***~~Charles Simeon's Devotional Commentaries Romans-Galatians~~***

***~~The Book of ROMANS~~***

***~~#1819~~***

***~~A MINISTER'S JOY OVER HIS PEOPLE~~***

**[Romans 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.8).**

"I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, for you all."

AS a title of honor, a minister may assume the character of an *ambassador*from God. But the *paternal*relation is that which exhibits him before us in the most endearing view. Under the character of a *father*, Paul frequently addressed his converts, [1 Thessalonians 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.11). Sometimes he even compared himself with a *mother*"travailing in birth with them [Galatians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.19);" yes, and as a *nursing mother*, drawing forth, as it were, the bosom to them, and "desiring to impart to them his very soul, because they were so dear to him, [1 Thessalonians 2:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.7-8)." There is scarcely one of his Epistles which does not begin with thanking God for them, and pouring forth his petitions in their behalf.

The Church of Rome, though he had "never yet seen their face in the flesh," were exceeding dear to him; and the more so, because the fame of their attainments had spread throughout the whole world. They were not all equally eminent; yet for all of them, without exception, did he return thanks to God: nor did he think it at all necessary to abstain from bestowing just commendations upon them [Romans 15:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.14). Nor shall we do wrong, if, with paternal regard, we express our thankfulness to God for the blessings he has bestowed on those over whom he has placed us, and whom he has graciously committed to our pastoral care.

We give thanks to God, therefore, brethren, for you all:

***~~I. For those of you who have begun to manifest a concern for your souls—~~***

Truly this is a just ground of thanksgiving to God—

Look at the world around you, and see how regardless men are of their eternal interest. They even put God far from them; saying, "We desire not the knowledge of your ways!" Everything occupies in their minds a higher place than God. The great mass of professors were once as manifestly alienated from God as the world around them still are.

But we need not think of others. Look only at your own conduct, from your youth up, until the moment that God was pleased to open your eyes to a sense of your guilt and danger. See how little you cared for God, or for your own souls. Instead of living unto Him who died for you, even to the Lord Jesus Christ who bought you with his blood, you lived altogether to yourselves, and were, so to speak, "without God in the world." Compare, then, your present with your former state; and say if there be not reason to bless and adore God for the change that has been wrought in you.

***~~We do then, and will, thank God through Jesus Christ in your behalf—~~***

The change has proceeded from God alone. It was he who first "opened your heart to attend to the things which were spoken" in his blessed word. He quickened you from the dead; endued you with, I will not say new *faculties*, but certainly with new *dispositions*; by means of which, you have been brought to hate the ways which you once followed, and to seek the things which you once despised And it is for Christ's sake that God has given this great mercy, even for the sake of him who bought you with his blood, and intercedes for you at the right hand of God. Through that Savior, then, will I render thanks to God, and bless him for all that he has done for your souls.

It may be that, at present, your attainments are but small. But God forbid that I would "despise the day of small things." It is true, also, that where the change is but small, and but recently experienced, we have not that confidence in your state which we feel in reference to more advanced Christians. But nevertheless we rejoice, even as the angels in Heaven do, at the first return of a repenting sinner to his God: and we desire to pray to God that he would establish all which he has wrought in you, and confirm unto the end the blessed work he has begun.

But with yet greater delight will we return thanks,

***~~II. For those who have made some progress in the Divine life—~~***

***~~Over such persons we rejoice with very exalted joy—~~***

Of those who *begin*a heavenly course, how many "run well only for a season!"

The *stony-ground hearers*are very numerous; and their end most deeply to be bewailed. How many thousands are turned aside by the fear of man; and "leave off to walk wisely," because they cannot bear the cross which an adherence to Christ would bring upon them!

*The cares of this life*, also, arrest many in their course, and drag them down to the concerns of this perishing world.

Many are ensnared by *the lusts of the flesh*, which they will not mortify; or by the vanities of the world, which they cannot prevail upon themselves to renounce.

Even in the apostolic age there were many, who, "after having known the way of righteousness, have forsaken it," and "turned back as a dog to his vomit, and as the sow that has been washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Shall we not bless God, then, for those who have maintained a steadfastness in the ways of God, and have made their profiting to appear? Surely, if augmented growth in corporeal and intellectual strength in a child is a ground of joy and gratitude to his parents, then much more must a progress in the divine life, among a pastor's hearers, be an occasion of praise and thanksgiving to him who "watches over them in the Lord".

***~~We do then bless God, through Jesus Christ, for you—~~***

We well know to what temptations you are exposed, and what conflicts with sin and Satan you have had to maintain; and we therefore adore him who has graciously given you strength according to your day, and held you up in his everlasting arms!

O! when we think of the account which poor apostates have to give, and how fearful will be their condition in the eternal world; and when, on the other hand, we contemplate your future prospects; we cannot but bless God for you. Yes, while for them we weep, and would have "our eyes as a fountain of tears to run down night and day;" for you we would adore and magnify our God, and implore him to "perfect that which concerns you," that what he has *begun in grace*may be *consummated in glory!*Most of all, however, must we thank God,

***~~III. For those who are walking worthy of their high and heavenly calling—~~***

To such our text more especially refers; because the Apostle specifies, as the peculiar ground of his thanksgiving, that "their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world." Now for such we thank God,

***~~1. Because of the glory which they bring to God—~~***

They live for God: they honor God: they commend his religion throughout the world. A man of low spiritual attainments causes but a dim light to shine around him: but a man who "runs well the race that is set before him," is seen of all, and approved of all, whose judgment in any respect accords with the mind of God. He is, in fact, "a light in the world:" and those who behold him are constrained to "glorify our Father who is in Heaven".

***~~2. Because of the good they do to mankind—~~***

Who are they that promote the knowledge of God in the world? Who labor for the salvation of their fellow men? I will not say that persons may not give the aid of their wealth and influence to a religious society from corrupt motives: but those who set on foot these societies, and exert themselves with most self-denying labor in them, are the persons of whom I am now speaking. In truth, but for them there would be little spiritual good done in the whole world. Works of humanity might go on without them: but works of religion would stagnate altogether. Nothing but apostolic zeal can do the work of an Apostle: but that work as far transcends every other, in real excellence and use, as the effulgence of the sun exceeds the twinkling of a star.

***~~3. Because of the blessings that await them in the eternal world—~~***

Who can contemplate the blessedness of a pious soul when admitted into the immediate presence of God, and not rejoice in its welfare? And can we see you, my brethren, pressing forward in your heavenly course, and laboring incessantly to finish the work assigned to you, and not thank our God in your behalf? Would not the very stones cry out against us, if we were so insensible, so altogether destitute of love either to God or man? For those who are departed in the faith of Christ we cannot but rejoice: and for you who are daily ripening for glory, we cannot but feel a measure of thankfulness proportioned to the attainments they make, and the prospects they enjoy.

***~~Permit me now to address you "all,"~~***

***~~1. Individually—~~***

That which rendered the Christians at Rome so eminent, was "their faith." Let that grace, then, be cultivated by every one of you. Faith is the root from which every other grace proceeds. Abound in that; and every other grace will be carried on and perfected within you.

***~~2. Collectively—~~***

Be careful, all of you, that we be not disappointed of our hope respecting you. Then shall we thank God also for you in the eternal world, and have you as "our joy and crown of rejoicing" for ever and ever!

***~~#1820~~***

***~~PAUL'S LOVE TO THE CHURCH AT ROME~~***

***~~[Romans 1:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.9-12).~~***

"God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong-- that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith."

IT has been thought by some, that it would have been better for the Church if the Gospels only had been transmitted to posterity, and the Epistles had perished in oblivion. This impious sentiment originates altogether in men's hatred of the truth; and it argues as much ignorance of the Gospels, as it does ingratitude to God. *The Gospels contain all the same truths as the Epistles; but the Epistles render them more clear.*Never would we have had so complete a view of the correspondence between the Jewish and Christian dispensations, as we are favored with in the Epistle to the Hebrews: nor would the doctrine of justification by faith alone have been so clearly defined, or so incontrovertibly established, if the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians had never existed.

*We are moreover indebted to the Epistles for a much clearer insight into practical religion*, than we ever would have had without them. It is true, that the example of Christ is perfect, and that the precepts he has given us are perfect also; but we would never have known what heights of piety are attainable by "men of like passions with ourselves," if we had not known more of the Apostles than what is recorded of them in the Gospels.

In the *Acts*of the Apostles we behold much of their zeal and diligence; but *in the Epistles, the full portrait of a minister is drawn with a minuteness and accuracy*which we would in vain look for in any other place. To go no further than to the words before us—what an exalted idea have we of the love which a minister would bear towards his people, in this solemn declaration of Paul! Let us contemplate it awhile—let us consider the leading points which his words develop:

***~~I. His love to the Church at Rome—~~***

Paul was a man of a most enlarged heart: he loved all that loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; as well "those who had not seen his face in the flesh," as those who had been converted under his own ministry. He knew the Christians at Rome only by report; yet he felt the most ardent affection for them, and showed that affection,

***~~1. By his incessant prayers for them—~~***

The love which exists among the men of this world leads them to regard each other's temporal welfare: but *spiritual and Christian love has respect chiefly to the souls of men; and consequently exercises itself most in promoting their eternal welfare*. It was thus that Paul manifested his love to the Christians at Rome: he prayed for them, as he knew that God alone could make them truly happy; and that he would regard the intercessions of his people in their behalf: and therefore "he made mention of them always in his prayers," and labored "without ceasing" to bring down upon them the blessings of Heaven.

Now *prayer was a decisive proof of love*. Indeed by this we all may try our love, and may ascertain whether it be merely natural, or truly Christian; yes, all husbands and wives, parents and children, ministers and people, may here discern not only the *nature*of their affection, as by a touchstone, but the *measure*of it, as by a scale; and, by examining into the constancy and fervor of their intercessions for others, may learn the state of their own souls before God. O that, like the Apostle, we could appeal to the heart-searching God, and "call him to witness," that we have this evidence at least of "serving him with our spirit in the Gospel of his Son!"

***~~2. By his earnest desire to visit them—~~***

*Love naturally desires communion with the objects beloved*. Paul no sooner heard of the piety of those at Rome, than he conceived an ardent affection for them, and a determination of mind, if a favorable opportunity would present itself, to pay them a visit. For many years, occurrences had arisen to prevent the execution of his purpose, [Romans 15:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.22-23); but nothing could abate his desire of seeing them, when his way thither would be made clear. Hence, among his other petitions for them, he prayed particularly and constantly that God would be pleased to direct his way to them, and to prosper him in his journey towards them.

This desire to visit them, in connection with prayer, was also a strong evidence of his love: for, had he loved them less, he might well have left them to the care of their spiritual fathers, and confined his own ministry to those who were nearer to him and easier of access. Had they been the peculiar objects of his charge, and had he labored for many years exclusively among them, we doubt not but that his desire to see them would have been still more ardent. At all events we are sure, that no minister who truly loves his people and his work will be long absent from his flock without having this the constant language of his heart, "I long to see you!" He may be separated from them "in presence, but not in heart."

But what were,

***~~II. The particular objects of his intended visit to them—~~***

Rome was then the most magnificent city in the universe: it was the seat of empire, the capital of the world. But was it to gratify a vain curiosity, or to court popularity among the great, that the Apostle sought to go thither? No! he had far nobler ends in view: the true objects of his intended visit were,

***~~1. The advancement of their spiritual welfare—~~***

The Apostle was honored by God with a power of conferring miraculous gifts: and these, when conferred, tended greatly to strengthen the hands of those who preached the Gospel, and to confirm the faith of those who heard it This is strongly marked in his appeal to the Galatians, [Galatians 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.2); [Galatians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.5). To this therefore he might in part refer, when he spoke of "imparting to the Church some spiritual *gifts*."

But he certainly desired to increase also the *graces*of the Lord's people; to confirm their faith, enliven their hope, and augment their joy. However exalted their characters were, there was yet abundant room for improvement; and he hoped to be a blessed instrument in the hands of God for the advancing and perfecting of his work in their souls.

For this end, God is pleased to make use of his ministering servants. On them he confers the honor, not merely of awakening men from the sleep of death, but of "building them up also on their most holy faith," and completing them, as a spiritual edifice, for his own immediate residence. O blessed work indeed! Well might the Apostle desire to be engaged in it, wherever his labors might be successfully employed: for surely no labor can be so great, no suffering so heavy, but it is richly compensated, if this end be in any measure produced.

***~~2. The comfort of his own soul—~~***

Next to the happiness of communion with God, is that of fellowship with his believing people. To be appreciated, it must be felt: *no one can have any conception of that oneness of heart and mind which exists in the Lord's people, unless he himself has experienced it.*When their faith is in lively exercise, and their souls are humbled in the dust, and their hearts overflow with love—who shall give us any adequate idea of their felicity? Certainly it is nearly allied to the happiness of Heaven; or rather, it is an anticipation and foretaste of Heaven itself. This happiness the Apostle assuredly expected to enjoy among the people at Rome: yes, this happiness does every faithful minister enjoy, according to the degree in which his own soul is devoted to God, and the people to whom he ministers have imbibed his spirit.

O that it may be known and felt among us; and that we may increasingly reap this fruit of our fellowship with each other!

***~~Improvement—~~***

***~~1. Let us be thankful to God, who has heard and answered our supplications—~~***

That you have remembered your minister, we have no doubt: and "God is witness" that he has not been unmindful of you; and now our heavenly Benefactor has graciously renewed to us our opportunities of uniting together in our usual exercises of prayer and praise. Let us then be thankful; yet "not in word only, but in deed and in truth." Let us consecrate ourselves to him afresh, and strive, with holy ardor, who shall serve him best. This is the true way in which to manifest our thankfulness to God. Our offices may differ, as the offices of the eye and hand; but, if all of us perform the proper duties of our station with care and diligence, he will accept our services, not according to the importance which we annex to them, but according to the heart attitude with which they are performed.

***~~2. Let us continue to pray for his blessing on our poor endeavors—~~***

*It is to no purpose that God has brought us together again, if he himself is not in the midst of us.* "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water: but it is God alone that can give the increase." Let us therefore wait upon him continually. Let us go to him before we meet in the public assembly; and retire from thence to our closets again. *Let all that we do be begun, continued, and ended in a humble dependence upon God*. Then shall spiritual gifts be richly imparted to you; and the whole body of us be comforted and edified.

***~~#1821~~***

***~~NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL~~***

**[Romans 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.16).**

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes."

THE epistle to the Romans, though first in order, is by no means first in point of time; several letters having, in fact, been written before it. But in respect of *importance*, it justly deserves to take the lead of all the others. There is no other epistle that is so full and comprehensive on the great subject of a sinner's justification before God; no other epistle so orderly in its arrangement, or so argumentative in its statement; and perhaps no other epistle that is, on the whole, so instructive.

It was written to the Church at Rome, which, though not planted by Paul, had a distinguished place in his regard. He had long wished to visit that Church, but had been prevented, by a variety of circumstances, from carrying his purpose into execution. Now however he announced his intention of going to them at the first opportunity, being desirous of "having some fruit among them even as he had had among other Gentiles." He had reason indeed to expect, that, in that opulent city, the abode of so many great and learned men, his ministrations would excite no small measure of contempt: but "he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ;" nor did he think he had any occasion to be ashamed of it; since "it was, and would be, the power of God to the salvation of all who received it in faith."

It were well if all who profess to believe the Gospel, were like-minded with him in this particular: but there are multitudes who, notwithstanding they call themselves Christians, are in reality ashamed of the Gospel. That we may assist such persons in discovering their own character, and induce them to walk worthy of their holy profession, we shall show,

***~~I. When we may be said to be ashamed of the Gospel—~~***

Few perhaps imagine that any such evil is imputable to them: but they, in fact, are guilty of it, who, through fear of that disgrace which attaches to the Gospel, are deterred,

***~~1. From seeking instruction in it—~~***

Many, from what they have seen and heard of the effects of the Gospel, have a secret conviction that it has an excellence far beyond any they have hitherto discovered: and they would be glad to be better instructed in it: but they dare not go where it is more fully and plainly set forth, because of the odium to which they will expose themselves. They are aware that the very circumstance of attending upon the ministry of one who is stigmatized as *evangelical*, will tend to fix a stigma on their names also, and to produce an apprehension in the minds of their friends, that they are beginning to favor these obnoxious tenets.

If the same doctrines were delivered in a church where they might attend without suspicion, they would gladly avail themselves of the opportunity to hear them: but, if any sacrifice of character is to be made in order to get instruction, they will rather lose the benefit, than purchase it at such a price. Even a religious book, would it happen to be in their hands when a friend unexpectedly calls in upon them, is put away in haste, lest it would draw down a measure of disgrace upon them. Even the Bible itself they would be afraid to have seen upon their table, if they were supposed to be reading it with a view to the welfare of their souls.

I ask then: Whence does all this proceed? and what does it argue, but that they are ashamed of the Gospel of Christ? They have none of these feelings in reference to other places of worship, or to other books, no, not even to plays and novels. It is plain therefore that the Gospel is that which creates the offense; and that the dread of the odium attached to it diverts them from prosecuting the knowledge of it. Such persons may obtain mercy of the Lord, even as did Nicodemus did, whose children they are; yes, they may, like him, become distinguished ornaments of the Gospel: but they are in great danger lest God give them over to their unworthy fears, and leave them to "perish for lack of knowledge."

***~~2. From making an open profession of it—~~***

After that men have attained the knowledge of the truth, the same evil principle frequently operates in their hearts, to make them ashamed of confessing it. They see that the followers of Christ are still at this day, no less than in the Apostolic age, "a sect that is everywhere spoken against, [Acts 28:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 28.22);" and they cannot bring their minds to participate in their reproach. They would partake of the blessings of the Gospel, without "partaking of its affliction:" they would enjoy their Lord's *crown*, but not bear his *cross*. But such cowardice is expressly designated as a being "ashamed of the Gospel, [2 Timothy 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.8);" and it will assuredly rob them of all the advantages which they desire to possess.

If they would be Christ's disciples indeed, they must "deny themselves, and take up their cross daily, and follow Christ! [Matthew 16:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.24-25)." Like Moses, they must "choose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt! [Hebrews 11:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.25-26);" they must not be contented with honoring Christ in secret, but must "follow him outside the camp bearing his reproach! [Hebrews 13:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.13)."

Indeed it is not merely reputation that they must be willing to sacrifice, but life also, for Christ's sake: and, if they stop short of this, they "lose their souls" for ever [Matthew 10:38-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.38-39). In some respects these are in a worse state than they of whom we have before spoken; because they sin against greater light and knowledge, and are guilty of infinitely greater ingratitude towards their Lord, whose love and mercy they inwardly acknowledge, and from whom they expect all the blessings of grace and glory.

To these therefore our Lord speaks in very solemn terms, and warns them, that as they are ashamed of him, and deny him, "he will be ashamed of them, and deny them, in the presence of his Father and his holy angels! [Matthew 10:32-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.32-33); [Mark 8:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 8.35); [Mark 8:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 8.38)." "The fearful, no less than the unbelieving," will have their portion in the lake of fire at the last day! [Revelation 21:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.8). "If we will not *suffer*with Christ, we cannot *reign*with him, [2 Timothy 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.11-12)." "With the *heart*man believes unto righteousness; but with the *mouth*confession is made, and must be made, unto salvation, [Romans 10:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.10)."

***~~3. From walking worthy of it—~~***

While the principles of the Gospel are by the world at large accounted "foolishness, [1 Corinthians 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.18)," the *practice*enjoined by it is no less offensive to them, on account of its contrariety to all the desires and habits of the carnal mind. Hence those who profess the Gospel are often led into compliances which are unsuitable to their high calling, and dishonorable to their profession. Under the idea of "becoming all things to all men" they belie their consciences, and betray the cause which they are pledged to serve. They forget that Paul's compliances were to save others, [1 Corinthians 9:19-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.19-23). "To gain the more."

Observe how often that is repeated; while theirs are only to screen themselves. But this is "to put their light under a bushel," when their duty is "to make it shine before men, [Matthew 5:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.14-16)." They are "not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them, [Ephesians 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.11)," and, like Noah, to "condemn that world, [Hebrews 11:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.7)." which sets itself against the Majesty of Heaven. Instead of "following a multitude to do evil," the Christian is to consider himself as set by God to be "a light in the world," that he may "hold forth to others, in the whole of his spirit and conduct, the word of life, [Philippians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15-16)." And all who are kept by fear from thus adorning the Gospel, will be numbered among hypocrites and dissemblers with God, [Galatians 2:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.11-13). If a den of lions were to be the recompense of our fidelity to God, we are not to be intimidated; we are not to be ashamed, [Daniel 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 6.10). The Lord Jesus Christ "endured the cross, and despised the shame" for us! [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2); and we must brave contempt and death in their most terrific forms for him.

Thus all who are deterred from "following the Lord fully," are, in fact, "ashamed of Christ." But how unreasonable this conduct is, will appear, while we show,

***~~II. Why we should not be ashamed of the gospel—~~***

Certainly, if any one might reasonably give way to shame, Paul might, when he contemplated the preaching of the Gospel at Rome. For as Rome was the seat of wealth and science, the preaching of the cross was likely to be peculiarly offensive to them, inasmuch as it poured contempt on all that was valued there, and required that they should place all their hopes for time and eternity on a poor despised Jew, who had suffered the most ignominious of all deaths from the hands of his own countrymen. But Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel; nor had he any real reason to be so; for,

***~~1. The Gospel is a revelation of God's grace to man—~~***

A wonderful mystery it is; a mystery which all "the angels of Heaven desire to look into," and which, as an expression of God's good-will to man, brings the highest possible glory to God himself. In the Gospel a way of salvation is provided for fallen man; a way exactly suited to man's necessities, and at the same time displaying in perfect harmony all the perfections of the Godhead.

It exhibits the *Father*sending his only dear Son to take upon him our nature, and to "bear our sins in his own body on the tree."

It represents the co-equal, co-eternal *Son*of God actually fulfilling that very office, and "reconciling us to God by his own blood."

It sets forth also the *Holy Spirit*, the third Person in the ever blessed Trinity, undertaking to apply that salvation to the souls of men, and by his almighty power to render them "fit for the inheritance" prepared for them.

Now I would ask, What is here to be ashamed of?

Is that, in which all "the wisdom of God, and the power of God," are concentrated and displayed, [1 Corinthians 1:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.24), an object which we would blush to acknowledge and confess?

Is that, which is the one theme of adoration and thanksgiving to all the hosts of Heaven, fit to be disowned by man on earth, so that the very mention of it shall suffuse his face with shame?

Shall sin, in all its varied forms, stalk abroad with unblushing effrontery, and this glorious mystery be veiled for fear of man's reproach? Abhorred be the thought!

Let the man that has ever been ashamed of the Gospel, be ashamed of his own extreme folly and impiety: and let that which is so glorious in the eyes of all the heavenly hosts, be henceforth glorious in our eyes; and let us "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of it! [Philippians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.8)."

***~~2. The Gospel is God's instrument for the salvation of a ruined world—~~***

Look back, and see what it is that has been the means of saving so many myriads of our fellow-creatures, when of the fallen angels not so much as one has ever been saved! What saved *Adam*, but the Gospel, which promised that "the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head!" What saved *Abraham*, but the Gospel, which was preached to him in these words; "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed!" Could you go up to the third heavens, and hear, as Paul did, the songs of the whole heavenly choir, you would hear but one note among them all, ascribing "salvation to God and to the Lamb for ever!"

Is this then a subject for us to be ashamed of? Shall we be ashamed of that, which alone has put a difference between us and devils? Shall we be ashamed of that, which is "the rod of God's strength," whereby he has brought millions, through seas of difficulty, to the full enjoyment of the heavenly Canaan?

The brazen serpent that healed the Israelites in the wilderness, though it was only a piece of brass, became an object of idolatrous regard: and shall we make "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God an object of shame and contempt? If we marvel at them for giving God's honor to a piece of brass, what wonder must it create among all the heavenly hosts, that any creature to whom the Gospel of salvation comes, would treat it but with the profoundest veneration, and the most ardent gratitude!

***~~3.The Gospel is effectual for the salvation of every one who believes—~~***

Never did it fail in any instance: it is equally effectual for "Jew or Gentile," and for the vilest, as well as the best, of the human race. It will leave none under the guilt and condemnation of their sins, none under the power and pollution of them. The *righteousness*which it provides for sinners is so pure and perfect, that, when clothed in it, they stand before God without spot or blemish. The *grace*treasured up for them in their living Head is so abundant, that the weakest of mankind, even though he be opposed by all the hosts of Hell, shall find it sufficient for him. It will not bring him out of six difficulties, and leave him to perish in the seventh, [Job 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 5.19); but "will keep him to the end, [1 Corinthians 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.8)," and allow "nothing to pluck him out of his Redeemer's hands! [John 10:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28)."

Is this then a thing to be ashamed of? and shall they be ashamed of it who profess to expect salvation by it? Methinks, a man must be almost as destitute of reason as of piety, who can account it any ground for blushing, that he loves, and admires, and glories in the cross of Christ; yes, and determines never to his last hour to glory in anything else [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14).

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Let not any of you then be ashamed of the Gospel—~~***

Let not the *rich* be ashamed of it; for it will make you richer than ten thousand worlds: "the riches of Christ are absolutely unsearchable, [Ephesians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.8)."

Let not the *poor* be ashamed of it; for it raises them to an equality with the greatest on earth, and gives them crowns and kingdoms for their inheritance, [James 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.9); [James 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.5).

Let not the *learned*be ashamed of it; for in it is contained "the manifold wisdom of God;" and even angels are made wiser by the revelation of it to the Church, [Ephesians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.10).

Let not the *unlearned*be ashamed of it; for it will "make them wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

Let not any thus dishonor it, until they cease to need its blessings, or have found a substitute worthy to supersede it. God is "not ashamed to be called our God, [Hebrews 11:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.16)." O! be not you ashamed to become, and to be called, his people.

***~~2. Let not the Gospel be ashamed of you—~~***

Many, alas! who profess to love the Gospel, are in their conduct a disgrace to it. Their pride, their passion, their worldly-mindedness, perhaps too their lack of truth and honesty, together with a variety of other evils predominant in them—cause "the way of truth to be evil spoken of, [2 Peter 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.2)," and "the very name of God to be blasphemed."

In every age, and in every Church, such instances occur; and lamentable it is to say, that no people are more unconscious of their guilt than they. It is on account of such persons that our Lord says, "Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come: but woe unto him by whom the offense comes—it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the depths of the sea! [Matthew 18:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.6-7)." See to it then, you professors of godliness, that this tremendous evil be not imputable to you: and endeavor so to walk, "that the adversary may have no evil thing to say of you," and "that they may be ashamed, who falsely accuse your good conduct in Christ, [Titus 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.8) and [1 Peter 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.16)."

***~~#1822~~***

***~~THE LOST STATE OF THE GENTILE WORLD~~***

***~~[Romans 1:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.20-21).~~***

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

HERE the plan of the epistle begins to be developed. Paul, intending to prove that there was only one way of salvation for the whole race of mankind, begins with showing that the *Gentile*world were altogether guilty before God, and lying under a just sentence of condemnation. In the next chapter he shows the same respecting the *Jews*: and, in the third, he confirms, from the Scriptures of truth, all that he has spoken respecting both the one and the other; and from thence deduces the general conclusion, that they are all shut up unto the faith of Christ, and must seek salvation by him alone.

In this present discourse we shall have to consider the state of the Gentiles, against whom universally the judgments of God are denounced; "the wrath of God being revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," and especially against "those who hold (or imprison) the truth in unrighteousness," which they have done in all ages of the world, verse 18.

But that we may bring the matter home to ourselves also, we shall show:

***~~I. How inexcusable they are for their conduct towards God—~~***

***~~The Gentiles have in every age had sufficient opportunities of attaining the knowledge of God—~~***

The things of God which are exclusively made known to us in the book of *revelation*, they could not be acquainted with, because the light of revelation was not given to them: but the book of *creation*was open to them, and equally legible to all; and from thence they might acquire a considerable knowledge of God's nature and perfections. In beholding the heavenly bodies all moving in their orbits; and the earth so abundantly furnished with everything for the accommodation of man; and man himself the most noble of all God's works, his *body*so intricately wrought, and his *soul*so richly endowed; in beholding these things, I say, they could not but know that there was some superior Being who had formed them all.

They could not look upon any work of art—a house, for instance, or a watch, or anything that required skill—but their minds must of necessity be led to contemplate the *maker*of it: and a similar necessity was imposed upon them by all the works of creation. Having traced up everything to a First Cause, they must see that, as He was the cause of all that existed besides himself, there could be nothing to give existence to him; and that consequently, he must be self-existent and eternal. Moreover, they must see, from the immensity and the excellency of all his works, that there can be no limit to his wisdom, his power, or his goodness; but that these perfections of his must of necessity be infinite. That these deductions were open to them we are sure, because some of their more enlightened philosophers have actually made these discoveries, though certainly with less clearness and precision than we by the means of Scripture revelation are enabled to do. God himself affirms it in the verses preceding our text; saying, that the things concerning him which were invisible to human eyes, were nevertheless "clearly to be seen and understood in his visible works, even his eternal power and Godhead, verse 19, 20."

Paul also, when addressing the heathen, quotes to them their own poets, to show that in the representations which they foolishly made of the Supreme Being, they did in fact violate the law that was in their own minds, and act contrary to the light that was within them, [Acts 17:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 17.28-29).

***~~But they did not improve these opportunities aright—~~***

They entertained most unworthy conceptions of the Deity. Instead of regarding him as a *spirit*who pervaded all space, they "made images of him like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things;" and then bowed down to the work of their own hands, and said, "Deliver me; for you are my god. Compare verse 23 with [Isaiah 44:9-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.9-20)." What could be more insulting to the Divine Majesty than such conduct as this?

Moreover they testified no gratitude towards him for all the benefits that he conferred upon them. Innumerable were the blessings which in constant succession he bestowed upon them, [Acts 14:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 14.16-17); yet "they were not thankful, verse 21," but abused his gifts, instead of taking occasion from them to love and glorify the Giver.

They sought not in anything to please him, nor cared however much they might displease him. The abominations they committed cannot even be thought of but with horror and amazement, verse 26, 27. And, while they were thus bent on the gratification of their lusts and appetites, and purposely cast out of their minds all those notices of a Supreme Being, which from time to time arose to check them in their excesses, verse 28, they were given over to the dominion of every hateful disposition that could assimilate them to the god of this world, whose willing servants they were. What an assemblage of evils was there accumulated in their character! verse 29-31. Yet was this representation of them by no means overcharged. Their own historians, and poets, and philosophers have justified every word that is here spoken. What the poet said of the Cretans might, with few exceptions, be applied to all; "The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons, [Titus 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 1.12)"—a wretched compound of falsehood, and cruelty, and abominable sensuality!

Nor were they merely impelled to these things by the impetuosity of their own passions; for, while they had internal convictions of the impiety of this conduct, they deliberately approved and honored those who were most addicted to it.

***~~From hence it appears how inexcusable they were, and how justly sentenced to eternal condemnation—~~***

Had they been able to plead *ignorance*, they would have had some kind of excuse: but they could not do this: for "they did really know God;" but "did not choose to retain him in their knowledge:" and so far were they from having this plea to extenuate their crimes, that the light which they resisted constitutes the heaviest aggravation of their guilt. "This is their condemnation, that *they loved darkness*rather than light, because their deeds were evil! [John 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.19)."

Again, if they could not plead ignorance, neither could they plead *necessity*; for they were under no necessity to dishonor God in this way, either from without or from within. They were perfectly free agents in all that they did: and though they could not, nor can any child of man, fulfill all the Divine will, or themselves do anything spiritually good—yet they might have abstained from much which they did amiss, and done much which they neglected to do: and therefore they are justly chargeable with all the guilt that they contracted; and are as reprehensible before God for not using the powers which they possessed, as they would have been if those powers had been ever so enlarged.

All that has been spoken in reference to the *heathen*in former days, is still applicable to them at this time. The notices of a Deity may be much more obscured in the minds of some than of others; and the criminality of all must be estimated in some measure according to the peculiar circumstances under which they live: but, inasmuch as all violate the law that is in their own minds, and neglect to improve the advantages they enjoy, they all are obnoxious to the charge contained in our text, and are therefore "without excuse."

But, that we may bring this matter home to ourselves, let us consider,

***~~II. How much more inexcusable we are, if we resemble them—~~***

***~~We have opportunities of knowing God, far beyond any that the heathen ever enjoyed—~~***

Even in reading the book of creation, we, by means of our superior advantages, are enabled to see much that was hidden from them, or, at least, to discover with incomparably greater clearness the unity and perfections of God, which they could but faintly and doubtingly discern. But we have a Scripture revelation, wherein God has proclaimed his own name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty! [Exodus 34:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 34.6-7)." We have also a yet clearer revelation of God in the person of his own Son, who is "the image of the invisible God [Colossians 1:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.15)," "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, [Hebrews 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 1.3)."

Nor is it from words only that we discover his excellency, but from *actions*also. We behold our God incarnate: we behold his glory veiled, so that, without being blinded with the overwhelming splendor of his majesty, we may contemplate him, and familiarize ourselves, as it were, with his adorable perfections. In this especially the most ignorant among us excels all the greatest philosophers of Greece and Rome; we behold God's attribute of *mercy*; we can tell how that may be exercised in perfect consistency with his *justice*: we can tell how God can be "just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly [Romans 3:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.26); [Romans 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.5)." In a word, all the wonders of redeeming love are set before us in terms so plain, that "he who runs may read them."

***~~But how have we improved these advantages?~~***

Have we glorified God as God, or his blessed Son as the one hope of a sinful and ruined world? Alas! alas! if we take a survey of our own spirit and conduct through life, we shall find, that there has been but little difference between us and the heathen.

Consider our defects. "We have not glorified God as God, neither been thankful." What might justly have been expected of persons privileged as we have been? Might it not have been reasonably hoped that persons redeemed from Hell by the blood of God's only dear Son, would have been incessantly pouring out their souls in grateful adorations, and dedicating to his service their every faculty, and every instant of their time? Methinks, it would have been a work of pain and self-denial to devote so much as a thought to any other subject, especially to any subject unconnected with this.

But have our hearts been thus exercised? Has it been thus our delight to anticipate the employment of Heaven? Or rather, have not the wonders of redemption had far less influence on our minds than the things of time and sense? Yes, have they not for the most part been passed by, as though they were only "a cunningly-devised fable," wherein we had no interest?

Consider also our errors. We have not, it is true, transformed our God into an idol: but we have had scarcely more worthy conceptions of him than if he had been an idol. In *theory*we have ascribed to him the different perfections of his nature; but in *practice*we have denied them all—his omniscience, his holiness, his justice, and his truth, by vainly imagining, either that he did not behold, or that he would not punish, our iniquities. We, as he himself tells us, have "thought him to be even such a one as ourselves:" while exalting in our minds his attribute of mercy, we have, in fact, divested him of all that belongs to him as the Governor of the universe: *A God all mercy, is a God unjust.*

Consider yet further our excesses. These, as to the overt act, do not proceed to such extremes as were common among the Gentiles: but the abominations that we do commit, sufficiently show, that we are not restrained by any regard to God, so much as by public laws and popular opinion. Christianity having elevated the general tone of morals, those hideous crimes which were but too frequent among the Gentiles are scarcely so much as thought of among us: but, in all that we can do consistently with the laws of society, we are not a whit superior to the heathen themselves.

What juster picture could the Apostle have drawn, if he had intended to describe, what is improperly called, the Christian world? Take us as a people, and say, whether we are not "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; yes, whether we be not full of envy, murder, deceit, malignity; whether we be not whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, implacable, unmerciful: and say particularly, whether, notwithstanding, verse 29-31. We know the evil of such things, we do not both practice them ourselves, and choose for our friends and companions those who are guilty of those very practices? Who, I would ask, are the favorites with the world? the godly, and those who are conformed to the Savior's image? No! but the ungodly, who by their conduct and example sanction all the corruptions of the human heart, verse 32.

***~~How inexcusable then must we be!~~***

Truly, "the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against us;" yes, the Gentiles also, throughout the universe, will condemn us, because of the extent to which we have imitated their evils, and abused our infinitely superior advantages. "The Gospel which we enjoy, if it prevails not with us to put away our sins, and to walk as Christ walked," will only prove to us "a savor of death" to our more aggravated and heavier condemnation, [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.16). "If Christ had not come and spoken unto us, we had not had sin: but now we have no cloak for our sin, [John 15:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.22)."

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

***~~1. How thankful we should be for the Gospel of Christ!~~***

Doubtless one reason why the world was left without a Savior for four thousand years, was, that the world might see how little they could do to restore themselves to the favor and image of God. At no period were the powers of the human intellect carried to a greater extent, than at the time of our Savior's advent: but what did philosophy effect? What did it effect even among those who most exalted it? Nothing to any good purpose. The poets and philosophers themselves were as much addicted to sin as the vulgar, whom they looked down upon with contempt: and, if it were not for the light of the Gospel, we would be as much immersed in sensuality as they!

Let this be borne in mind, that, whether born in a Christian or a heathen land, we are all by nature equally corrupt and helpless; and all need a Savior, the one as much as the other. To us a Savior is revealed, and precisely such a one as we stand in need of. O let us then bless our God for the revelation of his grace: let us be thankful that we see what many prophets and kings desired to see, but desired it in vain: and let Christ, who is the sum and substance of the Gospel, be truly "precious" to all our souls.

***~~2. What effect our superior advantages should produce upon us—~~***

We should aspire after the highest possible attainments, in love and gratitude, in purity and holiness. We should aim at "glorifying God as God," and Christ as Christ. Let us then contemplate Christ in all his offices, as our *Prophet*, as our *Priest*, as our *King*. Let us not be contented with a theoretical or superficial survey of his character, but let us search into it, and ruminate upon it, and get our souls suitably impressed with it. Let us get such views of him, as shall render us insensible to all created excellency; as a man who looks at the meridian sun is blinded to all inferior objects. Let us in these holy exercises seek to obtain a conformity to his image; agreeably to what the Apostle has said, "We beholding his glory are changed into the same image from glory to glory! [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18)." Let no measure of resemblance to him ever satisfy us; no efforts in his service ever content us. Let us, even if we have attained an apostolic measure of zeal and holiness, "forget it all, and reach forward" to higher attainments, [Philippians 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.13-14).

Let our *trust*in him be sincere;

let our *fellowship*with him be intimate;

let our *confidence*in him be assured;

let our *expectation*from him be large;

let our *devotion*to him be ardent;

let our *obedience* to him be uniform;

let our *surrender*of ourselves to him be entire and unreserved;

let us *live*for him, and "walk worthy of him;" so that he may be glorified, yes, and "be magnified in us" also, both in life and death. [Philippians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.20)."

***~~#1823~~***

***~~MEN HATERS OF GOD~~***

***~~[Romans 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.30).~~***

"Haters of God!"

WHAT! Are there any persons of this character upon earth? It cannot be! it were a libel upon human nature to suppose it. Go round to all the people you can find, and put the question to them, 'Are you a hater of God?' They will spurn at the idea, and deem the question a gross insult. The moral part of mankind would he filled with indignation at such a strange calumnious suggestion. And the most immoral would say, 'I certainly do not serve him as I ought: but, as to "hating him," "is your servant a dog, that he would do this! [2 Kings 8:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 8.12-13)."

But let us "come to the word and to the testimony." Of whom speaks the Apostle the words which we have read? Does he give this character to some of a pre-eminently impious disposition? Or does he ascribe it to the whole Gentile world, even to every man, so long as he continues in his natural and unconverted state? It is most assuredly in this latter sense that the words must be understood: for the scope of this part of the epistle is to show, not that some particular persons need a Savior, but "that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God! [Romans 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.19)."

I am far from saying that all persons manifest their enmity against God in the same way, and to the same extent: but if we will candidly examine the state of mankind, we shall find it precisely such as the Apostle here describes it; and that the *human heart, until changed by Divine grace*, is "full of envy, murder, deceit, malignity;" and that men still are, no less than in the Apostle's days, "whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful, verse 29-31." With the description at large I shall not trouble you. It is my intention to confine myself to that particular part of it which I have selected for my text: in confirmation of which I shall,

***~~I. Establish the fact, that unregenerate men are haters of God—~~***

***~~This fact is absolutely universal—~~***

Look at every man, and see what are his dispositions and conduct towards the God of Heaven and earth: and all, without exception, will be found to deserve the character here assigned them. All betray an enmity against God; they feel it in their hearts, and manifest it in their lives. It their minds were rightly disposed towards God, they would *esteem*him above all; and *desire*him above all; and *delight*in him above all; and, in comparison with his favor, there would be nothing regarded by them as worthy of a thought.

But what is the fact? *There is not anything, however vain or worthless, or vile, that does not occupy a higher place in their esteem than God! Any gratification which they affect, is sufficient to draw them from their allegiance to Him, and to induce them to violate his most express commands*. The favor of a fellow-creature is more sought than his; and the displeasure of a poor sinful worm more dreaded than his. Even Satan himself is deemed more worthy to be obeyed than he: as our Lord has said, "You are of your father the devil; and the lusts of your father you will do! [John 8:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.44)."

But the will of our heavenly Father we will not do. There is no such satisfaction felt in anything which he enjoins; no such readiness to comply with his sacred motions in the soul. In truth, *what is the whole life of an unregenerate man? Is it not a state of rebellion against God?*There is not a command of his which we desire to keep: there is not one which we do not violate.

Now let us try this conduct by an easy test. Suppose that a child, or a servant, treated us as we have treated God: suppose that, while he acknowledged his relation to us, he never sought to please us; never cared however much he displeased us; never felt any comfort in our society, but rather desired the society of our bitterest enemies; never was concerned about our honor or interests; but would sacrifice both the one and the other at any time, without any shame or remorse—what construction would we put upon that conduct? Would we not say that his mind was altogether alienated from us? No doubt we would: and that is the construction which God himself puts on our deportment towards him: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be! [Romans 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.7)."

***~~This fact is also realized to an inconceivable degree—~~***

It would appear impossible for a man so to hate God, as that God's annihilation and extinction would prove to them a source of real satisfaction: but I put it to the consciences of all, and ask: Supposing we were told, from undoubted authority, that there was no God to control us, no God to inspect our ways, no God to call us to an account, and that we were at liberty to follow our own ways without any fear of a hereafter; would it not, on the whole, be an acceptable report?

The Psalmist says, "The fool has said in his heart, No God! [Psalm 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 14.1)." Now, whether we understand that as an affirmation or a wish, it equally shows what I am now contending for; that the very existence of God is a burden to the carnal mind; and that the extinction of God, if it were possible, would be welcomed as a relief. In truth, we flee from him, as Adam did after the fall, [Genesis 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.8), and banish him from our minds as much as possible, [Psalm 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 10.4), and live altogether as "without him in the world, [Ephesians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.12)." And thus we give a clear proof that we would esteem it no loss if we could get rid of him altogether.

Melancholy, indeed, is this fact. I will now endeavor to,

***~~II. Account for it—~~***

One would suppose, that He who is all excellence in himself, and the one source of all benefits to man, would be an object of love, and not of hatred, to us: and so he would be, if we had retained our primitive state of innocence: but we have fallen, and are become inconceivably depraved: and therefore we hate him on account of,

***~~1. The contrariety that exists between him and us—~~***

There is not a greater difference between light and darkness, than between him and us; not only in his natural attributes, which, of course, we cannot resemble, but in his moral perfections also, which in our original creation were enstamped upon us.

There is not any one thing which God loves, which we do not hate with a perfect hatred. *Holiness*, in all its branches, is that which he approves: but in no one respect do we love it. A conformity to his image we never seek; nay, if we behold it in another, we hate and abhor it. This matter has been put to a trial. God himself has become incarnate, and exhibited to the world a perfect transcript of his perfections: and how did the world treat him? There was not an indignity which they did not offer him; nor did they rest, until they had put him to the most ignominious death. Nor was this the conduct of the ignorant populace alone, but of every rank and order in society: kings, priests, people, all joined in the same murderous assaults upon him.

His image, too, was represented in his holy Prophets and Apostles: and how were all of them treated? In every age they were the objects of most inveterate hatred; insomuch, that, of all the Apostles, one alone escaped the sword of martyrdom.

And is human nature different now, from what it was in former ages? The laws of men have imposed restraints on the enmity of the heart: but were those restraints removed, and occasion for the exercise of men's evil dispositions afforded, the same scenes would be transacted now as formerly: for men at this hour, no less than in former ages, "love darkness rather than light;" and would gladly extinguish the light, that they might be left to follow their own ways unmolested and unreproved!

***~~2. The consciousness we feel, that he will summon us to his tribunal—~~***

We may treat revelation as we will; but we all feel in our conscience a persuasion that God inspects our ways, and hates our proceedings, and will avenge the breaches of his holy laws. We may try to divest ourselves of these feelings, and may prevail to dissipate them for a moment; but they will return; and at certain times and seasons will occasion much uneasiness to the mind, and produce there a wish that we could by any means avoid the judgment that awaits us. We feel that God is, and must be, an enemy to us: and therefore we cannot contemplate him with any other feeling than that of fear and dread.

It may be said indeed by some, that this is by no means their experience: that, on the contrary, they feel a delightful regard for God, and a grateful sense of his mercies.

But to this I would answer,*It is not to God as revealed in the Scripture, but as they paint him to themselves in their own vain imaginations, that they feel this regard.* They conceive of him as bearing no anger against them for their sins, and as lowering his demands of obedience to the standard which they have fixed for themselves, and as looking with delight on their formal self-righteous endeavors: it is in this view of him alone that they are pleased with him: they despoil him of his own proper attributes, and clothe him with attributes of their own creation; and then they worship the work of their own hands!

But, let him be presented to them in his own proper character—as a holy Being, that cannot look upon iniquity without the utmost abhorrence; as a *just*Being, who cannot but punish with everlasting destruction every impenitent sinner; and as a God of *truth*, that will accept no human being but as clothed in the righteousness of his dear Son—and they will lose all their imagined regard for him, and show towards him all the aversion which we have before described. They will find in themselves that Scripture realized, "My soul loathed them; and their soul abhorred me! [Zechariah 11:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 11.8)."

Regarding the fact as proved, I now come to,

***~~III. Make some reflections upon it—~~***

In the view of this fact, we may observe,

***~~1. How deep should be our humiliation before God!~~***

Men are not humbled, because they will not look at themselves in the looking-glass of God's Word. They think only of some particular sins which they may have committed; and put out of view altogether the disposition of their souls towards God. But, if we would have a just sense of our condition, we must probe our hearts to the bottom; and see, not merely what we are, but what we would have been if we had been left to follow our dispositions without restraint.

Look at the souls that are now shut up in the abodes of misery in Hell: has any new disposition been infused into them, since they have entered into the eternal world? No! they have only the dispositions which they carried with them: and the only difference is, that they are now left to manifest to the uttermost what in this world was kept from issuing forth in all its full malignity. Under the displeasure of their God, so far are they from humbling themselves before him, that they "gnaw their tongues with anguish, and blaspheme the God of Heaven because of their pains! [Revelation 16:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 16.10-11)."

What would they have said in this world, if they had been told what was really in their hearts? They would have deemed it a gross calumny! But such would be our deportment here, if our corruptions were not restrained, either by education, or by the preventing grace of God. And, If we are sensible how great our depravity is, we shall see that no humiliation can be too deep for any of us; but that it becomes all of us, without exception, to "abhor ourselves, even as holy Job did, in dust and ashes."

***~~2. What obligations we owe to God for his Gospel!~~***

In the Gospel is revealed a way of reconciliation for us, through Christ. O! what love was it that bestowed upon us such an inestimable gift as that of God's only dear Son, to make reconciliation for us through the blood of his cross! And here it is particularly to be noticed, that God does not so much offer to be reconciled to us, as he invites us to be reconciled to him. The address which his ministers are commissioned to make to men, is, "We beseech you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God! [2 Corinthians 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.20)."

The great obstruction to friendship between God and us lies altogether on our part. Not a single moment would God retain his anger against us, if we humbled ourselves before him, and besought his favor for Christ's sake. But, though importuned by him, we continue obstinate in our alienation from him. Still, however, the Gospel follows us with invitations and entreaties to lay aside our enmity, and to accept his offered mercies. Be thankful for this marvelous kindness given unto you: for, once you are taken into the eternal world, there will be no longer any forbearance on the part of God; but his wrath will burst forth against you, and burn even to the lowest Hell to all eternity! [Psalm 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 11.6). [Romans 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.8-9).

*It would be terrible to have all the creation for your enemies: but to have the Creator himself your enemy, and that for ever and ever, O! how inconceivably terrible will this be!*Well! bless your God that this need not be your fate, nor shall be, if only you will throw down the weapons of your rebellion, and implore mercy at God's hands for Christ's sake.

***~~3. What a blessing the Gospel proves to all who receive it!~~***

The effect of the Gospel is, to "slay this enmity," and to bring the soul into a state of peace with God. Nor does it merely put away our guilt; but removes also our indisposition to what is good and holy, and even writes the law of God upon our hearts; so that there is in those who receive it as great a resemblance to God, as there was before a contrariety. The *mind*of a true convert is brought into a conformity to God's mind, and his *ways*into a conformity to God's ways. Thus, "being agreed, they walk together" in mutual love; and earth is made, to man, a foretaste of Heaven itself.

See, then, my brethren, that you experience this effect. See that you love all that God loves, and do all that God approves. Then will you show that there is an efficacy in the Gospel to transform the soul into the Divine image, and to render it fit for the inheritance of the saints in light.

***~~#1824~~***

***~~THOSE WHO JUDGE OTHERS, JUDGED~~***

***~~[Romans 2:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.3-5).~~***

"So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed."

*HUMAN nature is the same in every age, and every place*: external circumstances may make an external difference; but internally, every child of man is alike alienated from God, and alike needs the salvation revealed in the Gospel. This is the scope of the three first chapters of this epistle. In the foregoing chapter, it is proved in reference to the Gentiles; and in this chapter, in reference to the Jews. But to which of these the words which we have just read are addressed, admits of doubt. We think however, that the transition to the Jews is at the commencement of this chapter, notwithstanding they are not expressly mentioned until the 17th verse: and the not mentioning of their name proceeded, we apprehend from a delicacy of feeling, and a fear lest he might, by a too direct attack, arm, as it were, their minds against him. This certainly accords with the very tender regard which he manifests towards them throughout this whole epistle: and it was the less necessary to mention them, because their contempt of the Gentiles was so fully known, and so universally acknowledged. But the characters that are addressed are the same, whether among Jews or Gentiles: and, as the whole force of the address will be invalidated if we do not clearly discern to whom it is delivered, we will,

***~~I. Show to whom the expostulation is addressed—~~***

There were among the Gentiles some who in their public discourses inculcated a purer morality than that which was generally practiced, but in their own life and conduct were guilty of the very crimes which they condemned: and so it is at this day among those who call themselves Christians. The disposition which is here reproved shows itself,

***~~1. In the world, towards each other—~~***

From whatever it may proceed, whether from envy or pride or uncharitableness, *there is a disposition in all to view others in an unfavorable light, at the same time that they themselves are faulty, either in the same precise way, or in other ways to the same extent*. Indeed such is the extreme blindness of human nature, that the more any are under the dominion of pride, or vanity, or covetousness, or ambition—the more they hate those in whom the same evils are predominant: the proud man cannot endure the proud; and so of the rest.

But if this disposition manifests itself among equals, much more does it among those who are placed at some distance from each other, whether the difference be in age, or rank, or relation, or general habits and dispositions.

The *old*condemn the follies of the young; and the *young*condemn the severity of the old.

The *rich*inveigh against the idleness or dishonesty of the poor; and the *poor* inveigh against the selfishness and oppressiveness of the rich.

*Parents*complain of their children; and *children*complain of their parents.

*Masters*complain of their servants; and *servants*complain of their masters.

In like manner, the bigot and the free-thinker, the prodigal and the penurious, the hermit and the mirthful, all love to indulge in mutual incriminations; all overlooking their own peculiar failings, and condemning without reserve the characteristic failings of others!

***~~2. In the world, towards those who profess religion—~~***

To be a consistent Christian is, with the generality, the greatest of all crimes: there is no other crime so little tolerated, so universally condemned. Opprobrious names are universally affixed to the godly: and the current title, whatever it may be, is sufficient to make a man despised, and shunned, and dreaded, as a public nuisance all the world over.

Supposing for a moment that religious persons were unwise in laying so great a stress on religion, is there no evil in neglecting God and our immortal souls? Yet the world overlook all their own impiety, as if there were no harm in it, and set no bounds to their invectives against those who serve and honor God. It may be thought that the wild enthusiast alone is the object of their aversion: but were the Apostles wild enthusiasts? Was our blessed Lord lacking in wisdom and prudence? Yet were they all regarded "as the filth of the earth, and the offscouring of all things:" and the very men who scrupled not to suborn false witnesses, and to imbrue their hands in the blood of an innocent man—could find no evil in themselves, but only in those who were the objects of their implacable aversion.

If an occasion arises where a professor of religion acts unworthy of his profession, what a cause of triumph is it to an ungodly world! With what exultation are his faults imputed to the whole body of religious people, and all of them condemned as hypocrites alike! The sins of the ungodly and profane are all reputed as nothing in comparison with his crime; and the whole Church of God is vilified, and God himself also is blasphemed, as approving and justifying the iniquity that has been committed.

***~~3. In religious persons, towards the world—~~***

It would be well if this partiality in judging were confined to the ungodly: but there is a great tendency to it in those who profess religion. Doubtless in proportion as real humility is formed in the heart, this evil disposition will be mortified: but in proportion as pride and conceit are unsubdued, the attendant evil of uncharitableness will betray itself.

We have a most remarkable example of this in David, when he had relapsed into a state of grievous departure from God. When Nathan told him of a man who had taken a poor man's lamb, behold, nothing would suffice to expiate the crime but the forfeiture of life itself: so atrocious did this light offense appear, when, all his own unparalleled enormities were forgotten!

We grant that this was a very extreme case; and that nothing like it is commonly to be imputed to those who profess religion: but *is there not among many professors an utter contempt of the ungodly?*Do they not frequently speak of their irreligious neighbors with contemptuous asperity, as wretched, blind, carnal creatures? The religious Jews designated the Gentiles as dogs, and as cursed; while they imagined themselves the chosen people of God: and is not a great deal of the same spirit to be seen among what is called the religious world? The ignorance and ungodliness of the men of this world are at once conceded as just grounds of their eternal condemnation; while the pride and uncharitableness, and ten thousand other evils that are found but too frequently among these contemptuous professors, are passed over as trivial, or perhaps as having no existence in their hearts.

How different was the lesson taught us by our Lord, who, when the *rich youth*came to inquire of him the way to Heaven, "loved him," notwithstanding he knew that the love of earthly things would ultimately overcome all those better desires which occupied his mind! Our divine Master loved him for the good that was in him, though he foresaw it would prove ineffectual for the final welfare of his soul: whereas the great mass of religious professors would have lost sight of all the good that was in him, and have treated him with unqualified contempt.

But among those who with great confidence "cry, Lord, Lord," there are many who will be found in as bad a condition as he: and the disciple who betrayed our Lord with a kiss, will be found in no happier plight, than those who apprehended him with swords and staves.

***~~4. In religious people, towards each other—~~***

Strange as it may seem, *the different sects of religious people are as ready to anathematize each other*, as to condemn those who cast off all religion. It is even an avowed tenet in the Church of Rome, that those who are not of her communion cannot be saved. And there is not a little of that same bigotry existing among the different professors of the Protestant faith. To be of their party is almost of itself a qualification for Heaven; and a dissent from it is a preparative for Hell.

Blessed be God! this intolerant spirit has of late years greatly abated Since the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society; but still it prevails to a solemn extent, and gives but too just occasion for sceptics and infidels to triumph.

But even among persons of the same religious community this propensity to judge and condemn one another greatly prevails. The *weak*will judge the strong, and the *strong*will despise the weak. Persons, whose situations totally disqualify them for estimating aright the conduct of others who are differently circumstanced, will yet take upon them to determine with confidence the line of conduct that would be pursued, and to pass a sentence of condemnation on those who walk not in the way that seems good to them.

In truth, there are but few who do not need that reproof: "Who are you that judge another? To his own Master he stands or falls!"

Thus we see to whom the expostulation in our text is addressed; namely, to all who "judge others, while they themselves do the same things," or things equally reprehensible. We proceed now to,

***~~II. Consider the address itself—~~***

This is extremely pointed. The interrogations show how fearfully these persons delude themselves. The address is, in fact, an appeal to the consciences of the persons addressed; and it constitutes them judges in their own cause. It shows to all such *uncharitable persons*, what an awful state they themselves are in:

***~~1. How vain their hopes!~~***

All the fore-mentioned characters imagine that they themselves have nothing to fear: but they are all in a state displeasing to God, "whose judgment is according to truth against those who do such things, verse 2." *Can any man suppose that a mere profession of religion will pass with God for the actual experience of it in the heart?*Can any man suppose that a forwardness to condemn others, will be a substitute for the performance of our own duties?

Will God form his judgment upon the partial grounds which we take for the forming of ours? Will he admit as just, the estimate which we have made of our own character, or be content to try us by the standard which we have used in trying ourselves? No! his law is perfect; and by that he will try all to whom that law has been revealed. He will weigh us all in the balance of the sanctuary; he will "try the hearts," and "weigh the spirits," of men: he will "not judge according to the appearance, but will judge righteous judgment."

We appeal then to all, shall these uncharitable hypocrites escape? O you who have thus deceived yourself hitherto, what do you now think? Do you think, that, because you *know*more than others, or make a greater profession of religion than others—you shall escape? Know that such a hope is vain! "We are sure, verse 2," that, if you humble not yourself as an undone sinner, and flee not for refuge to the Lord Jesus Christ, the vengeance of God shall overtake you; and you shall experience the fate which you are so ready to award to others!

***~~2. How aggravated is their guilt!~~***

God has graciously exercised much "forbearance and long-suffering" towards you; and you take occasion from thence to conclude well of your state, and to sit in judgment upon others who appear less favored than yourself. But is this the end for which God has borne with you, and displayed towards you all the riches of his goodness? Was not that the proper tendency of all "his goodness?" Should it not have humbled you as unworthy of such mercy? Should it not have filled your heart with gratitude for such distinguishing favor? Should it not have quickened you to return to God, and to live unto Him to the best of your power? Consider, "O man," whether such is not the improvement which you should have made of all these mercies? And ask yourself, whether the neglecting to improve them thus be not in fact to "despise them?"

Yes, in overlooking your own sins, and in passing judgment upon others, you are "hardening yourself in impenitence," and pouring contempt on God himself. Alas! you have little thought what guilt you have been contracting! You *worldly*man that judge the religious, and you *religious*man that judge the world—when will you turn your thoughts inward, and pass judgment on yourself? Know that, until you are brought to a more equitable spirit, as it respects yourself, and a more charitable spirit as it respects your neighbor, you are a despiser of God, an usurper of his prerogative, and "a judge of the law itself," even of that law whereby you yourself are to be judged, [James 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.11). But this most awfully augments your guilt, and prepares you daily for a more aggravated condemnation.

***~~3. How fearful their prospects!~~***

There is "a day wherein God will judge the world in *righteousness*." Man has his day, [1 Corinthians 4:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.3), and God has his [1 Corinthians 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.5). The present is a day of grace: but that which is coming is "a day of wrath." What a fearful appellation is this! a day wrath! or, as it is elsewhere called, "the day of the perdition of ungodly men! [2 Peter 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.7)." O hear it, and tremble, all you who are judging others, and neglecting to judge yourselves. Against this day you are heaping up wrath: you are adding to the mass day by day—load upon load, mountain upon mountain, you are piling up; and under this accumulated weight must your souls lie to all eternity! Ah! little do you think what your eternal end is: little do you think what shall be the outcome of all your impenitence and obduracy. But thus it will be. That day is appointed expressly with a view to "the revealing," and displaying before the assembled universe, "the righteous judgment of God."

Every sin that is committed will then be brought to light; "and every one will be judged according to what he has done in the body, whether it be good or evil." Then, whether you will or not, your attention shall be fixed upon your own sins—you will have nothing to do then with the sins of others. O! begin now, while time is afforded you, to search out your own iniquities, and to seek the remission of them through the blood of Christ.

***~~We will conclude this solemn subject with a few words of advice—~~***

***~~1. Do not occupy yourselves too much about others, but rather take heed unto yourselves—~~***

There are situations, no doubt, wherein we are called to judge: nor are we ever so to lay aside the office of judging, as to think well of those who are guilty of all manner of sin; or to commit ourselves to those, whom we have good reason to think are treacherous and deceitful. Nor need we so forbear judging, as to be satisfied with the state of those who live in a total neglect of God and of their own souls. On the contrary, *we ought to weep over them, and pray for them, and to labor by all possible means for their salvation.*

But our chief concern must be with ourselves. Here our scrutiny cannot be too exact, or our concern too great. Here we would be afraid of entertaining a good opinion on insufficient grounds. We should judge ourselves, that we may not be judged of the Lord. Search then, and try your every way: and, not venturing to trust your own efforts, pray earnestly to God, and say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in, the way everlasting! [Psalm 139:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 139.23-24)."

***~~2. Above all things, seek to know your dire need of the Savior—~~***

This is the grand scope of the Apostle's argument: he is endeavoring to convince all, both Jews and Gentiles, that they stand in need of the salvation which Christ has purchased for us by his own blood.

There is in the generality, a fear of seeing themselves in too humiliating a point of view: but this can never be: the more we are abased in our own eyes, the more we shall be exalted in the sight of God. It is "the *sick*that need the physician:" and the more sensible we are of our malady, the more we shall value the Lord Jesus Christ. Were there indeed any doubt of his sufficiency to save us, we might well be afraid of viewing our sins in all their extent: but "his blood will cleanse from all sin;" and "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." In him all fullness dwells: and you need not be afraid of seeing yourselves "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," when you hear him counseling you to come to him for "gold that shall enrich you, and clothing that shall cover you, and eye-salve that shall restore your sight, [Revelation 3:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.17-18)." Be nothing, yes, "less than nothing," in yourselves; and He will be to you all that your heart can desire, "your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption!"

***~~#1825~~***

***~~THE RULE OF GOD'S FUTURE JUDGMENT~~***

***~~[Romans 2:6-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.6-11).~~***

"God will give to each person *according to what he has done*. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism."

IN reading the apostolic writings we should attend, not only to the doctrines that are inculcated, but to the manner in which they are inculcated; for writing, as the Apostles did, entirely under the influence of divine love, they have given us many valuable lessons, which escape the notice of the superficial observer, but amply repay the search of those who investigate them with deeper attention, and desire to imbibe their spirit.

It is of no small importance to learn how to combat prejudice with success. This is rarely done by an open and direct attack: it is far better to attempt it by a more circuitous mode, namely, by establishing such truths as shall serve to give juster views to the mind. In this way the fabric of error, which would have withstood any rude assault, is undermined, and falls, before the person who defended it is aware of any opposition.

The Jews were strongly possessed with the notion that no *Jew*could perish, except through apostasy or idolatry; and that no *Gentile*could be saved, but by subjecting himself to the institutions and observances of the Mosaic ritual. To counteract this error, the Apostle shows that the Jews, no less than the Gentiles, stood in need of a Savior, and must embrace the Gospel in order to their final salvation. But to this conclusion he comes by gradual, and almost imperceptible, advances; showing, that God, as a righteous Judge, will deal with *all*according to their works, without showing partiality to any on account of their external privileges, or leaving any to suffer on account of their external disadvantages; but awarding equally to all such a sentence as their respective characters shall require.

This is a truth so obvious and incontrovertible, that they could not but acquiesce in it; and, by a due consideration of it, they would be prepared to embrace all that the Apostle was about to advance on the subject which he was especially commissioned to proclaim—the admission of all, both Jews and Gentiles, on an equal footing, into the Church of Christ.

But, in stating the rule which God would observe in the future judgment, the Apostle designed further to convey the most important information to the whole world: for, as all must one day stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, it is of infinite *importance for all to know on what grounds their eternal state will be determined*.

To leave no doubt on this subject, he fully states,

***~~I. The character and end of the GODLY—~~***

Mark,

***~~1. The CHARACTER of the godly—~~***

The godly man is known by the object he pursues. Nothing less than "glory, and honor, and immortality" will satisfy him: not the glory and honor which pertain to this life; not the immortality which consists in posthumous fame; those he leaves for others. His ambition soars to higher things; the things worthy of an immortal soul; even to the everlasting possession of all the glory and felicity of Heaven. This is the prize which he sees held out to him in the Scriptures: and for the attainment of it he strains every nerve. He well knows how richly it will recompense all his labors and toils; and everything in comparison with it is regarded by him as the small dust upon the balance.

He is further known by the *means*he uses to attain it: he seeks it "by a patient continuance in well-doing."*Whatever he believes to be the will of God, he does.*

Has God commanded him to humble himself as a sinner, and to flee to Christ as to the refuge that is set before him? He does it; he does it heartily; he does it humbly; he does it continually.

Has God further ordered him "no longer to live unto himself, but unto him who died for him and rose again?" he endeavors to consecrate all his faculties and all his powers to the service of his adorable Redeemer. He is not satisfied with doing such good works as the men of this world are accustomed to perform; his efforts extend to all the most difficult and self-denying duties, as well those which are loaded with opprobrium, as those which elevate us in the good opinion of mankind. And this he does with "a patient continuance," prosecuting, like the sun in the firmament, his destined course, and causing all who behold his light, to glorify God in his behalf.

There are times indeed when the difficulties and discouragements which he meets with oppress his mind: his hands sometimes hang down, and his feeble knees seem as if they would no longer sustain the weight they have to bear. But he looks up to God for help: he obtains fresh supplies of grace and strength from above; and, with vigor renewed like the eagle's, he resumes his course, determined never to stop, until he has obtained the prize.

In accomplishing the work assigned him, he finds also opposition from without. As much as the ungodly world profess to honor good works, they do not like such works as Christ performed, or such as all his faithful followers perform: they do all they can to obstruct the Christian's path; and if he will proceed in it, they will revile and persecute him, even as they did the Lord of Glory himself. But he "endures hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and "counts not his life dear to him, if only he may be enabled to finish his course with joy," and to complete the work which God has given him to do.

***~~2. The END of the godly—~~***

God never suffers his faithful servants to be disappointed of their hope. Do they seek "eternal life" as their one object? "Eternal life" shall be theirs: "the glory and honor" which they sought shall be awarded to them, and shall be enjoyed by them in a degree, of which, while here, they had no conception. "Peace" also, even a perfect freedom from all those conflicts which so often troubled them in this world, will be theirs in full and everlasting possession. While they were here, their "peace passed all understanding, and kept their hearts and minds as in a citadel," out of the reach of all their enemies: but in the future world, their reconciliation with God will be so perfect, and their rest in God so complete, that their peace will flow down like a river, with ever-increasing amplitude and abundance to all eternity.

In perfect contrast with the foregoing are,

***~~II. The character and end of the ungodly—~~***

***~~Their CHARACTER is the very reverse of the godly—~~***

It might be thought that an obedience to the Gospel was not intended to be included in the "well-doing" of the godly: but here the lack of it is particularly marked as a leading feature of the ungodly. In fact, "the souls of men can only be purified by obeying the truth through the Spirit, [1 Peter 1:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.22);" and all who are born again of the Spirit, that is, all the children of God, are so purified.

But the ungodly are averse to the truth; they are "contentious, and will not obey it:" and this arises, not from any lack of evidence in the truth itself, but from the predominance of some unrighteous principle, towards which they feel a decided preference, and to which they yield a willing subjection.

Some, through the pride of their hearts, reject the principles of the Gospel: while others, through the love of this present evil world, or through the prevalence of unmortified lusts, refuse submission to its precepts: the *principles*are too humiliating; the *precepts*too difficult and self-denying.

It is not necessary that a person, in order to be numbered with the ungodly, would commit such crimes as are reprobated by the world around him: *he may be blameless as to his external conduct in the sight of men, and yet be very ungodly in the sight of God*. His aversion to "the truth as it is in Jesus" constitutes him a most flagrant sinner before God, and subjects him to God's heaviest displeasure, [2 Thessalonians 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.8) and [1 Peter 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.17).

***~~Their END will be more awful than either language can express, or heart conceive—~~***

They dream of being in the favor of God, but they are objects of his "indignation and wrath." They persuade themselves that they shall be happy in the eternal world: but "tribulation and anguish" will be their certain and unalterable portion! Compare [Psalm 78:49](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 78.49) with [Psalm 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 11.6). *O! who can conceive what it is to be "cast into a lake of fire and brimstone," and to "dwell with everlasting burnings!"*Alas! what "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth" will there be in those regions to which the ungodly will be for ever consigned! Yes, "to every soul that does evil," shall this sentence be awarded. No respect will be shown to persons" on account of their name, or profession, or rank, or distinctions of any kind.

The *Jew*will have a priority to the Gentiles, both in respect of happiness and misery; of *happiness*, inasmuch as his peculiar privileges afford him greater advantages for the attainment of holiness; though the Gentile shall not be overlooked on account of his lack of those advantages.

In like manner the Jew will have a fearful precedence also in respect to *punishment*, on account of the advantages he has abused: but the Gentiles will according to their measure be punished also, if they have not walked agreeably to the light which they have enjoyed, [Luke 12:47-48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.47-48). The possession of privileges will prove a blessing, or a curse, according to the use that has been made of them; but the lack of privileges shall neither excuse deliberate wickedness, on the one hand, nor prevent the acceptance of willing, though imperfect, services, on the other hand. If God, on the one hand, will "take vengeance on those who know him not," he has, on the other hand, declared, that "in every nation, he who fears God, and works righteousness, shall be accepted of him."

***~~From this subject then we may learn,~~***

***~~1. What the Gospel is—~~***

Many imagine that such declarations as those in our text are *legal*. But the apostle Paul, who surely understood the Gospel, considered these declarations as an essential part of it: and it is worthy of notice, that, in the very epistle where he has most strongly advanced the doctrines of predestination and election, he has brought forward these truths, which are so often set in opposition to them.

But the Gospel is not such a partial system as is generally imagined: it neither consists exclusively in those *doctrines*which are commonly spoken of under the term Calvinism, nor in those which are supposed to have an Arminian aspect. The Gospel exhibits the Deity to us under different views:

first, as a merciful Father, who offers salvation to us through the blood and righteousness of his only-begotten Son; next, as an almighty Sovereign, who dispenses his blessings according to his own will and pleasure; and lastly, as a righteous Judge, who will proceed with perfect equity in assigning to every man his proper portion of happiness or misery, according to what he has done in the body, whether it be good or evil. Under all these characters God must be viewed: if any one be excluded, his Gospel is mutilated, and his glory obscured. Let us then be equally ready to view him under any of these characters. Let us look to him for a full salvation through the death of his Son: if made partakers of that salvation, let us give all the glory to his free grace, and his electing love: and then let us walk before him in a conscientious performance of every duty, under a firm expectation, that our final sentence shall be according to the dictates of perfect equity. This is to be in the spirit of the Gospel; and if any restrict it to more partial views, they only betray their ignorance or pride, and will find themselves awfully mistaken in the last day.

***~~2. How to estimate our own character—~~***

The persons who have such an exclusive fondness of the deeper doctrines of predestination and election, are ready to pour contempt on evidences, as though an inquiry into the evidences of our conversion were mere legality. A favorite notion with them is, that faith is the only evidence of faith. But this is a grievous error. That faith does carry its own evidence along with it, just as love, or any other grace does, we readily allow. A person who relies simply and entirely on God, has a consciousness that he does so, and may, if this consciousness be confirmed by other evidence, be assured that his faith is genuine. But men may have a full persuasion in their own minds that they are right, and yet may be under a fatal delusion. This was the case with Paul, while he persecuted the Church of Christ: he "truly thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." The Scriptures furnish us with unnumbered marks whereby to judge of our state. The Epistles of John are full of them See 1 [John 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.10); [1 John 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.14); [1 John 3:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.19-21); [1 John 3:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.24); and our blessed Lord cautions us strongly against that presumptuous confidence that would exclude an appeal to them [Matthew 7:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.21-23); he bids us judge of ourselves by the fruits that we produce [Matthew 7:16-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.16-20); and assures us, that in this way only can we guard against final disappointment and everlasting ruin [Matthew 7:24-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.24-27). To all then would we say, examine whether you are proceeding in "a patient continuance in well-doing:" for the Judge himself will assuredly at the last day institute a strict inquiry into your works, and determine your state according to them [Matthew 25:31-46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.31-46); and "whatever you have sown, that, and that only, shall you reap to all eternity [Galatians 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.7-8)."

***~~3. How to secure the prize that is set before you—~~***

Not only is this plainly told us in our text; but Paul elsewhere says expressly, "Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not [Galatians 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.9)." John also inculcates the same beneficial lesson, as our Lord also does in the parable of the Sower [Luke 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 8.15). "Bring forth fruit with patience.", both, in effect, saying, look to yourselves, that you "lose not those things which you have wrought, but that you receive a full reward 2 John, verse 8." That we must live altogether by faith in the Son of God, is certain; for it is from his fullness alone that we can receive any spiritual blessing: but still we must exert ourselves as much, as if salvation were the fruit and recompense of our own efforts alone. This matter is put in a just light by Paul, when he says, "Let us cast away every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith [Hebrews 12:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.1-2)." In humble dependence on him to assist our efforts, and in an entire reliance on his meritorious sacrifice as the only ground of our acceptance, we must press forward in our heavenly course: then may we with confidence expect "a recompense of reward," not indeed for any merit in our services, but in exact proportion to them. The men of this world may seek for glory and honor, and be disappointed: but no disappointment shall occur to us: "The wicked works a deceitful work; but to him who sows righteousness shall be a sure reward [Proverbs 11:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 11.18)."

***~~#1826~~***

***~~INCONSISTENT PROFESSORS REMONSTRATED WITH~~***

***~~[Romans 2:17-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.17-24).~~***

"Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth--you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

*IT is generally acknowledged that the heart of man is deceitful: but the extent of its deceitfulness is very little known*. It is not in things of minor importance only that its delusive operations are felt, but in things of everlasting concern, where, it might be supposed, we would be most on our guard against them. It deceives us in things relating to God: it leads us to substitute a profession of religion for the actual experience of it in our souls; and to rest in a form of godliness, while we are wholly inattentive to its power.

This species of self-deceit prevailed to an awful degree among the Jews, with whom Paul expostulates on account of it in a way of keen remonstrance. They could not be persuaded that they were in any danger, because they were descended from Abraham; but Paul shows them that their descent from him would avail them nothing, while their conduct was so contrary to their professions; but that rather their hypocrisy proved them to be as much in need of a Savior, as the most ignorant of the Gentile world could be.

Such being the general scope of the passage, we will consider more particularly,

***~~I. The remonstrance itself—~~***

***~~Certainly the state of the Jews called for severe reproof—~~***

They were highly privileged beyond the rest of mankind. They had a revelation from Heaven, whereby they were instructed in the mind and will of God, [Deuteronomy 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 4.8), and enabled both to "discern things that differed," and to "approve the things that were more excellent." Moreover, as God's peculiar people, they could call Jehovah their God.

But these privileges they grievously abused. We condemn not their "resting in the law," or their "making their boast of God," provided they had really endeavored to serve God acceptably, and to yield a willing obedience to his law: but it was the external privilege that they gloried in, and not the spiritual advantages derived from it: they were proud of the distinction, but not desirous of the spiritual benefits connected with it. Because of the superior light they enjoyed, they despised all the rest of the world, as blind, ignorant, and benighted: and they assumed to themselves vain-glorious titles, as "guides of the blind, lights of those who were in darkness, instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes:" they had a summary of their duties in a short compendious form, "a form of knowledge and of the truth in the law," by means of which they were enabled to appear very wise to the unenlightened heathen. But, while they thought themselves so highly qualified to "teach others, they taught not themselves:" on the contrary, *they were notoriously guilty of those very crimes which they reprobated among the Gentile world*. They proclaimed with great authority the commandments, "You shall not steal, you shall not commit adultery," but they were as much addicted to these crimes as the heathen themselves; and though since their return from Babylon they professed an abhorrence of idolatry, and in that respect excelled the heathen, they sacrilegiously robbed God not only of his tithes and offerings, but of all that honor and obedience which they acknowledged to be his due.

In a word, by their gross hypocrisy, and their diversified abominations, they caused Jehovah himself to be blasphemed and abhorred among the heathen who were round about them, [Isaiah 52:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.5). [Ezekiel 36:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.21-23).

***~~Of what avail could external privileges be to such hypocrites as these?~~***

***~~Would to God there were not equal cause for reproof to those also who name the name of Christ—~~***

Great as were the advantages of the Jews, they were not to be compared with those which are enjoyed by the Christian world. We have not the law only, but the Gospel also, in which are manifested to us all the wonders of redeeming love. And we, in consequence of this distinction, look down with pity on the benighted heathen, who are bowing down to stocks and stones, and seeking to propitiate their deities by services most painful, most wicked, most debasing.

On the Christian name also we value ourselves, as if that name could save us: and because we have been admitted by infant baptism into the external bond of the Christian covenant, we conclude ourselves of course partakers also of its inward blessings. *Ah! fatal delusion! We stand amazed at this error, when exhibited to us by the Jews; but behold it not, when exemplified in ourselves.*

But our lives testify against us, as no less hypocritical than the Jews themselves. Were we really a holy people to the Lord, we might well "make our boast of the Savior," and "rest in his Gospel" as an undoubted source of everlasting blessedness. But while we boast of our superiority to the heathen in point of light and knowledge, we are on a perfect level with them in our allowed violations of every moral duty.

We say to the heathen, "You shall not steal, you shall not commit adultery:" but where were ever fornication and adultery practiced with more unblushing effrontery, than among those who name the name of Christ? Where was dishonesty more universal in every branch of trade, than among those who call themselves Christians? Who have ever carried dishonesty to such a pitch as the professed followers of Christ? Who have stirred up wars from year to year, on purpose to facilitate their projects of enslaving their fellow-creatures? Ah! tell it not in Gath. The very name of Christ is a stench in the nostrils of millions, who have been the victims of our rapacity.

"Me no Christian," is, in the mind of an African, a severer reproach to us than any other that language can express. And, at this day, there is an anniversary held in the island of Japan for the purpose of trampling on the cross, which the *Jesuits*of former days have made an object of universal abhorrence.

Happy would we be, if this reproof were to be confined to merely nominal Christians!

Among religious professors, who have the Gospel fully and faithfully administered to them, there are *many whose superior light and information serves only to puff them up with false confidence and vain conceit*. They look down with affected pity on those whose views of divine truth are not so clear as their own; while yet, in respect of truth, and honor, and integrity, they are far inferior to the persons whom they despise. It is common for such persons to set up for teachers, while they themselves need to be taught some of the first and fundamental rules of Christian duty.

That professors of religion are too indiscriminately, and too severely, judged, is certain: but it is no less certain, that there is too much reason for complaint given by many, who, under a cloak of religion, veil, or attempt to veil, the grossest hypocrisy. Deceit, and lying, and covetousness, and fraud, and petulance, and idleness, and many other evils, are not unfrequently found predominant features in persons professing godliness; insomuch that the very profession of piety is brought by them into general disrepute. The dishonor they reflect on God, and the injury they do to "the Gospel of Christ, which is evil spoken of through them," is more than words can express: but against such persons no remonstrance can be too pointed, no censure can be too severe.

To view the remonstrance in its true light, we must further consider,

***~~II. The argument confirmed by it—~~***

The general argument is, to convince the Jews of sin: but more particularly it was the Apostle's design to show,

***~~1. The emptiness of a merely nominal religion—~~***

The Jews valued themselves on their descent from Abraham, and on their external relation to God as his peculiar people. We in like manner value ourselves on being Christians and Protestants: and we, purely on this ground, entertain as little doubt of our salvation, as the Jews did of theirs. But Paul tells the Jews, that the uncircumcised Gentiles, who walked according to the light they enjoyed, would fare better in the eternal world than the disobedient Jews, notwithstanding all their boasted privileges, verse 27.

And, no doubt, many heathen are in an incomparably better state than the great mass of the Christians, who in their life and conduct disgrace the truth which they profess. We must go further still, and say, that many who have walked humbly and conscientiously before God, will, notwithstanding the comparative darkness of their views, rise up in judgment against those who, with their clearer views, and more confident professions of faith in Christ, have walked unworthy of their heavenly calling. Yes; many that, according to human estimation, are "last, shall be first; and many that in their own conceit are first, shall be last."

***~~2. The criminality of an inconsistent profession—~~***

A profession of love to God only involves us in deeper guilt, if it is not accompanied with a suitable conduct.*As much as God hates wickedness in general, there is nothing so odious in his sight as hypocrisy.*Against none did our blessed Lord denounce such woes as against hypocrites: "Woe unto you hypocrites!" and to "take our portion with the hypocrites" is to have the severest lot of all in the eternal world!

Think then, you who call yourselves Christians, what a portion awaits you, if, while you name the name of Christ, you depart not from iniquity. Say not, that you do not make any profession of religion; for your very calling of yourselves Christians, is a public avowal, that Christ is your Redeemer, and your Lord. What if you were warned that you would be refused the rites of Christian burial? Would you deem that no insult? Yet it is only on the presumption that you are Christians indeed, that your bodies are committed to the grave in faith and hope. You do then, and you cannot but, make a profession of faith in Christ, and of obedience to his revealed will: and, if you will not walk as befits the Gospel of Christ, "your circumcision shall become uncircumcision," your baptism no baptism, and your end terrible, in proportion to the advantages you have abused!

But to a still greater extent is this true respecting those, who, while they make their boast of the Gospel, dishonor God by their unholy lives, or unsanctified dispositions. To what purpose are their public professions, or religious exercises? To what purpose are all their boasted experiences of alternate elevation and depression, of fear or confidence, of sorrow or of joy? *They may profess as they will that they know God; but, if in their conduct they deny him, "they deceive their own souls, and their religion is vain."*

Extremely awful is that declaration of God to the Church of Smyrna, "I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan, [Revelation 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.9)." And it is to be feared, that such synagogues are yet to be found in our land, under the semblance of Christian Churches and religious societies. But whatever they may think of their professions, God accounts them "blasphemy," and those who make them will be dealt with by him as hypocrites and blasphemers. We would not speak of this, but with weeping, [Philippians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.18-19); nevertheless we must declare it, because it is the very truth of God! [Hosea 8:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 8.2-3).

***~~3. The universal need of a Savior—~~***

All, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin, and therefore need a saving interest in the Savior. Yes, *the best of men must perish, if they are not washed in the Redeemer's blood*. For who is there, that has not occasion to humble himself for his manifold infirmities? Who is there that has acted in all things up to his profession? Who could stand, if God would enter into judgment with him? Yes, "if God would lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet," who could answer him for any one act or thought of his whole life? Know then, that we are all in this respect on a level: we must all "put our hand on our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, crying, Unclean, unclean!" We must all desire with Paul to be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ."

***~~Exhortation—~~***

We call on all then, as they value their immortal souls,

***~~1. To embrace the Gospel—~~***

Do not attempt to substitute anything of your own in the place of it. Your privileges, your professions, your experiences, your attainments; you must consider them all but as "loss and rubbish in comparison with Christ." Let it not appear a hard thing to renounce them all in point of dependence; but "submit" willingly and thankfully "to the righteousness of God." It is strange that the acceptance of a free salvation would require any submission at all: but our proud hearts are averse to stoop to such a humiliating way of coming unto God. But be content to have nothing in yourselves, and all in Christ: then shall you be glorified in him, and he in you, to all eternity!

***~~2. To adorn the Gospel—~~***

This is no small measure of holiness that befits those who believe in Christ. They should endeavor "to shine as lights in a dark world, [Philippians 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15). [Matthew 7:13-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.13-16);" to "walk worthy of their high calling;" yes, "worthy also of him who has called them to his kingdom and glory." They should seek to be "holy as He is holy," and "perfect as He is perfect."

Doubtless those who preach to others would, like the shepherds of old, go before their flocks in everything that is excellent and praiseworthy: they would be "examples, not to the world only, but to believers also, in word, in conduct, in charity, in faith, in love, in purity, [1 Timothy 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 4.12)." They should be able to say to others, "Whatever you have seen and heard in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you."

Would to God that he who now is endeavoring to teach you, may himself learn, and exemplify, these lessons more than he has ever yet done! But the duty of holiness pertains equally to all. O be persuaded to press after the highest attainments in it, and so to make your light shine before men, that all who behold you may be constrained to glorify God in your behalf!

***~~#1827~~***

***~~THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCE OF TRUE RELIGION~~***

***~~[Romans 2:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.28-29).~~***

"A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God."

IF we were to estimate men's religion by the degree of confidence which they expressed, we would be ready to think that the glory of the latter day were already arrived, so universal are men's claims to Christian knowledge and experience. But *it is often found, that where there is the strongest confidence, there is the least ground for it.*None could ever be more firmly persuaded of their acceptance with God than the carnal Jews; yet were they fatally mistaken: for though they enjoyed many privileges, and abounded in outward observances, they were destitute of that vital principle, without which their religion was a vain ceremony, an empty form.

In the preceding context the Apostle is proving to the Jews that they stood in need of a Savior, no less than the idolatrous Gentiles: and, knowing what a stress they laid upon their outward privileges, he tells them, that it was not an outward and carnal, but an inward and spiritual service that God required, and that was necessary to justify their pretensions to the Divine favor.

His words naturally lead us to show,

***~~I. The vanity of a mere outward and nominal religion—~~***

***~~All are apt to rest in external forms—~~***

***~~Practicing mere religious forms and rituals, always gratifies our natural tendency to self-righteousness and self-applause. Hence arises that universal readiness to substitute something that is of an external nature, in the place of vital godliness.~~***

The Jews valued themselves on their descent from Abraham, and on their admission into covenant with God by the right of circumcision: they also boasted of the law in which they were instructed, and of the ordinances wherein they drew near to God. Such was their dependence on these things, that they would not allow themselves to doubt their title to Heaven for one moment.

Precisely such also are the grounds on which the generality of Christians hope to obtain eternal happiness: they have been born of Christian parents, devoted to God in baptism, instructed in the truths of the Gospel, and brought up in a constant attendance, if not on the Lord's supper, at least on the other ordinances of religion. If they can boast thus far, they will conclude that all is well with them, and that their salvation is quite secure.

***~~But the form of godliness without its power, is of no avail—~~***

Testimonies to this effect are exceeding numerous and strong. John the Baptist particularly cautioned the Jews against trusting in their descent from Abraham, [Matthew 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 3.9); our Lord also warned his hearers, that though they were Abraham's children after the flesh, they could not be considered as the seed to whom the promises were made, because they did not the works of Abraham, [John 8:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.39). Paul also, having enumerated the great and glorious privileges to which the Jews were entitled—yet declares that "all were not Israel who were of Israel," and that *the spiritual seed alone would be partakers of the promises*, [Romans 9:4-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.4-8).

However therefore our knowledge of divine truth be enlarged, or our outward religious services be multiplied, we can never be admitted into God's sanctuary, unless we have a better righteousness than the Scribes and Pharisees attained, [Matthew 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.20); we may indeed, "have a name to live; but we are really dead! [Revelation 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.1)."

In confirmation of this point we proceed to state,

***~~II. The nature and excellence of true religion—~~***

***~~True religion extends its influence to the inmost dispositions of the soul—~~***

Circumcision and baptism are mere signs and shadowy representations of something inward and spiritual; they are intended to lead our minds to "the circumcision of the heart," and "the washing of regeneration. Compare [Deuteronomy 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 10.16); [Deuteronomy 30:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 30.6) with [Colossians 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.11-12) and [Titus 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.5)." True religion rests not "in the letter of the law," but goes to "the spirit" of it; and *inclines the heart to a uniform, unreserved compliance with the will of God*. God himself has informed us fully upon this point, "Neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation! [Galatians 6:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.15). *The renovation of our inward man after the Divine image, is that which alone constituted a person a Jew in God's estimation*; nor is anything less than this necessary to constitute us Christians in the sight of God. Without this, the circumcision of the Jew was worthless ritual; and the baptism of the Christian is a worthless ritual as well, [Philippians 3:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.2-3). [1 Peter 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.21).

***~~Wherever this operates, God looks upon it with pleasure and delight—~~***

Man's approbation is confined to the outward forms of religion; the life and power of which are reprobated by him as hypocrisy and enthusiasm. But God, who sees the emptiness of mere outward services through the specious veil that is put upon them, beholds also the intrinsic worth of those dispositions which are cultivated by the true Christian. *The sighs and groans of a penitent are as a sweet-smelling savor unto God; while the self-exalting thoughts and expressions of a proud Pharisee are as an offensive "smoke in his nose," which excites nothing but disgust and abhorrence!*[Jeremiah 31:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.18); [Jeremiah 31:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.20). [Isaiah 65:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.5). See also [Luke 18:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.11-14). Nor is there a good desire rising in the bosom from a principle of pure religion, but it is instantly noted in the book of God's remembrance! [Malachi 3:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.16-17), and shall be recorded to the Christian's honor in the great day of our Lord's appearing [1 Peter 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.7). [1 Corinthians 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.5)

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are resting in outward forms—~~***

Persons who are diligent in *external*duties, never doubt but that they are true Christians: but if they be not equally attentive to their *inward motives and principles*, God himself tells us that they are no Christians. Let us then inquire, not whether we be descended from Christian ancestors, but whether we are born of God? Let us ask, not whether we have "cleansed the outside of the cup and platter;" but whether we are "purified from all spiritual as well as fleshly filthiness, [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.1)." And let us remember, that "the King's daughters are all glorious within;" and that their brightest ornament is "the hidden man of the heart, [Psalm 45:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 45.13). [1 Peter 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.4)." Nor is it he who commends himself that is approved of God, "but he whom the Lord commends, [2 Corinthians 10:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.18)."

***~~2. Those who disregard religion entirely—~~***

It has already been seen that *persons may be Christians in appearance, and very observant of all the ordinances of religion, while yet they are not Christians in the sight of God*. How far then must they be from deserving this appellation, who habitually violate the commandments of their Divine Master, and live in a constant neglect of the most acknowledged duties! Surely "their circumcision is become uncircumcision;" instead of being Jews "they are of the synagogue of Satan:" and the unbaptized heathen, who walk agreeably to the light of nature, shall condemn them, who, having been baptized into the faith of Christ, are yet despising his authority, and trampling on his laws, verse 25-27 with [Revelation 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.9). *Let then the very name of Christian be renounced at once, or let the spirit of Christianity be made apparent in our lives.*

***~~3. Those who are cultivating a spiritual and heavenly mind—~~***

Amidst the abounding of iniquity there yet are many who are devoted to God both in heart and life: and unspeakably blessed is their state. "Their praise indeed is not from men:" by men they are derided as enthusiasts and fanatics: but they have "praise of God." God beholds them with pleasure, and forbears to destroy the world for their sake, [Isaiah 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.9). [Matthew 24:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 24.22). He accounts them his servants, his children, his glory! [Isaiah 46:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 46.13); and in a little time he will welcome them to his bright abodes, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord!"

At the day of judgment too will the Lord Jesus Christ confess them before his Father and his holy angels; "These were Christians indeed; they followed me in the world, and shall therefore now be seated on thrones of glory: as I have already shown my mercy to them, so will I now evince my righteousness in them; they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy! [Revelation 3:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.4-5)." Go on then, beloved, from grace to grace: never think that you have yet attained, or that you are already perfect; but forget all that is behind, and press forward for that which is before, knowing assuredly, that "to him who works righteousness shall be a sure reward."

***~~#1828~~***

***~~PROFESSING CHRISTIANS' ADVANTAGES ABOVE THE HEATHEN~~***

***~~[Romans 3:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.1-2).~~***

"What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God."

IT is not easy to form a just estimate of the privileges attached to the profession of Christianity: we are ready either, on the one hand, to rate them too high, or, on the other, to undervalue and despise them. *The Jews laid so great a stress on their relation to Abraham, that they could scarcely conceive it possible for them to perish: they concluded, that because they bore in their flesh the external seal of God's covenant, they must of necessity be partakers of its spiritual blessings*. When Paul showed them their error, they indignantly replied, "What advantage then has the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?"

Just so, many among ourselves are apt to imagine, that their having been admitted by infant baptism into the Christian covenant will secure them an admission into Heaven: and, when they are warned against this sad delusion, they are ready to say, that the heathen are in a happier state than they. In opposition to this, we propose to show,

***~~I. What advantages we, as professing Christians, have above the heathen—~~***

The Apostle intimates, that the Jews, merely as Jews, possessed "every way much" advantage above the heathen: but, instead of descending to particulars, he contents himself with specifying one, which, as it was the greatest, so in fact it included all the rest, namely, that "to them were committed the words of God." What he has stated thus comprehensively, we shall enter into more minutely.

We say then, that as professing Christians, we have many things to which the heathen are utter strangers: we have,

***~~1. A guide for our faith—~~***

The oracles which the heathen consulted, were altogether unworthy of credit. Their answers were purposely given with such ambiguity, that they might appear to correspond with the event, whatever the event might be. A famous instance of this is mentioned by Herodotus: Croesus, king of Lydia, inquired of his gods, Whether he would make war against Cyrus? The Oracles answered, That he was then only to think himself in danger, when a mule would reign over the Medes; and that, on his passing over the river Halys, he would destroy a powerful kingdom. Relying on these answers as predicting success, he commenced the war, which speedily terminated in the ruin of himself and his whole kingdom: and when he complained that he had been deceived by the Oracles, he was told, That Cyrus was that mule (being a Persian by his father's side, and a Mede by his mother's); and that the kingdom which he was to destroy, was his own.

But our holy Scriptures have no such subterfuges: nor can we possibly err in giving to them the most implicit confidence. They declare to us the nature and perfections of God—the way which he has appointed for our reconciliation with him—the eternal state of those who shall embrace his offered mercy, and of those who shall reject it. Of these things the heathen were wholly ignorant; nor could their oracles afford them any instruction on which they could rely.

What an amazing advantage then has the basest professing Christian above the greatest of the heathen philosophers! The little volume which he has in his hand, sets before him innumerable truths, which reason never could explore; it reveals them to him so plainly, that he who runs may read and understand them: and, instead of deceiving him to his ruin, it will "make him wise unto everlasting salvation."

***~~2. A warrant for his hope—~~***

The heathen oracles which could declare nothing with certainty, could afford to their votaries no solid ground of hope. But the Christian who believes the Scriptures, has an "anchor for his soul so sure and steadfast," that not all the storms or tempests which either men or devils can raise, shall ever drive him from the station where he is moored. Suppose his discouragements to be as great as the most gloomy imagination can paint them; he has reasons in plenty to assign for his hope. The sovereignty of God—the sufficiency of Christ—the freeness and extent of the promises—the immutability of Jehovah, who has confirmed his promises with an oath—these, and many other things which are revealed in the sacred volume, may enable the person who relies upon them to go to the very throne of God himself, and to plead for acceptance with him: and, in proportion as he relies upon them, he has within his own bosom a pledge, that he shall never be ashamed.

What an advantage is this to the man that is hoping for eternal happiness! Surely "blessed are the eyes which see the things that we see, and hear the things which we hear."

***~~3. A rule for his conduct—~~***

The wise men of antiquity could not so much as devise what constituted the chief good of man; much less could they invent rules which would be universally applicable for the direction of their followers: and the rules which they did prescribe, were in many respects subversive both of individual and public happiness.

But the Scriptures are proper to direct us in every particular. We may indeed in some more intricate cases err in the application of them, (else we would be infallible; which is not the lot of man upon earth;) but in all important points the path we are to follow is made as clear to us as the racer's course: yes, the word is not only a general "light to our feet, but a lamp to our steps:" so that what was obscure at a distance, is manifested to us on our nearer approach, and a direction is given us, "This is the way; walk in it." The whole circle of moral and religious duty is thus accurately drawn.

The poor man who is conversant with his Bible, needs not to go to the philosopher, and consult with him; nor need he regard the maxims current in the world. With the Scriptures as his guide, and the Holy Spirit as his instructor, he needs no philosophy, but an upright heart; no director, but a mind bent upon doing the will of God. If he derives assistance from any, it is from those only who are more fraught with divine knowledge, and whose superior illumination has qualified them to instruct others. But they are no farther to be regarded, than as they speak according to the written word.

Compare now the professing Christian with the most learned pagan, and see how greatly he is benefitted in this respect also by the light of revelation. If indeed he rests in his admission into the Christian covenant by infant baptism, and looks no further than to a mere profession of Christianity, he may easily overrate his privileges: but if he consider them means to an end, and improve them in that view, he can never be sufficiently thankful, that he was early received into the bosom of the Church, and initiated by infant baptism into a profession of Christ's religion.

Having stated our advantages, we proceed to notice,

***~~II. The improvement we should make of them—~~***

If the possession of the sacred Scriptures constitutes our chief advantage, doubtless we should,

***~~1. Study them—~~***

"Search the Scriptures," says our Lord, "for in them you think you have eternal life." If we neglect the word of God, we lose the very advantage which God in his mercy has given to us, and reduce ourselves, as much as lies in us, to the state of the heathen. If then we shudder at the thought of reverting to heathenism, let us, not on some occasions only, like the heathen, but on all occasions, consult the Scriptures whereby we profess to be directed. "Let our meditation be in them day and night;" and let them be "our delight and our counselors. See [Deuteronomy 6:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 6.6-9) and [Psalm 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 1.2) and [Proverbs 2:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 2.1-6)."

***~~2. Conform ourselves to them—~~***

*The end of studying the holy Scriptures is not to obtain a speculative knowledge, but to have our whole souls cast, as it were, into the mold which is formed therein. By them we must regulate both our principles and our practice.*We must not presume to dispute against them, because they are not agreeable to our pre-conceived opinions; we must not complain that this is too humiliating, and that is too strict; but must receive with submission all which the Scriptures reveal, believing implicitly whatever they declare, and executing unreservedly whatever they enjoin.

If we do not thus obey the truth, we shall indeed be in a worse state than the heathen; our infant baptism will be no baptism; and the unbaptized pagans, who walk according to the light they have, will rise up in judgment against us for abusing the privileges which they perhaps would have improved with joy and gratitude, [Romans 2:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.25-27).

***~~3. Promote the knowledge of them in the world—~~***

If God had imparted to us a secret whereby we could heal all manner of diseases; and our own interest, as well as that of others, would be greatly promoted by disclosing it to the whole world; would we not gladly made it known? Shall we then withhold from the heathen world the advantages we enjoy; more especially when God has commanded us to communicate as freely as we have received? Would we not contribute, by financial aid, or by our prayers at least, to send the Gospel to the heathen, that they may be partakers with us in all the blessings of salvation?

But there are, alas! heathen, *baptized heathen*, at home also; and to those we should labor to make known the Gospel of Christ. We should bring them under the sound of the Gospel—we should disperse among them books suited to their states and capacities—we should provide instruction for the rising generation—we should especially teach our own children and servants—and labor, "by turning men from darkness unto light, to turn them also from the power of Satan unto God."

***~~#1829~~***

***~~THE FOLLY OF UNBELIEF~~***

***~~[Romans 3:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.3-4).~~***

"What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."

IN every age of the world man has been prone to disbelieve the testimony of God. Our *first parents*fell by questioning the prohibition which God had given them, and doubting the penalty with which it was enforced. Their posterity, born in their fallen image, have but too faithfully copied their example. By unbelief, the *antediluvian world*were overwhelmed. By unbelief, God's chosen people the Jews have been despoiled of all their privileges.

The same malignant principle pervades also the professing Christian church. We profess indeed, like the Jews of old, to venerate the Scriptures; but there is scarcely a truth contained in them, which is not practically, and almost, universally, denied. Yet is this no reason for questioning their divine authority: for God is as immutable in his word, as he is in his nature; and, as his existence would not be affected, though the whole world would be atheists, so neither will one jot or tittle of his word fail, though the world would be infidels. This is the very point on which Paul is insisting in the passage before us.

Having observed that the Jews were highly privileged in having the holy Scriptures committed to them, he anticipates the objection which might be urged against him from their unbelief; and allowing the truth of the fact: That they were very generally disbelieved, he denies and refutes the inference that might be drawn from it, by declaring, That *their unbelief, however general it might be, could never invalidate the truth of God*.

From his words we shall be led to consider,

***~~I. The prevalence of unbelief—~~***

It is not our intention to expose the errors of infidelity, or the sophistry with which the truth of God has been assailed; but rather to point out that *secret unbelief*which works in the minds of all, even with respect to the most acknowledged truths. That such unbelief prevails, cannot possibly be doubted, if we observe,

***~~1. How general is men's neglect of the word of God—~~***

The sacred volume lies by us: we have it in our own language, that all may read it; and it is statedly read and explained to us in public. But how few *study*it! How few *regard*it! How few are there who do not give a decided, yes, an exclusive preference to books of human science, and even to any worthless novel, or ephemeral compilation!

And what is the cause of this? Could they be thus indifferent, if they really believed it to be the word of God; the word of God to them? Would anyone manifest such indifference towards a will in which he was informed that great estates were bequeathed to him? or even towards a map, which would show him his way through a trackless desert? How much less then would any disregard the Holy Scriptures, if they really believed them to be the charter of their privileges, and the only sure directory to Heaven! They would rather account them more precious than gold, and esteem them more than their necessary food! [Psalm 119:72](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.72). [Job 23:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 23.12).

***~~2. What contempt men reveal for the truths they do hear—~~***

Men hear that there is such a place as Heaven, where the saints shall live in everlasting felicity; and such a place as Hell, where the wicked shall lie down in everlasting burnings: yet are they neither allured by the one, nor alarmed by the other. When the ministers of God insist on these subjects, they are considered only as preaching "cunningly devised fables."

But could this be the case, if men believed the testimony of God? Do men feel no emotion at the news of some unexpected benefit arising to them, or some unforeseen calamity impending over them? Do men treat with contempt a sentence of condemnation, or a notice of reprieve? How then could men so disregard the things revealed in the Gospel, if they believed them to be the very truths of God?

***~~3. How men expect things in direct opposition to the word of God—~~***

*Unconverted men will as confidently expect to go to Heaven, as if the word of God were altogether on their side!*The drunkard, the swearer, the whore-monger, are as persuaded that they shall never come into condemnation, as if there were not one word in all the book of God that declared the contrary. They will never believe that the wrath of God is revealed against such sins as theirs, notwithstanding God so positively declares, that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God! [1 Corinthians 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.9)."

They do not indeed imagine that *any*will be finally lost. They can hear of thousands slain in battle, and yet extend their thoughts no further than the grave. The idea that multitudes of them may possibly have died in their sins, and been consigned over to endless misery, seems so harsh that they cannot believe it one moment, notwithstanding God expressly says, that "the wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God! [Psalm 9:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 9.17)." Could all this be so, if they sincerely believed the word of God? Would not their sentiments then be more conformed to it? Would they not be assured, that, however "it would be well with the righteous," it must and would "go ill with the wicked, [Isaiah 3:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 3.10-11)."

***~~4. How little men are influenced by the things they profess most to believe—~~***

They profess to believe that there is a *God*—yet they do not love him, or fear him, or trust in him, or regard him, any more than if there were no such Being.

They profess to believe that they have an *immortal soul*—yet they pay no more attention to its interests, than if it were not to survive the body.

They profess to believe that there will be a *day of judgment*, wherein they shall give account of themselves to God—yet they are not at all solicitous to know how their account stands; they bestow no pains in preparing for that day; they presume that others are happy, and that they shall fare as well as those who have gone before them; and thus they hazard their eternal welfare on a mere groundless surmise.

They profess to believe that *death*will put an end to their day of grace, and that it may snatch them away suddenly, and unawares: yet they live as securely, as if they could call days and years their own. They say to themselves, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry!" [Luke 12:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.19). This is the constant language of their hearts.

Now, whence is all this? Will any one say, that these men are thoroughly persuaded even of the things which they profess most to believe? they certainly are not: they give a general assent to them, because they have been educated in these particular sentiments, and because their *reason*cannot but acquiesce in them as true: but as for the *faith*which realizes invisible things, which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen"—they have no portion of it; they are shut up altogether in unbelief.

The prevalence of unbelief being thus unquestionably proved, we proceed to point out,

***~~II. The folly of unbelief—~~***

A just view of this subject will soon convince us, that the very men who glory in their unbelief, and say, "Wisdom shall die with us! [Job 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 12.2)," are indeed influenced by the most foolish and fatal of all principles; for, with respect to unbelief,

***~~1. Unbelief cannot avert the evils which it affects to despise—~~***

*Unbelief can never make void the truth of God.* It did not in the days of old. When Satan said to our first parents, "You shall not surely die," and they credited his testimony in preference to God's, did their unbelief avail them? Was the threatening less certain? Did God forbear to inflict it? Did not their *souls*die that very day, being instantly separated from God, which constitutes spiritual death, and becoming obnoxious to his wrath, the chief ingredient of eternal death? Did not their *bodies*also, though, for the peopling of the earth, and for other gracious purposes, they were allowed to continue awhile, become impregnated with the seeds of death, whereby they were in due time reduced again to their native dust?

When the unbelieving Jews rejected their Messiah, were the purposes of God at all frustrated? Were they not rather furthered and accomplished by their unbelief? And was not the whole nation, except a little remnant, broken off from their stock, and the Gentiles, whom they regarded as accursed, engrafted on it?

So we may now ask of unbelieving sinners, "What if you do not believe? Shall your unbelief make the faith of God without effect?"

Will *God*cease to be a holy, sin-hating, sin-avenging God, because you presume to think him even such a one as yourselves?

Shall *sin*no longer be debasing, defiling, damning, because you choose to esteem it light and trivial?

Shall *death*wait your pleasure, because you think you have made a covenant with it, and put it far from you?

Shall the *judgment-day*lose its solemnity, and the account you are to give be made less strict, because you take it for granted, that all shall then be well with you?

Shall *Hell*be divested of its horrors, because you will not believe that there is any such place, or because you are averse to hear of it?

Shall the nature and blessedness of *Heaven*be altogether changed, in order that it may, according to your conceits, be the residence of the wicked as well as of the righteous?

In short, is it reasonable, is it probable, is it possible, that the truth of God would be made void—merely because you do not choose to believe it?

***~~2. Unbelief enhances and insures the evils, whose very existence it presumes to deny—~~***

The Apostle tells us what should be the fixed principle of our minds, "Let God be true; but every man a liar." But unbelief reverses this; and gives, not only to the testimony of man, but even to his most groundless conjectures, a greater weight than to the most solemn declarations of Jehovah.

What an affront is this to the Majesty of Heaven! Is there a man on earth that would not take offense at such an indignity, especially if it were offered to him by those whom he had never deceived, and for whose sake alone he had spoken? Let it not then be thought, that, to treat God as though he were the worst liar, is a light matter; for surely it must greatly provoke the eyes of his glory.

Besides, unbelief, while it thus incenses God against us, rejects the only possible means of reconciliation with him; and consequently rivets all our guilt upon us! Judge then whether those who yield themselves up to the influence of unbleief, be not "blinded by Satan," and victims to their own delusions, 2 Corinthians 4:4. [Isaiah 66:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.4).

***~~By way of improvement, let me commend to your attention the grand object of a Christian's faith—~~***

It is to little purpose to have general notions of the prevalence and folly of unbelief, if we do not apply them particularly to that fundamental doctrine of Scripture, That we are to be justified solely by faith in the Lord Jesus. This is that, which is emphatically called, The Gospel; concerning the necessity of believing which, nothing more need be urged, than that assertion of our Lord, "He who believes shall be saved, and he who believes not shall be damned! [Mark 16:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.16)."

The point for us now to determine, is, *Do we indeed believe in Christ for the justification of our souls?*We are continually apt to mistake the nature of saving faith; and, for lack of right views of that, we put away from ourselves all that is spoken respecting unbelief, as though we had no experience of it, no concern about it. But it has been already abundantly shown, that if we believe only in the manner that the generality of professing Christians do, we have no true faith at all.

Examine then, Have you clear and lively views of Christ as the Savior of sinners?

Are you deeply convinced of your own sinfulness, and your consequent need of mercy?

Have you renounced every other hope? and do you rely simply and solely on Christ's atonement?

Finally, are you deriving virtue from him for the healing of your corruptions, and for the bringing forth of all the fruits of righteousness to his praise and glory?

This, and this alone, is saving faith; and he who thus believes, shall be saved; and he who does not thus believe, shall be damned.

Let not any object, and say, "What is there in this faith that would save us, or in the lack of it that would damn us?" Our only inquiry must be, Has God suspended our salvation on the exercise of a living faith, or not? If he has, we have no more to say, than, "Let God be true: but every man a liar."

To dispute against him is to dispute against the wind. The wind will not stop its course for us: yet sooner would that be done, yes, "sooner would Heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or tittle of his word would fail." If then no objections of our's can ever disprove the truth of God's word, or prevent the execution of it on our own souls, let us guard against that principle of unbelief, which operates so powerfully, so fatally, within us.

Let us remember where our danger lies: it is not in giving too much weight to the declarations of God: but in softening them down, and accommodating them to our vain wishes or carnal apprehensions. Let then the fore-mentioned record abide upon our minds. Let us be persuaded that he whom God blesses, shall be blessed; and he whom God curses, shall be cursed. In other words, let us rest assured, that life is to be found in Christ alone; and that "he who has the Son, has life; and he who has not the Son of God, has not life! [1 John 5:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.11-12)."

***~~#1830~~***

***~~THE EXTENT OF MAN'S DEPRAVITY~~***

***~~[Romans 3:9-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.9-20).~~***

"What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written:

"There is none righteous, no, not one.

There is none who understands.

There is none who seeks after God.

They have all turned aside.

They have together become unprofitable.

There is none who does good, no, not one.

Their throat is an open tomb.

With their tongues they have practiced deceit.

The poison of asps is under their lips

Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

Their feet are swift to shed blood.

Destruction and misery are in their ways.

And the way of peace they have not known.

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

*THE Scriptures are the only and infallible source of divine knowledge.* To them the Apostles continually refer in support of their doctrines. No subject is capable of more ample proof from them, than that before us. Paul is showing that all mankind are guilty and depraved. In confirmation of this he cites many passages from the Old Testament. See [Psalm 14:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 14.1-3). [Proverbs 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 1.16); [Proverbs 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 1.18). [Isaiah 59:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.7-8). From these, as stated and improved in the text, we are led to consider,

***~~I. The representation which the Scripture gives of every person's state before God—~~***

The testimonies here adduced, declare, that the most lamentable depravity pervades,

***~~1. All ranks and orders of men—~~***

"There is none righteous, no, not one!"

The Apostle has so arranged his quotations as to form a beautiful climax, every subsequent passage affirming more than that which precedes it."

Righteousness is a conformity of heart and life to the law of God. Where is the man on earth that possesses it by nature? Where is the man whose deviations from this standard have not been innumerable?

"There is none who understands"—

The natural man has no discernment of spiritual things, [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14); his practical judgment is in favor of sin and the world.

"There is none who seeks after God"—

The things of time and sense are diligently pursued; but who ever cultivates divine knowledge, or seriously inquires after God? [Job 35:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 35.10).

"All are gone out of the way"—

Men universally prefer the way of self-righteousness, to that of faith in Christ, and that of sin and self-indulgence to holiness and self-denial. No one that sees them would imagine that they really intending to tread in the steps of Christ and his Apostles.

"They are together become unprofitable"—

God has formed us for his own glory, and each other's good: but unregenerate men never attempt to answer these ends of their creation They may do good to the bodies of men; but never show any real solicitude about their souls. Indeed, how could they, when they care not for their own souls? Hence they are justly compared to things worthless and vile! [Luke 14:34-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 14.34-35) and [John 15:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.6).

"There is none who does good, no, not one"—

Nothing is really good, which is not so in its principle, rule, and end:

the fear and love of God are the *principle*,

the Scriptures are the *rule*,

and God's glory is the *end*

of Christian obedience, [1 Corinthians 10:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.31). But where is the action of any natural man that will stand this test?

***~~2. All the faculties and powers of men—~~***

Nothing is more offensive than an open *sepulcher*, [Matthew 23:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 23.27); or more venomous than an *asp*; yet both the one and the other fitly represent the effusions of a carnal heart: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak:" deceit, calumny, invective; yes, in many instances, the most horrible oaths and execrations will proceed from it! No less than four expressions, and those exceeding strong, are suited to declare the evils of the tongue. Hence that solemn description of the human tongue in [James 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 3.6).

From words we are ready also to proceed to *actions*, yes, even the most cruel and atrocious!

Who that sees with what readiness nations engage in war, will question the declaration in the text? Hazael revolted at the idea of murder, when warned of his readiness to commit it; yet notwithstanding his present feelings, how "swift were his feet to shed blood! [2 Kings 8:12-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 8.12-15) and [13:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 13.7)."

How many at this day are impelled by shame even to destroy their own offspring!

How frequently do men engage in *duels*on account of the slightest injury or insult!

And in how many instances might we ourselves, when irritated and inflamed, have committed murder in an unguarded moment, exactly as others have done, who in a cooler hour would have shuddered at the thought! The instance of David, who, though "a man after God's own heart," murdered Uriah, and many others with him, to conceal his shame, is sufficient of itself to show us what the best of men might commit, if left to themselves, [2 Samuel 11:14-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 11.14-17). Well we may apply to this subject that humiliating language of the prophet [Isaiah 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.5-6).

Thus, God himself being witness, instead of walking in "paths of peace" and safety, we all by nature prefer the "ways which bring destruction and misery" both on ourselves and all around us, [Psalm 36:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.1). The whole of our state is properly summed up in this, that "there is no fear of God before our eyes!" So entirely are our *understandings*blinded, and our *hearts*alienated from him, by means of our innate depravity, verses 16 and 17, relate primarily to the evil which men do to others, though they may include what they do to themselves. See [Isaiah 59:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.7-8).

This humiliating view of our state would lead us to consider,

***~~II. The inferences to be deduced from it—~~***

Those which the Apostle suggests in the text will suffice for our attention at this time:

***~~1. We are all "guilty before God"—~~***

It seems inconceivable to many that they would really be headed to everlasting misery in Hell—and they will plead their own cause with zeal and eloquence: if they concede it with respect to some more heinous transgressors, they will deny it in reference to themselves. But God has taken care that "every mouth would be stopped." It is not possible to express the universality of men's wickedness more strongly than it is expressed in the words before us "None, no, not one!" "None; none; none, no, not one!" "All; all together;" "every mouth;" even "all the world." Can any, after this, fancy himself an exception? All then must "become guilty before God," and acknowledge their desert of his wrath and indignation; they must feel their desert of condemnation, as much as a man that has been condemned for parricide feels the justice of the sentence which is pronounced against him. O that we might all be brought to such sincere contrition! We would then be "not far from the kingdom of God, [Psalm 51:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.17)."

***~~2. We can never be justified by any works of our own—~~***

"We know that what the law says, it says unto them that are under the law." Now the law says, "Do this and live; transgress it and you shall die, [Romans 10:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.5). [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10);" but it speaks not one word about mitigating its demands to the weak, however weak, or its penalties to the guilty, however small the measure of their guilt. How then can any man "be justified by the works of the law?" Can a man be guilty, and not guilty? Or can he be condemned by the law, and yet justified by it at the same time, and in the same respects?

Let all hope then, and all thought, of justification by the law be put away from for us ever. God has provided a better way for our justification, namely, through the blood and righteousness of his dear Son, [Romans 3:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.21-22); and to lead us into that way was the intention of the Apostle in citing the passages that have already been considered. Let us improve his humiliating representation for this beneficial end; so shall we be "justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! [Romans 3:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.24)."

***~~#1831~~***

***~~OUR VIOLATIONS OF EVERY COMMANDMENT~~***

***~~[Romans 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.20).~~***

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

OUR lost estate, and our consequent need of a Savior, can never be truly known, unless we compare our lives with that universal rule of duty, the law of God. Paul took this method of proving that both Jews and Gentiles were under sin: in all the preceding part of this epistle he sets forth their transgressions against the law; and having confirmed his assertions by many passages out of the old Testament, he says in the verse before my text, "We know that whatever things the law says, it says to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

From hence it is evident that the law of which he is speaking, is the *moral law*, that same law which was originally engraved in the heart of Adam, and was afterwards published to the world on Mount Sinai: for the Gentiles having never been subject to the ceremonial or judicial law, it can be no other than the moral law, which shuts their mouth and brings them in guilty before God. The principal ends for which he referred them to this law were these:

first, to convince them that they could not be justified by their obedience to it (and therefore in the words immediately preceding our text, he says, that by the law shall no flesh be justified;)

secondly, to show them their undone condition by the law; and therefore he adds, in the words of our text, "by the law is the knowledge of sin."

From these words we shall take occasion to compare our lives with the law of God, so that we may obtain the knowledge of our sins: and while we are thus bringing our iniquities to remembrance, may the Spirit of God come down upon us, to convince us all of sin, and to reveal unto us the only Deliverer from sin, the Lord Jesus Christ!

The law was delivered to Moses upon two tables of stone, and comprised in ten commandments.

1. The first commandment respects the *object*of our worship, "You shall have none other gods but me." In this we are required to believe in God, to love him, and to serve him with all our hearts, and minds, and souls, and strength: and if we examine ourselves by it, we shall see that our transgressions are neither few nor small:

Instead of *believing*in him at all times, how rarely have we either trembled at his threatenings or confided in his promises!

Instead of *loving*him supremely, have we not set our affections on the things of time and sense?

Instead of *fearing*him above all, have we not been swayed rather by the fear of man, or a regard to our worldly interests? Instead of *relying*on him in all difficulties, have we not rather "leaned to our own understanding, and trusted in an arm of flesh?" and instead of making it our food and drink to do his will, have we not lived to ourselves, seeking our own pleasure, and following our own ways?

Surely if we seriously inquire into our past conduct, we shall find that throughout our whole lives "other lords have had dominion over us," *the world has been our idol*, and *self has usurped the throne of God*. If therefore we were to be tried by this commandment only, our offenses would appear exceedingly numerous, more than the hairs of our head, more than the sands upon the sea shore.

2. The second commandment respects the nature of worship: "You shall not make to yourself any graven image." God is a Spirit, and therefore is not to be addressed by the medium of any sensible object, but is to be "worshiped in spirit and in truth." Yet, whenever we have presented ourselves before him, we have scarcely paid him more respect, yes frequently much less, than the heathen manifest towards their gods of wood and stone. Let us only consider what has been the frame of our minds when we have approached the throne of grace; how little have we stood in awe of his Majesty! How unaffecting has been our sense either of our wants, or of his power and readiness to help us!

And if we look at the *prayers*which we have offered, we shall see cause to acknowledge that they have been dull, formal, and hypocritical.

Our *confessions*have neither been attended with humility nor followed by amendment.

Our *petitions*have been without faith and without fervor.

Our *thanksgivings*, which should have been the warm effusions of a grateful heart, have frozen on our very lips!

Indeed *secret prayer*is by the generality either wholly omitted, or performed as a task or drudgery.

As for *family devotions*,they are wholly, and almost universally, neglected.

In the *public assemblies*, instead of breathing out our hearts before God, our thoughts are wandering to the ends of the earth; or, as the Scripture has said, "we draw near unto God with our mouth, but our heart is far from him."

Let us all therefore consult the records of our own consciences, that we may judge ourselves with respect to these things; nor let us forget that every such omission and every such defect has swelled the number of our transgressions, and greatly aggravated our guilt and misery.

3. The third commandment respects the manner of worship; "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." The name of God is never to be uttered by us but with awe and reverence. But, not to mention the stupid indifference with which it is often repeated in prayer, how generally, how daringly is it profaned in common conversation, so generally, that no age, gender, or quality is exempt from this impious custom; and so daringly, that it is even vindicated: the thoughtless manner in which that sacred name is used, is often urged as an excuse for the profanation of it; when it is that very thoughtlessness which constitutes the profanation. But instead of extenuating the guilt of this sin, we shall do well to consider what God has said respecting it, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain."

4. The fourth commandment respects the time of worship; "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." In what manner we are to keep it holy, the Prophet Isaiah teaches us [Isaiah 58:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.13), "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words." But how has this day been regarded by us? Have we conscientiously devoted it to God, and spent those sacred hours in reading, meditation and prayer? Have we, as well by example as by precept, inculcated on our families a regard for the Sabbath? and have we improved it for the welfare of their souls as well as of our own?

Alas! have not those blessed seasons been rather wasted in worldly business, worldly company, and worldly pleasures? Yes, it is to be feared that however we may have kept up a mere formal attendance on the external services of the Church, we have not any of us accounted our sabbaths a delight, or spent them in devout and holy exercises. We may rest assured however, that of every such abuse of the Sabbath, we shall give a strict account; for if God has so solemnly warned us to "remember that we keep the Sabbath holy," no doubt he himself will remember what regard we payed to it.

Here end the commandments of the first table, which relate to God, as those of the second table relate more especially to our neighbor; yet not so entirely as to exclude ourselves. We proceed therefore with them:

5. The fifth commandment, "Honor your father and your mother," requires a befitting deportment not only towards our own immediate parents, but towards all mankind, however related to us; our superiors, equals, and inferiors:

to our superiors, we owe submission;

to our equals and inferiors, we owe love and humility.

But how often have we affected independence, and refused submission to lawful authority! How often have we envied the advancement of our equals, or exalted ourselves above them! How often have we treated our inferiors with haughtiness and severity! Even our natural parents we have by no means honored as we ought, nor sustained any relation in life as God has required us to do. In all these respects therefore we have sinned before God, and "treasured up wrath for ourselves against the day of wrath!"

Thus far many will readily acknowledge themselves guilty. But so ignorant are mankind in general of the spirituality and extent of God's law, that they account themselves blameless with respect to all the other commandments. If they have not literally, and in the grossest sense, committed murder, adultery, theft, or perjury, they have no conception how they can have transgressed the laws which forbid these things.

But let us calmly and dispassionately examine this matter; bearing this in mind, that it is our interest to know our sins; because by knowing them, we shall be stirred up to seek the forgiveness of them through the Savior's blood. Whereas, if we remain ignorant of our sins, we shall not feel our need of the Savior, and shall consequently die without a saving interest in him.

6. The sixth commandment then respects our own and our neighbor's life; "You shall not murder." We take for granted that none of us have imbrued our hands in human blood: yet this by no means exempts us from the charge of murder. Our Lord, in that justly admired Sermon on the Mount, has given us the clue whereby we may be led to a true exposition of this and of all the other commandments; "You have heard," says he, "that it has been said by them of old time, You shall not kill, and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire."

By this comment of our Lord's, we are assured that causeless anger and passion are esteemed by him as violations of this commandment. And John in the third chapter of his first epistle confirms this by saying, "He who loves not his brother abides in death; whoever hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." From this additional testimony therefore we see that *the hating of any person, or the not truly loving him, is a species of murder in the sight of God.*

Who then is innocent? Who has been free from passion? Who has not often conceived anger and hatred against his neighbor? And shall it be thought unreasonable to call this murder?

Look at the effects of anger; how often has it terminated in murder, when the perpetrators of the act little supposed themselves capable of such an atrocious crime! If we have been irritated and provoked by small occasions, who can tell what our anger might have effected if the occasion had been increased, and the preventing grace of God withdrawn? And what is that which the world has falsely called a sense of honor? It is revenge, it is murder; murder in the heart, as it often proves murder in the act.

But there are other ways of committing murder: if we have wished a rival dead, in order that we might be advanced; if we have wished an enemy dead, because of our aversion to him; if we have wished a relation or any other person dead, in order that we might succeed to his fortune or preferment, or if we have rejoiced in the death of another on any of these accounts—then we have manifested that same principle in our hearts, which, if kindled by temptation and favored by opportunity, would have produced the most fatal effects.

Nor is this all: we are no less guilty in the sight of God, if we do what tends to the destruction of our own life, than if we seek the destruction of our neighbor's life. Not to mention therefore the too common act of *suicide*, *how many bring upon themselves pain, sickness, and disease, I may add too, an early and premature death, by means of debauchery and excess.*

Let not any one therefore imagine himself innocent even in respect of murder: for in every instance of anger, impatience, or intemperance, yes, whenever we have wished for, or rejoiced in another's dissolution, we have violated this commandment.

7. The seventh commandment respects our own and our neighbor's chastity: "You shall not commit adultery." Fornication and adultery are by many practiced without remorse, and recorded without shame. But to such we may well address the words of Solomon: "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment!"

Nor will it avail anything to say, that we committed these sins only in our youth; and that now we have left them off; for sin is sin, whenever and by whoever committed; and *however it may have escaped our memory, it is not therefore erased from the book of God's remembrance*; nor however partial the world may be in its judgment respecting it, will it escape due notice at another tribunal; for we are assured by the Apostle, that "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

But *this commandment extends much further than to the outward act—it reaches to the inmost thoughts and desires of the heart!*Let us hear an infallible expositor; let us hear what our Lord himself says in his Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it has been said by them of old time, You shall not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whoever *looks*on a woman to *lust*after her, has committed adultery with her already in his heart!" By this commandment therefore is forbidden all indulgence of unclean thoughts, and consequently all immodest words, all obscene allusions, all wanton looks, all impure desires and affections. Who then will say, "I am pure!" Who will take up a stone to cast at another?

8. The eighth commandment respects our neighbor's goods; "You shall not steal." Theft is universally branded with disgrace: and it may be hoped that we who have been so far out of the reach of poverty, have never been reduced to so infamous a practice. Yet how many are guilty of practices equally repugnant to the spirit of this commandment! How many defraud the government by withholding or evading taxes! How many defraud the public by circulating coin which they know to be either base or defective! How many defraud those with whom they transact business, by taking undue advantage of their ease, their ignorance, or their necessities! How many defraud their creditors by neglecting to pay their debts! And how many defraud the poor by not giving to them what the Great Proprietor of all has made their due!

If indeed we regard only these effects of dishonesty, they will probably appear to us light and insignificant; but if we look to the principle which gives birth to these things, it will be found no less corrupt than that which manifests itself in theft and robbery. Odious therefore as the imputation of fraud may justly be considered, there is not one who has not at some time or other been guilty of it: so that this commandment as well as all that have preceded it, will accuse us before God.

9. The ninth commandment respects our neighbor's reputation; "You shall not bear false witness." We offend against this law, not only when we perjure ourselves before a magistrate, but *whenever we misrepresent the conduct of others, or pass hasty and ungrounded censures upon them*. All *whisperers*therefore and *backbiters*, and all who circulate reports injurious to their neighbor, are condemned by it. Nor does it forbid such falsehoods only as are pernicious, but such also as are jocular or exaggerated: for, as to the morality of the act, it matters little whether we falsify *to*our neighbor, or *against*him.

Who then has not been often guilty in these respects? Who does not feel the force of the Psalmist's observation, that "as soon as we are born we go astray, speaking lies!" Nor let any think lightly of this sin: for so detestable is it in the sight of God, that he has given us this solemn warning, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death!"

10. The tenth commandment, "You shall not covet," is perhaps the most extensive of any; because while the others forbid the indulgence of any sinful act, *this forbids the first risings of desire after any sinful object*—it utterly condemns the least motions of *discontent*at our own lot, or of *envy*at the lot of others. It was this commandment which first wounded the conscience of the Apostle Paul; he was in all points relating to the ceremonial law, and according to the letter of the moral law, he was blameless; and he conceived that he must therefore of necessity be in a state of salvation. But this good opinion of his state arose from his ignorance of the spirituality and extent of the law: and when his eyes were once opened to see that the law condemned him for the first risings of evil, as well as for the actual commission of it, he became guilty in his own sight, and acknowledged the justice of his condemnation.

Thus he says of himself; "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust (that is, the evil and danger of it) unless the law had said, You shall not covet: for I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." The plain meaning of which is this: before he understood the spirituality of the law he thought himself safe; but when that was revealed to him, he saw himself justly condemned for his offenses against it.

May that same, that beneficial, conviction be wrought also in our hearts! for our Lord has told us, that "the whole need not a physician, but those who are sick;" plainly intimating thereby, that we must feel our need of him, before we shall be willing to receive his saving benefits. Though therefore we may think as highly of our state as the Apostle did of his—yet if we feel not our condemnation by the law, we shall but deceive ourselves; and though we be possessed of his knowledge, zeal, and holiness—yet shall we, like him, be "dead in trespasses and sins!" For until we are indeed weary and heavy laden with a sense of sin, we never shall, nor ever can, come unto Christ for rest.

***~~To Conclude—~~***

If, while we have been surveying the duties of the first table, we have called to mind our low esteem for God, together with the unnumbered instances wherein we have neglected his worship, misemployed his sabbaths, and profaned his name; if in examining the duties of the second table, we have remembered our multitudinous violations of them, both generally, by misconduct in the different relations of life, and particularly,

by anger and intemperance,

by actual or mental impurity,

by dishonesty or lack of liberality,

by willful and allowed falsehood,

by discontent with our own lot,

or coveting of another's,

then surely we shall confess with the Psalmist, that "our iniquities are grown up unto Heaven, they are a sore burden too heavy for us to bear!"

"Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep your law." To make us thus cry out for mercy is the proper use of the law; for the Apostle says, "The law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." And if we once obtain this view of the law, and by it the knowledge of our sins, we shall then have the best preservative against errors: for instead of making the divinity of Christ and his atonement a matter of mere speculative inquiry, we shall see that we have no safety but in his blood, and no acceptance but in his righteousness. We shall then "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," and shall each of us be like-minded with that great Apostle who said, "I desire to be found in Christ, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

***~~#1832~~***

***~~THE BELIEVER'S RIGHTEOUSNESS~~***

***~~[Romans 3:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.21-22).~~***

"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."

IT is justly observed by our Lord, that "those who are whole need not a physician, but those who are sick." *Persons never value a remedy until they are aware of their disease*: they must know their condemnation and misery by the Law, before they will receive with gratitude the glad tidings of the Gospel. On this account Paul labors through the whole preceding part of this epistle, and especially in the ten verses before the text, to prove all, both Jews and Gentiles, guilty before God; and to show that they need a better righteousness than any which they themselves can work out. Then he introduces that righteousness which is exhibited in the Gospel, and is offered to every repenting and believing sinner.

To elucidate the subject before us, we propose to show,

***~~I. What is that righteousness whereby we are to be saved—~~***

The Apostle's description of it is as clear and comprehensive as we can possibly desire:

***~~1. It is "the righteousness of God"—~~***

Twice is it called "the righteousness of God;" by which expression we are to understand that *it is a righteousness provided by God for sinful man, wrought out by God himself in the midst of us, and accepted by God on our behalf*.

When we were destitute of any righteousness of our own, and incapable of establishing one that would be sufficient for us, God, in his infinite mercy determined to provide one for us, that would be commensurate with the demands of law and justice, and fully adequate to our needs. For this end he sent his co-equal, co-eternal Son to fulfill the precepts of the law which we had broken, and to endure its penalties which we had incurred. The Lord Jesus came into the world and executed his high commission; and thus, as the Prophet Daniel expresses it, "brought in an everlasting righteousness, [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24)." He being "Emmanuel, God with us," his righteousness is truly and properly the righteousness of God.

This righteousness God accepts for us as though it were our own. In consideration of what Jesus suffered, he remits our punishment; and in consideration of Christ's meritorious obedience, he bestows on us the reward of eternal life. Hence, from beginning to end, this is distinguished from the righteousness of man; seeing that it was provided by God the Father, wrought out by God the Son, and shall be accepted both by the Father and the Son on our behalf.

***~~2. It is a righteousness "apart from the law"—~~***

By this expression the Apostle distinguishes it from any righteousness arising from our obedience to the law; and intimates that it is totally independent of any works of ours, past, present, or future. No works of ours can add to it in the smallest degree, or render it either more satisfactory to God, or more sufficient for us.

On the contrary, if we were to attempt to unite anything of our own with it, instead of rendering it more firm, we would utterly make it void; and instead of securing to ourselves a saving interest in it, we would cut off ourselves from all hope of acceptance by it, [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2); [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4).

We must not be understood to say, that this righteousness supersedes the practice of good works, (for it lays us under tenfold obligation to perform them, [Titus 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.11-12).) but that it excludes all reliance on our own works, and will on no account admit a creature's righteousness to participate in the honor of justifying us before God.

***~~3. It is a righteousness "by faith in Jesus Christ"—~~***

As in the foregoing expressions this righteousness is declared to be God's, exclusive of any works of man, so here we are told how it becomes ours. But this part of the subject will be more fully considered under the third head of our discourse; I will therefore only observe at present, that we must obtain a saving interest in this righteousness, not by working, but by believing in Christ. We must no more attempt to purchase it by our works, than to add to it by our works; or, if we will purchase it, we must "buy it without money and without price! [Isaiah 55:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.1)."

To confirm the Apostle's description, we shall proceed to show,

***~~II. What evidence we have that this is the only justifying righteousness—~~***

There will be no room left to doubt respecting it, if we consider, that,

***~~1. It was "manifested" to be so by the Gospel—~~***

This truth had been obscurely intimated under the law; but "now" it was fully "manifested" by the Gospel. When Christ was just entering on his ministry, John the Baptist pointed him out as "the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world! [John 1:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.29)." Christ himself declared that he was about to "give his life a ransom for many, [Matthew 20:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 20.28)," and that they were to receive the remission of sins as purchased by his blood, [Matthew 26:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.28). Peter in his very first sermon exhorted the people to believe in Christ for the remission of their sins, and declared to them that there was no other name whereby they could be saved, [Acts 2:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.38); [Acts 4:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.11-12). Paul in numberless places insists upon our seeking justification solely by faith in Christ, without the smallest mixture of dependence on our own works, [Romans 4:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.3-5); [Romans 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.14); [Romans 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.9); [Romans 5:15-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.15-18). And when Peter, through fear of the Jews, had given some reason to think that an obedience to the Mosaic ritual ought to be, or at least might be, added to the righteousness of Christ in order to render it more effectual, Paul reproved him publicly before all the Church, and reminded him that all, not excepting the Apostles themselves, must be justified solely by the righteousness of Christ, without any works of the law, [Galatians 2:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.14-16). Is not this a strong confirmation of the point before us?

***~~2. It was "witnessed by the law and the prophets"—~~***

The *moral*law may in some sense be considered as bearing testimony to the righteousness of Christ: for though it makes no express mention of it, yet, by condemning all without exception, it "shuts men up to faith in Christ," and serves as "a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, [Galatians 3:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.22-24)."

The *ceremonial*law in all its ordinances pointed directly to Christ. It is not possible to contemplate the Paschal lamb, or the scape-goat, or indeed any of the sacrifices or ablutions, without seeing Christ prefigured by them, and confessing him to be "the end of the law for righteousness" to believing sinners, [Romans 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.4).

If we consult the *prophets*, they are unanimous in directing us to Christ. The prophecies that preceded Moses, represent Christ as the one conqueror of the serpent, [Genesis 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.15), and the one source of blessedness to man, [Genesis 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 12.3); [Genesis 15:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 15.6). Moses himself spoke of him as the prophet, to whom all must look for instruction and salvation [Acts 3:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 3.22-23). Jeremiah calls him by name, "The Lord our righteousness [Jeremiah 23:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.6);" and Isaiah represents every child of God as saying with exultation, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength! [Isaiah 45:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.24-25)." To adduce more proofs is unnecessary, since we are assured by Peter, that all the prophets unite their testimonies to the same effect, [Acts 3:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 3.24); [Acts 10:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.43). What stronger evidence than this can any man desire?

But we have further to inquire,

***~~III. How Christ's righteousness becomes ours—~~***

***~~Faith alone is the means whereby we obtain a saving interest in Christ's righteousness is—~~***

This also is twice intimated in the text: nor can it be too often repeated, or too strongly insisted on. *We must come to Christ as perishing sinners; and, without attempting to establish, in whole or in part, our own righteousness, we must submit to be saved by his righteousness alone!* [Romans 10:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.3). We must be contented to have his "righteousness imputed to us without works, [Romans 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.6)," and to make his obedience the one ground of our hope, [Romans 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.19). They alone who thus regard Christ, can properly be said to believe in him; and it is only when we thus believe, that "he is made of God righteousness unto us, [1 Corinthians 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30)."

***~~On our believing, Christ's righteousness is instantly put to our account—~~***

This righteousness is bestowed upon us freely by God himself; it is not only given "unto" us as a portion, but is put "upon" us as a garment. In this light it is spoken of by our Lord himself, who counsels us to "buy it from him that we may be clothed, and that the shame of our nakedness may not appear, [Revelation 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.18)." Without this, we are despoiled of our innocence, and exposed to shame, as our first parents were upon the introduction of sin: but as they were covered by the skins of their sacrifices according to the direction which God himself had given them, [Genesis 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.7); [Genesis 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.21), so are we by "putting on the Lord Jesus [Romans 13:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.14);" nor, when clothed with his righteousness, can even God himself behold a spot or blemish in us, [Ephesians 5:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.27). Hence the Church rejoices with joy unspeakable, [Isaiah 61:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.10), and is rendered fit for the presence of her heavenly bridegroom, [Revelation 19:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.8).

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~Must not the self-righteous moralist then stand confounded before God?~~***

Surely it is no light matter to pour contempt on the righteousness of God, as though it were insufficient for us without "the filthy rags of our righteousness, [Isaiah 64:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.6)." It is no light matter to reject the united testimony of the law and the prophets, of Christ and his Apostles. And as the guilt of such conduct is great, so is also the danger: and whoever persists in it must irremediably perish, [Romans 9:30-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-32).

***~~On the other hand, would not the self-condemning sinner receive encouragement from this subject?~~***

It is well to condemn ourselves, but not to despond. Twice is it declared in the text, that this righteousness is for "all" who will believe in Christ. Compare [Acts 13:38-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.38-39) with [Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.18) and [Romans 5:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20-21). And is it not sufficient for all? Let all then "set to their seal that God is true." Let them honor the righteousness of Christ by their affiance in it; and it shall be "manifested" to their consciences, no less than in the Scriptures themselves, that it is complete in itself, adequate to our necessities, and effectual for all who rely upon it.

***~~#1833~~***

***~~THE JUSTICE OF GOD IN JUSTIFYING SINNERS~~***

***~~[Romans 3:22-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22-26).~~***

"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

THE whole plan of the Gospel takes for granted that we are in a lost and helpless condition. Its provisions are suited to such, and to such only. Hence the Apostle proves at large that "we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" and then he states, in the plainest and strongest manner, the method which God has proposed for our restoration to his favor.

The words of the text will lead us to show,

**I.** The way of a sinner's justification before God—

The manner of our justification is here plainly declared—

There seems indeed a senseless tautology in the expressions of the text; but the words "freely," and "by grace," are of very different import, and are necessary to convey the full meaning of the Apostle.

We are justified "freely," that is, without any cause for it in ourselves. See [John 15:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.25). And for the truth of the assertion, see [Titus 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.5); no works before our justification, no repentance or reformation at the time of our justification, no evangelical obedience after our justification, are at all taken into the account. There is no merit whatever in anything we ever have done, or in anything we ever can do. Our justification is as independent of any merit in us, as was the gift of that Savior through whom we are justified.

Our justification also springs from no motive in God, except his own boundless "grace" and mercy. When speaking merely after the manner of men, we say, that God consults his own glory: but, strictly speaking, if the whole human race were punished after the example of the fallen angels, he would be as happy and as glorious as he is at present: just as the sun in the firmament would shine equally bright, if this globe that is illuminated by it were annihilated. We can neither add to, nor detract from, God's happiness or glory in the smallest possible degree. His mercy to us therefore is mere grace, for grace sake.

Yet it is of great importance to notice also the means by which we are justified—

Though our justification is a free gift as it respects us—yet it was dearly purchased by our blessed Lord, who "laid down his own life a ransom for us." There was a necessity on the part of God, as the moral Governor of the world, that his justice would be satisfied for our violations of his law. This was done through the atoning blood of Jesus; on which account we are said to be "justified by his blood," and to he "redeemed to God by his blood." The Father's grace is the source from whence our justification flows; and "the redemption that is in Christ" is the means, by which God is enabled to bestow it consistently with his own honor.

In this view the text informs us, that "God has set forth his Son to be a atoning sacrifice , or mercy-seat. See [Hebrews 9:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.5). the Greek, through faith in his blood." The mercy-seat was the place where God visibly resided, and from whence he dispensed mercy to the people, as soon as ever the blood of the sacrifices was sprinkled before him [2 Corinthians 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.19)." But that typical mercy-seat is accessible no more: Christ is now the true mercy-seat, where God resides, and from whence he dispenses all his favors of grace and peace. God requires, however, that we would come with the blood of our Great Sacrifice, and sprinkle it, as it were, before him, in token of our affiance in it, and as an acknowledgment, that we hope for mercy only through the blood of atonement.

But in our contemplation of this subject, we are more particularly called upon to show,

**II.** The justice of God as displayed in it—

God had exercised "forbearance" and forgiveness towards sinners for the space of four thousand years; and was now, in the Apostle's days, dispensing pardon to thousands and to myriads. That, in so doing, God acted consistently with his own justice, the Apostle here labors to establish: he repeats it no less than thrice in the short space of our text. We shall therefore show distinctly, how the justice of God is displayed,

**1.** In the appointment of Christ to be our atoning sacrifice —

If God had forgiven sins without any atonement, his justice, to say the least, would have lain concealed: perhaps we may say, would have been greatly dishonored. But when, in order to satisfy the demands of justice, God sends, not an angel or archangel, but his only dear Son, and lays on him our iniquities, and exacts of him the utmost farthing of our debt, then indeed the justice of God is "declared," yes, is exhibited in the most solemn colors. The condemnation of the fallen angels was indeed a terrible display of this attribute: yet was it no proof of justice in comparison with that more conspicuous demonstration which was given of it in the death of God's co-equal, co-eternal Son.

**2.** In requiring us to believe in him as our atoning sacrifice —

God wills that every one would come to "Christ" as a atoning sacrifice through faith in his blood, or, in other words, would express his dependence on that blood that satisfied divine justice. As the offender under the law, when he put his hand upon the head of his sacrifice, confessed his own desert of death; and as the high-priest, when he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices before the mercy-seat, confessed that the hope of all Israel was derived from that blood [Leviticus 16:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 16.2); [Leviticus 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 16.14); so when we look to Christ as our sacrifice, or approach him as our mercy-seat, we must carry, as it were, his blood with us, and sprinkle it on our consciences before him, as an acknowledgment that by the justice of God we were deservedly condemned, and that we have no hope of mercy except in such a way as will consist with the immutable rights of justice. Thus it is not sufficient for Christ to have honored divine justice once by enduring its penalties; but every individual sinner must also honor it for himself by an explicit acknowledgment, that its demands must be satisfied.

**3.** In pardoning sinners out of respect to this atoning sacrifice —

That sinners are justified through Christ, may well appear an act of transcendent mercy: but it is also an act of justice; and the justice of God is as much displayed in it, as it would be in consigning sinners over to everlasting perdition. It is not an act of mercy, but of justice, to liberate a man whose debt has been discharged by a surety. But when Christ has paid our debt, and we, in consequence of that payment, claim our discharge, we may expect it even on the footing of justice itself. And whereas it is found, that no living creature ever applied to God in vain, when he pleaded Christ's vicarious sacrifice, it is manifest, that God has been jealous of his own honor, and has been as anxious to pay to us what Christ has purchased for us, as to exact of him what he undertook to pay on our behalf: so that his justice is as conspicuous in pardoning us, as it has been in punishing him.

INFERENCES—

**1.** How certain is the salvation of believers!

That which principally alarms those who stand before a human tribunal, is an apprehension that justice may declare against them. But there is no such cause for alarm on the part of a believer, seeing that justice is no less on his side than mercy. Let all then look to Christ as their all-sufficient atoning sacrifice , and to God as both "a just God and a Savior." Then shall they find "that God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins [1 John 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.9)," yes, is "just in justifying all that believe."

**2.** How awful will be the condemnation of unbelievers!

While they slight the united overtures of mercy and justice, what do they but arm both these attributes against them? Now, if they would seek for mercy, justice, instead of impeding, would aid, their suit. At the last day, how will matters be reversed! When justice demands the execution of the law, mercy will have not one word to say in arrest of judgment, but will rather increase the vengeance by its accusations and complaints. Let this be duly considered by us, that we may actively glorify God as monuments of his saving grace, and not passively glorify him as objects of his righteous indignation.

***~~#1834~~***

***~~JUSTIFICATION WITHOUT BOASTING~~***

***~~[Romans 3:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.27-28).~~***

"Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law."

IT may well be supposed, that any revelation, purporting to be from God, would, in addition to all external evidences, have internal proofs also of its divine original. Accordingly, if God would reveal a way of salvation to fallen creatures, we should of course expect it to be such a way, as would display the riches of his own grace, and secure all the glory of it to himself.

Now when we look into the Gospel, we find precisely such a method of salvation revealed to us. And herein it differs from all the methods that ever have been devised by man: for they uniformly reserve a share of the glory, at least, to the creature: whereas *the Gospel gives all the glory to God alone*.

Paul, having opened throughout the whole preceding part of this epistle the state of fallen man, and the way prescribed for his acceptance with God, puts this question, "Where then is boasting?" And having told us, that it is, and must for ever be, "excluded by the law of faith," he repeats his former conclusion, and represents it as confirmed by this additional evidence of its truth; "Therefore we conclude," etc.

In discoursing on these words, we shall show,

***~~I. That the way of salvation (whatever it may be) must exclude boasting—~~***

This will appear undeniably true, if we consider,

***~~1. The avowed design of God in the revelation he has given us—~~***

Paul speaking on this subject, repeats even to tautology, that God designed from the beginning to exalt his own grace, and had *so planned the way of salvation, as that every part of it might redound to his own honor*, [Ephesians 1:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.5-7); [Ephesians 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.9); [Ephesians 1:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.11-12); [Ephesians 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.14); [Ephesians 2:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.4-5); [Ephesians 2:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.7-9), especially verse 7. All possibility of boasting was studiously cut off from man. With this view the knowledge of this salvation was imparted to the poor and ignorant in preference to the wise and noble, 1 Corinthians 1:26-29; and every person that embraced it was necessitated to seek everything in and through Christ, that "the loftiness of man might be laid low, and that God alone might be exalted! [1 Corinthians 1:30-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30-31) with [Isaiah 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 2.17)."

***~~2. The disposition and conduct of all that have ever embraced it—~~***

*Abraham*, the father of the faithful, accounted himself only "dust and ashes, [Genesis 18:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 18.27);" "nor had he anything whereof to glory before God, [Romans 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.2)."

*Job*, "a perfect and upright man, so that none was like him upon earth," yet spoke with the utmost abhorrence of justifying himself before God, [Job 9:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 9.2-3); [Job 9:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 9.20-21); [Job 9:30-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 9.30-31); [Job 42:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 42.6).

*David*, "a man after God's own heart," cries, "Enter not into judgment with your servant, O Lord, for in your sight shall no man be justified, [Psalm 143:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 143.2)."

*Isaiah*, that most distinguished prophet, lamented that he was vile as a leper, [Isaiah 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.5) with [Leviticus 13:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 13.45); and confessed that his righteousnesses were as "filthy rags, [Isaiah 64:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.6)."

*Paul*, who was "not a whit behind the very chief apostles," yes, "labored more abundantly than they all," acknowledges himself the very "chief of sinners, [1 Timothy 1:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.15)," desires to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, [Philippians 3:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.8-9), and boils with indignation at the thought of glorying in anything but the "cross of Christ, [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14)."

If any might glory in themselves, we might suppose that the *glorified saints*and *angels*would have liberty to do so: but among them there is one only theme, "Worthy is the Lamb! [Revelation 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.11); [Revelation 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.13)."

Now if the way of salvation (whatever it may be) correspond with God's design in revealing it, or with the dispositions of those who have been the most distinguished ornaments of it, then it must of necessity cut off from man all occasion of glorying in himself. We may say therefore with the Apostle, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded."

Having determined this point, let us proceed to inquire,

***~~II. What is that way of salvation which alone does exclude boasting—~~***

There are but two possible ways in which any man can be saved, namely, by works, or by faith. Many indeed have attempted to unite them; but that is impossible, seeing that they are distinct from, and directly opposed to each other, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6). Let us then inquire which of the two excludes boasting?

**1. Do *works*****exclude boasting?**

The law of works says, "Do this, and live." Now suppose a man to be saved by his own obedience to this law; will he not have to boast? May he not say to a perishing fellow-creature, "I made myself to differ from you?" May he not justly take credit to himself for his own superior goodness? Yes, even in Heaven, may he not unite his own praises with those of his Maker, and ascribe salvation partly to himself?

It is of no use to say, that our works are only in part the ground of our acceptance; and that even for them we are indebted to the operation of Divine grace: for, works are works, by whoever they are wrought in us; and, as being wrought in and by us, they are our works; and in whatever degree they form the ground of our justification before God, in that degree (be it little or great) they give us a ground of glorying: and to deny this, is to confound grace and works, which are as distinct, and as irreconcilable with each other, as light and darkness, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6).

**2. Does *faith*****exclude boasting?**

This says, "Believe and be saved." By this law we are constrained to receive everything out of the Redeemer's fullness, and to acknowledge him as our "all in all." Nothing is left for us to ascribe to ourselves.

The *planning*of salvation was the work of God the Father.

The *procuring*of salvation was the work of God the Son.

The *imparting*, *continuing*, and *perfecting*of salvation is the work of God the Holy Spirit.

We cannot glory over a fellow-sinner, and say, "God had respect to my good qualities, (either seen or foreseen) and on account of them distinguished me from you."

In gospel salvation, no room is left but for shame to ourselves, and gratitude to God.

Here then we may boldly say with the Apostle, "By what law is boasting excluded? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith."

It remains then for us to inquire,

***~~III. What conclusion we are to draw from these premises—~~***

***~~Nothing can be more express than the conclusion drawn by the Apostle—~~***

We have seen that the way of salvation (whatever it be) excludes boasting; and that salvation by faith is the only way that does exclude boasting: from hence therefore the conclusion is plain, that salvation must be by faith and not by works.

But there is an emphasis in the Apostle's words which deserves particular attention. He does not merely affirm that salvation is by faith rather than by works, but by faith exclusive of works. No "deeds of the law" are to be added to faith in order to render it effectual: we must be saved by faith simply, by faith solely. If any work whatever be added to our faith as a joint ground of our hope, or as a motive to induce God to justify us, or as a price whereby we are to obtain a saving interest in Christ, "faith will be made void, and the promise will be of no effect, [Romans 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.14)." *We must not trust any more in our good works than in our vilest sins!*For the very instant that the smallest stress whatever is laid on our good works as procuring our justification before God, boasting is introduced, and all hope of salvation is annihilated. Not even faith itself saves us as a work, but solely as uniting us to Christ, by whose righteousness we are justified.

***~~Nor can anything be more certain than the conclusion drawn by the Apostle—~~***

When men argue, even from the clearest premises, we must be cautious in admitting their conclusions; because they frequently put more into their conclusions than their premises will bear. Indeed, it is necessary to watch every step of their arguments, because of the fallacies which often escape their own observation, and would, if unguardedly acceded to, mislead our judgment also. But no suspicion need be entertained respecting the point before us, since the premises are stated, and the conclusion is drawn, by God himself. If we will dispute about the one or the other, we must debate the matter with God; for it is to God's arguments, and not to man's, that our assent is now required.

Before we conclude, we will **consider some OBJECTIONS**that may be urged against the foregoing statement. It may be said that,

***~~1. It contradicts many positive assertions of Holy Scripture—~~***

Our Lord does, in answer to the young man's inquiry, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" say, "If you will enter into life, keep the commandments, [Matthew 19:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 19.16-17)." But our Lord did not mean to say, that he, a fallen creature, could keep the commandments, so as to obtain eternal life by them: his answer was intended to show him, that he must not seek for life in such a way: and, to convince him that he had not kept the commandments so perfectly as he supposed, our Lord put him to the test; and gave him thereby a very convincing proof, that he must seek salvation in another way, namely, by becoming his disciple, and embracing his salvation.

There are many other passages that speak of our works being rewarded: and it is true, that *works done in faith, will receive a reward of grace*. But is there no *difference between a sinner's being justified by the merit of his works; and a justified person's receiving a reward of grace on account of his works?*In the one case a man may boast, that he has, in part at least, purchased Heaven: in the other case, he must acknowledge his justification to be altogether of grace; and his increased weight of glory to be from the superabounding riches of divine grace, proportioned to his services, but not founded on his merits.

But this matter is beyond a doubt: for we are told, that there could not be a law given that would give life to fallen man: and that that was the very reason why a different way of salvation was prescribed to him, [Galatians 3:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.21-22). So that whatever is said in the Scriptures respecting the reward which God will give to our works, we may be sure they never can be rewarded on the ground of merit, nor can we ever obtain life by the performance of them.

***~~2. It encourages people to disregard good works—~~***

If this objection were founded in truth, we would think it sufficient to invalidate all that the Apostle himself could say in confirmation of the text: for we may be well assured, that God can reveal nothing that in its consequences is destructive of morality. But why would it be thought injurious to good works, to affirm, that they cannot justify us before God? Is there no other end for which they would be performed, than to purchase Heaven by them? Are they not necessary to prove the sincerity of our faith? Do they not honor God, and benefit our fellow-creatures, and strengthen the religious principle within us, and tend to make us fit for Heaven, yes, and (as has been observed above) increase our happiness in Heaven?

If we affirm that food is of no use to clothe us, or that clothes are of no use to feed us, do we teach men to despise food and clothing, merely because we deny their utility for purposes for which they never were designed? Surely there are motives enough to the practice of good works, without urging one, which, if entertained in the mind, would at once destroy all their value in the sight of God.

But let us see whether *experience*gives any countenance to this objection. Were Abraham, David, Paul, regardless of good works, because they believed that they must be justified by faith without works? Were those who are so justly celebrated for their faith in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, inattentive to good works, when they chose the most cruel torments, and even death itself, in preference to an accusing conscience? We may even appeal to you respecting those of our own day: Who are they that are condemned for their strictness and sanctity? those who exalt the merit of good works, or those who maintain justification by faith alone?

See then how little reason there is for this objection.

***~~In fine, we shall address a few words,~~***

***~~1. To those who are yet cleaving to the law of works—~~***

None but those who are taught of God, can conceive how prone we are to self-righteousness, or how subtle are its workings in the heart. We may accede to every idea that has been suggested, and yet be secretly founding our hopes on something that we have done, or that we intend to do; or, which is the same in effect, seeking to recommend ourselves to Christ, that he may become our Savior.

We entreat you, brethren, to he on your guard, lest, after all your good wishes and desires, you be proved to have built upon a foundation of sand, and be left to inherit your own deserts.

***~~2. To those who embrace the law of faith—~~***

Much depends on your conduct: the eyes of the world are upon you; and they will be ready to spy out every blemish in you, in order to justify their rejection of your sentiments. Others may commit a thousand sins, and escape censure; but, if you are guilty of anything amiss, all mouths are open, not against you only, but against your principles, and against all who maintain them. We say then, with the Apostle, "Let those who have believed, be careful to maintain good works."

Be much on your guard, that you "give no occasion to the enemies to speak reproachfully:" but rather endeavor to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men by well-doing." Thus will you "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior," and give a practical refutation of the calumnies that are circulated respecting you.

***~~#1835~~***

***~~FAITH ESTABLISHES THE LAW~~***

**[Romans 3:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.31).**

"Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith?

Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law."

A GENERAL prejudice obtains against the way of salvation by faith: but it prevailed equally even in the apostolic age. Paul himself saw that his statement of the Gospel did not escape censure. He perceived that it was deemed injurious to the interests of morality; he therefore anticipated and answered this objection.

To bring the subject fully before you, I will propose for your consideration three things:

the objection made,

the objection obviated,

the objection retorted.

***~~I. The objection MADE—~~***

People suppose we make void the law through faith; but the truth, however clearly we may state it is, for the most part, misapprehended. In explaining salvation by faith we affirm two things concerning the law:

***~~1. That the law has no power either to condemn or to justify a believer—~~***

It cannot *condemn*him, because Christ has redeemed him from its curse, [Galatians 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.13).

It cannot *justify*him, because he has transgressed it, and its demands of perfect obedience are unalterably the same.

Faith in Christ delivers him from the penal sanctions of the law, but does not in any respect lower its demands.

***~~2. That his obedience to the law makes no part of his justifying righteousness—~~***

Faith and works, as grounds of justification, are opposite to each other, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6). If our works had any share in our justification, we would have a ground of boasting; which is utterly to be excluded, [Romans 3:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.27). The smallest reliance on our works makes void all hope by the Gospel, [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2); [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4). All dependence therefore on the works of the law must be entirely renounced.

These affirmations evidently exclude morality from the office of justifying. They are therefore supposed to discountenance all practical religion; but this mistake originates in the ignorance of the objectors themselves.

This will be seen, while we notice,

***~~II. The objection OBVIATED—~~***

The believer, so far from making void the law, establishes it. The power of the law is twofold:

to command obedience,

to condemn for disobedience.

The believer establishes the law in each of these respects:

***~~1. In the law's COMMANDING power:~~***

He owns its absolute authority over him as God's creature; all his hope is in the perfect obedience which Christ paid to it for him; he looks upon his obligations to obey it as increased, rather than vacated, by the death of Christ; he actually desires to obey it as much as if he were to be justified by his obedience to it.

***~~2. In the law's CONDEMNING power:~~***

He acknowledges himself justly condemned by it: he founds his hope in Christ as having borne its curse for him: his own conscience cannot be pacified but by that atonement which satisfied the demands of the law: bereft of a hope in the atonement, he would utterly despair: he flees to Christ continually "to bear the iniquity of his holiest actions."

Thus he magnifies the law, while the objector himself, as I will now prove, makes it void.

To see this more fully, consider,

***~~III. The objection RETORTED—~~***

The person who objects to salvation by faith alone, is in reality the one who makes void the law. Objections against the doctrine of faith are raised from a pretended regard for the law; but the person who blends faith and works effectually undermines the whole authority of the law. He undermines,

***~~1. The law's commanding power—~~***

He is striving to do something which may serve in part as a ground of his justification; but he can do nothing which is not imperfect; therefore he shows that he considers the law as less rigorous in its demands than it really is: consequently he robs it in a measure of its commanding power.

***~~2. The law's condemning power—~~***

He never thoroughly feels himself a lost sinner; he does not freely acknowledge that he might be justly cursed even for his most holy actions; he even looks for justification on account of that which in itself deserves nothing but condemnation: and what is this but to lower its condemning power?

Thus the advocates for the law are, in fact, its greatest enemies; whereas the advocates for the Gospel are the truest friends to the law also!

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How absurd is it for persons to decide on religion without ever having studied its doctrines!~~***

In human sciences men forbear to lay down their dogmas without some previous knowledge of the points on which they decide; but *in theology, all, however ignorant, think themselves competent to judge*. They indeed, who are taught of God, can judge; but unenlightened reason does not qualify us to determine. Let us beware of indulging prejudices against the truth. Let us seek to be "guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit."

***~~2. How excellent is the salvation revealed to us in the Gospel!~~***

Salvation by faith in Christ is exactly suited to man's necessities. It is also admirably calculated to advance the honor of God. Every man that is saved magnifies the law, and consequently the lawgiver. The *commanding*and *condemning*power of the law are equally glorified by the sinner's dependence on the obedience and sufferings of Christ: but in those who are condemned, its sanctions only are honored. Thus is the law more honored in the salvation of one, than in the destruction of the whole human race. Let all then admire and embrace this glorious salvation!

***~~#1836~~***

***~~JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE~~***

***~~[Romans 4:1-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.1-8).~~***

"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but not before God. What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

THE mind of man, however open to conviction from the plain deductions of reason, is susceptible of peculiarly strong impressions from that species of argument, which, at the same time that it addresses itself to his intellect, has a tendency to engage his feelings, and to enlist his prejudices in its favor.

All the prejudices of the Jews were in favor of *Abraham*their father, and of *David*, the greatest of their monarchs, and one of the most distinguished of their prophets: and, if the conduct of these two could be adduced as precedents, there would need but little further argument to convince a Jew, that the thing which was so recommended was right.

Of this prejudice Paul availed himself in the passage before us. He had proved, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the justification of a sinner was, and must be, solely by faith in Christ: he had proved it from the guilty state of all, whether Jews or Gentiles, (which precluded a possibility of their being justified by any works of their own [Romans 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.20);) and from the Lord Jesus Christ having been sent into the world to make an atonement for sin, and thereby to reconcile the demands of justice with the exercise of mercy. He had shown, that this way of salvation cut off all occasion of boasting, and was equally suited both to Jews and Gentiles; and that, instead of in validating the law, as at first sight it might appear to do, it did in reality establish the law.

Having thus proved his point by *argument*, he now comes to confirm it by *example*; and he adduces such examples, as the Jews could not but regard as of the highest authority.

We must bear in mind what the point is which he is endeavoring to maintain: it is, That the justification of the soul before God is not by works of any kind—but simply, and solely, by faith in Christ. This he proceeds to prove from the examples,

***~~I. Of Abraham—~~***

What (he asks) did Abraham, the great progenitor of the Jewish nation, find effectual for his salvation? This he answers,

***~~1. By an express declaration of Holy Writ—~~***

The manner in which he appeals to the decision of Scripture is well worthy of notice. *"What does the Scripture say?"* It matters little, what this or that man may say: we must abide by what God has spoken. His word shall stand, though the whole universe would rise up to contradict it. On Scripture therefore we must found our sentiments, and on that alone: if men speak according to his word and testimony, it is well: "if not," whatever may be their pretenses to wisdom, "there is no light in them, [Isaiah 8:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.20)."

Now the Scripture declares, that "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, [Genesis 12:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 12.1-3) with 15:5, 6." In the passages referred to, there were two promises made to him: the one was, that one particular "seed would be given to him, in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed;" and the other was, that a spiritual seed would be given him, who would be as "numerous as the stars of Heaven." These promises he firmly believed; and so believed them, as actually to repose all his hope and trust in that promised Seed, who was to be the Savior of the whole world. "This faith of his was counted to him for righteousness;" or, in other words, this Savior, on whom his faith reposed, was made the source of righteousness and salvation to his soul.

This particular declaration of Holy Writ is referred to by the Apostle a great many times, on account of its singular importance: but, as its importance will more fully appear in the sequel of our discourse, we shall proceed to notice how Paul answers his own question.

***~~2. By arguments founded upon Scripture~~***

He justly observes, that, when the Scripture thus represents Abraham as justified by faith all works are of necessity excluded from any participation in the office of justifying: for if it is supposed that a man is justified, either in whole or in part, by his works, his reward would come to him as a debt, and not as a gift. However great the distance maybe between the work and the reward, it will make no difference with respect to this point: if the work be proposed as the ground of the reward, and be performed in order to merit that reward, then is the reward a debt which may be justly claimed, and cannot with justice be withheld.

Moreover, if works be thus admitted as purchasing or procuring the reward, then may the person who performs them have a ground of boasting in himself: he may say with truth: This I earned; this I merited; this could not justly have been withheld from me. But had Abraham any such ground of boasting? No! the Scripture denies that he had, in that it ascribes his salvation, not to any righteousness of his own, but to a righteousness imputed to him, and apprehended by faith alone.

But while the Apostle argues thus strongly and incontrovertibly on the passage he has cited, we must not overlook the peculiarly forcible language which he uses, and which, if it had not been used by him, we would scarcely have dared to use. In declaring who the person is that is thus justified, he tells us that it is the person "who works not" (with a view to obtain justification by his works), but "believes on him who justifies the ungodly."

Of course the Apostle is not to be understood as saying, that the justified person will *continue*"ungodly," or that he will "not work," after he has been justified; but only as saying, that he does not work with a view to obtain justification, or come as a godly person to receive a recompense: in coming to the Savior, he will bring nothing but his sins with him, in order that he may be delivered from them, and obtain a saving interest in the Redeemer's righteousness, in which he may be clothed and stand before God without spot or blemish.

But still the terms are such as to mark with the utmost force and precision, that, from the office of justifying, works must be for ever excluded; and that we must, like Abraham, be justified by a righteousness not our own; a righteousness which cuts off all occasion of boasting, and which makes our salvation to be altogether of grace!

But, as to the Apostle's arguments several **OBJECTIONS**may be made, we will endeavor to state and answer them.

***~~1. This statement of Abraham's being justified by faith is directly contradicted by James—~~***

James, it is true, does say that Abraham was justified by his works; and specifies the offering up of his son Isaac as the work for which he was justified: and further declares, that in that act the passage quoted by Paul received its accomplishment, [James 2:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.21-23). But here is no opposition between the two Apostles; as the scope of the context in the two passages will clearly evince.

*James is evidently speaking of the difference between a living and a dead faith; and he shows that Abraham clearly proved his to be a living faith, by the fruits it produced,*[James 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.18).

But *Paul is speaking of the way in which Abraham was justified before God*: and the faith whereby Abraham was justified, was actually exercised forty years before the time that James speaks of. The faith by which Abraham was justified was exercised twenty years before Isaac was born. See [Genesis 15:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 15.5-6). And we suppose Isaac to have been at least twenty years old when his father offered him up; which we consider as a decisive proof of these two things, namely, that *Abraham was justified (in Paul's sense of that term) by faith without works*; and next, that James did not intend to contradict Paul, but only to guard his doctrines from abuse.

***~~2. Though it was not for offering up his son that God justified Abraham—yet it was for another act of obedience, namely, his submitting to circumcision—~~***

This idea is entertained by many, who oppose the doctrine of justification by faith alone: but it is as erroneous as that before stated: for Abraham had no son at all, when he exercised faith in God's promises, and by that faith was justified before God: and he had waited some years in expectation of the promised seed, before Sarah gave him her servant Hagar to be his wife, [Genesis 16:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 16.3); and Ishmael was thirteen years old when God renewed his covenant with Abraham, and enjoined him the use of circumcision: so that, in this, as in the former case, *Abraham was justified many years before the act took place for which our objector would suppose him to be justified*.

This is so important an observation, that Paul, in the verses following our text, dwells upon it with all the emphasis imaginable verse 9-11 with [Genesis 17:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 17.23); deducing from it a truth which is of infinite importance to us, namely, that, *as Abraham was justified in his uncircumcised state, he is as truly the father of us uncircumcised Gentiles, as he is of his lineal descendants, the circumcised Jews*.

***~~3. If we are constrained to acknowledge, as indeed we must, that Abraham was justified by faith without works—yet that was a personal favor to him on account of the extraordinary strength of his faith, and not to be drawn into a precedent for us—~~***

But this also is as erroneous as either of the foregoing objections: for though it is certain that he is celebrated above all men for the strength of his faith, and that the exercises of his faith are recorded to his honor—yet it is expressly affirmed by Paul, that "it was not written for Abraham's sake alone, that faith was imputed to him for righteousness, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him who raised up Jesus from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification, verse 20-25."

Having thus considered the example of Abraham, we proceed to notice, that,

***~~II. Of David—~~***

The passage which Paul adduces from the Psalm of David, in confirmation of his argument, is peculiarly deserving of our attention, [Psalm 32:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 32.1-2).

***~~In the words themselves, we, if not directed by an inspired Apostle, would not have found any decisive evidence of justification by faith alone—~~***

There is nothing in it respecting imputation of righteousness, but only of a non-imputation of sin. That non-imputation, or forgiveness of sin, might, for anything that appears in that passage to the contrary, be obtained by works: for there is nothing said about faith in Christ, or indeed about faith at all. Moreover, the words, as they stand in the psalm, and are followed by what is spoken of an honest spirit, seem to intimate the very reverse of what Paul has deduced from them, namely, that a man, who, in consideration of his honest spirit, has his infirmities forgiven, is a blessed man.

***~~But Paul has, by Divine direction, put a sense upon them which beyond all possibility of doubt determines the question before us—~~***

He tells us, that David in this passage "describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works." Here it is not possible to shut our eyes against the doctrine of imputed righteousness. We do not approve of taking one or two particular expressions, and giving them in our discourses a prominence and importance which they do not hold in the inspired volume. But we equally disapprove of keeping out of view any doctrine which is clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures: and we must say, that the doctrine of "righteousness imputed to us without works," is more clearly taught here, than if it had been maintained in a long and elaborate course of argument; because it is introduced so incidentally, and because the Apostle goes, if we may so speak, so much out of his way on purpose to introduce it. To introduce it, he represents David as saying, what (in words) he did not say; and he omits some very important words which he actually did say. It is observable, that Paul stops short in his quotation, and leaves out those words of David, "and in whose spirit there is no deceit." And why did he omit them? We apprehend, for this reason. If he had inserted them, he might have been supposed to countenance the idea, that, though we are justified by faith—yet it is not by faith only, but by faith either as connected with an honest spirit, or as productive of an honest spirit: whereas we are justified by it, not as united with holy dispositions, nor as an operative principle in the soul, but simply and solely as apprehending Christ, in and through whom we are justified.

Thus by a remarkable addition, and by a no less remarkable omission, he brings the words of David to bear upon his point, and to prove what is of incalculable importance to every soul of man.

We would earnestly wish these words of David to be understood in their full import, as declaring explicitly, that *we are to be justified by a righteousness not our own, nor obtained by any works of ours; but by a righteousness imputed to us, and apprehended entirely by faith*, even by the "righteousness of Christ, which is unto all, and upon all those who believe [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22)."

***~~From hence then we may see, how incontrovertibly the doctrine of justification by faith alone is established; and,~~***

***~~1. How far the doctrine of "justification by faith" is from being a new doctrine—~~***

Wherever this doctrine is preached, a clamor is raised against it, just as it was in the Apostle's days, [Acts 17:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 17.19), as a "new doctrine:" but let any one look into our Articles and Homilies, and see whether it be not the doctrine of our Church. It is that very doctrine which constituted the basis of the Reformation! Then let us go back to the apostolic age: Can anyone read the epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and doubt what *Paul*thought of it? If we go farther back, to *David*and to *Abraham*, we see that they sought salvation in no other way than simply by faith in Christ. We may go farther back still, even to *Adam*, whose views were precisely the same, and who had no hope but in "the Seed of the woman, who would bruise the serpent's head."

*There has been but one way of salvation for fallen man from the beginning of the world: nor shall there be any other as long as the world shall stand!*[Acts 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.12). If it is new in any particular church, the fault is not in him who preaches it, but in those who have preceded him, who have neglected to preach it. Dismiss then this prejudice; and receive the glad tidings of a Savior with all the joy and gratitude that the occasion demands.

***~~2. How far the doctrine of "justification by faith" is from being an unimportant doctrine—~~***

Many who do not reject the doctrine itself—yet consider it as a merely speculative doctrine, a mere strife of words. But our reformers did not so think it, when they sealed the truth of it with their blood. Nor did Paul think it so, when he denounced a curse against any man, yes even against any angel from Heaven, that would attempt to establish any doctrine that interfered with it! [Galatians 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.8-9). See how strongly he guards us against any dependence whatever upon our own works, as entirely invalidating the whole Gospel, and destroying utterly all our hope in Christ, [Galatians 5:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2-4).

It was owing to the aversion which the Jews had to this doctrine, that so few of them were saved; while the Gentiles, who felt less difficulty in submitting to it, were brought in vast multitudes into the kingdom of our Lord, [Romans 9:30-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-32). Know then, that this doctrine of justification by faith alone without works, is absolutely necessary to be received, and known, and felt, and gloried in; and that if we build on any other foundation, we must inevitably and eternally perish! [1 Corinthians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11).

***~~3. How far the doctrine of "justification by faith" is from being a discouraging doctrine—~~***

Another calumny generally circulated respecting justification by faith, is that it is an alarming and terrifying doctrine, and calculated not only to bewilder weak persons, but even to deprive them of their senses. But the very reverse of this is true. Doubtless, before that this doctrine can be received aright, a man must be made sensible that he is in a guilty and undone state, and incapable of effecting his own salvation by any works of righteousness which he can do: but when once a person is brought to that state, the doctrine of a full salvation wrought out for him by Christ, and freely offered to him "without money and without price," is replete with consolation: it is marrow and fatness to the soul; "it is food indeed, and drink indeed."

Look at the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, and see the effect of this doctrine upon them, [Acts 2:46-47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.46-47). Look at the Ethiopian Eunuch, and at the whole city of Samaria, when Philip had preached it to them, [Acts 8:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.8); [Acts 8:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.39); and then you will see the proper tendency of the doctrine, and the sure effect of it wherever it is received.

If any works of ours were required to purchase salvation, that doctrine might well drive men to despair: for, it would be like telling the wounded Israelites, when they were in the very article of death, to perform some arduous feats in order to procure their restoration to health; or rather, like telling the dead to raise themselves in order to their enjoyment of life. But the erection of the brazen serpent, that the dying might look unto it and live, is a lively emblem of that salvation which is offered to the world through faith in a crucified Redeemer. The more pungent is the grief which any feel on account of their guilt and helplessness, the richer is the consolation which will flow into their souls the very instant they believe the glad tidings of the Gospel!

***~~4. How far the doctrine of "justification by faith" is from being a licentious doctrine—~~***

There is no end to the calumnies raised against this doctrine, and against all who maintain it. The preachers of it, even those who are most sober, and most guarded, and most practical, are always represented as saying, that, if only men will believe, they may live as they please. But there is nothing more contrary to truth than such a representation as this. We always affirm that *though works are excluded from the office of justifying the soul, they are indispensably necessary to prove the sincerity of our faith; and that the faith which is not productive of good works, is no better than the faith of devils*.

Then, as to the actual effects which are produced by this doctrine, look back to our reformers: look back to Paul, the great champion of this doctrine: look back to David, and to Abraham, and to all the saints recorded in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews; or if you wish for living examples, look to thousands who maintain and glory in this blessed doctrine. We will appeal to matter of fact: who are the persons that in every place are spoken of as precise, and righteous overmuch, and as making the way to Heaven so strait that nobody can walk in it? Are not these the very persons, even these who maintain salvation by faith alone?

That there are some who do not *adorn*this doctrine, is true enough: and so there were in the apostolic age. But do we not bear our testimony against them, as well as against the self-righteous despisers of the Gospel, yes, with far greater severity than against any other class of sinners whatever?

Be it remembered then, that the Gospel is "a doctrine according to godliness;" and that "the grace of God which brings salvation teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world." And we now declare before all, that those who profess the Gospel in words, and deny it in their works, will have a less tolerable portion in the day of judgment than Tyre and Sidon, or even Sodom and Gomorrah!

***~~#1837~~***

***~~THE PARDONED BLESSED~~***

***~~[Romans 4:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.7-8).~~***

"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

My uniform rule has been, where passages in the Old Testament are cited in the New Testament (which in some instances occurs several times), to treat them only once. Here I deviate from my accustomed plan, because, in my Discourse on [Psalm 32:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 32.1-6), my object was to trace David's experience as was there delineated: whereas the two first verses of that Psalm which are here cited, being of singular importance in relation to Christian experience in general, I treat them here again.

To enter into the real scope of these words, it will be proper to compare them with the Psalm from whence they are cited. In themselves, they are simple, and easy to be understood: but taken in their connection with the context before us, and with the interpretation put upon them by the Apostle—they are involved in considerable difficulty: and more especially, when we observe the peculiar omission of the closing words of David, which seem necessary to a proper exhibition of his mind, and a full comprehension of his meaning, we are rather surprised at the way in which they are here referred to, and at the obscurity that is thrown around them.

On comparing the two passages together, we find the Apostle, in appearance at least, adding to David's words what he never distinctly uttered, and omitting a very essential part of what he did utter. Yet the Apostle spoke by inspiration of God; and if we attentively consider his statement, we shall not only find it unexceptionable, but shall feel greatly indebted to him for throwing much additional light upon a most interesting and important passage of Holy Writ.

To unfold these words so that they may be clearly and fully understood, I will,

***~~I. Explain their true import—~~***

This will appear if we consider David's words,

***~~1. According to the plain meaning of the terms themselves—~~***

"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered." It is an acknowledged truth that sin, by whoever committed, involves the soul in guilt, and subjects it to God's heavy displeasure. And how terrible his wrath is, no words can express, no imagination can conceive. But, if a man has attained the forgiveness of his sins, his obligation to punishment is cancelled, and he is liberated from all the miseries to which, without such forgiveness, he must have been subjected to all eternity.

Who that contemplates this great deliverance, must not congratulate the man on his escape? Who must not account him "blessed?" To have the punishment due to his offenses mitigated, or to have them shortened to the space of ten thousand years, would be a state of comparative blessedness; but to have it altogether remitted, must surely entitle the man to conceive of himself as truly "blessed!"

***~~2. According to the construction put upon them by Paul—~~***

Paul says, that David in these words "described the blessedness of the man, to whom God imputes righteousness without works, verse 6." Now this does not appear in the words themselves, nor would we ever have known that such an idea was comprehended in them, if we had not been assured of it by God himself, that is, by an Apostle writing under his immediate inspiration. But, being so instructed, we know for certain that this construction of the words is unquestionably correct.

The fact is, that *no one ever has his sins pardoned without having at the same time the righteousness of Christ imputed to him for his acceptance before God*. We sometimes distinguish between the active and passive righteousness of Christ, as if his death atoned for our sins, and his obedience to the law constituted a meritorious righteousness, to be made over to us in a way of imputation, [Romans 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.19); and this may perhaps be warranted by what is said by the Apostle, "Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin (a sin-offering) for us, that we (who neither had, nor could have, any righteousness of our own) might be made the righteousness of God in him, [2 Corinthians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.21)."

But whatever ground there may appear to be in Scripture for this distinction, the two can never be separated from each other: the whole of Christ's life and sufferings constituted his one obedience unto death, by which salvation, in its full extent, was purchased for us, [Philippians 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.8); and he who partakes of salvation, receives it, not in part only, but in the full extent to which it has been obtained for him.

It is obvious that a man whose iniquities stood in need of pardon, could not purchase Heaven by any merits of his own. He could neither possess, nor procure by any works of his own, a perfect righteousness wherein to stand before God. Yet such a perfect righteousness he must have: and if he ever possess such a righteousness, it must be, by having the righteousness of another imputed to him. When therefore the Apostle quotes the words of David, he puts upon them the true construction which they were designed to bear: for though David, in words, speaks only of a non-imputation of sin, he must of necessity be considered as speaking also of an *imputation of righteousness*without works, seeing that the one is of necessity involved in the other, and can never exist without it.

Now then take the words of David in this sense, and say whether that man who is clothed in the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, and so covered, that God himself cannot behold a spot or blemish in him, be not "blessed! [Ephesians 5:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.27)." Surely it is impossible to entertain a doubt of this, or to withhold for a moment our assent to David's assertion, according to the construction put upon it by the Apostle Paul.

***~~3. According as they stood associated in David's mind—~~***

David says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit." But these concluding words the Apostle entirely omits. What was his reason for this? Did Paul conceive that any man who was not purged from "deceit" could be happy? Or had he less jealousy on the subject of holiness than David? Why then did he stop short, and quote the words of David in such an imperfect way? Did he act thus by accident only, or by design? Surely this matter needs explanation.

I doubt not but that he acted thus by design, exactly as our blessed Lord himself did in his first sermon that he ever preached, when, in citing the words of the Prophet Isaiah, he stopped short, when he came to the words which were irrelevant to his present subject, and never mentioned them at all. Compare [Isaiah 61:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.1-2) with [Luke 4:17-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 4.17-19), where our Lord stopped short in the middle of the sentence, omitting all mention of "vengeance" when he wished to impress his hearers with nothing but the words of "grace."

The Apostle was engaged in a most important topic, and establishing by argument the doctrine of justification by faith without works. He had shown that Abraham, who had so abounded in good works, had nothing whereof he could boast, and that he had been justified solely by faith in the promised Seed, verse 1-3. He proceeds then to establish the same doctrine from the words of David, who had pronounced that man blessed, not whose good works could avail, whether in whole or in part, for his justification before God, but, "whose transgressions were forgiven, and whose sins were covered;" and who, consequently, if saved at all, must be saved by a righteousness imputed to him.

But, if the Apostle had proceeded to cite the remaining words of David, he would have obscured his argument, and given occasion to an adversary to misrepresent, or at all events to misunderstand, his meaning. An adversary, if the last clause of David's words had been inserted by Paul, might have said, 'I agree with you, Paul: we are to be justified by faith: but then it is not by faith as apprehending the righteousness of another, but by faith as working out a righteousness for itself; or, in other words, not by faith without works, but by faith as an active, operative, sanctifying principle: and the person who possesses and exercises such a faith, has somewhat of his own to glory in.'

Now this would have utterly subverted the Apostle's argument: and therefore the Apostle, not choosing to give occasion for any such objection to his statement, altogether omitted the words on which the adversary would have founded it. He could indeed easily have answered the objection: but he judged it best to cut off all occasion for it.

But David had no such reason for restraining his words; and therefore he gave full scope to what was in his mind: and knowing that the *justifying*office of Christ is never separated from the *sanctifying*office of the Holy Spirit, and that no man under the power of sin could be blessed, he added, "and in whose spirit there is no deceit." He knew it would be to no purpose that a man was *pardoned*, if he was not also *renewed*in the spirit of his mind.

Suppose Satan himself to be pardoned; suppose further, that he was admitted into Heaven; he could not be happy even there, unless he was made a new creature: for, being enslaved by all manner of evil dispositions, and under the influence of all his malignant habits—he would, though in Heaven, be a devil still; and consequently far from anything approximating to real blessedness.

The very essence of happiness lies in a conformity to the Divine image: and he only who possesses that, is happy. The truly blessed man, and the only man that can be called "blessed," is "the Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit."

The words of my text being thus explained, I proceed to,

***~~II. Confirm the sentiment contained in them—~~***

Here I speak without hesitation. The man thus justified through faith in Christ, and thus renewed by the Holy Spirit, is *blessed*. For,

***~~1. In him are all the wonders of redeeming love accomplished—~~***

What did the Father design in giving his only dear Son to take our nature upon him? What, but that we might be "saved from wrath through him, [John 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.16) and [1 John 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.10)."

And for what end did the Lord Jesus Christ shed his precious blood for us upon the cross, but "to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14)."

And for what purpose did the Holy Spirit come down and dwell in our hearts, but to transform us into the Divine image, and to "make us fit for the inheritance" which Christ has purchased for us!

Now in the person before described, all these things are already attained. His sins are pardoned: the robe of Christ's righteousness is put upon him, [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22); and he is "sanctified throughout in body, soul, and spirit, 1 Thessalonians 5:23." Is not he then "blessed?" If not, I only ask, where will you find a "blessed" man on earth?

***~~2. In him all the great ends of life are answered—~~***

For what has God preserved our souls in life unto this hour, and given us so many opportunities for spiritual improvement? Has it not been that we might be brought to the knowledge of him, and into a state of acceptance with him, and to a conformity to his blessed image?

That God has assigned us many works to do, and many duties to perform, I readily acknowledge: but they are all in subserviency to the great work of salvation. That is "the one thing needful:" and whatever we may have done, or whatever we may have attained, without that, we have done nothing, and attained nothing.

Suppose us to have labored successfully, and acquired crowns and kingdoms, what would they be in comparison with pardon, and peace, and holiness? Ask Solomon, who possessed a greater measure of earthly joys than any other man, what he thought of them? He pronounced them all to be "vanity and vexation of spirit:" so far were they from rendering him truly "blessed." The man possessed of earthly things knows not how soon he may have to relinquish them, and to curse the day that he ever attained them: but the man whom David pronounces "blessed," is prepared for everything.

He is prepared either for life, or death.

If God see fit that he should *live*, he is prepared to fill up any station either of action or of suffering. In action, he will do everything for God's honor; and in suffering, he will receive it all as from God, and improve it all for the advancement of his soul's eternal welfare.

On the other hand, if God see fit to call him hence, he is ready to *depart*, at whatever hour his Lord shall call him. In fact, though willing to continue on earth his appointed time, "he is longing to be depart, that he may be with Christ." He numbers death among his richest treasures; and, in whatever shape it may come, he welcomes it, as Jacob did the wagons that were to bear him to the presence of his exalted and beloved Joseph.

I ask then now again, is not this man justly called "blessed?"

***~~3. In him is the felicity of Heaven already begun—~~***

Wherein does the blessedness of Heaven consist? Is it not in near access to God, in an assured consciousness of his love, and in an incessant ascription of praise to him? All this is begun in the believing and renewed soul. "God has shined into the heart of him whom he has pardoned and sanctified, and has revealed to him all the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6)." He even dwells in the bosom of the believer, and sheds abroad his love there, and enables him to "rejoice in the Savior with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory," that is, of the very same nature with that which the glorified saints and angels possess in Heaven. True, he enjoys these things but in part: but still the little he does enjoy, is both a pledge and a foretaste of what he shall one day be filled with to the utmost extent of his capacity for ever and ever!

It is needless that I pronounce him "blessed:" for I am well assured that there is not a soul here present that has not already anticipated me in this, and said, "O that I were *that*happy man!"

***~~Let me in conclusion address a few words to,~~***

***~~1. Those who are seeking their happiness in earthly things—~~***

I will suppose you to have attained all that mortal man can possess: find me in all the sacred volume one single passage that pronounces you blessed. Find me but one single passage, and I will say, "Go on, and prosper." But I need only appeal to your own experience. What has all that you have ever attained done for you? Has it made you truly happy? You know it has not. Nothing short of that state which we have before contemplated can make you happy. Seek then blessedness where alone it can be found. Seek it in a reconciled God and Savior. Seek it in a sense of his pardoning love, and in conformity to his mind and will. The creature, in its utmost fullness, is only "a cistern that will hold no water:" but in your Savior you shall find "a Fountain of living waters!"

***~~2. Those who profess to have attained the blessedness here spoken of—~~***

"What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conduct and godliness!" Do but look at the millions around you, who are yet unpardoned, unsanctified, unsaved! What do you owe to God, who has made such a difference between you and others, yes, and between you and your former selves! Surely there would be no bounds to your gratitude, no limits to your devotion to such a Benefactor.

***~~#1838~~***

***~~JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH NECESSARY TO THE HONOR OF GOD, AND THE HAPPINESS OF MAN~~***

***~~[Romans 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.16).~~***

"Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all."

TO many the doctrines of the Gospel appear mere arbitrary appointments; and justification by *works*seems as much entitled to our approbation as justification by *faith alone*. But the doctrines of the Gospel are grounded on absolute and indispensable necessity: we are shut up to them: we have no other ground of hope. After man had fallen, it was not possible that any law would be given him whereby he might regain his lost happiness. If such a law could have been devised, God would have given it in preference to the plan of salvation provided in the Gospel; as Paul tells us; "If there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law, [Galatians 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.21)." But a Savior was necessary; and justification by faith in him was necessary, indispensably necessary,

***~~I. For the honor of God—~~***

It is surely fit that God would have the undivided honor of all that he has done—

He has made the universe for the express purpose of glorifying himself in the works of his hands, [Revelation 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 4.11); and both the celestial and terrestrial bodies reflect upon him the honor due unto his name, [Psalm 19:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 19.1). In the various dispensations of his providence also God has respect to his own glory, "upholding all things by the word of his power," and ordering all things, even from the rise and fall of empires, to the preservation of a sparrow or the falling of a hair from our head! [1 Samuel 2:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.6-8). [Isaiah 45:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.5-7).

But, if in the works of *creation*and *providence*God has all the glory, shall he not much more have it in the work of *redemption?* Who first devised that wondrous work? The counsel of peace was between the Father and the Son from all eternity, [Zechariah 6:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 6.13). [Ephesians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.9). Who prevailed upon the Father to give his only Son out of his bosom to be our surety and substitute, and to accept his vicarious sin-atoning sacrifice in our behalf? All this was the result of God's "eternal purpose which he purposed in himself," "according to the counsel of his own will, and to the praise of the glory of his own grace, [Ephesians 1:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.9-12); [Ephesians 3:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.10-11)."

We may further ask also, How is it that this salvation is imparted to the souls of men? Do men attract his notice first by their own superior merits? Or do they of themselves begin to seek his favor? Does not God in every instance go before them with the blessings of his goodness; and of his own good pleasure give them "both to will and to do, [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.13)."

Now all this exercise of love and mercy is intended by God himself to show to the whole universe "the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus, [Ephesians 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.7)."

Is he then, or is he not, to have the glory of this work? *Is it fit, that, when he gives all, and his creatures receive all, the crown would be taken from his head, and be placed on the head of those, who, but for the superabundance of his grace, must all have perished like the fallen angels?*We think that, however prejudiced any may be against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, it is impossible for them not to see that man has no right to invade the prerogative of the Most High, and that "God cannot, consistently with his own honor, give his glory to another, [Isaiah 42:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.8)."

***~~But, if man's salvation be in any measure by works, God will not have all the glory of it—~~***

"Therefore is salvation by faith, that it may be by grace." Were it in any measure by works, it would become "a debt, and not a reward of grace, verse 4." Let but the smallest part of our reward be claimed as a debt, and there is an end of God's honor as the sole Author of our salvation.

Man imagines that he has a right to boast: indeed he cannot but boast: he cannot but say, I paid a price for this benefit: whether the price be equal in value to the benefit conferred, is nothing to the purpose: it was the price demanded; and the man who pays this price may claim the benefit, as having performed the terms on which that benefit was suspended.

To suppose that salvation can be of faith and of works at the same time, is absurd; the two are incompatible with each other: "If it is of works it cannot be of grace;" and "therefore it is of faith, that it may be by grace, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6)."

But justification by faith alone is yet further necessary,

***~~II. For the happiness of man—~~***

***~~If justification were by works, "the promise would be sure" to none—~~***

Consider what must be done to secure the promised benefit:

First, such a number of good works must be performed as shall be sufficient to purchase the remission of all our past sins. But who shall ascertain what measure of them shall suffice? Or who, if it were ascertained, shall perform them?

Next, such a number of good works must be performed as shall suffice to purchase eternal happiness and glory. And who shall tell us the amount of these that is required? Or who will undertake to pay the price? Whatever is paid to purchase mercy for other acts, must need no mercy for itself: and how many of such acts can you produce?

Nay further; it must be not only a perfect work, but a surplus of works; for if it is a work that has been enjoined, you are still only "an unprofitable servant; you have done no more than was your duty to do." What store of such works have you with which to purchase Heaven?

But you will say that God has mitigated the demands of his law, and is now satisfied with imperfect obedience. I ask, Where has he done so? and What is the measure of imperfection which he allows? Can you answer this? Can any human being answer it? But, for argument sake, you shall fix your own standard; you shall fix it where you please; and you shall be judged by nothing but your own law. Suppose that you have now fixed it; have you from the beginning observed in all things your own law? Have you come up truly and habitually to your own standard? if not, you must be condemned out of your own mouth.

Reduce the law to anything you please, to *sincerity*, if you choose it; and I then ask, Are you sincerely abstaining from everything which you believe to be evil, and doing everything which you believe to be pleasing unto God, from day to day, from month to month, from year to year? Are you willing to found all your hopes of salvation on your sincerity? Are you content that all the promises of mercy shall for ever fail you, if in any one instance you ever have been, or ever shall be, defective in your performance of these conditions? Will you look to this method of salvation to "make the promise sure?" Alas! there is no man that ever could, or ever can, stand on such a ground as this.

***~~But justification being by faith alone, the promise is sure to all who believe—~~***

To all who truly believe in Christ the promise is infallibly sure, whatever be their nation, their character, their attainments, their circumstances. The Jew and the Gentile are here perfectly on a level, [Romans 3:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.29); nothing is conceded on account of circumcision; nothing is withheld on account of uncircumcision: the righteousness of Christ shall be equally on the one or the other the very instant they believe in Christ! [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22). Nor will it make any difference whether they have been more or less sinful in times past. The blood of Christ is as sufficient to cleanse one, as another: the very man that nailed our Savior to the cross, or that pierced his side with the spear, may be as effectually delivered from his guilt, as any other sinner in the universe, provided he really and truly look to the Lord Jesus Christ to save him! For "all that believe, are justified from all things, [Acts 13:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.39)."

Moreover, babes in Christ have the promise as sure to them, as the young men or fathers have. Salvation is not suspended on the *strength*of our faith, but its *reality*; not on the time that it has been exercised, but on the simplicity and sincerity with which it is exercised. Hence John says, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake 1 [John 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 2.12)." It is not said here, that their sins shall be forgiven, when they have attained such an age; but, that they are even now already forgiven to them, notwithstanding their weakness and insufficiency.

We must go further still, and say, that, though the believer would be in the very article of death, and have no time left him for the performance of good works—yet would the blood of Christ, sprinkled by faith, cleanse him from all sin; and the righteousness of Christ, apprehended and applied by faith, shall justify him perfectly before God.

The *penitent thief*had reviled our Savior on the cross, no less than the impenitent one: yet, the very instant he cast himself on the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, he was accepted; and our Lord himself said to him, "This day you shall be with me in Paradise!" The promise being made to all who believe, it is as sure to the believer, as the power and veracity of God can make it.

***~~To improve this subject, we shall,~~***

***~~1. Guard the doctrine from abuse—~~***

That the doctrine of justification by faith may be abused, is certain: for so it was in the days of Paul himself, [Romans 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.1); [Romans 6:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.15). But truth is not therefore to be renounced because it may be perverted; but we must, as Paul himself did, hold fast the truth, and rescue it from those perversions to which it is exposed.

We have stated with all possible plainness, that we are to look for our justification solely by faith, without the smallest dependence on any works of our own. But are we therefore at liberty to neglect good works? Or can our final salvation be secured without them? Assuredly, in their place, good works are as necessary as faith itself: only we must take care not to confound their respective offices. The use of *faith*is, to apprehend Christ; and the use of *good works*is, to glorify Christ. In no other way can Christ be apprehended, than by faith; and in no other way can he be glorified, than by good works, [John 15:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.18). Now God has clearly pointed out the way in which his people must walk: and it is only by walking in that way that they can arrive at the mansions prepared for them, [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4); [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.10).

It is necessary therefore that we should cultivate all Christian virtues, adding one to another throughout their whole extent: and it is by this course of action that we are to "make our calling and election sure, [2 Peter 1:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.10-11)." Here we would particularly remind you, that the very same word which is used in my text by Paul in reference to faith, is used by Peter in reference to works. And how are we to explain this? Are we to set the two Apostles against each other? No! they are easily reconciled: Paul is speaking of faith as securing a saving interest in the promises; Peter is speaking of works as the appointed road in which we are to walk, and which alone will lead us safely to the kingdom of Heaven. As, on the one hand, without faith we can never be united unto Christ, or be partakers of his righteousness; so, on the other hand, if it produce not obedience, our faith will be of no more avail than the faith of devils! And this is exactly what James tells us, [James 2:14-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.14-20); as also does Paul in this very epistle, where he says, that "to those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, God will give eternal life! [Romans 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.7)."

If the Apostle therefore did not contradict himself, neither are we to consider the other Apostles as contradicting him, but only as affirming, that *in their place good works are necessary*, no less than faith is necessary in its place.

Behold then, while we maintain with all steadfastness the doctrine of justification by faith, we declare to all that the King's highway is the way of holiness, [Isaiah 35:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.8), and that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord! [Hebrews 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.14)."

***~~2. Commend it to your cordial acceptance—~~***

If you sought for nothing but present comfort, methinks you would without hesitation embrace the doctrine of salvation by faith. For at what comfort can a man ever arrive, who seeks salvation by his works? How can he ever get satisfaction on the subjects on which all his happiness depends? How can he know what is sufficient for his acceptance, and whether he has done what under his circumstances is sufficient? And, if he can never attain the knowledge of these things, in what sad uncertainty must he be held all his days respecting the final salvation of his soul!

Is it not a fearful thing to stand on the brink of eternity, and not to know whether we are going to Heaven or to Hell? The doctrine of justification by faith presents a clear and definite idea to the mind. Doubtless, in the lower stages of the divine life, there may be considerable suspense even there; because a person may not be certain that his faith is so simple and entire as it ought to be: but still he has a definite object in view, namely, to cast himself wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and to rely altogether upon him: and, though he may not have an assured confidence of his acceptance in Christ, he knows that it is as impossible for a man who flees to Christ to perish, as it is for God to lie: and this conviction is a source of unbounded consolation to his soul, [Hebrews 6:17-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.17-19). In this conviction he has "an anchor for his soul, both sure and steadfast"—an anchor which shall enable him to ride out in safety all the storms which either the world or Satan can raise against him.

But present comfort is but a secondary consideration. The question is, What will avail us at the day of judgment? What will secure to us the promise then? God has told us, that he has appointed salvation to be by faith for this very end. Will God then, who has declared, that, if we believe not on his Son we are condemned already, and that his wrath abides on us; will he, I say, reverse his sentence in favor of those who have proudly rejected the salvation which he offered them? This cannot be. Let me therefore entreat all to renounce all dependence on their own works, as Paul did on his, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9); and to seek salvation in that adorable Emmanuel, of whom it is said, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and in him shall they glory, [Isaiah 45:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.25)."

***~~#1839~~***

***~~Abraham's Faith~~***

***~~[Romans 4:20-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.20-25).~~***

"Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

THERE is no Christian grace, the lack of which is so much condemned in Scripture, or the exercise of which is so much applauded, as *faith*. In the Epistle to the Hebrews there is one whole chapter occupied in celebrating the saints that were distinguished for this grace. Among these *Abraham*makes a very conspicuous figure. In the chapter before us also the Apostle mentions this eminent trait in Abraham's character, and expatiates upon it in support of that, which it is the one scope of this whole epistle to establish, namely, *the doctrine of justification by faith alone*.

In opening the Apostle's words, we shall consider,

***~~I. The faith of Abraham—~~***

***~~This faith was most extraordinary—~~***

It had respect to two things, which God had promised him, namely, The birth of a son by Sarah, whose progeny would be numerous as the stars of Heaven [Genesis 15:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 15.4-6); and *the gift of one particular seed, in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed*, [Genesis 12:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 12.2-3); [Genesis 22:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 22.17-18). As incredible as these events appeared, he staggered not at God's promises relating to them; but was fully persuaded that they would be fulfilled in their season.

Considering his age and Sarah's, he being one hundred years old, and she ninety, there was no hope, according to the course of nature, that a child would be born unto them. But natural impediments were of no account with him: he knew that, whatever God would promise, he was able also to perform: and therefore, while "Sarah laughed" at the tidings in a way of unbelieving derision, Abraham laughed at them in a way of believing exultation. Compare [Genesis 17:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 17.17) with 18:12.

The gift of a Savior too to descend from his loins, a Savior in whom both his own soul, and the souls of all his *believing*posterity, would be blessed, he fully believed. Our blessed Lord himself assures us, that, at the distance of two thousand years, "Abraham saw his day, and was glad! [John 8:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.36)." Abraham knew himself to be a sinner before God, and consequently that he needed a better righteousness than his own, to procure him acceptance with God in the last day: and he believed that this promised Seed would work out a righteousness for him, a righteousness commensurate with his necessities, yes, and with the necessities of the whole world. "This Gospel was preached to Abraham" in the promise before us, [Galatians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.8), and on this he founded all his hopes, and placed the most unshaken affiance.

***~~By this faith he was justified before God—~~***

"This faith of his," my text informs us, "was imputed to him for righteousness." But what are we to understand by this? Was the mere act of faith made his justifying righteousness? No, assuredly not: for if it were so, "he had something to boast of;" which the Apostle assures us he had not verse 2.

Faith, as an act, is a work of our own, just as love, or any other grace is: and if he was justified by it in that view, he was justified by works, which no man ever was, or ever can be. No; it was *instrumentally*, as apprehending Christ, that faith justified him. In Christ alone his justifying righteousness was found: and it was by faith that he laid hold on this righteousness, and applied it to himself for the salvation of his soul. That is the righteousness which God has appointed to be received through faith in Christ, and which he has declared, "is unto all, and upon all, those who believe [Romans 3:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.21-22)."

Now the Apostle marks this point with peculiar jealousy and precision. It might be *supposed*that, because Abraham, in token of his *believing*the promise made to him, *obeyed*the command given him relative to circumcision, his obedience was meritorious, and was, in part at least, a ground of his justification before God.

But the faith by which he was justified existed many years before he was circumcised; and his circumcision was "a seal of that righteousness which he had long before possessed in his uncircumcised state:" and consequently, it was his faith only, and not any subsequent obedience, that justified him, verse 9-11. The moment he believed in Christ as the promised seed, that moment the righteousness of Christ was imputed to him, and he was justified by it in the sight of God.

Having distinctly considered the *faith*of Abraham, I proceed to state,

***~~II. The instruction to be derived from his faith—~~***

Though God was pleased to honor his servant Abraham by transmitting to posterity an account of his faith—yet this was not the only, or the principal, reason that induced him to record these things concerning Abraham. His chief intent was,

***~~1. To show us how all are to seek justification before God—~~***

Abraham believed in God as able to accomplish all that he had promised: and by this faith he was justified. Thus we are to believe in God as having already accomplished his promises, in having given up his Son to "die for our offenses," and having raised him from the dead as the author and pledge of our eternal justification. It is by the death of Christ, and through the prevailing intercession, which, in his exalted state, he makes for us, that we are to be reconciled to God. We must not for one moment dream of any other way of acceptance with God. If so eminent a man as Abraham was incapable of being justified by his works, then much more must we: and if he was necessitated to look to Christ in order to obtain salvation, then beyond all doubt we must stand indebted to the same Savior for all our hopes of happiness and glory.

***~~2. To assure us that, if we truly believe in Christ, we cannot fail of being justified—~~***

Abraham's views of Christ must assuredly have been very obscure: yet, as dark as they were, they availed for his justification before God. But we have an incomparably clearer knowledge of Christ: we see him in his *person*, *work*, and *offices*, and therefore have stronger ground for our faith in him. If we then receive the record of God concerning him, and rely fully upon him as "dying for our offenses, and as raised again for our justification," shall not we be accepted with God?

We need not fear. Our souls may appear as dead with respect to spiritual fruitfulness, as Abraham's and Sarah's bodies were with respect to their having a son and heir; and to the eye of sense it may appear as improbable that we would inherit the promise, as that they would; but if we believe, we shall soon find that "all things are possible to him who believes:" we shall have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us; and, being made heirs with Abraham, we shall be enabled to "walk in his steps, verse 12." on earth, and "sit down with him in the kingdom of our Lord in Heaven! [Galatians 3:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.6-9)."

***~~By way of conclusion, we would entreat you to reflect upon,~~***

***~~1. The folly and danger of self-righteousness—~~***

For what end did the Apostle take such pains to show us that the most eminent saints of old were not justified by their works, but to caution us the more strongly against trusting in our own works? Let us not imagine this to be a light matter: on this one point our everlasting happiness depends. If we will renounce all dependence on ourselves, and "submit to Christ's righteousness," we shall be saved: but if we will "go about to establish our own righteousness," either in whole or in part, we must inevitably, and eternally, perish! [Romans 9:30-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-32); [Romans 10:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.3).

***~~2. The value and importance of faith—~~***

The highest commendation imaginable is given to faith in the words before us. Two things are spoken of it, which would render it very precious in our eyes; it "gives the highest glory to God," and brings the richest benefit to man. Faith glorifies all the perfections of the Deity, in a far higher degree than any other grace whatever: and it saves the soul; which cannot be said of any other grace.

***~~Faith is the instrumental cause of our justification; all other graces are the fruits and effects of justification already imparted to us.~~***

Let us seek then to exercise faith, and to be "strong in faith:" and let us be well assured, that the more confidently we rely on the promises of God, the more certainly shall we laugh with holy exultation, and obtain a testimony from God that we were accepted in his sight.

***~~#1840~~***

***~~BENEFITS ARISING FROM A JUSTIFYING FAITH~~***

***~~[Romans 5:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.1-5).~~***

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

IT may excite surprise, that the Apostle would contend so earnestly for the doctrine of justification by faith alone, when on many other subjects he evinces a candor that might almost be construed into indifference. The eating of foods offered to idols; the observance of times and seasons which under the Jewish law were regarded as holy; yes, and even the practice of circumcision itself, if not set in opposition to the Gospel; were left by him to the discretion of men, to be used or neglected as they thought fit. But to receive the doctrine of justification by faith was not left to the option of any; nor was any alternative offered them, but to submit to it, or perish. This however was not without good reason, since it was not possible to substitute anything in the place of that doctrine, or to interfere with it in any degree, without making void the whole work of redemption. Moreover, by this doctrine such blessings were insured to man as could not be procured by any other means. Some of these the Apostle enumerates in the passage before us: and we shall consider them in the order in which they lie—

***~~I. A state of favor and acceptance with God—~~***

*Man, as a sinner, is exposed to the wrath of God, and is under a sentence of actual condemnation.* But being justified by faith in Christ, he is freed from guilt through the atoning sacrifice which has been offered for him, and is brought into a state of reconciliation with God. From the moment that he believes in Christ, "the anger of God is turned away from him;" and there remains, if we may so speak, no longer anything upon him, which can call forth the Divine displeasure against him: his sins are all washed away in the Redeemer's blood; and *he is clothed from head to foot in the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, so that in the sight of God he stands without spot or blemish*, [Ephesians 5:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.27). Jude, verse 24. Having thus perfect reconciliation with God, he has peace in his own conscience, even that "peace of God which passes all understanding."

Into this state "he has access by faith in Christ;" and in it "he stands," having this peace as an abiding portion. It is the very portion which Christ himself promised to all his faithful followers; "In me you shall have peace:" "My peace I give unto you." And hence the Lord Jesus bears, as his own peculiar title, that glorious name, "The Prince of Peace! [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6)."

Next, in succession to this blessing, is,

***~~II. A joyful hope of his glory—~~***

*The believer, being made a child of God, has become "an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ*, [Romans 8:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.17);" and he immediately begins to look forward to that inheritance to which he has been begotten, which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and never-fading; and is reserved in Heaven for them, as they are reserved by the power of God for it, [1 Peter 1:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.4-5)." To this inheritance our blessed Lord encouraged his disciples to have respect continually, and to anticipate in their minds the everlasting fruition of it: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also, [John 14:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.2-3)."

And accordingly we find the Apostle Paul sweetly assured of the possession of it, as soon as he would be liberated from this earthly tabernacle, [2 Corinthians 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.1). [Philippians 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.21); [Philippians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.23); and teaching all believers to expect the same portion at the period of their dismissal from the body [2 Timothy 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 4.8). Well may the believer rejoice in such a hope: for, what are earthly crowns and kingdoms in comparison with those to which he is heir! [Revelation 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.21).

While the believer receives such great benefits from Christ, he experiences,

***~~III. A delight even in tribulations for his sake—~~***

Tribulations must of necessity in themselves be painful: but as endured for Christ, they become a source and occasion of joy. The believer knows beforehand that he shall be called to suffer them, [1 Thessalonians 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 3.4); and he is prepared to glory in them, as the Apostles did, who, when they had been imprisoned and scourged for their fidelity to Christ, went forth from their persecutors, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake! [Acts 5:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.41)."

They know that their sufferings will be productive of present, no less than of eternal, benefit to their souls; that, though in the first instance tribulation may cause impatience, it will ultimately "work perseverance," by bringing him to a meek submission to the Divine will; from perseverance so increased, he will derive "experience," or a decisive evidence that God is with him, and that the grace of God has wrought effectually on his soul. By that experience his "hope" will be exceedingly confirmed; for he will see the very justice, as well as the truth, of God pledged to recompense what is so endured for his name's sake, [2 Thessalonians 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.6-7); and this "hope will never make him ashamed," as theirs will, who look for salvation in any other way than through faith in Christ.

Thus he will see that "his light and momentary afflictions are in reality working for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! [2 Corinthians 4:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.17-18);" and in this view of them he will greatly rejoice; even as Paul did, who took pleasure in his multiplied distresses, [2 Corinthians 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.10), and counted even the most cruel death for the sake of Christ and his Church as a subject of the most heartfelt congratulation, [Philippians 2:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.17-18). Instead of repining at his trials, he receives them as a most invaluable gift of God to him for Christ's sake, [Philippians 1:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.29), and glorifies God for them as a most precious testimony of his love, [1 Peter 4:12-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.12-16).

His enemies indeed "do not think so, neither do they mean so:" nothing is further from their hearts than to advance the work of godliness in the souls of those whom they persecute, and to augment their joy: but this is *the real effect of persecution, which, like fire, purifies them from their dross, and causes its victims to leap for joy*,[Luke 6:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 6.23).

To this elevated state of mind the believer is advanced by,

***~~IV. A sense of God's love shed abroad in the heart.~~***

This, as it is usually interpreted, is made to sanction the idea, that a sense of God's love in the soul is of itself a sufficient ground for an assurance, that our hope is truly scriptural, and shall never be disappointed. But such an idea would lead to the most fatal delusions. A most able and judicious commentator (Mr. Scott), aware of this danger, endeavors to remove it, by including in "the love of God shed abroad in the heart," all the fruits resulting from it.

But an easier, and, in the Author's judgment, a better way to get rid of the difficulty, is, to connect this clause of the text with those words in verse 3, "We glory in tribulations also;" the intermediate parts being taken parenthetically. Then the proper sense of these words may is given to them without any danger, and a beautiful light be thrown on the whole passage: for though the love of God in the heart is not of itself a sufficient evidence of the soundness of our hope, it is, beyond everything in the world, an incentive to glory in sufferings for the Lord's sake. We would read it thus: "We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

This is a blessing which, though not to be appreciated or understood by those who have never received it, is yet most assuredly enjoyed by many of God's chosen people. We scarcely know how to describe it, because it consists chiefly in an impression on the mind occasioned by manifestations of God's love to the soul. Nothing is more certain than that Christ will "manifest himself to his people, as he does not unto the world." This he will do by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who will "take of the things that are Christ's, and will show them unto us."

As "a spirit of adoption" too, he will give us views of the Father, as our Father in Christ Jesus: he will also "witness with our spirits that we are Christ's;" and will be in us as "a pledge of our everlasting inheritance;" and will "seal us unto the day of redemption."

By all these operations on our souls, he will "fill us with joy and peace in believing," yes, with "a joy unspeakable and full of glory!" This is in reality a foretaste of Heaven itself; and, where this is, a man, if he had a thousand lives, would be ready to lay them all down for his Lord and Savior, accounting nothing dear to him, so that "Christ might but be magnified in him, whether by life or death."

How persons have been transported with these manifestations, and been enabled by them to triumph over their most malignant enemies, ecclesiastical history, yes the history of our own martyrs, sufficiently informs us. This sense of the Divine presence and love is not indeed at all times equally powerful on the soul: but it is the privilege of all who flee unto the Savior as their only refuge, and rely upon him as their only hope.

***~~We would exhort you then, beloved,~~***

***~~1. To hold fast the doctrine of justification by faith alone—~~***

No other doctrine brings such blessings along with it. Hence, those who impugn this doctrine, pour contempt on all these effects of it, as delusions that have no reality, and as the creatures of a heated imagination. But we must discard the Scriptures themselves, if we discard these things from the experience of God's people: and therefore let none deprive you of your hope. Believe in Christ: make him "all your salvation, and all your desire." Dismiss with abhorrence every thought that tends to lower him in your estimation, or to rob him of his glory; and to the last hour of your lives "live altogether by faith in Him, who has loved you, and given himself for you."

***~~2. To seek the privileges connected with justification by faith alone—~~***

If any enjoy them not, the fault is utterly their own. Circumstances may interfere to put a difference between one and another, so that persons, equally pious, may not be equally full of peace and joy: and the same persons may sometimes experience a diversity of frames. But, generally speaking, these blessed exercises of mind will be found in men in proportion to the simplicity of their faith, and the entireness of their devotion to God.

All the persons in the blessed *Trinity*are engaged to make you thus blessed.

The *Father*lays his anger aside, and speaks peace to your souls.

The *Lord Jesus Christ*, as your Advocate with the Father, secures these blessings for you, and, as your living Head, imparts them to you.

And the *Holy Spirit*communicates to you all those exquisite delights, which the sense of God's love, and a prospect of his glory, are calculated to inspire.

Seek then the peace that passes all understanding; and the joyful "hope that purifies the heart:" and seek such an abiding sense of God's presence, as shall raise you above all the things of time and sense, and convert tribulation itself into a source of joy and a ground of glorying. Then will you adorn this doctrine of God our Savior; and will put to shame the enemies of the Gospel, by the transcendent efficacy of it upon your souls.

***~~#1841~~***

***~~THE BELIEVER'S SECURITY IN CHRIST~~***

***~~[Romans 5:6-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.6-10).~~***

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"

IT is pleasing to see with what delight the Apostle Paul dwells upon the transcendent excellency and unbounded love of our Lord Jesus Christ! Whatever he is insisting on, he is sure to introduce the Savior's name; and, when once he has introduced it, he scarcely knows when to leave the heart-reviving topic: and, if he has left it for a moment, he is ever eager to recur to it again. Hence the connection of his sentences is frequently remote; as we apprehend it to be in the instance before us.

We conceive that the proper connection of our text is with the two first verses of the chapter; in which the Apostle has spoken of Christ as the true and only source of our acceptance with God, and of that hope of the glory of God, which animates our souls. Then, after expatiating on the further benefits which we receive through him, he comes to state more explicitly, How it was that Christ procured these blessings for us; and, Why we may be assured of the ultimate possession of them. In this view of the text we shall be led to show,

***~~I. What Christ has done for us, as enemies—~~***

***~~Our state by nature is here justly described—~~***

We are "ungodly," we are "sinners," "enemies" to God and to all vital religion: at the same time, we are also "without strength," altogether impotent to that which is good. What a description is this! how humiliating! And yet how just!

***~~Yet, when we were in this state, did the Lord Jesus Christ undertake our cause—~~***

He assumed our nature, and in that nature died. Nor was it merely for our benefit that he died, but in our actual place and stead. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree," and suffered, "he, the Just, for us the unjust, 1 Peter 2:24; [1 Peter 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.18).

This may be illustrated by the substitution of the ram in the place of Isaac, [Genesis 22:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 22.13). We were exposed to the wrath of God; and that wrath he bore for us: "He became a curse for us, [Galatians 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.13)." The cup of divine which we must have been drinking to all eternity, he drank to the very dregs!

What a stupendous exercise of love was this!

Well may it be said, that God, in this act of mercy, "commends his love towards us:" for it is indeed such a display of love as finds no parallel in the whole universe. There could scarcely be found on earth, one person, who would consent to die in the place of another, who was confessedly "a righteous man," and just in all his dealings: though possibly there might be some who would lay down their lives for "a good man" who was eminently pious and useful in the world, See [Romans 16:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.4).

But who ever made such a sacrifice for his enemy? The utmost stretch of human affection is, "to lay down one's life for a friend, [John 15:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.13)." But such was not the love of Christ: "while we were yet sinners and enemies, He died for us! How different was this from all that ever occurred on earth, either before or since! If one man has ever died for another, it has been from the consideration of his being either peculiarly excellent in himself, or a great benefactor to others, or from a very high degree of friendship for him. But when Christ died for us, we, so far from having anything to recommend us to him, were ungodly in ourselves, and enemies to him." Truly this was "a love that surpasses knowledge;" a love, the heights and depths whereof can never be explored, [Ephesians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18-19).

From this love of Christ to his enemies the Apostle takes occasion to declare,

***~~II. What we may expect from Christ, as friends—~~***

Nothing can be plainer or more conclusive than the Apostle's argument, that, if Christ has already done so much for us under circumstances so unfavorable, then much more shall, whatever remains to be done for us, now that we are in a state of friendship with him—will assuredly be completed in due season.

To elucidate the force of this argument, we would call your attention to the following positions. If Christ would now abandon the work in which he has proceeded so far, and would leave his people to perish at last:

***~~1. He would defeat all his Father's counsels—~~***

The Father from all eternity predestined unto life a number of the human race, who therefore are called, "A remnant according to the election of grace, [Ephesians 1:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4-5); [Ephesians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.11). [2 Thessalonians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 2.13). [Romans 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.5)."

These he gave unto his Son [John 17:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.2); [John 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.6); [John 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.9); [John 17:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.11); [John 17:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.24); that he might redeem them by his blood, and have them as "his portion for ever and ever! [Isaiah 53:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.10)."

These in due time he calls by his word and Spirit; he adopts them into his family, transforms them into his image, and will finally exalt them to a participation of his glory.

That this counsel may be carried into effect, he commits them to his Son, that they may be kept by his power and grace, and "be preserved blameless unto his heavenly kingdom."

But if Christ would relinquish his care of them, and leave them ultimately to die in their sins, all these counsels would be defeated; and with respect to those who were so deserted, it would be said, "Whom he did predestine, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified," them he left to perish!! [Romans 8:28-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.28-30).

But shall God's purposes be so frustrated? Shall this golden chain of salvation, which reaches from eternity to eternity, be so broken? No! "Of those whom his Father gave him, he never did lose any, nor ever will [John 17:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.12)."

We do not say that he will save them and allow them to remain wedded to their sins. God forbid, that such a blasphemous idea would enter into the mind of any: but *from*their sins he will save them, [Matthew 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 1.21); and "through sanctification of the Spirit, [1 Peter 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.2)," "he will keep them from falling, and present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy! Jude verse 24."

***~~2. He would render void all that he himself had done—~~***

He has given up his own life a ransom for his elect people, and has actually reconciled them to God by his own obedience unto death. Can we conceive, that, after he has done all this, he would become indifferent to those whom he has thus redeemed? Will he be satisfied thus to shed his blood in vain? If he has "bought us with a price," will he be content to lose what he has so dearly purchased? After he has actually "redeemed us by his blood, and justified us," will he leave us to be condemned? Will he, now that nothing is lacking on his part, but to supply us with his grace, and to uphold us in his arms—will he, I say, relax his care of us, and leave us to perish? Having done the *greater*for us, when enemies—will he forbear to do the less for us, as friends? Having done the greater unsolicited—will he refuse to do the less when entreated night and day?

In the days of his flesh, notwithstanding all the obstacles in his way, he ceased not to go forward until he could say, "It is finished." And will he now leave his work unfinished? Having been "the Author of faith" to us, will he decline to be "the Finisher? [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)."

Justly does David argue, like the Apostle in our text: "You have delivered my soul from death; will not you then deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living? [Psalm 56:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 56.13)."

In like manner, we also may be "confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, [Philippians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.6)." Our great "Zerubbabel has laid the foundation of his house; and his hands will finish it! [Zechariah 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.9)."

***~~3. He would forget all the ends of his own exaltation—~~***

He is "exalted to be a Prince and a Savior! [Acts 5:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.31)," and to "put under his feet all his own, and his people's enemies, [1 Corinthians 15:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.25);" and do we suppose that he will neglect this work? After "having spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them openly upon the cross [Colossians 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.15)," will he, now that he is invested "with all power in Heaven and on earth" on purpose to complete his triumphs, give up the palm of victory, and allow Satan to rescue from his hands those, whom with such stupendous efforts he has delivered? It is not as a private person that Jesus has ascended, but as the "Forerunner" of his people, [Hebrews 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.20). Will he then forget those whom he has left behind? Will the Head be unmindful of his members, [Ephesians 5:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.30). And shall the first-fruits be waved, and no harvest follow, [1 Corinthians 15:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.20) with [Leviticus 23:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 23.10-11). "Living, as he does, on purpose to make intercession for us," will he forget to intercede, [Hebrews 7:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 7.25). And having all fullness treasured up in him for his Church, [Colossians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.19), will he forget to impart of it to those for whom he has expressly received it, [Psalm 68:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 68.18). As our High Priest, he must not only enter with his own blood within the veil, and there make continual intercession for us, but must come forth to bless his people, [Deuteronomy 10:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 10.8); and, having fulfilled his office thus far, will he now abandon it?

The Apostle had certainly no such apprehensions when he laid so great a stress on the resurrection of our Lord, as to make it more efficacious for the salvation of men, that even the whole of Christ's obedience unto death, [Romans 8:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.34). We may be sure, therefore, that as he, in his risen state, "is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him," so he will do it, and "will bring Satan himself shortly under their feet, [Romans 16:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.20)."

***~~4. He would falsify all his own great and precious promises—~~***

How express is that promise which he has made to all his sheep, that "none shall ever pluck them out of his hands! [John 10:27-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.27-30)." Will he be unmindful of this? or is he become so weak that he is not able to fulfill it? He said to his disciples, "You have not chosen me; but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you would go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit would remain, [John 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.16);" but how can this be true, if he allow them to become barren, and to be cut down at last as cumberers of the ground?

Why did he say, "Believe in God: believe also in me," if he meant, after all, to disappoint our confidence? Can we conceive, that, after comforting his disciples with the assurance that he was "going to prepare mansions in his Father's house for them, and would come again and receive them to himself, [John 14:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.2-3);" can we conceive, I say, that he would leave them to take up their abode in the regions of everlasting darkness and despair? No! he is "the Amen, the true and faithful Witness;" and "every promise that is made to us in him, is yes and Amen," as immutable as God himself, [2 Corinthians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.20).

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are inquiring after the way of salvation—~~***

Nothing can be more plain than the way of salvation, as it is marked out in our text. How must we "be reconciled to God? Through the death of his Son!" How must we be justified and saved from wrath? We must "be justified by his blood," and "saved from wrath through him." How, after having been reconciled to God by the death of Christ, must we finally attain complete salvation? We must be "saved by his life;" that is, we must from first to last live by faith in the Son of God, looking to his death as the meritorious ground of our acceptance, and to his renewed life in Heaven as the one source of all our stability, and the surest pledge of our eternal happiness.

But, it may be asked: Am I among the number for whom these blessings were purchased? If you are among the number of those who feel themselves "*ungodly*and *sinners*, and *enemies*to God, and *without strength*," then are you the persons for whom Christ died, and for whom he is improving every moment of his renewed life. What, I would ask, can be more plain than this? What room is here left for doubt?

Truly, if salvation is not altogether by Christ Jesus, that is, by the efficacy of his death, and the operation of his grace, Paul must have been the most incautious and erroneous writer that ever lived. But, if he was neither ignorant nor deceitful, then is the way of salvation so plain, that not any poor "way-faring man, even though he be a fool, can err therein." We charge you then, brethren, to flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you; and to "determine to know nothing as a ground of hope, but Jesus Christ and him crucified!"

***~~2. Those who, having sought for reconciliation through Christ, are afraid of being cast off, and left to perish—~~***

What is it that fills you with such fears as these? Is it on account of Christ that you are distressed? Or on account of your own weakness and unworthiness?

If you are afraid of Christ, what is it in him that you stand in doubt of; his power, or his willingness to save? Surely there can be no doubt on either of these points.

If your fears arise from a view of your own weakness and sinfulness, why would that prove a bar to your acceptance with him, which was, I had almost said, a reason for his dying for you, and which constantly calls forth his compassion towards you? True, if you *continue*ungodly, you have no hope: for "the unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God." But, if you desire truly to be delivered from all your corruptions, and to receive constant supplies of grace from him, then you may safely trust in him to carry on and perfect the work he has begun. He who first sought you, will not be sought by you in vain. He who bore your sins in his own body, will carry them all away into the land of oblivion. He who reconciled you to God, will maintain your peace with God. He who has completed everything as far as it depended on his death, will much more perfect what depends upon his life. Be strong then, and of good courage; and hold fast your confidence, and the rejoicing of your hope, firm unto the end.

***~~#1842~~***

***~~HAPPINESS OF THE MORE-ADVANCED BELIEVER~~***

***~~[Romans 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.11).~~***

"Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

THOSE remarkable words of the prophet, "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," are usually interpreted in reference to the future world: but Paul speaks of them as fulfilled to us under the Christian dispensation: for, having cited them, he adds, "But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit, [Isaiah 64:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.4) with [1 Corinthians 2:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.9-10)."*So great are the privileges and blessings which we enjoy under the Christian covenant, that no words can adequately express them, no imagination can fully conceive them*. We may say respecting them, what God said to Ezekiel respecting the abominations practiced by Israel in the chambers of imagery, that the oftener we search into them, the more and greater we shall find them, [Ezekiel 8:3-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 8.3-16). Truly, "the riches of Christ are unsearchable [Ephesians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.8)." This is strongly intimated by Paul in the passage before us.

He had expatiated on the blessings which we enjoy in, and by, Christ: "We have peace with God" by him; and through him are enabled to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Nay more, we are enabled to "glory in tribulations also," as the appointed means of perfecting the Divine work within us, and of fitting us for the glory which God has taught us to expect verse 1-3. But neither is this all: for God would have us rise above the mere consideration of our own happiness, even though it consists in a possession of all the glory of Heaven; and he would have our minds occupied with the contemplation of his infinite perfections, and "filled with all the fullness" of his communicable felicity, [Ephesians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.19). Hence the Apostle, declaring this to be the actual experience of the great body of the Church at Rome, says, "Not only is this so," (that is, we not only enjoy the fore-mentioned blessings,) "but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

In discoursing on these words, we shall be led to show,

***~~I. The happy state of believers in general—~~***

***~~The believer has now already received reconciliation with God—~~***

Reconciliation has been purchased for men by Christ's obedience unto death: and it is freely offered to them in the name of Christ, by those who go forth as his ambassadors to a guilty world: and it is accepted by those who believe their testimony, and embrace the offered salvation. It is on this account that the Gospel is called, "The ministry of reconciliation, [Deuteronomy 33:26-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.26-29)." Those who receive the glad tidings have all their iniquities blotted out from the book of God's remembrance. He is no more angry with them, as he was in their unbelieving state; but looks upon them as dear children, in whose happiness he will be eternally glorified. They are now privileged to regard him no longer as an angry Judge, but as a loving Father. Their state is precisely that of the Prodigal Son, after he had returned to his Father's house: they are freely forgiven for Christ's sake; nor shall so much as one upbraiding word be ever uttered against them. Their Father rejoices over them as restored to his favor, and delights to honor them with all suitable expressions of paternal love. Are not these persons truly blessed? [2 Corinthians 5:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.18-20).

***~~This is the state of every believer without exception—~~***

If a man has lived in sin for ever so many years, and have at last been led, with deep penitence and contrition, to the foot of the cross, this mercy is instantly given to him. The long-continuance of his former iniquities is no bar to his acceptance. The very first moment that he comes weary and heavy-laden to Christ, he finds rest unto his soul.

Neither does the enormity of a man's transgressions make any difference in this respect. He may have been as vile as ever David was; and yet, on coming truly to Christ, his iniquities shall all be pardoned, and it shall be said to him, "The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die!" "Though his sins may have been as crimson, they shall instantly become as white as snow! [Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.18)."

The healing virtue of the brazen serpent was not felt by those only whose wounds were of a less dangerous nature, but by those who were at the very point of death. Just so, shall a sight of our crucified Redeemer operate, however long the wounds of sin have been inflicted, or to whatever extent they may have brought death upon the soul.

We may add also, for the encouragement of the young, that, however weakly their infantile minds have embraced the truth, yet, if they be really sensible of their lost estate, and truly look to the Lord Jesus Christ as their only hope—then he will "take them up in his arms and bless them," and will "ordain praise for himself even in the mouth of babes and sucklings."

But the more immediate object of our text is, to set before us,

***~~II. The yet happier state of the more advanced believer—~~***

Every believer without exception receives reconciliation with God: but the advanced believer is yet more highly privileged. He has this blessing in common with others; but "not only so." No! he rises higher; he soars even to God himself; and "rejoices" and "glories in" God. It is the same word as is used in verse 3,

***~~1. As a God of all grace—~~***

*The more we are advanced in the divine life, the more deeply do we feel our own emptiness and utter helplessness.* This, we might suppose, would rather weaken and interrupt his joy: and so it would, if his views of God were not also proportionably enlarged. But he views God as "a God of all grace, [1 Peter 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.10);" and whatever grace he more particularly needs, he sees a fullness of it treasured up in his reconciled God for the supply of his necessities.

Does he desire peace? God is to him "the God of peace, [Hebrews 13:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.20)."

Would he abound in hope? God is to him "the God of hope, [Romans 15:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.13)."

Would he have an increase of patience and of consolation to support him under his diversified afflictions? God is to him "a God of patience and consolation, [Romans 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.5)."

In short, whatever the Christian needs, God is a God of it to him, not only as having an inexhaustible fullness of it in himself, but as, if we may so speak, made up of it, as if it were his only perfection.

What a joyful thought is this to the believer who is accustomed to seek his all in God, and to "live altogether by faith in the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him!"

***~~2. As his covenant God and Father—~~***

God, in the new covenant which he has made with us, has stated this as an inseparable provision of that covenant, that he will be "the God of his people," and "a God to them, [Jeremiah 31:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.33) with [Hebrews 8:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.8)."

Whatever he *is*—he will be for them.

Whatever he*has*—he will, as far as they are capable of receiving it, impart unto them.

He will not merely be a Friend, or a Father, to them: more, he will be a God! All that a God can *be*to them, or can *do*for them—he *will*be, and do!

All this he pledges to them by covenant, and by oath, "that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for him to lie, they might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them, [Hebrews 6:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.17-18)." Well then may those who have laid hold on this covenant, rejoice in him. The Jews, on account of their external relation to him, "made their boast of God, [Romans 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.17);" and they had reason so to do. But how much greater reason has the Christian to do so, who has laid hold on that better covenant, which "is ordered in all things and sure," and which shall never wax old, or decay!

***~~3. As his everlasting portion—~~***

It is not here only that God will be the portion of his people, but for ever in the eternal world. Such he was to Abraham; "I am your shield, and your eternal great reward! [Genesis 15:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 15.1)." And such he will be to every believer; as it is written, "My flesh and my heart may fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever, [Psalm 73:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 73.26)." In that tabernacle that is above, God will dwell in the midst of his people, and be their God, and will wipe away all tears from their eyes, [Revelation 21:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.3-4). It is his presence that will constitute the felicity of Heaven: there will be no sun or moon there; for God himself, and the Lamb, will be the light of that world; and all created enjoyment will vanish, like the light of the glow-worm before the meridian sun! [Revelation 21:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.22-23).

Justly in this view of his privileges does David say, and justly may every believer say, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage! [Psalm 16:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.5-6)."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Let all avail themselves of the opportunity now afforded them—~~***

At this hour do "we preach peace to you by Jesus Christ, [Acts 10:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.36);" and "as ambassadors of God, we beseech you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." To all without exception is this invitation given. To every one does he address those memorable words, "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth [Isaiah 45:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.22)."

Will any of you then be content to continue at enmity with God, and to have God an enemy to you? O lay down the weapons of your rebellion, and seek your happiness in God. Surely "in his favor is life; and his loving-kindness is better than life itself." Only begin this day to rejoice in your God; and "there shall be joy among the angels in the presence of God on your account."

***~~2. Let all seek the highest attainments in the divine life—~~***

There is a holy ambition which all should feel. We should not any of us be content to obtain reconciliation with God: we should seek to rejoice in God. We would say with David, "I will go unto the altar of God, of God my exceeding joy, [Psalm 43:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 43.4)." *It is greatly to he lamented that the generality of Christians live far below their privileges*. If only they have peace with God, and can rejoice in hope of his glory, and can glory in tribulations for his sake, they are ready to think, that they are in as good a state as they need to be.

But, brethren, while we rejoice that you are so far advanced, we would have you "not only so:" we would have you "forget what is behind, and press forward towards that which is ahead." We would have you "covet earnestly the best gifts." It is your privilege "to rejoice in God all the day," yes, to "rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.8)."

Nor is it your privilege only, but your duty also: for it is said, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory, [Isaiah 45:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.25)." I call you then to live near to God, and to "delight yourselves in God," and to have even now "the pledge" of Heaven in your souls, [Ephesians 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.14). "Let Israel then rejoice in him who made him; and the children of Zion be joyful in their King! [Psalm 149:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 149.2)."

***~~#1843~~***

***~~DEATH BY ADAM, AND LIFE BY CHRIST~~***

***~~[Romans 5:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.18-19).~~***

"So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."

THE more we investigate the Gospel of Christ, the more mysterious it appears in all its parts. To a superficial observer it seems that the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer is plain and simple: but it is surely an astonishing mystery, that *those who have destroyed themselves would be redeemed by the blood of God's only dear Son, and be saved by a righteousness that was wrought out by him*. Yet that is but a small part of the mystery revealed to us in the Gospel. There we learn, that at the instant of our birth we are under a sentence of condemnation for the sin of our first parent; and that, as we are lost in him, so we are to be recovered by the Lord Jesus Christ, inheriting righteousness and life from him, the second Adam, as we inherit sin and death from the first Adam.

This is the subject of which the Apostle treats in the passage before us. He had throughout the preceding part of this epistle declared the way of salvation through Christ: but now *he traces up sin and death to Adam as our federal head or representative: and righteousness and life to Christ as our federal head or representative under the new covenant*. This opens to us a new view of the Gospel, and leads us farther into the great mystery of redemption than the preceding statements had enabled us to penetrate.

That we may avail ourselves of the light which is thus afforded us, we shall,

***~~I. Consider the comparison here instituted—~~***

***~~It is here assumed as an acknowledged truth, that by the sin of Adam we all were brought under guilt and condemnation—~~***

*Adam was not a mere private individual, but the head and representative of all mankind.* Hence what he did in eating the forbidden fruit, is imputed unto us, as though it had been done by us: and we are subjected to the punishment that was denounced against transgression, "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die!" This in the preceding context is repeatedly affirmed: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned, verse 12." Again, "Through the offense of one, many died, verse 15;" Again, "The judgment was by one to condemnation verse 16;" And again, "By one man's offense, death reigned by one, verse 17."

So also it is twice mentioned in our text. Nor is it merely asserted: it is proved also, and that too by an argument which all can easily understand. The *death of infants*demonstrates the truth in question: for, nothing is plainer than that God will not inflict punishment, where no guilt attaches: but he does inflict punishment, even death itself, on infants, who cannot possibly have committed sin in their own persons.

For *whose*sin then is this punishment inflicted? Surely for the sin of *Adam*, our first parent; who was the head and representative of all mankind. The law which denounced death as the penalty of transgression, comprehended, not him only, but us also: and therefore, having transgressed it in him, we are considered as sinners, and are subjected to all the penalties of transgression. To account for the agonies and death of new-born infants on any other supposition than this, is impossible.

***~~With this is compared our justification to life by the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ—~~***

Christ is that person "by whose obedience many are made righteous." He is given to us as a second Covenant-Head. There is however this difference between him and Adam: Adam was the head of all his *natural*seed; and Christ is the head of all his *spiritual*seed. They are included in him; and all that he did or suffered is put to their account, as though they had done or suffered it themselves: and his entire righteousness is imputed to them for justification, precisely as Adam's disobedience is imputed to us for condemnation. The parallel indeed holds yet farther still: for as Adam's guilt is imputed to us before we commit personal sin, so is Christ's righteousness imputed to us before we perform any personal obedience.

Nevertheless, our obedience is not therefore rendered either useless or uncertain; for, as *from Adam we receive a corrupt nature, so from Christ we receive a holy and divine nature*: and as all our personal disobedience aggravates the guilt and condemnation which we derived from Adam; so our personal obedience, after we have been justified in Christ Jesus, enhances the degrees of glory to which we are entitled at the instant of our justification.

Now all this is plainly affirmed in our text: nay, it is, in the verses preceding our text, affirmed, that we receive more from Christ than ever we lost in Adam, verse 15-17. And this is a striking, and very important, truth. For,

FIRST, we are placed in a *safer state*than that which we lost in Adam. Adam was placed in a state of probation, to stand or fall by his own obedience; and, notwithstanding all his advantages, he fell, and ruined both himself and all his posterity. But we, when justified in Christ's righteousness, are given to him, that we may be kept by his power unto everlasting salvation: and he has expressly declared, that "none shall ever pluck us out of his hands."

NEXT, we are made to possess a *better righteousness*than any which we could ever have inherited from Adam: for if he had stood, and we had stood in him, and partaken of his righteousness for ever, we would still have had only the righteousness of a *creature*: but now we have, and shall have to all eternity, the righteousness of the *Creator*. Yes, "Jehovah himself is our righteousness:" and whereas, with a *creature's*righteousness, we could have claimed nothing, being only unprofitable servants, with the *Creator's*righteousness we may claim on the footing of justice as well as of mercy, all the glory of Heaven!

ONCE MORE: Our *happiness is infinitely enhanced*beyond anything it could ever have been, if we had stood in Adam. The felicity of Heaven would doubtless have been inconceivably great under any circumstances: but who can conceive what an addition it will receive from the consideration of its being the purchase of the Redeemer's blood, and the fruit of those eternal counsels by which the whole work of redemption was both planned and executed?

Thus then is the comparison between the first and second Adam shown to be strictly just; except indeed that the scale preponderates beyond all expression or conception in favor of the Lord Jesus, who has done "much more" for us than ever we lost in Adam; or than Adam, though he had continued sinless, ever could have done, either for himself or us.

But that this subject may produce a suitable impression on our minds, we will,

***~~II. Suggest one or two reflections upon it—~~***

It is much to be regretted, that the great mysteries of religion are but too often made the subjects of mere speculation. But *every doctrine of Christianity should be practically improved*, and especially a doctrine of such vital importance as that before us.

From the doctrine of our fall in Adam and our recovery in Christ, we cannot but observe,

***~~1. How deep and unsearchable are the ways of God!~~***

That ever our first parent would be constituted a federal head to his posterity, so that they would stand or fall in him, is in itself a stupendous mystery. And it may appear to have been an arbitrary appointment, injurious to the whole race of mankind. But we do not hesitate to say, that if the whole race of mankind had been created at once in precisely the same state and circumstances as Adam was, they would have been as willing to stand or fall in Adam, as to have their lot depend upon themselves; because they would have felt, that, while he possessed every advantage that they did, he had a strong inducement to steadfastness which they could not have felt, namely, the dependence of all his posterity upon his fidelity to God: and consequently, that their happiness would be more secure in his hands than in their own.

But if it could now be put to every human being to determine for himself this point; if the question were asked of every individual: Whether do you think it better that your happiness would depend on Adam, formed as he was in the full possession of all his faculties; subjected to only one temptation, and that in fact so small a temptation as scarcely to deserve the name; perfect in himself, and his only companion being perfect also, and no such thing as sin existing in the whole creation; whether would you prefer, I say, to depend on him, or on yourself, born into a world that lies in wickedness, surrounded with temptations innumerable, and having all your faculties only in a state of infantile weakness, so as to be scarcely capable of exercising with propriety either judgment or volition.

Would any one doubt a moment? Would not every person to whom such an option was given, account it an unspeakable mercy to have such a representative as Adam was, and to have his happiness depend on Adam, rather than on his own feeble capacity and power? There can be no doubt on this subject: for *if Adam, in his more favorable circumstances, fell—then much more would we in circumstances where it was scarcely possible to stand*. Still however, though we acknowledge it to be a gracious and merciful appointment, we must nevertheless regard it as a stupendous mystery.

But what shall we say of the appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ to be a second Covenant-Head, to deliver us by his obedience from the fatal effects of Adam's disobedience? Here we are perfectly lost in wonder and amazement. For consider, Who Jesus WAS? He was the co-equal, co-eternal Son of God.

Consider, What he undertook to DO? He undertook to suffer in our place and stead all that was due to us, and to confer on us his righteousness with all the glory that was due to him!

Consider farther, On what TERMS he confers this blessing upon us? He requires only that we believe in him: "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth".

Consider yet farther, What provision he has made for the FINAL HAPPINESS of those who thus believe in him? He does not restore them to the state of trial in which Adam was originally placed, but to a state of comparative security, inasmuch as he himself undertakes to "perfect that which concerned them," and to be "the Finisher of faith" to those in whom he has been "the Author of it, [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)."

What an inscrutable mystery is here:

That such a *person*would be given; and such a *righteousness*be wrought out by him!

That a saving interest in this righteousness would be conferred on such easy terms!

And lastly, that such *security*would be provided for all his believing people!

Well might the Apostle say, "Great is the mystery of godliness:" and well may all the angels in Heaven occupy themselves, as they do continually, in searching into it with the profoundest adoration! [1 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 3.16).

Let us then contemplate these wonders with holy awe. Let us not make them a theme for disputation, but a subject of incessant admiration, gratitude, and praise.

***~~2. How obvious and urgent is the duty of man!~~***

Here we are in the situation of fellow-creatures, wholly incapable of saving ourselves, and shut up to the way of salvation provided for us in the Gospel. God does not *consult*us, or ask our *approbation*of his plans. He calls us, not to give our opinion, but to accept his offered mercy. To dispute, or sit in judgment on his dispensations, is vain.

We are like shipwrecked persons, ready to perish in the great deep. When the ship is just on the point of sinking, it is no time to complain, that our lives, by the laws of navigation, were made to depend on the skill of the captain; or that the management of the vessel had not been committed to ourselves; or that God, when he formed the world, placed a rock in that particular situation, notwithstanding he foresaw, from all eternity, that our ship would be wrecked upon it. All such thoughts at that time would be vain: our only consideration under such circumstances would be, *how shall I be saved from perishing?*

And if we saw a ship hastening towards us for our preservation, we would be wholly occupied in contriving how we might secure the offered aid.

This, I say, is precisely our case: we are lost in Adam; but that God, who foresaw that we would be wrecked in him, provided his only dear Son to be a Savior to us; and has sent him to save all who feel their need of mercy, and are willing to enter into this ark of God.

Behold then, brethren, what your duty is: it is to "flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you." If you feel a rebellious thought arise: *Why did God make me thus?* Let it be answered in the way prescribed by the Apostle, "Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God [Romans 9:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.20)." If you were not consulted about your dependence on Adam, were you consulted about the appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the way of recovery by him? No! this was the unsolicited gift of God, who determined thus to glorify himself in blessing and exalting you. Embrace then, with all thankfulness, the salvation offered to you in the Gospel. Lay hold on Christ: rely upon him: place all your hope in his obedience unto death; seek for justification solely through his blood and righteousness: and expect to receive from him all, yes "exceeding abundantly above all that you can either ask or think." (The corruption that we derive from Adam, is a totally distinct subject from that treated of in the text; and on that account is left unnoticed here.)

***~~#1844~~***

***~~THE ABUNDANT GRACE OF GOD~~***

***~~[Romans 5:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20-21).~~***

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

*FROM eternity God determined to glorify his grace: for this end he permitted sin to enter into the world.* The publication of his law also promoted the same end: it served to show how awfully sin had abounded, and consequently to magnify that grace which destroyed sin. To this effect the Apostle speaks in the text and the words preceding it.

We shall endeavor to show,

***~~I. How sin has abounded—~~***

The transgression of Adam was of a very malignant nature!

In the whole preceding context, Adam's sin in particular is referred to, and it may well be considered as of a crimson dye.

It argued a contempt of God's goodness, which had bestowed so much upon him, [Genesis 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 2.8-9).

It argued a doubt of God's veracity, which was engaged to inflict the penalty, [Genesis 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.4).

It argued a rejection of God's authority, which forbad the eating of that fruit [Genesis 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 2.17).

It argued an attempt to invade the peculiar prerogatives of God [Genesis 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.5).

Surely in this single transgression, sin greatly abounded.

***~~But sin spread also over the whole world—~~***

Adam begat sons "in his own fallen likeness." All his descendants inherited his corruption, [Job 14:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 14.4), and cast off the yoke which their Maker had imposed upon them: there was not so much as one single exception to be found [Psalm 14:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 14.2-3). On this very account God once destroyed all but one family.

***~~Sin had moreover prevailed in every heart to an awful degree—~~***

Every faculty of men's souls was debased by it.

The *understanding*was blinded,

the *will*was made obstinate,

the *conscience*was seared,

all the "*members of their bodies*also were made instruments of unrighteousness."

There was not an *imagination of their thoughts*that was not evil, [Genesis 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.5).

It even took occasion from the holy law of God to rage the more.

God gave his law to reveal and repress sin—but sin would not endure any restraint: it rose like water against the dam that obstructs its progress, [Romans 7:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.8), and inflamed men both against the law, and against him who gave it. Thus, in using so good a law to so vile a purpose, it displayed its own exceeding sinfulness, [Romans 7:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.13).

But God did not altogether abandon our wretched world!

***~~II. How grace has much more abounded—~~***

God determined that his grace would be victorious and that it would establish its throne on the ruins of the empire which sin had erected. For this purpose he gave us his Son to be a second Adam, [Romans 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.14). [1 Corinthians 15:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.22); 1 Corinthians 15:45. He laid on him the curse due to our iniquities:

he enabled him to "bring in an everlasting righteousness:"

he accepted us in him as our new Covenant-Head:

he restores us through him to eternal life.

Thus the superabundance of his grace is manifest,

***~~1. In the object attained—~~***

The *destruction of man*for sin was certainly tremendous: yet was it no more than what was to be expected. The fallen angels had already been banished from Heaven. No wonder then if man was made a partaker of their misery.

But how beyond all expectation was the *recovery of man!*How wonderful that he would be restored, while a superior order of beings were left to perish; and be exalted to a throne of glory from whence they had been cast down! This was indeed a manifestation of most abundant grace.

***~~2. In the method of attaining it—~~***

Sin had reigned unto death by means of Adam, and certainly the destruction of the whole world for one sin argued a dreadful malignity in sin. Yet was there nothing in this unjust or unreasonable. If, instead of being represented by Adam, we had all undergone the same probation for ourselves, we have no reason to think that we would not have fallen, like him. If we had possessed exactly the same grace as he, and been subjected to the same temptation, we would have acted as he did. The constituting of him our representative was a great advantage to us, because he had much stronger inducements to fidelity than we could have: we would have been concerned only about ourselves; whereas he had the interests of all his posterity depending on him.

Besides, he met his temptation when all his powers were in a state of maturity, and when there was no evil example before him; whereas we would be tempted from our earliest infancy, and with the additional influence of bad examples.

But who could have thought that God would send us his own Son? That he would constitute him our new Covenant-Head and representative? That he would remove the curse of sin by His death? That he would accept sinners through his righteousness? That he would remedy by a second Adam what had been brought upon us by the first? This was a discovery of grace that infinitely transcends the comprehension of men or angels!

***~~3. In the peculiar advantage with which it was attained—~~***

If Adam had retained his innocence, we also would have stood in him as our representative. We would however have possessed only a creature's righteousness; but in Christ we possess the righteousness of God himself! [2 Corinthians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.21). Our reward therefore may well be augmented in proportion to the excellence of that, for which we are accepted: besides, *the glory of God is infinitely more displayed in Christ, than ever it would have been if Adam had not fallen!*Our happiness therefore, in beholding it, must be greatly increased. Thus our restoration through Christ will bring us to the enjoyment of far greater happiness than ever we lost in Adam, [Romans 5:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.15). This point is insisted on from verse 15 to 19. What can more fully manifest the superabounding grace of God?

***~~Improvement—~~***

***~~1. For caution—~~***

This doctrine seems liable to the imputation of licentiousness. Paul foresaw the objection, and answered it in [Romans 6:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.1-2); his answer should satisfy every objector: but the reign of grace consists in destroying every effect of sin; therefore to indulge sin would be to counteract, and not to promote, the grace of God. Let the professors of religion however be careful to give no room for this objection: let them "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men by well-doing."

***~~2. For encouragement—~~***

How strange is it that any would despair of mercy! The infinite grace of God has been exhibited in many striking instances, [Luke 7:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 7.47). [1 Timothy 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.14); 1 Timothy 1:16. Let us seek to become monuments of this mercy: let us not indeed "sin, that grace may abound;" but let us freely acknowledge how much sin has abounded in us, and yet expect through Christ "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness."

***~~#1845~~***

***~~THE GOSPEL SECURES THE PRACTICE OF HOLINESS~~***

***~~[Romans 6:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.1-4).~~***

"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

WE are told that "the Gospel was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;" while to all who had an experience of it in their souls, it was both "the power of God, and the wisdom of God, [1 Corinthians 1:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.23-24)." The grounds on which the Jews and Greeks so greatly inveighed against it were various: its apparent contrariety to the revelation given by Moses rendered it offensive to the one; and its proposing to us a Savior, who appeared unable to save himself, rendered it contemptible to the other.

But there was one ground of offense which exposed it equally to the reprobation of all; and that was, the unfavorable aspect which it had in relation to holiness. Men of every religion were ready to cry out against it in this view: and therefore the Apostle, having stated the plan of the Gospel salvation with all possible clearness, takes up this objection, and gives an answer to it; such an answer, indeed, as neither Jews nor Gentiles could have anticipated; but such as must approve itself to all whom God enables to comprehend it.

From the words of my text, I will take occasion to show,

***~~I. The supposed tendency of the Gospel to encourage sin—~~***

***~~The Gospel certainly, when stated as Paul stated it, has, to a superficial observer, this aspect—~~***

It greatly magnifies the grace of God in the salvation of fallen man.

It sets forth that grace, in all its freeness, and in all its fullness.

It offers salvation freely, "without money and without price."

It offers salvation through the righteousness of another, even the righteousness of our incarnate God and Savior.

It offers salvation by faith alone, without works; saying, "To him who works not, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness, [Romans 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.5)."

Nor does it make its offers to the most righteous only; but to all, not excepting even the vilest of mankind; saying, "Where sin has abounded—grace shall much more abound; that as sin has reigned unto death—so shall grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord, [Romans 5:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20-21)."

***~~Hence men in every age have characterized it as licentious—~~***

In Paul's day, many drew from his statements this inference, that, supposing his statements to be true, men might very safely "continue in sin, so that the grace of God," in pardoning it, "might be the more abundantly displayed." At this day also, wherever the Gospel is faithfully delivered, men bring the same objections against it. Because we offer salvation to the chief of sinners, saying, "All that believe shall be justified from all things! [Acts 13:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.39)," we appear to them to make light of sin. And because we declare that the good works of men make no part of a man's justifying righteousness; and that the best work that ever we performed would, if relied upon in ever so small a degree, not only not add anything to the work of Christ, but would invalidate and render void all that he ever did and suffered for us; we seem to make light of holiness; since we declare, that the evil we have committed shall never condemn, nor shall the good that we may do ever justify, the believing soul.

Men cannot imagine what inducement we can have to practice good works, if they are not to justify us; or to abstain from sin, if it may so easily be blotted out by one simple exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence the whole Gospel appears to them a strange, unintelligible, and licentious doctrine; calculated only to mislead the simple, and palatable only to hypocrites and fanatics.

But, in answer to all such objections, I will show,

***~~II. The security it gives for the practice of universal holiness—~~***

Doubtless, nothing but divine grace can secure the practice of holiness: and, to a man destitute of that sanctifying principle, all sentiments, of whatever kind, will be ineffectual for the purification of his soul. A man may profess the greatest regard for good works—yet not perform them; or he may profess the greatest regard for Christ, and not render to him the obedience of the heart: on the contrary, he may "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness Jude, verse 4." But, so far as any principles can prevail, those of the Gospel, when embraced in their purity, will be found to produce holiness both of heart and life. So the Apostle declares, in answer to the objection before stated.

***~~To enter fully into the Apostle's argument, see what a man professes at his first entrance into the Church of Christ—~~***

He is "baptized into Christ:" into Christ, "as dying for his offenses, and as raised again for his justification, [Romans 4:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.25)." To the Savior, so dying and so rising, he feels himself bound to be conformed; dying to sin, as He died for sin; and rising, like him, to a new and heavenly life, verse 8-11. His immersion, at the time of his baptism, represented this to him: and he, in submitting to it, pledged himself to seek the experience of this change in his soul, and never to rest until he shall have attained it.

Christ, after his crucifixion, was buried: and in baptism the believer is "buried with Christ;" and engages to become as separate from all his former lusts, as Christ was from all the concerns of this perishing world. And the same power that wrought in Christ, to raise him from the dead, works effectually in his soul, to accomplish in him this wondrous renovation after the Divine image. "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father;" and by the same glorious power the believer is enabled to "walk in newness of life."

Now, all this a man professes in his baptism: he then, in the sight of God and of the world, acknowledges these to be his most decided sentiments, and his unalterable obligations. He declares, before all, that he owes everything to Christ, and is bound to employ every faculty of his soul for Christ; "living altogether for that Savior who died for him and rose again, [Romans 14:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.7-8)."

***~~Now mark what aspect this profession must have on all his future life—~~***

I grant, that he may be drawn aside from the path of duty, and go back to all the evil courses from which he professes to have been delivered, [2 Peter 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.9); 2 Peter 2:20. But, in the midst of all he must say, 'This course of life does not proceed from my Christian principles; nor is it in accordance with them. No! it is altogether in opposition to my avowed sentiments, and is one continued violation of my most solemn engagements. The Gospel is not to be blamed for what I do, any more than it was for the sins of Judas or of Peter, of Ananias or of Demas, or of any other person that ever dishonored his Christian calling.'

In a word, the man who has been baptized into the faith of Christ bears in the face of the whole world this unequivocal testimony: "The grace of God, which brings salvation, teaches me, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, I should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world:" and, if it produces not this effect, the fault is in myself alone.

Now, I look upon this as a complete answer to the objection in my text. I admit that a person professing the principles of the Gospel may walk unworthy of them: but I utterly deny that the Gospel has anything in it to encourage such a life: on the contrary, I assert, that a man's entrance into the Church by baptism is an open acknowledgment that a very different life befits him; and that he cannot depart from holiness without expressly contravening all his principles and all his obligations.

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~1. Is there now anyone who entertains the objection here made against the Gospel?~~***

Alas! there are many who will falsely represent the preachers of the Gospel as saying to their hearers, "Only believe; and you may live as you please." But methinks there is not one, among all this host of objectors, who believes his own statement. For it is a notorious fact, that those very persons, who decry our ministry as encouraging licentiousness, will, with the very next breath, cry out against us, as making the way to Heaven so strait, that none but a few enthusiasts can walk in it.

But, supposing them to be sincere, they only betray their own ignorance. Paul says in my text, "Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death?" No! they know nothing of the matter: they know nothing of the Christian's principles; nor do they at all consider his obligations.

The Christian never accounts himself free from the moral government of the law, though he knows himself free from its condemning sentence. On the contrary, he feels a thousand motives for obedience, which a mere self-righteous moralist has no idea of: and if a proposal were made to him to "sin, that grace might abound," he would reply with indignation and abhorrence, "God forbid!"

To you, then, I say, be diligent in your inquiries, and candid in your judgment. Where, among the self-righteous moralists, did you ever find such attainments in holiness as in the Apostle Paul? These attainments were the genuine fruit of his principles; as he himself has told us: "The love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that those who live would not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again, [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14-15)." Only receive the Gospel as he preached it; and it shall operate in you as it did in the Churches which were planted by him.

***~~2. Is there anyone here who, by his conduct, gives occasion for this objection?~~***

That there is not any avowed Antinomian among us, I can easily believe: but are there not those who, by their ungoverned tempers, or their covetous practices, or their unholy lives, "give occasion to the enemies of religion to blaspheme," and to "speak evil of the truths" which Paul preached?

Ah! brethren, if there are one such person in the midst of us, let him remember what our blessed Lord has said: "Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses will come: but woe unto him by whom they come: for it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the midst of the sea, than that he would offend one of God's little ones! [Luke 17:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 17.1-2)."

It is a lamentable fact, that one man who dishonors the Gospel by an unholy conduct, does more injury to the souls of men, than ten holy men can do them good. Everyone, however blind to the excellencies of the godly, has his *eyes*open to behold the faults of those who profess godliness; yes, and his *mouth*open too, to report and aggravate all the evil that he has either seen or heard: for it is by this that worldly men seek to justify themselves in their contempt of a religion which is so disgraced. I charge you then, my dear brethren, guard against everything which can produce these fatal effects; and beg of God rather to cut you off from the earth at once, than to allow you to become a stumbling-block to the world, and a scandal to his Church.

***~~3. I trust there are those present who bear in mind and exemplify their baptismal vows—~~***

Yes, I hope there are among us many who "walk worthy of their high calling," and "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior" by a holy and heavenly conduct. To such persons I would say, be steadfast in your course, and endeavor to "abound more and more." And, that you may see what heights are to be attained, set the Lord Jesus Christ before you both in his death and resurrection; that, "being planted in the likeness of the one, you may be also in the likeness of the other, verse 5."

What had he to do with the cares or pleasures of this world, when he was "buried" in the grave? Or when has a moment's intermission of his services to God occurred, since his resurrection from the dead? Let this, then, be your pattern, both in your *death unto sin*, and in your *living unto righteousness*: and, as you acknowledge yourselves to have "been bought with a price, seek and labor to glorify Him with your bodies and your spirits, which are his! [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20)."

***~~#1846~~***

***~~THE CHRISTIAN RISEN WITH CHRIST IN NEWNESS OF LIFE~~***

***~~[Romans 6:8-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.8-11).~~***

"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

THE Gospel in every age, when freely and faithfully delivered, has been calumniated as injurious to morality. But Paul, though he well knew how his doctrines would be misrepresented, did not on that account mutilate the Gospel, or declare it less freely than it had been revealed to him: he proclaimed salvation altogether by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, without any works or deservings on our part: but at the same time he showed that good works, though excluded from any share in justifying the soul, would of necessity be practiced by every believer; because the believer, by his very profession, was, and could not but be, "dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness."

He showed that there would of necessity be in the believer's soul a conformity to his Lord and Savior, since he bound himself to it in his baptismal engagements, or rather professed to have the actual experience of it before he was baptized; so that he must be a hypocrite, and no true believer, if he was not holy both in heart and life. To this effect he speaks in the whole of the preceding context, verse 1-7; and in the words which we have just read, he confirms the idea, and founds upon it an animated exhortation.

To elucidate this difficult, but important subject, we shall consider,

***~~I. The truth he assumes—~~***

He takes it for granted that the believer is "dead with Christ." The believer, by virtue of his union with Christ, partakes in all that Christ either did or suffered for him. Was Christ crucified, dead, and buried? The believer also is crucified, dead, and buried. Only Christ underwent this in his body; whereas the believer experiences it in his soul. The believer has what is called "the old man," or "the body of sin:" and this it is which undergoes a change equivalent to that which Christ experienced in his mortal body. This old man is "crucified." Crucifixion was a long protracted punishment: but though the death of the crucified person was slow and gradual, it was sure. It is in this way that "the old man," or "the body of sin," in the believer, is destroyed: he is not so instantly slain, as never to move again: but it is nailed to the cross: it is gradually weakened: and, in the purpose and intention and determination of the believer, it is as really dead, as if it were already altogether annihilated.

The believer, at his baptism, considered this as solemnly engaged for on his part, and as shadowed forth, yes, and as pledged also to him on the part of God, in the rite itself: "he was baptized into Christ's death, and buried, as it were, with Christ by baptism into death." This was his profession; and this is his obligation: and wherever true and saving faith exists in the soul, this profession is realized, and this obligation performed.

Hence it may be assumed as a universal truth, that, as a scion participates in the state of the stock into which it has been engrafted, so the believer, engrafted as he is into a crucified Savior, "is planted together with him in the likeness of his death," or, in other words, is "dead with Christ."

In close connection with this is,

***~~II. The persuasion he intimates—~~***

"We believe," says he, "that we shall also live with him."

It is not in his death only that the believer is conformed to Christ, but in his resurrection also. As the believer has an "old man," which dies, so he has also "a new man," which lives: and in the latter, no less than in the former, he resembles Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ, in his risen and ascended state, lives with God, and to God, employing for his God and Father all the power that has been committed to him.

Thus the believer lives in a state of intimate fellowship with God, consecrating to him all his newly-acquired powers, and improving for him every faculty that he possesses. This is his privilege, no less than his duty: and therefore we may be fully persuaded that the weakest believer, if truly upright, shall attain this high and honorable employment.

***~~This persuasion is founded on a firm and solid basis—~~***

We "know that Christ dies no more." Those whom he raised to life, as Lazarus and others, were constrained at last to pay the debt which our nature owes, and to yield to the stroke of death: but "over Christ, death has no more dominion." He so fully expiated sin, that none of its penal consequences attach to him any longer. But the life which he possesses has both perpetuity and perfection, being wholly and eternally devoted to the care of his people, and the honor of his heavenly Father. And here is the believer's security: "Because Christ lives, he shall live also, [John 14:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.19)." The believer's "life is hid with Christ in God;" yes, "Christ himself is his life:" and therefore we may be assured, that his believing people shall be preserved to "appear with him in glory! [Colossians 3:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.3-4)." We do live in him: and therefore we shall live with him for evermore.

From hence is deduced,

***~~III. The duty he inculcates—~~***

"Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This would be a point fixed and settled in our minds: I am a Christian. I am dead to sin. I have no more to do with "my former lusts in my ignorance, [1 Peter 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.14); [1 Peter 4:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.2-3)," than Christ himself has with the "sins which he once bore in his own body on the tree." "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," have no more charms for me, [1 John 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.15-16). Those "lords which once had dominion over me," are now dead; and I am liberated from their yoke. This is the precise idea contained in verse 7.

As a Christian, I possess a new and heavenly life: I am alive unto God, as Christ himself is; and must live unto God, as Christ himself does. There is not an act performed by Christ either in providence or grace, which has not respect to the glory of his Father: so, "whether I eat, or drink, or whatever I do, I must do all to the glory of God, [1 Corinthians 10:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.31)."

As for being satisfied with any lower standard, it is impossible: my Christian profession utterly forbids it. Those who seek to be justified by their works, may be satisfied with such a quota of works as shall, in their apprehension, screen them from punishment; but I can be satisfied with nothing but a perfect conformity to Christ. My lusts that are crucified, shall never (God helping me) come down from the cross: there they are doomed to perish: and the sooner they die, the better. My new life shall be spent as Christ's is, in executing the office assigned me, and in glorifying my God.

Christians, this is the state to which you are to aspire; and if you rest in anything short of this, you are not worthy of the Christian name.

***~~In this subject we may see,~~***

***~~1. The proper tendency of the Gospel—~~***

The proper tendency of the Gospel is, to "sanctify us wholly," and to make us pure, as Christ himself is pure, [1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.23). [1 John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.3). And let the enemies of the Gospel calumniate it ever so much as tending to licentiousness, they show that they believe it to be a doctrine according to godliness, by the excessive offense which they take at the smallest inconsistency in the Christian's conduct. If they did not know that his principles required, and tended to, the highest possible perfection, why are they so offended, and why do they exult so much, at the smallest imperfection? The proper tendency of the Gospel then is holiness, the enemies themselves being judges.

***~~2. The true criterion whereby to judge of our faith in Christ—~~***

We will not disparage other parts of Christian experience; but the only safe test whereby to try ourselves, is, the degree in which we are dead to sin, and alive to God: "The tree must be known by its fruits".

***~~3. The connection between our duty and our happiness—~~***

We have fixed the standard of Christian duty high. True, but does any one doubt, whether such a conformity to Christ is not also our truest happiness? Truly, Heaven itself consists in this: "We shall be like him, when we shall see him as he is! [1 John 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.2)."

***~~#1847~~***

***~~A PROMISE OF VICTORY OVER SIN~~***

***~~[Romans 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.14).~~***

"Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace."

IT is often made a ground of objection against the Gospel, that it is unfavorable to morality. But the very reverse of this is true; for the Gospel not only inculcates moral duties as strictly as the law itself, but suggests far stronger motives for the performance of them, and even provides strength whereby we shall be enabled to perform them.

A great part of this epistle was written on purpose to establish the doctrine of justification by faith: and yet here is one whole chapter devoted entirely to the enforcing of universal holiness, and to the removing of all ground for the objection before referred to: and in the text an express declaration is given, as from God himself, that *sin shall never regain its ascendency over the hearts of his people*. We shall consider,

***~~I. The promise here given to us—~~***

***~~The promise is express, and relates to our deliverance from sin, of whatever kind it be—~~***

Sin of almost every kind has dominion over the unregenerate man. All persons indeed are not addicted to the same lusts; nor do they gratify any one lust in the same degree: but *the seeds of all evil are in the hearts of all men*; and if any person abstains from any particular act of sin, it is rather because he is not strongly tempted to commit it, than because he has not a propensity to commit it; and it is universally found, that the sins which are peculiar to our age, our constitution, our situation and circumstances in life, do habitually get the dominion over us. But God promises, that it shall not be so with his people; that they shall be delivered from this ignominious bondage; and be enabled to resist the solicitations of appetite and passion.

We must not however imagine that this promise extends to absolute perfection: for, however desirable the attainment of perfection might be in some points of view, it is not the lot of any in this world. Even the most eminent of God's saints have failed, and that too, in those very points wherein their peculiar eminence consisted: Abraham, Moses, Job, and all others, have proved sufficiently, "that there is not a just man on earth who lives and sins not:" and that, "if any say they have no sin, they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them."

Nor does the Apostle mean that sin, even of a grosser kind, shall never, in any instance, be found in a child of God; for, as "in many things we all offend," so, under the influence of strong temptation, we may act very unsuitably to our holy calling: Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, afford melancholy proofs of such weakness and depravity.

But this is asserted in the text, and attested by the universal voice of Scripture, that *no child of God shall ever give himself up to the willful and habitual indulgence of any one sin whatever*. No! *every child of God will watch against sin in the heart, as well as in the act; and will pray and fight against it to the last hour of his life*. And the reason why he never can sin in the same willful and habitual way that he did before, is, that he has the seed of God, or a living principle of grace, within him, that constantly impels him to hate and flee from all iniquity, [1 John 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.9); and, "because he is Christ's, he cannot but daily crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts".

The limiting of this promise to believers leads us to show,

***~~II. Its connection with our new-covenant state—~~***

***~~Believers are "no longer under the law but under grace"—~~***

Once they were, like others, under a covenant, which cursed them for disobedience, but afforded them no hope of pardon for past offenses, nor any means of resisting sin in the future. But now they have embraced that better covenant, the covenant of grace, wherein God offers them a full remission of all their former sins, and assures them that he himself will give them grace sufficient in every time of need. On this promise they rely, knowing by bitter experience that they have not in themselves a sufficiency even to think a good thought, and that God alone can give them either to will or to do any good thing.

***~~It is on this very account that God guarantees to them, if we may so speak, the attainment of universal holiness—~~***

*By embracing God's covenant, they become his children, members of his family, and heirs of his glory.* Now God's honor is concerned that his own children shall not be left in bondage to the devil: Besides, after having made them heirs of his glory, he never will leave them under the power of a corrupt nature; because that would incapacitate them for the fruition of his glory, even if they were admitted to a participation of it: an unholy nature would utterly unfit them for the services and enjoyments of Heaven.

But there is yet another reason why God fulfills this promise to them; God has made it a part of his covenant, that he will cleanse his people from all their filthiness and all their idols, [Ezekiel 36:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.25-27); and pledged his word that he will not only forgive all their sins, but cleanse them from all unrighteousness [1 John 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.9). Now this promise they rest upon, and plead as their only hope; and will God, who cannot lie, rescind it? No! he will fulfill it to them in the time and manner that he judges most conducive to his own glory.

***~~To improve this subject, let us observe that,~~***

***~~1. To lay hold on this covenant should be the first great object of our lives—~~***

Where else shall we find deliverance from the judgments denounced against us for our violations of the first covenant, or obtain strength for our obedience to God's holy will? All efforts of our own will be utterly in vain; it is Christ alone who can effect either the one or the other of these things; and it is only by looking to him, and laying hold of his covenant, that we can obtain these blessings at his hands.

But let us once obtain a saving interest in him, and all these things are ours; pardon, peace, holiness, glory—all are ours, the very instant we believe in him. What then can be put in competition with this? Truly all the things of time and sense sink into utter insignificance, when compared with this: and therefore let us regard this as the one thing needful, and make it the one object of our whole lives to be found in Christ, and to secure the blessings which he has purchased for us.

***~~2. None, however, can have any interest in the covenant of grace who do not experience deliverance from sin—~~***

Though no man is admitted into the covenant of grace on account of any holiness that there is in him—yet none are left unholy after they have been admitted into it. "That very grace of God which brings us salvation, teaches us to deny every species and degree of ungodliness! [Titus 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.11-12)." To fail in this would be to defeat a principal end of Christ's death, [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14). If there be any allowed sin in us, we deceive ourselves, and our religion is vain, [James 1:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.26).

***~~3. But none have any reason to despair on account of the inveteracy of their lusts—~~***

Were it required of us to purify our hearts by any exertions of our own, we might well despair. But holiness is not only enjoined—it is promised; it is promised by Him, who is able also to perform. Let none then say, "My wound is incurable!" for with God all things are possible: and we, however weak in ourselves, shall be "able to do all things through Christ who strengthened us." If we were at this instant led captive by ten thousand lusts, no sin whatever would have dominion over us in the future, provided only we took refuge in the covenant of grace.

***~~4. Nevertheless, this promise does not supersede the necessity of prayer and watchfulness on our part—~~***

God's promises are free; "yet will he be inquired of by us before he will perform them." Nor are we at liberty to run into temptation because he has promised to keep us; for that would be to tempt him: but, *in the exercise of prayer and watchfulness, he will keep us.*If Paul, that chosen vessel, was obliged to keep his body under control, and to bring it into subjection, lest he himself would be a cast-away, surely the same care and diligence are necessary on our part. It is our comfort however, that, while we run, "we do not run as uncertainly;" and while "we fight, it is not as one who only beats the air, 1 Corinthians 9:26;" for victory is secured for us, and God himself "will bruise Satan under our feet shortly," and preserve us blameless to his heavenly kingdom.

***~~#1848~~***

***~~CONVERSION A GROUND OF THANKSGIVING~~***

***~~[Romans 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.17).~~***

"But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted."

EXEMPTION from the *punishment*of sin is doubtless an inestimable blessing; but deliverance from its *power*is equally precious.The most advanced Christians greatly delight in this part of salvation. Hence Paul thanks God for bestowing this mercy on the Church at Rome. We shall consider from the text,

***~~I. The character of all while in an unconverted state—~~***

***~~All are "servants of sin" until they receive converting grace—~~***

All indeed are not slaves to the same sin.

Some are led captive by their lusts and passions.

Others are drawn away by the pleasures and vanities of the world.

Others are under the dominion of pride and self-righteousness.

All, without exception, are alienated from the life of God, [Ephesians 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.18); all are full of unbelief and self-sufficiency.

***~~This, however humiliating, is an indisputable truth—~~***

The Scriptures everywhere assert this respecting fallen man, [John 8:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.34). [Romans 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.16) with the text. The most eminent saints confess it to have been their own case, [Titus 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.3); experience proves it with respect to ourselves. The very excuse which men offer in extenuation of their sins, namely, "that they cannot live as God requires," establishes this truth.

But it does not remain so in regenerate persons; as appears from,

***~~II. The change they experience in conversion—~~***

***~~God instructs them in "the form of sound doctrine"—~~***

There is in Scripture a "form of sound doctrine." This in all its parts is set before them. They are enlightened by the Spirit to understand it: they have it applied with divine efficacy to their souls.

***~~This form of doctrine they "obey from the heart"—~~***

They yet indeed feel a law of sin in their members; but "they no more serve sin" willingly as before: on the contrary, "they now delight in the law of God." They obey it, not in appearance only or by constraint, but willingly and without reserve.

***~~They are now cast, as it were, into the mold of the Gospel—~~***

This is also the case, wherever the Gospel takes effect, [Colossians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.6). The wax has every lineament of the seal, and the coin has every lineament of the die: so do they resemble God, who are renewed by the Gospel, [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18).

The blessedness of this change will appear if we consider,

***~~III. How great a cause of thankfulness such a conversion is—~~***

***~~The Apostle thanks God that they were no longer slaves of sin—~~***

Sin is at all times a ground of shame and sorrow, [Romans 6:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.21). Paul esteemed it so in his own particular case, [1 Timothy 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.13); every saint of God views it in the same light. Paul therefore did not mean that their subjection to it was a ground of thankfulness; but the subject of his thanksgiving is, that the Romans, who once were slaves of sin, were now radically devoted to God.

***~~This is a ground of unspeakable thankfulness on many accounts:~~***

***~~1. On account of the moral change in the persons themselves—~~***

What can be more *deplorable*than to be a slave of sin? What can be more truly *blessed*than to have all our actions and affections corresponding with the word of God? Surely this is a ground of thankfulness.

***~~2. On account of the effects of this change on society—~~***

How much better member of society must a child of God be than a slave of sin! How much happier would the world be, if such a change were general! On this account therefore it became the Apostle to be thankful.

***~~3. On account of the eternal consequences that must follow this change—~~***

Those who die as slaves of sin must suffer its punishment. *They are now the children of the devil, and must soon be his companions in misery*,[John 8:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.44). But the regenerate are children and heirs of God. Surely eternity will scarcely suffice to thank God for this.

***~~We shall conclude with a suitable ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. To the unregenerate—~~***

All who have not been freed from sin are of this number. Alas! the friends of such have little cause to thank God for them: they have rather reason to weep and mourn, [Jeremiah 13:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 13.17); they may indeed bless God that the stroke of vengeance has been delayed. O that all such persons might know the day of their visitation! Let all cry to God for his converting grace: nor let any rest in an external or partial change. Nothing but a cordial compliance with the Gospel, and a real conformity to it, will avail us in the day of judgment.

***~~2. To the regenerate—~~***

The foregoing marks have sufficiently characterized these persons. Such persons will do well to reflect on the mercy they have received:

The recollection of their *past guilt*will serve to keep them humble.

A consciousness of their *remaining infirmities*will make them watchful.

A view of the *change*wrought in them will make them thankful.

Let the regenerate then adopt the words of the Psalmist, [Psalm 103:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 103.1-3).

Let them beware of ever returning to their former ways, [2 Peter 2:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.20-21).

Let them press forward for higher degrees of holiness and glory, [Philippians 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.13-14).

***~~3. To those who doubt to which class they belong—~~***

Many, from what has been wrought in them, have reason to hope; yet, from what still remains to be done, they find reason to fear. Hence they are long in painful suspense. But let such remember, that sin, if truly lamented and resisted, does not prove them unregenerate, [James 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 3.2); on the contrary, their hatred of it, and opposition to it, are hopeful signs that they are in part renewed. Nevertheless, let them endeavor to put this matter beyond a doubt, 2 Peter 1:10. Let them look to Christ as their almighty deliverer, [John 8:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.36); let them pray for, and depend upon, his promised aid, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9).

***~~#1849~~***

***~~THE UNPROFITABLENESS AND FOLLY OF SIN~~***

***~~[Romans 6:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.21).~~***

"What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!"

AS an appeal to the judgment of men is, when just, the most powerful mode of silencing the contentious, so *an appeal to their conscience is the strongest possible method of convincing the ignorant, and of humbling the proud.*

With such kinds of argumentation the Scripture abounds. God himself appeals to his apostate people: "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and become vain?" "Have I been a wilderness to Israel? [Jeremiah 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.5); [Jeremiah 2:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.31)."

Thus, in the passage before us, Paul, laboring to impress the Christians at Rome with a sense of the indispensable necessity of renouncing all their former ways, and devoting themselves wholly to the Lord, puts to them this pungent question, "What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!" To answer this question, no strength of intellect, no extent of information, is required: nothing is lacking but an honest and upright heart. The poor, as well as the rich, can tell whether they have been happy in the ways of sin: to the one therefore as well as to the other, we would address the language of our text; entreating every one to consult the records of his own conscience, and to answer to himself the question, as in the presence of his God.

The points respecting which we would make our appeal to all, are,

***~~I. The unprofitableness of sin, as learned by experience—~~***

Whether men have drunk deep of the cup of pleasure, or have followed their earthly inclinations with more measured steps, we would ask, in reference to all their former ways,

***~~1. What benefit did you reap at the time?~~***

*Sin, previous to the commission of it, promises much; but what solid satisfaction has it ever afforded us?*Suppose a man to have had all the means of gratification that Solomon ever possessed, and, like him, to have withheld his heart from no joy; still, we would ask him, Was your pleasure of any long duration? Was it without alloy? Is not that true which Solomon has said, "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness, [Proverbs 14:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 14.13)." I doubt not but that every man who will faithfully relate his own experience, "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish? [Ecclesiastes 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 2.2)."

A similar testimony must be given by those who have been the most sober and discreet. They have not, it is true, the same measure of guilt upon their consciences, as they would have had, if, like the others, they had "run into every excess of riot" but if, as must he confessed by all, they have lived to themselves, and not unto the Lord, we must put the same question to them: Have you found real happiness in your ways? *Have you not, in the midst of all your self-delight, had a secret consciousness that you were not prepared for death and judgment?*Did not that consciousness embitter your lives, so far at least, that you could not bear to think of the state of your souls, and the realities of the eternal world?

God has said, that "the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, which casts up mire and dirt." Whatever peace therefore you have felt has been a false peace, which in reality rendered you more miserable, in proportion as it hid your misery from your view. "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked! [Isaiah 57:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.20-21)."

***~~2. What benefit have you in the retrospect?~~***

Supposing sin to have made us ever so happy at the time, how does it appear when we look back upon it? Is not that which was "rolled as a sweet morsel under the tongue, become as gall in the stomach?" Would not the voluptuary be well pleased on the whole, that the criminal excesses of his former life had never been committed? Would he not be well satisfied to have lost the gratifications, if he could expunge from his conscience and from the book of God's remembrance, the guilt which they have entailed upon him?

And if the man who has sought his happiness in less criminal enjoyments, but has wasted in mere earthly pursuits the time that was given him to prepare for eternity, could recall his misspent hours, would he not rather that they would have been spent in seeking the things belonging to his eternal peace? Though he may not look with delight on a pious character who has given up himself unreservedly to God, does he not secretly reverence that man, and wish that his latter end might be like his?

***~~3. What benefit have you in the prospect of your account at the solemn day of judgement?~~***

If ever we look forward to death and judgment, what do we think of a sensual or worldly life in reference to those seasons? Will it afford us any pleasure in a dying hour, to reflect, that we have, on such and such occasions, gratified our criminal desires, or indulged in reveling and excess?

Or will a life of mere external decency afford us comfort, when we consider how we have neglected God and our own souls?

Shall we not then wish that we had paid more attention to the Savior, and lived under the influence of his blessed Spirit?

Still more, when standing at the judgment-seat of Christ, will it be any joy to us, that, while in this world, we took so little pains to obtain mercy from the Lord, and to secure his favor?

Alas! alas! How will a carnal or worldly life then appear? Would to God, that we would view things now, as we shall surely view them in that day!

Instructed by these lessons of experience, let us proceed to contemplate,

***~~II. The folly of sin, as taught us by grace—~~***

The very first effect of grace is to humble us before God. The more enlarged our views are of our past transgressions, the more shall we blush and be confounded in the remembrance of them. Of every true Christian it may with certainty be affirmed, that, like Job, he "abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes!" He is "ashamed,"

***~~1. That he has so requited the goodness of his God—~~***

In an unconverted state, men can receive innumerable blessings at the Lord's hand, and never consider from whence they flow. Even the great work of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ is not regarded as any sufficient incentive to love and serve him. But no sooner does grace enter into the soul, than all the wonders of God's love and mercy are seen in their proper colors; and the man is amazed at his more than brutish ingratitude! How wonderful does it appear, that God would so love him as to give his only dear Son to die for him; and yet that he would live all his days in an utter contempt of that stupendous mystery, trampling on that precious blood that was shed to cleanse him from sin, and doing despite to that blessed Spirit, who strove to bring him to repentance! Truly, that expression of Agur is adopted by him, not as a hyperbole, but as a just representation of his case; "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man! [Proverbs 30:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 30.2)." The circumstance of his being forgiven is so far from obliterating this sense of his baseness, that it renders the feeling of it incomparably more poignant; according as the Prophet Ezekiel has said, "Then shall you loath yourselves for all your iniquities, and for all your abominations, after that I am pacified towards you, says the Lord."

***~~2. That he has bartered for such trifles an immortal soul—~~***

*The loss of the soul is scarcely thought of, when the fascinations of sin are strongly felt.* But after a man is awakened to see that "the end of these things is death," then what folly and madness does a life of sin appear! Even if the whole world could have been gained, it would be regarded as of no value in comparison with the soul: how empty and vain do such trifles as he has obtained then appear, when for the enjoyment of them his eternal interests have been sacrificed, and the everlasting wrath of God incurred!

The folly of Esau in selling his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew, may be considered as wisdom in comparison with his, in selling Heaven and his immortal soul for the transient pleasures of sin: and, if an irrevocable sentence of exclusion from the heavenly inheritance is passed upon him, he is ready to acknowledge the justice of it, or, like the man without the wedding garment, to confess by silence the equity of God's judgments.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are yet seeking their happiness in the creature—~~***

We need not here discriminate between different degrees of guilt. It is sufficient for our condemnation that we have lived to ourselves rather than to God. Whatever we may have had recourse to for consolation, it has proved only like the husks with which the Prodigal sought to satisfy the cravings of nature: nothing but the bread that is in our Father's house can ever satisfy an immortal soul. O let us think, What must be the consequence of living at a distance from God! See [Jeremiah 6:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 6.15-16). Speak not peace to yourselves in such a state! Well does Peter say, "What must the end be of those who obey not the Gospel of God?" *Only let the end of our course of living be kept in view, and we shall see the folly and madness of every pursuit that has not an immediate tendency to secure the blessedness of Heaven.*

***~~2. Those who are seeking their happiness in God—~~***

You have no reason to be ashamed of the fruit which you have gathered. At the time that you have been serving God, you have found "the work of righteousness to be peace," and, that "in keeping God's commandments there is great reward."

In the *retrospect*of a life devoted to God, there is the purest joy. "Our rejoicing," says Paul, "is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conduct in the world."

And O! what comfort is there in the *prospect*of our great account! We know that "if we have our fruit unto holiness, our end will be everlasting life!" And if in our last hours we can say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," then we may add with him, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me."

Go on then, brethren, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." We congratulate you that you have learned to blush and to be ashamed of all your former ways: and we would, as we are specially instructed by God himself, urge you to a most careful observance of all the commandments of your God. This is the way to preserve a good conscience before him; and so acting, "you will not be ashamed before him at his coming! [1 John 2:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.28)."

***~~#1850~~***

***~~MAN'S DESERT, AND GOD'S GRACE~~***

***~~[Romans 6:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.23).~~***

"The *wages*of sin is death; but the *gift*of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

THE distribution of rewards and punishments in the day of judgment will be in perfect agreement with the works of men; the righteous will be exalted to happiness; the wicked will be doomed to misery. The Gospel makes no difference with respect to this: it provides relief for the penitent, but rather aggravates than removes the condemnation of the impenitent. But it opens to us an important fact: namely, that *the punishment of the ungodly is the proper fruit and deserved recompense of their own works*. *Whereas the reward bestowed upon the godly is a free unmerited gift of God for Christ's sake*.

The Apostle has been showing, throughout this whole chapter, that the Gospel increases, instead of relaxing, our obligation to good works; and that it will avail for the salvation of those only who "have their fruit unto holiness:" but in the text he assures us, that *those who are saved will be saved by mere grace; whereas those who perish will perish utterly through their own demerit*.

In the words before us, we have a short, but accurate, description of,

***~~I. Man's desert—~~***

***~~By "death," we must understand everlasting misery—~~***

It is a truth that temporal death was introduced by sin: but that cannot be the whole that is meant by the Apostle in the text, because the "death" procured by sin stands in direct opposition to the "life" which is bestowed by God, which is expressly said to be "eternal." By "death" therefore we understand an everlasting banishment from God's presence, together with a "suffering of his vengeance in eternal fire."

***~~This is the penalty that is due to sin—~~***

It is in vain that people endeavor to soften down the expressions of Scripture upon this subject, and to substitute annihilation for eternal misery. Our blessed Lord, in his account of the judgment-day, declares that he himself, as the Judge of the living and dead, will doom the wicked to a participation of the misery inflicted on the fallen angels, and that their punishment shall be of the very same duration with the happiness of the righteous, [Matthew 25:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.41); [Matthew 25:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.46). See also [Mark 9:43-48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 9.43-48).

Nor is this more than the real desert of sin. The word we translate "wages," means "provisions" which in the earlier part of the Roman empire constituted the only pay of soldiers: and it must be confessed that a soldier's pay, at the best, is but a very moderate compensation for the dangers and fatigues of war: his wages are certainly no higher than justice demands. Thus *the penal evil of damnation is no more than a just recompense for the moral evil of sin*—it is the "wages" due to sin.

It is worthy of remark also, that this awful doom is not spoken of as the penalty of many or of great sins, but of "sin," of every sin, whether great or small. Every "transgression of God's holy law is sin, [1 John 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.4);" and, though all sins are not of equal malignity, *there is not any sin which does not deserve God's wrath and fiery indignation, or against which an everlasting curse is not denounced*,[Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10).

How dreadful then is the desert of every man, of the more moral and decent, as well as of the immoral and profane! for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and therefore all are deserving the punishment of sin, eternal damnation.

Let us now turn our thoughts to a more pleasing subject, namely,

***~~II. God's grace—~~***

***~~Notwithstanding our desert of eternal punishment, God has offered to us everlasting life—~~***

"He is not willing that any would perish, but that all would come to repentance and live." He has opened the gates of Heaven, and invited sinners of every description to enter in. Nor has he required anything to be done in order to purchase an admittance into it: he offers it freely, as a "gift" to all who will accept it. His invitation is to all who wish for it, to those also who have no money, to come and receive it at his hands "without money, and without price! [Isaiah 55:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.1)."

In this he has strongly marked the different grounds of a sinner's condemnation, and a saint's acceptance.

Eternal misery is awarded to the one, as "wages earned".

Eternal happiness is conferred upon the other, as a "gift bestowed".

Indeed our minds must be humbled: and we must be willing to accept salvation as a gift: for, if we carry any price whatever in our hands, we cut ourselves off from all hope of obtaining the desired blessing, [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2); [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4).

***~~This gift however is bestowed only "through the Lord Jesus Christ"—~~***

All possibility of regaining happiness by the covenant of works was prevented by the very terms of that covenant: in token of which, the way to the tree of life was obstructed by a fiery sword! [Genesis 3:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.24). But another, and a better "way, is opened to it through the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we may have boldness, and access with confidence" into the presence of our God! [Hebrews 10:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.19-20). Through him, as a Mediator, God can exercise mercy towards us in perfect consistency with his own honor; and through him, as the appointed channel, God will convey to us all the blessings of grace and glory. But then he expects that we come to him through Christ, and receive his blessings from Christ: for, as there is no other way unto the Father but through the Son, [John 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.6), so neither is there any way of obtaining from the Father, but by receiving out of the fullness which he has treasured up for us in Christ Jesus, [Colossians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.19). [John 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.16).

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. To those who are living in any allowed sin—~~***

We will suppose you are free from any gross immoralities; but that you are neglecting the great concerns of your souls, or attending to them with only a divided heart. Consider then, I beseech you, what you are doing: you are *earning wages*every day, every hour, every moment: whether you think of it or not, you are earning wages, and the day of reckoning is near at hand, when they shall be paid you by a just and holy God! Every act, every word, every thought is increasing the sum that shall be paid to you. Who can calculate the amount of a debt which has been increasing with awful rapidity from the first moment that you began to act? Yes, you have been doing nothing throughout your whole lives, but earning wages that shall be paid to you to the full, or, in other words, you have been "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath! [Romans 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.5)."

Consider, if the desert of one sin is eternal death—then what must be your desert, whose sins are more in number than the sands upon the sea-shore! Reflect on this, while there is an opportunity of cancelling the debt, and while the mercy of God can be extended to you. But remember, that you must not attempt to discharge the smallest part of this debt yourselves: if you take but one single sin upon you, you must suffer eternal damnation forever. Go therefore to Christ, and through him unto the Father: go with the guilt of all your sins upon you; cast yourselves entirely upon the mercy of your God; plead nothing but the merits of his dear Son; and "look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life! Jude, verse 21."

***~~2. To those who have obtained mercy, and deliverance from sin—~~***

Numberless are the considerations which should excite your gratitude for the mercies you have received. Consider:

the greatness of the guilt that has been forgiven you;

the riches of the glory which has been conferred upon you;

the freeness with which it has been bestowed;

and, above all, the means which have been used in order that you might be partakers of these benefits, even the appointment of God's only-begotten Son to be your dying Savior, and your living Head.

Consider these things, I say, and then judge what ought to be the frame of your minds.

What an abhorrence should you have of sin!

What gratitude should you feel towards that God who exercised such mercy towards you, and towards that adorable Jesus, through whose mediation alone it could ever have been communicated! Stir up yourselves then to "render unto God according to these benefits;" and exert yourselves to the uttermost to "glorify him with your bodies and your spirits, which are his! [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20)."

***~~#1851~~***

***~~DEADNESS TO THE LAW, AND UNION WITH CHRIST~~***

**[Romans 7:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.4).**

"So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God."

THAT the Gospel is hostile to the interests of morality, is an objection that has been raised against it, from the first promulgation of it by the Apostles, even to the present age. That the Gospel is a most wonderful display of grace and mercy, must be acknowledged: but it does not therefore encourage any man to live in sin: on the contrary, it teaches men, and binds them by every possible tie, to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

To this effect the Apostle speaks throughout the whole preceding chapter. He begins with stating the objection urged against the Gospel; "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" And then he answers it at large; and affirms, that the covenant of grace, so far from invalidating our obligation to good works, absolutely secures the performance of them, [Romans 6:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.14-16). In the chapter before us he is continuing the same argument, and putting it in a new light: he represents men as by nature married to the law, and bringing forth fruit to sin and death; but afterwards, as separated from the law, and married to Christ, in order to their bringing forth the fruits of holiness to the praise and glory of God.

His words will naturally lead us to consider,

***~~I. The state to which we are brought by the death of Christ—~~***

***~~We are all by nature bound to the law—~~***

God gave his law to Adam as a covenant, promising life to him if he were obedient, and denouncing death against him as the penalty of disobedience. Under that covenant we all are born: and on the terms prescribed by it we look for happiness or misery in the future world. The connection between us and it is indissoluble; like that of an husband; our obligations to whom nothing but death can dissolve.

***~~But by the death of Christ we are liberated from it—~~***

Christ, our incarnate Lord, has fulfilled every part of God's law; enduring its penalties, as well as executing its commands: and this he has done, as our Surety: so that, if we believe in him, we may plead his obedience unto death for all the punishment it denounces against us; and may even plead it also as having procured for us a title to all its promised blessings. Our blessed Lord, in fulfilling the law, has abrogated it as a covenant; and has obtained for us a new and better covenant, of which he himself is the Surety, [Hebrews 8:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.6); [Hebrews 8:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.8); [Hebrews 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.13).

As a rule of conduct, the law does, and ever must, continue in force; because it is the transcript of the mind and will of God, and contains a perfect rule for the conduct of his creatures, [1 Corinthians 9:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.21); but as a, covenant it is dissolved; and is, in respect of us, dead; so that we have no more connection with it than a woman has with her deceased husband: our obligations to it, and our expectations from it, have ceased for ever! [Galatians 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.19). This is a just and beautiful representation of the believer's state: perhaps there is not in all the Scriptures another image that conveys a complete idea of our state, in so clear, and so intelligible a way as this.

We all see in a moment the bonds by which a woman is tied to her husband during his life, and the total dissolution of them all by his death: we see that the deceased husband has no longer any authority over her, nor can any longer be to her a source either of good or evil.

Now if we transfer this idea to the law, and think of the law as a husband that is dead, or as a covenant that is annulled, then we shall have a just view of a believer's state respecting it. Throughout the whole context, Paul expatiates so fully upon this point, and explains himself so clearly, that we cannot possibly mistake his meaning, verse 1-6. The only doubt that can arise is, what law he refers to? But this doubt is dissipated in a moment: for he speaks of that law which prohibits inordinate desire; and consequently it is, and must be, the moral law, verse 7.

Such being the liberty which Christ has procured for us, let us consider,

***~~II. The improvement we would make of it—~~***

***~~Our blessed Lord offers himself to us as an husband—~~***

Under this idea he is frequently spoken of in the Old Testament, [Isaiah 54:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.5); [Isaiah 62:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.5). [Psalm 45:10-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 45.10-17), is, as it were, a celebration of the heavenly nuptials. The same is also frequently applied to him in the New Testament, [John 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.19). [Ephesians 5:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.25-27). In some sense indeed it is the *espousal*only that takes place in this world, [Hosea 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 2.19-20). [2 Corinthians 11:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.2). The *consummation*is deferred until our arrival in the world above, [Revelation 19:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.7-8); [Revelation 21:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.9-10).

***~~In this relation we would cordially receive him—~~***

Our former husband being dead, we are at liberty to be married to another. And where shall we find one who is more worthy of all our love and obedience? If Jesus so loved us when enemies, as to lay down his own life for us, what will he not do for us, when we become bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh; yes, when we become "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)." To him then let us unite ourselves by faith, and devote ourselves to him as wholly and exclusively, as the most faithful and affectionate of women does to her newly-acquired husband.

***~~We shall then have the honor and happiness of bringing forth fruit unto God—~~***

By our connection with the law, we have brought forth fruit only unto sin and death: but by the mighty operation of divine grace, we shall be enabled to bring forth fruit unto God, and holiness, and life, Compare [Romans 6:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.21-22) with our text and context. We shall no longer live under the influence of a slavish spirit, aiming only at the mere letter of the commandment, and regarding even that as an irksome service; but we shall aspire after the utmost spirit of the commandment, and strive with holy ardor to make the highest possible attainments, longing, if possible, to be as "holy as God is holy," and to be as "perfect as God is perfect." Our services will resemble those of the heavenly choir, who look, and watch, and pant, as it were, for an opportunity to testify their love to God, and to execute, in all its extent, his holy will.

How should the prospect of such fruit stimulate our desires after Christ! Let us bear in mind, that the bringing of us to such a state was the great object which he sought in giving up himself for us, [1 Peter 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.24); and let it be also the great object of our solicitude in devoting ourselves to him, [Romans 14:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.7-8).

***~~From hence then it appears,~~***

***~~1. How concerned we are to know the law—~~***

It was "to those only who knew the law," that the Apostle addressed himself in our text, verse 1; others could not have understood his meaning, but would have accounted all his representations as "foolishness, [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14)." Thus shall we also be incapable of entering into the sublime import of this passage, if we do not understand:

the nature of the law,

the extent of its requirements,

the awfulness of its penalties, and

the hopeless condition of all who are yet under it as a covenant of life and death.

But if we have just views of the law, then shall we be prepared for the Gospel, and be determined, through grace, that we will not give sleep to our eyes, or slumber to our eye-lids, until we have obtained a saving interest in Christ, and been received into a covenant of grace with him, as our Husband, our Savior, and our all.

***~~2. How interested we are, in embracing the Gospel—~~***

By this we are brought into a new state: we have new relations, both to God and man: our spirit is altogether new, as our attainments also are: our hopes and prospects also are new: "A beggar taken from a dunghill, and united to the greatest of earthly princes [1 Samuel 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.8)," would experience a very small change in comparison with that which we experience, when we enter into the marriage covenant with Christ.

O let us consent to his gracious proposals, and give up ourselves wholly unto him; then shall we "know the blessedness of his chosen," and comprehend, as far as such imperfect beings can, the incomprehensible wonders of his love; and after bringing forth fruit to his glory here, we shall be partakers of his kingdom in the world above.

***~~#1852~~***

***~~THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE LAW~~***

***~~[Romans 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.7).~~***

"What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."

*THERE is nothing, however good, which has not been abused to the vilest purposes.* The blessings of providence are rendered subservient to intemperance. The Holy Scriptures also are often wrested to support error. But we must not blame the things that are perverted, but the persons who pervert them. We must estimate things by their use, and not by their abuse.

To this effect the Apostle speaks respecting the law of God. He had spoken of the law as the accidental occasion of sin and death, verse 5. From hence he supposes that some would object against the law as the cause of sin and death. But, shuddering at such a blasphemous thought, he refutes the objection; and shows that, instead of being a promoter of sin, it revealed and prohibited sin in its first and most secret workings; and, in his vindication of it, he opens to us,

***~~I. Its nature—~~***

The law here spoken of must be the moral law, because it is that which forbids inordinate desire. Its spirituality may be seen by considering,

***~~1. The commandments in general—~~***

Our Lord comprises them all in two, namely, love to *God*, and love to *man*, [Matthew 22:37-40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.37-40).

Our love to **God**must be supreme, without intermission or reserve. The smallest defect in the degree or manner of our love is a violation of our duty towards him.

Our love to our **neighbor**must resemble our love to ourselves: it must be as extensive, as constant, as uniform, as influential.

The moral law is transgressed, not by overt acts only, but by secret thoughts. In this extent our Lord himself explains those very commandments, which we would be most ready to limit and restrict, [Matthew 5:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.21-22); [Matthew 5:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.27-28); hence it appears, that we may be blameless respecting the outward breach of the law, and yet have transgressed every one of the commandments throughout our whole lives.

***~~2. The particular commandment before us, covetousness—~~***

This, in the very letter of it, extends to our *inclinations*and *desires*:

it prohibits all dissatisfaction with our own state or lot;

it prohibits all envy at the prosperity of others;

it prohibits all desire of any evil or forbidden object;

it prohibits all inordinate love even of good and lawful objects;

it does not say, that we must not *indulge*a wrong desire, but that we must not even *have*a wrong desire.

Well therefore does David say respecting the law, "Your commandment is exceedingly broad [Psalm 119:96](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.96)."

It may seem unjust in God to publish such a law, seeing that man in his present fallen state cannot keep it one single hour. But God could not, consistently with his own honor and our good, publish a less spiritual law than this; and this will be found both "just and good verse 12," if we consider,

***~~II. Its use—~~***

Many are the uses of this law both to saints and sinners, but there is one use in particular mentioned in the text; and to that we shall confine our attention.

***~~The nature of sin is but little understood—~~***

The generality think that sin consists only in the outward act. Hence they suppose themselves in a good and safe state. This was the case with Paul himself before his conversion. And it is equally the case with every unconverted man.

***~~But the law is intended to reveal sin to us in its true colors—~~***

*Like a perfect rule, it leads to a discovery of our smallest obliquities. When applied to our motives, and principles, and to the manner and measure of our duties—it shows us that our very best actions are extremely defective.*Thus it plucks up by the roots all conceit of our own goodness, and causes us to lie low before God as miserable sinners. It was to a view of the law that Paul owed his knowledge of his own sinfulness. And it is by this light that we must see the evil of our state.

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~1. What do we know of sin?~~***

Have we ever seen the *spirituality*and *extent*of the law?

Have we ever laid the law as a line to our consciences?

Have we ever measured our best actions by the law?

Have we ever been bowed down under the weight of our transgressions?

Have we ever felt the impossibility of being justified by the law?

No attainments in knowledge or goodness will profit us without this. Paul himself, though he thought well of his own state, was really dead while he was ignorant of the law; and when the spirituality of the law was revealed to him, then he saw and confessed himself an undone sinner! verse 9. Let us then seek increasing views of the law, that we may be made truly humble and contrite.

***~~2. What do we know of the Deliverer from sin?~~***

There is One who has fulfilled the demands of the law. His obedience and righteousness will avail for us.

Have we fled to him as the fulfiller of the law for us?

Have we take refuge in him who bore its curse for us?

Do we see the need of him to "bear the iniquity of our holy things?"

Let us then bless God for such a Savior, and "cleave to him with full purpose of heart."

***~~3. What regard are we yet daily showing to the moral law?~~***

We are indeed delivered from its penal sanctions; nor ought we to regard it any longer as a covenant. But we are still subject to its commands, and ought to receive it as a rule of life. If we are sincere, we shall not account even the strictest of its commandments grievous, [1 John 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.3).

Let us then remember that it still says to us, "You shall not covet." Let us, in obedience to it, mortify all discontent and envy, all improper and inordinate desire: and let it be the labor of our lives to glorify God by our professed subjection to it.

***~~#1853~~***

***~~THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE LAW~~***

***~~[Romans 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.9).~~***

"I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

WHEN we behold the extreme supineness of those around us in relation to their eternal concerns, we are naturally led to inquire, What the reason of it is? Is it that they imagine there is no God; or no future state; or no connection between their present life and their eternal destiny? No! they acknowledge their accountableness to God; but they are ignorant of the rule by which they shall be judged: and hence they conclude that they are in no danger, when, if they were apprised of their real state, they would he filled with alarm and terror. Thus it was with the Apostle Paul previous to his conversion: while ignorant of the spiritual nature of God's law, he thought himself secure of acceptance with God: but when he had juster views of the law, he had juster views of his own spiritual condition also. Here then, as in a looking-glass, we see,

***~~I. The apprehensions which ignorant men have of their state before God—~~***

None are so blind as to think they have never sinned: but the generality suppose that they have never sinned in any great degree, so as to endanger their eternal happiness, or to justify God in consigning them over to eternal misery. If in some respects their actions have been incorrect, they imagine that have had no bad intentions: their conduct may have been bad, but their hearts were good. If they have refrained from gross immoralities, and been observant of some outward duties, they will, like the Pharisee, "thank God that they are not as other men;" and will boast before him of the good deeds which they have done, [Luke 18:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.11-12). As for being in any danger of perishing, they cannot for a moment admit the idea: they think, that if God were to cast them into Hell, he would be unjust; that they have never merited such a doom: and it would be quite irreconcilable with the goodness of God to suppose him capable of proceeding with such severity against persons of their description.

Such were Paul's views of himself; "he was alive without the law once:" having extremely contracted views of his duty, he thought he had done nothing to deserve punishment, and was secure of eternal life and salvation. And such is the delusion by which the whole host of unconverted men are blinded at this day.

Hence we perceive,

***~~II. The means by which alone they can be brought to a juster knowledge of their state—~~***

When God was pleased to arrest Paul on his way to Damascus, and to reveal himself to him, he manifested to him the *spirituality*and *extent*of the law. Paul had before thought that the commandments related only to outward acts; whereas he was now made to see that an *inordinate desire*was as much forbidden as the most criminal action; and that an *impure or angry thought*were in God's sight as adultery or murder, verse 7 with [Matthew 5:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.22-23); he saw too that the curse of the law was denounced against every violation of its commands; and that it as truly condemned men for a dissatisfied or envious wish, as for the most flagrant transgression, [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10).

From this time all his delusions vanished: he no longer cherished the fond idea of meriting salvation by his past or future obedience: he saw that he had not in any one action of his life come up to the full demands of the law; and that consequently he must renounce all dependence on the law for his justification before God.

Thus were his views rectified: and it is in this way alone that anyone can attain a just knowledge of his state. "The commandment must come" with power to his conscience: he must see the *spirituality*of the law as extending to every thought and motion of the heart, and the *holiness*of the law as unalterably consigning over to the curse every one who shall transgress it in the smallest particular. Then his hopes of salvation from obeying the law will forever vanish; and he will seek for mercy solely through the atoning blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

But let us more distinctly consider,

***~~III. The view they will have of themselves, when rightly informed—~~***

While men are ignorant what the law requires, sin appears to be, as it were, dead, and destitute of power either to enslave or condemn them: but when they have a discovery of the law, they will perceive that sin has all along exercised a tyrannic sway over them, and brought them under the heaviest condemnation. *Their whole life will appear to have been one uninterrupted course of sin*; and to have been spent, unwittingly indeed, but truly, in "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." *Their best actions now will be viewed as defiled with sin, and as deserving punishment*: and they will see their need of one to "bear the iniquity of their holy things," as well as of their more evident transgressions. They will now confess, that "if God would enter into judgment with them, they could not answer him" for one act, or word, or thought, in their whole lives. Hence they lie before him as sinners under the sentence of "death," and cast themselves wholly on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

Instead of rising against the denunciations of his wrath, as they once did, they are silent, [Matthew 22:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.12); well knowing that "he will be justified in his sayings, and be clear when he judges, [Psalm 51:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.4)." Thus from thinking themselves "alive" and pure—"sin revives in them, and they die."

***~~Improvement—~~***

***~~1. How mistaken then are those who imagine that they have no cause to fear the wrath of God!~~***

We will grant, that, according to the world's estimate, they are very worthy characters: but are they more exemplary than the Apostle Paul was before his conversion? Let them hear his own account of himself, and judge, [Philippians 3:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.4-6). If then he, when his eyes were opened, saw that he was a "dead" condemned sinner, let not any of us delude ourselves with the idea that we are in any better state.

***~~2. How suited is the Gospel to those who feel their guilt and misery!~~***

Are we lost? it was such persons that Christ came to seek and to save. Have we nothing to present to God in order to obtain salvation? He requires nothing at our hands, but to receive it freely from him "without money, and without price." Let "the law then be to us as a schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ;" and let us look to "Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes."

***~~#1854~~***

***~~SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS OF BELIEVERS~~***

***~~[Romans 7:18-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.18-23).~~***

"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members."

OF all evils that can be mentioned, Antinomianism is the worst; because it makes the Lord Jesus Christ himself a minister of sin, and turns the most glorious revelation of his grace into an occasion of unrestrained licentiousness. But while we reprobate with utter abhorrence the idea of *sinning that grace may abound*, we dare not, with some, deny or pervert the Gospel of Christ. We must affirm, that the Gospel offers to us a free and full salvation through the blood of Christ, and that those who believe in Christ are altogether dead to the law, so as to have nothing to hope for from its promises, or to fear from its threats.

If, from this assertion, any one would infer, that we think ourselves at liberty to violate the precepts of the law, he would be much mistaken. There were some who put this construction on Paul's statements; to whom he replied, "Shall we then continue in sin, that grace may abound?" and again, "Shall we then sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? [Romans 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.1); [Romans 6:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.15)." To each of these questions he answered, "God forbid:" and in like manner we reject with indignation the remotest idea that we would make the Gospel an occasion of sin.

But, while Paul vindicated himself from this charge, he showed, that, as a woman who had lost her husband was at liberty to be married to another man, so the law to which he once owed allegiance being dead, he was at liberty to be married to Christ, and by him to bring forth fruit unto God.

The terms however in which he expressed himself seemed to encriminate the law, as much as he had before seemed to cast reflections on the Gospel. "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death, verse 5." Here, as he had before denied to the law the office of justifying a sinner, so now, in appearance, he seemed to accuse it as being to him the author both of sin and death. But these representations also he rejects; and shows, that the law had only been the occasion of sin, and not the cause of it, verse 8; and that it had also been the occasion of death, but was by no means the cause of it, verse 13.

The proper cause both of sin and of death was the corruption of our nature, which remains with us even to our dying hour; as he himself could testify by bitter experience. This experience of his he then proceeds to describe. But as commentators have differed widely from each other in their explanations of the passage, we will endeavor to show,

***~~I. Of whom it is to be understood—~~***

That we may bring the matter to a fair outcome, we will distinctly inquire,

***~~1. Does the passage relate the experience of an ungodly man, or of one that is truly pious?~~***

Those who explain it of an ungodly man say that the whole preceding chapter represents a true Christian as made free from sin, [Romans 6:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.6-7); [Romans 6:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.11); [Romans 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.14); [Romans 6:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.18); and that to interpret this passage of a true Christian, would be to make the Apostle contradict himself. As for the opposition which the person here spoken of makes to his sinful propensities, it is nothing more (say they) than the ordinary conflict between reason and passion; and it may therefore properly be interpreted as experienced by an ungodly man.

But to this we answer, that, though an ungodly man may feel some restraints from his conscience, and consequently some conflicts between reason and passion, he cannot say that he really "hates sin," or that "he delights in the law of God after the inward man, verse 15, 22." The carnal and unrenewed mind neither is, nor can be, subject to the law of God, [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14); it is altogether enmity against God, [Romans 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.7); and therefore the character here drawn cannot possibly be assigned to an ungodly man.

***~~2. Does Paul in this passage impersonate a godly man who is in a low state of grace, or does he speak altogether of himself?~~***

That the Apostle does sometimes speak in the person of another, in order that he may inculcate truth in a more inoffensive manner, is certain, [1 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.6); but we conceive it to be clear that he speaks here in his own person: for it is undeniable that he speaks in his own person in the preceding part of the chapter, where he tells us what he was in his unconverted state verse 7-11; and now he tells us what he is, at the time of writing this epistle.

In verse 9 he says "I was alive without the law once;" and then afterwards, in verse 14 he says, "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal:" and so he proceeds to the very end of the chapter declaring fully and particularly all the workings of his mind. This change of the tense shows clearly, that from stating his *former*experience, he proceeds to state that which he felt at *present*.

Moreover, in the concluding verse of the chapter, where he sums up, as it were, the substance of his confession in few words, he particularly declares, that he spoke it of himself: "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." To interpret á ô ò ã , "I the same man," that is, not I myself, but I that other person, is such a perversion of language as cannot with any propriety be admitted.

And this is yet further evident from what he adds at the beginning of the next chapter, where he says, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death, [Romans 8:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.2)."

The only thing that can raise a doubt whether the Apostle speaks in his own person or not, is the strong language which he uses. It is certainly strong language to say of himself, "I am carnal, sold under sin." But this differs as widely from what is said of Ahab, who "sold himself to work iniquity," as the motion of a volunteer differs from the motion of a person who is dragged in chains.

To understand the Apostle, we must consider the subject on which he is writing. He is comparing himself with the spiritual and perfect law of God. To fulfill that in its utmost extent, was his continual aim: but by reason of his *indwelling corruption*he could not attain his aim: and this may well account for the strong terms in which he speaks of his corrupt nature.

And, if we compare his language with that which the holiest men that ever existed have used in reference to themselves, we shall find that there is a perfect agreement between them. "Behold, I am vile!" says *Job*; "I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes." *David*also complains, "My soul cleaves to the dust." And the Prophet *Isaiah*, on being favored with a vision of the Deity himself, exclaimed, "Woe is me, I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips." And it is a fact, that the most eminent saints in every age have felt a suitableness in the language of Paul to express their own experience, just as they have also in those expressions of our Liturgy, "We are tied and bound with the chain of our sins; but do you, O Lord, of the pitifulness of your great mercy, loose us!"

Having shown that the passage relates the Apostle's own experience, we will proceed to show,

***~~II. Its true import—~~***

The Apostle is speaking of that corrupt principle, which, notwithstanding his attainments, still remained within him, and kept him from that perfect conformity to the law of God to which he aspired. This principle he represents as having the force of a law, which he was not able fully to resist. He had indeed within himself a principle of grace which kept him from ever yielding a willing obedience to his indwelling corruption; but it did not so free him from the workings of corruption, but that he still offended God in many things:

***~~1. In a way of occasional aberration—~~***

To conceive of this subject aright, we may suppose the holy and perfect law of God to be a perfectly straight line on which we are to walk; and the corrupt principle within us to be operating on all our faculties to turn us from it.

Sometimes it blinds the *understanding*, so that we do not distinctly see the line.

Sometimes it biases the *judgment*, so as to incline us, without any distinct consciousness on our part, to smaller deviations from it.

Sometimes with force and violence it impels the *passions*, so that we cannot regulate our steps with perfect self-command.

Sometimes it operates to delude the *conscience*, and to make us confident that we see the line, when in reality it is only a semblance of it, which our great adversary has presented to our imagination in order to deceive us.

By this principle, a continual warfare was kept up in his soul against his higher and better principle, keeping him from what was good, and impelling him to what was evil; so that he often did what he would not willingly have done, and did not do what he gladly would have done. Thus, as he expresses it, there was "a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin in his members."

This representation exactly accords with that which he gives of every child of God, in the Epistle to the Galatians: "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would, [Galatians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.17)."

This is by no means to be understood as though he acknowledged that he was driven to any gross violations of God's law; for with respect to them he had a conscience void of offense: but in respect of smaller deviations from the exact line of duty, he could not assert his innocence: he felt, that however much he longed for perfection, "he had not yet attained, nor was he already perfect."

***~~2. In a way of constant defect—~~***

The law of God requires that we would love God with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our soul, and all our strength; and that every action, every word, every thought, be in perfect accordance with this rule. But who has not reason to confess that his very best duties are defective, in extent, in intensity, and in continuance? Who comprehends in any one action all that assemblage of pure motives, and purposes, and affections, that were combined in the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ? Who at any time feels all that ardor in the service of his God which the angels in Heaven feel? Or, supposing he did at some highly-favored season serve God on earth precisely as the glorified saints are serving him in Heaven, who must not confess that it is not *always*thus with him? However "willing his spirit may be, he will find that his flesh is weak."

Indeed, in proportion as any man aspires after perfection, he will lament his imperfections; and in proportion as he sees the beauty of holiness, he will loath himself for his defects. We doubt not but that Paul's spirituality of mind led him to complain more bitterly of the defects, which, with all his exertions, he was not able to prevent, than he would have done in his unconverted state of more plain and palpable transgressions.

It might be supposed that the more holy any man was, the more free he would be from such complaints: but the very reverse of this is true: the persons "who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, are those who groan most within themselves for their complete redemption, [Romans 8:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.23);" yes Paul himself, as long as he was in the body, did "groan, being burdened, [2 Corinthians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.2); 2 Corinthians 5:4;" to his dying hour he resumed at times that piteous moan, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me! verse 24."

Paul indeed makes a wide distinction between these sins of infirmity, and willful sins. Of these sins of infirmity, he twice says, "If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me, compare verse 17, 20;" that is, my new nature in no respects consents to these sins; nay, the full bent and purpose of my soul is against them; but the remainder of my indwelling corruption, which I hate and oppose to the uttermost, keeps me from attaining that full perfection that I pant after: and therefore I hope that God will accept my services, notwithstanding the imperfection that attends them.

In like manner, we, if we have the testimony of our consciences that we allow no sin, but fight against it universally, and with all our might, may rest assured, that "God will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss," but that our services, notwithstanding their imperfection, shall come up with acceptance before him.

In considering this experience of the Apostle, we must especially attend to,

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

We may learn from it,

***~~1. How constantly we need the atonement and intercession of Christ—~~***

It is not for the sins only of our unconverted state that we need a Savior, but for those of daily occurrence, even for those which attend our very best services. As Aaron of old was to bear the iniquity of the people of Israel, even of "their holy things, [Exodus 28:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 28.38)," so our great High-Priest must bear ours. Nor can the best service we ever offered unto God be accepted by him, until it has been washed in the Redeemer's blood, and perfumed with the incense of his intercession! [1 Peter 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.5).

Guard then against all conceit of meriting anything at the hands of God. Guard also against self-delight, as though you had wrought some good work in which no flaw can be found. If God were to lay a line and plummet to your best deeds, there would be found inconceivable obliquities and defects in them, [Isaiah 28:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.17). [Psalm 130:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 130.3). Be sensible of this, and then you will learn how to value the Pearl of great price, even the Lord Jesus Christ, for whom you will gladly part with all that you have, that you may obtain a saving interest in him and in his salvation.

***~~2. What reason we have to watch over our own hearts—~~***

Carrying about with us such a corrupt nature, and knowing, as we do, that even Paul himself could not altogether cast off its influence, how jealous should we be, lest we be led into the commission of iniquity, even while we imagine that we are doing God service! Even the Apostles of our Lord, on more occasions than one, "knew not what spirit they were of." And we, if we will look back on many transactions of our former lives, shall view them very differently from what we once did: and no doubt God at this moment forms a very different estimate of us from what we are disposed to form of ourselves.

How blinded men are by pride, or prejudice, or self-interest, or passion, we all see in those around us.

Let us be aware of it in ourselves: let us remember, that we too have a subtle adversary, and a deceitful heart.

Let us never forget, that Satan, who beguiled Eve in Paradise, can now "transform himself into an angel of light" to deceive us, and to "corrupt us from the simplicity that is in Christ."

Let us pray earnestly to God to keep us from his wiles, to disappoint his devices, and to bruise him under our feet. If God keeps us, we shall stand; but, if he withdraws his gracious influences for one moment, we shall fall!

***~~3. What comfort is provided for us, if only we are sincere before God—~~***

If we wish to make the Apostle's experience a cloak for our sins, we shall eternally ruin our own souls. His experience can be of no comfort to us, unless we have the testimony of our own consciences that we "hate evil," of whatever kind it be, and "delight in the law of God," even in its most refined and elevated requirements, "after our inward man." But, if we can appeal to God, that we do not regard or retain willingly any iniquity in our hearts, but that we sincerely endeavor to pluck out the right eye that offends our God—then may we take comfort in our severest conflicts. We may console ourselves with the thought that "no temptation has taken us but what is common to man," and that "God will, with the temptation, make for us also a way to escape." We may go on with confidence, assured of final victory; and may look forward with delight to that blessed day, when sin and sorrow shall depart from us, and death itself be swallowed up in everlasting victory!

***~~#1855~~***

***~~PAUL'S SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS~~***

***~~[Romans 7:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.24-25).~~***

"O what a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin."

THE Epistle to the Romans, as a clear, full, argumentative, and convincing statement of Gospel salvation, far exceeds every other part of Holy Writ. And *the seventh chapter of that epistle equally excels every other part of Scripture, as a complete delineation of Christian experience*. The Psalms contain the breathings of a devout soul, both in seasons of trouble and under the impressions of joy. But in the passage before us the Apostle states the operation of the two principles which were within him, and shows how divine grace and his corrupt nature counteracted each other. The good principle did indeed liberate him from all allowed subjection to sin: but the corrupt principle within him yet exerted such power, that, in spite of all his endeavors to resist it, he could not utterly overcome it. Having opened thus all the secret motions of his heart, he gives vent to the feelings which had been alternately excited by a review of his own experience, and of the provision which was made for him in Jesus Christ.

In discoursing upon his words we shall show,

***~~I. The Apostle's experience—~~***

We shall not enter into the general contents of this chapter, but confine ourselves to the workings of the Apostle's mind, in,

***~~1. His views of his sin—~~***

He considered sin as the most loathsome of all objects. In calling his indwelling corruption "a body of death," he seems to allude to the practice of some tyrants, who fastened a dead body to a captive whom they had doomed to death, and compelled him to bear it about with him until he was killed by the offensive smell. Such a nauseous and hateful thing was sin in the Apostle's estimation. He felt that he could not get loose from it, but was constrained to bear it about with him wherever he went: and it was more loathsome to him than a dead body, more intolerable than a putrid carcass!

The bearing of this about with him was an occasion of the deepest sorrow. Whatever other tribulations he was called to endure, he could rejoice and glory in them, yes, and thank God who had counted him worthy to bear them. But under the burden of his indwelling corruptions he cried, "O what a wretched man I am!"

Nor was there anything he so much desired as to be delivered from it. When he had been unjustly imprisoned by the magistrates, he was in no haste to get rid of his confinement: instead of availing himself of the discharge they had sent him, he said, "Nay, but let them come themselves and fetch me out." But from his indwelling sin he was impatient to be released; and cried, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Not that he was at a loss where to look for deliverance; but he spoke as one impatient to obtain it.

***~~2. His views of his Savior—~~***

If his *afflictions*abounded, so did his *consolations*abound also. He knew that there was a sufficiency in Christ both of merit to justify the guilty, and of grace to sanctify the polluted. He knew, moreover, that God for Christ's sake had engaged to pardon all his sins, and to subdue all his iniquities. Hence, with an emotion of gratitude, more easy to be conceived than expressed, he breaks off from his desponding strains, and exclaims, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" I thank him for Christ, as an all-sufficient *Savior*; and I thank him through Christ, as my all-prevailing *Advocate*and *Mediator*. While he saw in himself nothing but what tended to humble him in the dust, he beheld in Christ and in God as reconciled to him through Christ, enough to turn his sorrow into joy, and his desponding complaints into triumphant exultation.

That we may not imagine these things to be peculiar to Paul, we proceed to show,

***~~II. Wherein our experience must resemble his—~~***

"As face answers to face in a looking-glass, so does the heart of man to man:" and every one who is converted to God will resemble the Apostle,

***~~1. In an utter abhorrence of all sin—~~***

Sin is really hateful to all who see it in its true colors; it is properly called, "filthiness of the flesh and spirit, [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.1);" and all who feel its workings within them, will "loath both it, and themselves on account of it, notwithstanding God is pacified towards them, [Ezekiel 16:63](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.63).

Ungodly men may indeed hate sin in *others*; as Judah did, when he sentenced his daughter Tamar to death for the crime in which he himself had borne a share, [Genesis 38:24-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 38.24-26); and as David did, when he condemned a man to die for an act which was but a very faint shadow of the enormities which he himself had committed, [2 Samuel 12:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 12.5-7).

Ungodly men may go so far as to hate sin in themselves, as Judas did when he confessed it with so much bitterness and anguish of spirit; and as a woman may who has brought herself to shame; or a gambler, who has reduced his family to ruin. But it is not *sin*that they hate, so much as the *consequences*of their sin.

The true Christian is distinguished from all such persons in that he hates sin itself, independent of any shame or loss he may sustain by means of it in this world, or any punishment he may suffer in the world to come. The Apostle did not refer to any act that had exposed him to shame before men, or that had destroyed his hopes of acceptance with God, but to the inward corruption of which he could not altogether divest himself: and every one that is upright before God will resemble him in this respect, and hold in abhorrence those remains of depravity which he cannot wholly extirpate.

Nor will the true Christian justify himself from the consideration that he cannot put off his corrupt nature. No, he will grieve from his inmost soul that he is so depraved a creature. When he sees:

how defective he is in every grace,

how weak his faith is,

how faint his hope is,

how cold his love is;

when he sees that the seeds of pride and envy, of anger and resentment, of worldliness and sensuality—yet abide in his heart; he weeps over his wretched state, and "groans in this tabernacle, being burdened."

Not that this grief arises from fear of perishing, but simply from the consideration that these corruptions defile his soul, and displease his God, and rob him of that sweet fellowship with the Deity, which, if he were more purified from them, it would be his privilege to enjoy.

Under these impressions he will desire a deliverance from sin as much as from Hell itself: not like a merchant who casts his goods out of his ship merely to keep it from sinking, and wishes for them again as soon as he is safe on shore; but like one racked with pain and agony by reason of an abscess, who not only parts with the corrupt matter with gladness, but beholds it afterwards with horror and disgust, and accounts its separation from him as his truest felicity.

Let every one then examine himself with respect to these things, and ask himself distinctly, "Am I like Paul in loathing sin of every kind, and of every degree? Does my grief for the secret remains of sin within me swallow up every other grief? And am I using every means in my power, and especially calling upon God, to destroy sin root and branch?"

***~~2. In a thankful reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ—~~***

The hope of every true Christian arises from Christ alone: if he had no other prospect than what he derived from his own inherent goodness, he would despair as much as those who are gone beyond a possibility of redemption. But there is in Christ such a fullness of all spiritual blessings treasured up for his people, that the most guilty cannot doubt of pardon, nor can the weakest doubt of victory, provided he relies on that adorable Savior, and seek his blessings with penitence and contrition. In him the Apostle found an abundance to supply his needs; and from the same inexhaustible fountain does every saint draw water with joy.

And what must be the feelings of the Christian when he is enabled to say of Christ, "This is my Friend, this is my Beloved!" Must he not immediately exclaim, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" Must not the very stones cry out against him, if he withholds his acclamations and hosannas? Yes, "to every one who believes, Christ is, and must be, precious!" "All that are of the true circumcision will rejoice in him, having no confidence in the flesh." And the deeper sense any man has of his own extreme vileness, the more fervently will he express his gratitude to God for providing a Savior so suited to his necessities.

***~~Let us then learn from this subject,~~***

***~~1. The nature of vital godliness—~~***

Religion, as it is experienced in the soul, is not as some imagine, a state of continual sorrow, nor, as others fondly hope, a state of uninterrupted joy. It is rather a mixture of joy and sorrow, or, if we may so speak, it is a joy springing out of sorrow. It is a *conflict*between the fleshly and spiritual principle, [Galatians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.17), continually humbling us on account of what is in ourselves, and filling us with joy on account of what is in Christ Jesus!

As for those who dream of sinless perfection, I marvel at them. Let them explain their notions as they will, they put away from themselves one-half of the Apostle's experience, and suffer incalculable loss, in exchanging true scriptural humility for Pharisaic pride, and unscriptural self-delight. The being emptied of all our own imaginary goodness, and being made truly thankful to God for the blessings we receive in and through Christ, is that which constitutes the Christian warfare, and that which alone will issue in final victory.

***~~2. How little true religion there is in the world—~~***

We hear every living man complaining at times of civil, domestic, or personal troubles; and we find every man at times exhilarated on some occasion or other. But we might live years with the generality of men, and never once hear them crying, "O my inward corruptions: what a burden they are to my distressed soul!"

Nor would we see them ever once rejoicing in Christ as their suitable and all-sufficient Savior. Yes, if we were only to suggest such a thought to them, they would turn away from us in disgust. Can we need any further proof of the prevalence, the general prevalence, of irreligion? May God make use of this indisputable fact for the bringing home of conviction upon all our souls!

***~~3. What consolation is provided for those who have ever so small a portion of true religion in their hearts—~~***

Many experience the sorrows of religion without its joys; and they refuse to be comforted because of the ground they have for weeping and lamentation. But if their sins are a just occasion of sorrow; their sorrow on account of sin is a just occasion of joy: and the more they cry, O wretched man that I am, the more reason they have to add, "Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ." Let this ascription of praise be our alternate outpouring now; and before long it shall be our only, and uninterrupted, song forever!

***~~#1856~~***

***~~THE PRIVILEGE OF TRUE CHRISTIANS~~***

***~~[Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1).~~***

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus; who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

TO establish that fundamental doctrine of our religion, the doctrine of justification by faith alone, is the main scope of this epistle. Having argued the point, and shown that the objection of its encouraging men to sin, is without any real foundation, the Apostle sums up the whole in the words before us; and declares, as the just inference from his preceding arguments, that the believer in Christ, who acts agreeably to his profession, has nothing to fear from the condemnation of the law.

From this inspired declaration we learn the *state*, the *character*, and the *privilege*of every true Christian—

***~~I. His state—~~***

He is "in Christ Jesus." This is altogether a term peculiar to the New Testament: but it expresses admirably the condition into which the Christian is brought, as soon as he believes in Christ.

***~~He is savingly interested in Christ as his all-sufficient Savior—~~***

He has fled to Christ for refuge from the curses of the broken law: and has obtained peace with God by faith in his atoning sacrifice. Though in himself he deserves nothing but condemnation, he is "accepted in the beloved," and "made an heir of God through Christ."

***~~He is united to Christ as his living Head—~~***

Christ is "made Head over all things to the Church." "He is the vine, of which believers are the branches." Everyone knows how it is that the branch is nourished and enabled to bear fruit, namely, by its union with the stock, and by sap derived from the root. Thus it is that the believer "receives continually out of the fullness that is in Christ," being, in fact, not only "one body," but also "one spirit, with him".

In a word, the person that is in Christ is one who can say, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength."

In strict accordance with this is,

***~~II. His character—~~***

"A tree is known by its fruit," as the Christian is by his.

***~~"He walks not after the flesh."~~***

Notwithstanding he is in Christ, he still carries about with him a corrupt nature, "a body of sin and death." He has yet "the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and incapacitating him to serve God so well as he could wish. But "he does not walk after the flesh;" nor will he "obey it in the lusts thereof." In this respect he is widely different from the ungodly world. They desire nothing but the things of time and sense. He is not satisfied with anything which has not a direct reference to eternity.

***~~"He walks after the Spirit"—~~***

He possesses a new and heavenly principle, under the influence of which he lives: and his conduct is in Heaven, "where Christ sits at the right hand of God:" nor can anything please him which does not advance his eternal interests, and tend to the honor of that Savior who bought him with his blood.

Viewing thus his state and character, we shall not wonder at what is here declared to be,

***~~III. His privilege—~~***

"There is no condemnation to him." We say not, that there is no *desert*of condemnation in him: for he is still a weak and corrupt creature; and there is much "iniquity even in his holiest acts." But "there is no condemnation now remaining to him."

The law only curses those who are under the law. But the believer is "no longer under the law, but under grace;" and consequently, so far as he is concerned, the law is disarmed of its power, and is incapable of inflicting upon him its penalties. As a woman, when her husband is dead, is no longer under his power; so the Christian, now that the law is abrogated, is no longer liable to its sentence, [Romans 7:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.4-6). He stands before God perfect in Christ Jesus, yes, "without spot or blemish:" and he has nothing to fear on account of his past infirmities or his present conflicts: for God will carry on the work begun in his soul, and will "perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ".

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. The mere nominal Christian—~~***

Do not think that your observance of a round of duties is any evidence of your acceptance with God. You must be "in Christ" by a living faith, if ever you would be accepted by him; and by virtue derived from him, must be bringing forth fruit to the glory of his name. And, if this be not your state and character, deceive not yourselves, for the text itself intimates that there is condemnation for you, and that you have no part or lot with God's believing people. I beg you, lay this matter to heart, and seek, before it be too late, the blessings purchased by the Redeemer of the world.

***~~2. The over-confident professor—~~***

Some there are who will pronounce the words of our text with the same unhallowed confidence, as if there were no condemnation awaiting any man. But, brethren, your state and character should be tried, before you claim the privilege belonging to God's faithful people. "If you walk after the flesh, you shall die," whatever you may imagine to the contrary! "If you are Christ's, you will surely crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts".

***~~3. The timid and doubting Christian—~~***

Some, because they still feel within themselves the workings of corruption, will doubt whether they can by any means belong to Christ. But the very text intimates, that there will yet be the flesh stirring within us; only, that, if we are Christ's, we shall not "walk after it."

Say then, my dear brethren, do you find your pleasure in earthly things? Is it not, rather, painful to you that you cannot more entirely mortify all earthly desires, and find all your comfort in the things of God? I do not say this to encourage or sanction a slothful habit; but I say it in order to "strengthen your hands that hang down," and to show you, that, if, with Paul, you are constrained to cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" you would also add with him, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

***~~#1857~~***

***~~THE GOSPEL FREES MEN FROM SIN AND DEATH~~***

***~~[Romans 8:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.2).~~***

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

THE world in general account it liberty to give loose to their passions. But such freedom is indeed the sorest bondage to sin and Satan! [Romans 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.16). None possess true liberty but those who are freed by Christ, [John 8:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.36). The state of the demoniacs when healed by Christ resembled theirs, [Luke 8:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 8.35). Paul was made a glorious example of it to all ages. He was once under condemnation, both because he adhered to the covenant of works, and was governed by his own impetuous will: he now rejoiced in a freedom from the sin that he had indulged, and from the curse to which he had subjected himself, "The law of sin and death."

We shall first explain, and then improve the text—

***~~I. Explain it—~~***

It is not needful to state the various interpretations given of the text. We shall adopt that which seems most easy, and agreeable to the context. We will begin with explaining the terms.

***~~"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is the Gospel covenant, as confirmed to us in Christ, and revealed to us by the Spirit—~~***

The "Spirit of life" is the Holy Spirit, who is the author and preserver of spiritual life, [John 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.5). [Ephesians 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.16). The "law" of the Spirit, is the Gospel as revealed and applied by him: it is called a law because it has all the essential properties of a law. A law is a precept enforced with sanctions: and such is the Gospel: it is a precept, [1 John 3:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.23); and it is enforced with the most encouraging and solemn sanctions, [Mark 16:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.16); it is often spoken of as a law both by prophets and Apostles, [Isaiah 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 2.3). [Romans 3:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.27); it is said to be the law of the Spirit "in Christ Jesus," because the blessings of the Gospel are treasured up in Christ, confirmed to us through Christ, and received by us from Christ, [Colossians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.19). [2 Corinthians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.20). [John 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.16).

***~~"The law of sin and death" may be understood either of the covenant of works or of our indwelling corruption—~~***

The covenant of works is a "law" to which all are by nature subject: it is called the "law of sin and death," because both sin and death come by that law. Without that law there had been no transgression, and, consequently, no sin (which is the transgression of a law); nor death (which is the penalty inflicted for transgression). Compare [1 John 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.4). [Romans 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.13). [1 Corinthians 15:56](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.56). Hence it is called "the ministration of death and of condemnation." [2 Corinthians 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.7); [2 Corinthians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.9). Our indwelling corruption also operates as "a law" within us, [Romans 7:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.23); it invariably hurries us on to "sin and death, [Romans 7:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.5)."

We shall next explain the proposition contained in the terms.

***~~The proposition is, that "the Gospel frees us from the curse of the law, and from the dominion of sin"—~~***

When we embrace the Gospel we cease to be under the covenant of works, [Romans 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.14), latter part; we then partake of all the blessings which Christ has purchased for us; we are liberated from the condemnation due to sin, [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1); we are freed, through the aid of the Spirit, from the power of sin, [Romans 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.13); [Romans 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.14), former part.

***~~This proposition is to be understood as extending to all believers—~~***

It is not true with respect to the Apostles only; it was exemplified in all the first converts One hour they were full of guilt and wickedness; the next they were rejoicing in the pardon of their sins, and in the practice of all holy duties, [Acts 2:46-47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.46-47), and is experienced still by every sincere Christian.

The text thus explained is capable of most useful improvement—

***~~II. Improve it—~~***

***~~It is replete with very important instruction—~~***

It shows us the wretched state of every unregenerate man—

We are all in bondage to "the law of sin and death;" we are justly subjected to the curses of the broken law, [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10); we are also led captive by our own corrupt appetites; even Paul himself was in this very state, [Romans 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.9). Let us then humble ourselves under a conviction of this truth.

It declares to us the only method of deliverance from the state sin and death.

It was the Gospel which freed the Apostle. The same will avail for every other person. We must however "obey the Gospel," and receive it as our "law of faith;" we must look for its blessings from Christ through the Spirit. In this way we may all adopt the language of the text in reference to our own happy experience.

***~~It affords also abundant matter of reproof—~~***

It reproves those who despond as though there were no hope for them.

Many think their guilt is too great to be pardoned, and their lusts are too strong to be subdued; but Paul's case was intended to prevent such desponding fears, [1 Timothy 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.16). Let none therefore any more complain like those of old, [Ezekiel 37:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.11); every one may find encouragement in the power and mercy of God, [Isaiah 59:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.1).

It reproves also those who speak against an assurance of faith.

It would indeed be presumptuous in some to profess an assurance of faith; but God is desirous that all his people would enjoy it, [1 John 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.13); let not any one therefore reprobate it as presumption; let every one rather seek the assurance expressed in the text.

It may administer comfort also to many sincere Christians.

Many are yet fighting against their manifold corruptions, and because they obtain not a perfect deliverance, they tremble under apprehensions of the divine wrath. But Paul himself bewailed bitterly his indwelling corruptio,n [Romans 7:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.24); yet that did not prevent him from rejoicing in the partial freedom he experienced. Let upright souls take comfort from this reflection.

***~~#1858~~***

***~~CHRIST THE AUTHOR OF OUR SANCTIFICATION~~***

***~~[Romans 8:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.3-4).~~***

"For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

THE *necessity*of holiness is allowed by all: the *means*of attaining it are known to few. Christ is regarded as the *meritorious*cause of our *justification*before God; but he is not sufficiently viewed as the *instrumental*cause of our deliverance from sin. He is represented in the Scriptures as "our sanctification," no less than "our wisdom and our righteousness, [1 Corinthians 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30);" and we would do well to direct our attention to him more in that view.

In the preceding context he is spoken of as delivering his people from condemnation, and many judicious commentators understand the text as referring to the same point: yet, on the whole, it appears more agreeable both to the words of the text, and to the scope of the passage, to understand it in reference to the work of sanctification. Paul had just said that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," that is, the Gospel, "had made him free from the law of sin, as well as of death." He then adds, that on account of the insufficiency of the law to condemn and destroy sin, God had sent his own Son to effect it; and that through his incarnation and death its power would be effectually broken.

From this view of the text, we are led to consider,

***~~I. The end and design of Christ's Mission—~~***

***~~God's desire and purpose was to restore his people to true holiness—~~***

Sin was the object of God's utter abhorrence: it had marred the whole creation: it had entered into *Heaven*itself, and defiled the mansions of the Most High: it had desolated the *earth*also, and all that dwelt upon it. To remedy the miseries introduced by sin, and to root it out from his people's hearts, was a design worthy of the Deity; since, if once they could be brought to "fulfill the righteousness of the law," by walking, in their habitual course of life, no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit—then eternal honor would accrue to him, and everlasting happiness to them.

***~~The law was not sufficient to effect this—~~***

The law was indeed perfectly sufficient to direct man, while he remained in innocence: and it was well adapted to reclaim him when he had fallen; because it denounced the wrath of God against every transgression of its precepts, and set forth a perfect rule of duty. But "it was weak through the flesh:" man was *deaf*, and could not hear its threatenings; he was *dead*, and could not execute its commands. Hence, as to any practical effects, it spoke in vain.

***~~God therefore, in order that his purpose might not fail, sent his only dear Son—~~***

He sent his co-equal, co-eternal Son, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," and to be a sacrifice "for sin" that, through his obedience unto death, he might "deliver those who had been, and must for ever have continued, subject to bondage." How this expedient was to succeed, will come under our consideration shortly: we therefore only observe at present, that it was a plan which nothing but Infinite Wisdom could have devised! It could not have entered into the mind of any finite being, to subject God's only dear Son to such humiliation;

to make him a partaker of our nature, with all its sinless infirmities;

to substitute him in our place, and, by his vicarious sacrifice, to restore us to the image and favor of God.

This does, and must for ever, surpass all finite comprehension.

But though we cannot fathom all the depths of this mystery, we may show

***~~II. In what way it is effectual for the end proposed—~~***

We speak not of the way in which the death of Christ obtains our *justification*, but of the way in which it is instrumental to our *sanctification*. In reference to this, we say,

***~~1. It displays the evil and malignity of sin—~~***

The evil of sin had been seen in a measure by the miseries which it had introduced, and by the punishment denounced against it by the holy God. But in what light did sin appear, when nothing less than the incarnation and death of Christ was able to expiate its *guilt*or destroy its *power!* Let any person behold the agonies of Christ in the garden, or his sufferings and death upon the cross, and then go and think lightly of sin if he can! Surely if men were more habituated to look at sin in this view, they would be filled with indignation against it, and seek incessantly its utter destruction.

***~~2. It obtains for us power to subdue sin—~~***

Though man is in himself so weak that he cannot, of himself, even think a good thought—yet through the influence of the Holy Spirit he can "fulfill the righteousness of the law," not perfectly indeed, but so as to walk in newness of life. There is a two-fold fulfilling of the law mentioned in the Scriptures; the one *legal*, the other *evangelical*. Compare [Matthew 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.17) with [Romans 13:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.8) and [Galatians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.14). Now, by the death of Christ the promise of the Spirit is obtained for us; and all who seek his gracious influences, shall obtain them. Thus the axe is laid to the root of sin. "The weak is enabled to say, I am strong:" and he, who just before was in bondage to his lusts, now casts off the yoke, and "runs the way of God's commandments with an enlarged heart."

***~~3. It suggests motives sufficient to call forth our utmost exertions—~~***

The *hope of Heaven*and the *fear of Hell*are certainly very powerful motives; yet, of themselves, they never operate with sufficient force to produce a willing and unreserved obedience. While the mind is wrought upon by merely selfish principles, it will always grudge the price which it pays for future happiness. But let the soul be warmed with the love of Christ, and it will no longer measure out obedience with a parsimonious hand: it will be anxious to display its gratitude by every effort within its reach. "The love of Christ will constrain it"

to put forth all its powers;

to "crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts,"

and to "perfect holiness in the fear of God."

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How vain is it to expect salvation while we live in sin!~~***

If we could have been saved in our sins, can it be conceived that God would ever have sent his own Son into the world to deliver us from them; or that, having sent his Son to accomplish this end, he would himself defeat it, by saving us in our iniquities? Let careless sinners well consider this: and let the professors of religion too, especially those in whom sin of any kind lives and reigns, lay it to heart: for if sin is not "condemned in our flesh," our bodies, and souls too—we shall be condemned forever.

***~~2. How foolish is it to attack sin in our own strength!~~***

A ball, with whatever force it be thrown, and however long it may proceed in a right direction, will follow at last the inclination of gravity, and deviate from the line in which it was first impelled. Thus it will be with us under the influence of legal principles: we shall certainly decline from the path of holiness, when our corrupt propensities begin to exert their force. Our resolutions can never hold out against them. We must have a new bias; "a new heart must be given us, and a new spirit be put within us," if we would persevere unto the end.

Let us not then expect to prevail by legal considerations, or legal endeavors. Let us indeed condemn sin in the purpose of our minds, and sentence it to death: but let us look to Christ for strength, and maintain the conflict in dependence on his power and grace. Then, though unable to do anything of ourselves, we shall be enabled to "do all things through Christ who gives us strength."

***~~3. How are we indebted to God for sending his only Son into the world!~~***

If Christ had never come, we would have remained for ever the bond-slaves of sin and Satan. We would have still continued, like the fallen angels, without either inclination or ability to renew ourselves: whereas, through him, many of us can say, that we are "made free from the law of sin and death." Let us then trace our deliverance to its proper source:

to the Father's love,

to the Savior's merit, and

to the Spirit's influence.

And let us with sincere gratitude adore that God, who "sent his Son to bless us, in turning away every one of us from our iniquities! [Acts 3:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 3.26)."

***~~#1859~~***

***~~THE CARNAL AND THE SPIRITUAL MAN COMPARED~~***

***~~[Romans 8:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.5)~~***

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit."

IT is a certain and blessed truth, that all who believe in Christ are delivered from the *condemnation*due to their sins. But it is no less true, that all who believe in Christ are delivered also from the *dominion*of sin, and are enabled to walk in the paths of righteousness and holiness: and it is only by men's attainment of this latter state that their attainment of the former can be ascertained.

At the time that men believe in Christ, they have a new and spiritual principle infused into them by the Spirit of God: and where that principle exists, it will of necessity manifest itself by its appropriate operations. Hence the carnal and the spiritual man may be clearly distinguished from each other. Each will follow the predominant principle by which he is actuated: "Those who are after the flesh, will mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

That the two characters may the more clearly appear, I will set them before you,

***~~I. In a distinct and separate view—~~***

***~~The carnal man will follow carnal things—~~***

There is in man, by nature, a carnal principle only. Whatever be his feelings, or whatever his pursuits, he is influenced by no other principle than that which he has in common with the whole human race: and the objects of his pursuit are such only as that principle affects. In a word, he seeks nothing beyond the things of time and sense. Pleasure, riches, honor, are, in his estimation, the great sources of happiness to man; and they alone are deemed worthy of his attention. His pleasures may be more or less refined; but, whether they are of an intellectual or fleshly nature, his end in pursuing them is the gratification of his own tastes and pleasures.

As in the animal creation there is a diversity of pursuit, but the same end; so in men one may affect the sports of the field, another the indulgence of his appetites and passions, and another the investigations of science; but still *self-pleasing*is alike the principle of all. So also, in the pursuit of riches or honor, the immediate efforts of men will be suited to the sphere in which they move: but the king upon a throne, and the beggar upon a dunghill, however wide asunder the objects of their pursuit may be, will be wrought upon in the same way by the things which appear to be within their reach, and will show that they are alike under the influence of a principle that is purely carnal.

Even in the things which have respect to religion, a carnal man will still feel no higher principle than self: self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-righteousness, and self-dependence, will be found at the root of all that he does in waiting upon God. He has no real delight in any devotional exercise; and all his conformity to religious observances is a mere tribute to self, rather than to God: it is a price paid for self-esteem, and for the esteem of those around him.

***~~The spiritual man, on the other hand, will follow spiritual things—~~***

There is in him, as we have said, a principle infused into his soul by the Spirit of God, and operating to the production of a new and spiritual life. The person who has received this new nature will affect objects and employments suited to it. Acceptance with God will be the first great object of his pursuit. In comparison with this, nothing under Heaven will be of any value. The care of the soul will be, in his estimation, the one thing needful. Hence he will devote much time to reading the Scriptures and to prayer. The great work of repentance will now occupy his mind; and the Lord Jesus Christ will be endeared to him as the Savior of the world.

There will be between him and the carnal man the same difference as existed between the healthy and the sick in the days of our Lord. The healthy beheld him with mere curiosity: the sick flocked around him with a determination to obtain, if possible, the healing of their diseases. The spiritual man is in pursuit of Heaven, as begun on earth, and perfected in glory: and, like a man in a race, or in a conflict, he engages with all his might, if by any means he may obtain the prize of his high calling. Even in his earthly engagements he bears in mind his great object, and endeavors to make even temporal pursuits subservient to his attainment of it. He considers his responsibility to God, and acts in everything with a reference to his great and final account.

But, that we may render the distinction between the two characters more clear, it will be proper to consider them,

***~~II. In a combined and contrasted view—~~***

Take both the characters, and consider them,

***~~1. In their judgment—~~***

A carnal man may feel a general approbation of religion; but he does not regard it as of paramount importance. What he allows to religion, he rather concedes from necessity, than claims as its unquestionable due. He will conform to religion so far as his temporal interests will admit of it: but where the two come seriously in competition with each other, the world will have a decided preponderance in its favor. The good opinion of men will limit his exertions for God; and the attainment of some earthly object will be prosecuted in preference to the best interests of his soul. To attend to the interests of time and sense will be esteemed by him as of the first necessity; and his spiritual welfare will be subordinated to it.

The spiritual man, on the other hand, will decidedly declare himself on the side of God and of religion. He will not neglect his earthly duties; for he considers them as a part of his duty to God: but if anything earthly stands in competition with what is heavenly, he hesitates not to which he shall give the preference. The things of time and sense are in his eyes but as the dust upon the balance, in comparison with the things which are invisible and eternal: and in the contemplation of his God and Savior, he gives this as the deliberate judgment of his mind, "Whom have I in Heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with you!"

***~~2. In their will—~~***

The will of man, for the most part, is determined by his judgment: for though he may see a better path, and pursue a worse, yet, at the time, he wills that which he thinks will, under the existing circumstances, contribute most to his happiness. Hence the carnal man, though he may feel some good desires after religion, and some purpose of heart to seek after it at some future period, determines that he will, for the present, give himself to the prosecution of his earthly objects.

Hence, too, he chooses as his associates those who are like-minded with himself, and who can participate with him in his enjoyments. He may know of persons capable of advancing his spiritual welfare: but he has no sympathy with them, nor any desire after their company. Any excess in worldly-mindedness he can forgive and palliate: but anything that approximates to excess in religious matters is deemed by him an unpardonable offense: and one instance of it will do more to repel him from religion, than ten thousand instances of the opposite habit to deter him from a conformity to the world.

The spiritual man, on the contrary, chooses, with deliberate purpose, his spiritual pursuits; nor will he be deterred from them by any regard to the things of this world. His heart is fixed; and though he finds that the world has yet too great an ascendant over him, he maintains his conflicts with vigor, and becomes daily more dead to the world and more alive to God. He uses diligently, too, the means of spiritual advancement; and takes for his friends and associates those who will help him forward in his heavenly way.

***~~3. Their affections—~~***

These invariably are most called forth by the things which most preponderate in the soul. The carnal man accordingly betrays his indifference to spiritual objects by his total lack of feeling in relation to them. He may go through his religious observances with constancy; but he rests in them, and never thinks of the manner in which his duties have been performed.

But, in reference to earthly things, he is alive: his hopes and fears, his joys and sorrows, are called forth, according as he succeeds or fails in the objects of his pursuit.

The spiritual man, on the contrary, though not regardless of earthly pursuits, is comparatively unmoved by them; because he is chiefly solicitous that his soul may prosper, and that he may advance in a fitness for his heavenly inheritance. You may find him dejected or happy, without any visible cause: but when you inquire into the reasons of his experience, you will find that some change has taken place in his conflicts with sin, or in his sense of the Divine presence, or in his prospects in the eternal world; and, according as these are favorable or not, his soul becomes elevated or depressed; by which he shows that *his chief treasure is in Heaven.*

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

Take this portion of Holy Writ,

***~~1. As a test whereby to try your state—~~***

Hitherto I have left unnoticed the peculiar force of the word which the Apostle uses to designate the regard which we feel towards the different objects here spoken of. But the question is, not so much what our external conduct is in relation to them, as what the disposition of our minds is. Which of the two objects do we savor? to which does our taste lead us? and in which do we find most enjoyment? Now, *if we will only take notice where our thoughts lead us, at those seasons when nothing particular has occurred to determine their course, we shall infallibly discover the real bias of our minds*. If they run out after anything that relates to this vain, transient world, we are carnal. If they run out after things spiritual and eternal, we may rank ourselves among the number of those who are truly spiritual.

The same judgment we may form, by noticing what subjects we most delight to *converse*about, whether on those which pertain to this life only, or those which relate to the kingdom of our Lord and the interests of our souls. Whatever it is that we most relish and most delight in, that is the thing which occupies the chief place in our hearts, and determines us to be either spiritual or carnal, as the case may be. Take, then, this test; and "judge yourselves, that you be not judged of the Lord."

***~~2. As a rule whereby to regulate your conduct—~~***

It is clear from this passage, what ought to be the constant habit of our lives. We should be growing continually in a deadness to the world, and in a superiority to everything here below. The great concerns of eternity should more and more occupy our minds; and the whole course of our life should be such as to bear witness to us that we are candidates for Heaven. As to this present world, we would consider ourselves as mere pilgrims and sojourners, that have but little interest in anything around us, and whose chief concern is to pass through it in safety to our destined home.

***~~#1860~~***

***~~THE CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL MIND CONTRASTED~~***

**[Romans 8:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.6).**

"To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

THE people of the world in general are much mistaken with respect to the means of solid happiness. They seek the vanities of time and sense in hopes of finding satisfaction; and they shun religion under the idea that it would make them melancholy: but the "way of transgressors is hard, [Proverbs 13:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 13.15)." On the contrary, the ways of religion afford both peace and pleasure, [Proverbs 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 3.17). The testimony of Paul respecting this is clear and decisive. His words naturally lead us to consider the difference between the carnal and the spiritual mind,

***~~I. In their operations—~~***

By "the carnal mind" we understand that principle of our fallen nature which affects and idolizes carnal things. The spiritual mind imports that principle which leads the soul to spiritual objects, and is implanted by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the regenerate.

***~~The difference between these two principles is discoverable in our thoughts—~~***

The *thoughts*will naturally be fixed on the objects that are best suited to the reigning principle. Our occupations in life indeed will give a direction to our minds: a carnal mind may from necessity be conversant about spiritual things, and a spiritual mind about carnal things.

Particular occasions also may fix the attention much either on spiritual or carnal objects. But we speak of those seasons only, when the mind is free from pressing engagements, and can fix on the things which it most desires; to these objects they recur with frequency, fervor, and delight. If we are under the dominion of a carnal principle, we shall be thinking of some pleasure, profit, honor, or other worldly vanity. If we are led by a spiritual principle, God, and Christ, and the concerns of the soul, will occupy the mind.

***~~The principles will also operate on the affections—~~***

Whatever we most esteem, we desire it when absent, hope for if it is attainable, love the means of attaining it, and rejoice in it when secured. If there is danger of losing it, we fear; we hate the means that would deprive us of it; and if it is lost, we grieve. The carnal mind is thus exercised about carnal objects: the spiritual mind is thus exercised about spiritual objects. Hence that caution given us with respect to the affections, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." [Colossians 3:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.1-2)

***~~The principles will yet further influence our aims and ends of action—~~***

A carnal man can only act from carnal motives: he will have carnal aims even in spiritual employments, [Zechariah 7:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 7.5-6). A spiritual man, on the contrary, will act from spiritual motives: he will act with spiritual views even in his temporal concerns. The one will seek his own interest or honor, and the other will seek God's glory, [1 Corinthians 10:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.31).

This difference in the operation of the two principles causes a corresponding difference,

***~~II. In their effects—~~***

***~~The effect of the carnal principle is dreadful beyond measure—~~***

This principle reigning in us proves us destitute of spiritual life; yes, rather, the reign of it is itself a state of spiritual "death:" it must moreover terminate in everlasting death. This is irreversibly decreed by God, [Galatians 6:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.7); and it must be so in the very nature of things. What comfort could a carnal person have in Heaven? there are no objects there suited to his inclination; nor has he any delight in the employments of the celestial spirits.

***~~The effect of the spiritual principle is inexpressibly glorious—~~***

Wherever it prevails, it is a proof of spiritual life: it is also invariably the means of filling the soul with "peace." Nor can it issue otherwise than in eternal life and peace. This also is according to the express constitution of God, [Galatians 6:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.8); and it must be so in the very nature of things. Spiritual-mindedness constitutes our *fitness*for Heaven, while it is also an *anticipation*and *foretaste*of Heaven.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. The carnal-minded—~~***

In what a lamentable state are they whose consciences testify that their thoughts, affections, and aims, are altogether carnal! Let it be remembered that it is God who declares this. Who would dare to continue in such a state another day? Let those who feel their misery plead that promise, [Ezekiel 36:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.26). There is the same grace for them as has been effectual for others.

***~~2. The spiritual-minded—~~***

Happy those who are of this description! Let such adore the grace that has caused them to differ from others. Let them endeavor to improve in spirituality of mind; let them guard against relapses, which will destroy their peace; and let their eyes be fixed upon the eternal state, where their present bliss shall be consummated in glory!

***~~#1861~~***

***~~THE VILENESS AND SPIRITUAL IMPOTENCE OF THE NATURAL MAN~~***

***~~[Romans 8:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.7-8).~~***

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

TO those who know not what is in the heart of man, it must appear strange that persons not very dissimilar in their outward conduct would be adjudged to widely different states in the eternal world. But *in the most imperfect of the regenerate, there is a predominant principle of love to God; whereas in the best of unregenerate men there is a rooted enmity against him: and this alone places their eternal destinies as far asunder as Heaven and Hell.*

Paul has been speaking of the final outcomes to which a carnal and a spiritual mind will lead: and because it may seem unaccountable that the one would terminate in eternal damnation, while the other is productive of eternal life and peace, he assigns the reason of it, and shows that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and that a person under its influence is incapable of rendering him any acceptable service.

In the Apostle's words there are three things to be considered:

***~~I. Paul's assertion—~~***

***~~The mind here spoken of, is that which actuates every unregenerate man—~~***

"The carnal mind" does not necessarily imply a disposition grossly wicked. It is (as it is explained in verse 5) a savoring of earthly and carnal things, in preference to heavenly and spiritual things. And this is the disposition that rules in the heart of every child of man.

***~~This "mind is enmity against God"—~~***

There is not one of God's perfections, to which this disposition is not averse. It deems . . .

his *holiness*too strict,

his *justice*too severe,

his *truth*too inflexible,

and even his *mercy*itself is hateful to them, on account of the humiliating way in which it is sovereignly dispensed.

Even the very existence of God is so odious to them, that they say in their hearts, "I wish there were no God! [Psalm 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 14.1)."

God once put himself into their power; and they showed what was the desire of their hearts by wickedly murdering him. If they could have rid the universe his very being, they would, no doubt, have gladly done it!

This mind is not merely inimical to God, for then it might be reconciled; but it is "enmity" itself against him, and must therefore be slain, before the soul can ever be brought to the service and enjoyment of God.

This assertion, though strong, will not be thought too strong, when we consider,

***~~II. Paul's proof—~~***

***~~The carnal mind "is not subject to the law of God"—~~***

The law requires that we would love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves. But the carnal mind prefers the *world*before God, and *self*before his neighbor. There are different degrees indeed, in which a worldly and selfish spirit may prevail; but it has more or less the ascendant over every natural man; nor is there an unregenerate person in the universe who cordially and unreservedly submits to this law.

***~~It not only is not subject to God's law, but "it cannot be"—~~***

There is the same contrariety between the carnal mind and the law of God, as there is between darkness and light. It has been shown before, that the carnal mind is enmity itself against God; and that the very first principle of obedience to the law is love. Now how is it possible that enmity would produce love? "We may sooner expect to gather grapes from thorn-bushels, or figs from thistles."

This incapacity to obey the law of God is justly adduced as a proof of our enmity against him: for if we loved him, we would love his will; and if we hate his will, whatever we may pretend, we in reality hate him.

A due consideration of the Apostle's argument will secure our assent to,

***~~III. Paul's inference—~~***

We cannot please God, but by obeying his law from the heart. All external compliances are worthless in his eyes, if not accompanied with the love and devotion of the soul. But such obedience cannot be rendered by the carnal mind; and consequently those who are in the flesh, that is, are under the influence of a carnal mind, "cannot please God:" they may be admired by their fellow-creatures; but whatever they do will be an abomination in the sight of God.

***~~On the whole then we may learn, from this subject,~~***

***~~1. The grounds and reasons of the Gospel—~~***

The principal doctrines of the Gospel have their foundation, not in any arbitrary appointment of the Deity, but in the nature and necessities of man. We must seek reconciliation with God through Christ, because we are "enemies to him in our minds by wicked works." We must seek the renewing influences of the Spirit, because our nature is altogether corrupt, and incapable of either serving or enjoying God. When therefore we hear of the indispensable necessity of being born again, and of the impossibility of being saved except by faith in Christ, let us remember that these are not the dogmas of a party, but doctrines consequent upon our fallen state, and therefore of universal and infinite importance: and that, if we were to be silent on these subjects, we would be unfaithful to our trust, and betray your souls to everlasting ruin.

***~~2. The suitableness and excellence of its provisions—~~***

If man were commanded to reconcile himself to God, or to renovate his own nature—then he must sit down in despair. Darkness could as soon generate light, as fallen man could effect either of these things. But we are not left without hope: God has provided such a Savior as we need, to mediate between him and us: and such an Agent as we need, to form us anew after the Divine image. Let us then embrace this Gospel, and seek to experience its blessings. Let us, as guilty creatures, implore forgiveness through the blood of Jesus; and, as corrupt creatures, beg the Holy Spirit to work effectually in us, and to render us fit for a heavenly inheritance!

***~~#1862~~***

***~~THE NECESSITY OF HAVING THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST~~***

***~~[Romans 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.9).~~***

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

MAN at his first creation was made in the Divine image; God communed with him as a friend, and dwelt in him as a temple: but this harmony was not of long continuance: man sinned; and God in righteous judgment departed from him.

Not willing however that his apostate creatures would irrecoverably perish, God sent his Son to make atonement for their sins, and his Spirit to renew their natures, so that they might be restored to his favor, and rendered fit for the inheritance they had forfeited. It is of this Spirit that the Apostle speaks in the text, and declares that we must have him dwelling in us if we would belong to Christ. We might understand the Spirit as referring to the disposition of Christ; but the context evidently confines its import to that blessed Spirit, who "raised up Christ from the dead, and will in due time raise up us also." He is called "the Spirit of God," and "the Spirit of Christ," because Christ is God, and the Spirit acts as his deputy. We propose to show,

***~~I. That we may have the Spirit—~~***

By "having the Spirit" we do not mean, that we are to have those common operations of the Spirit, which the most ungodly men both experience and resist, [Genesis 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.3). [Isaiah 63:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.10) (for then the Apostle's assertion would be frivolous in the extreme.) Nor do we mean those miraculous powers, which were given in the apostolic age (for many, who were Christ's, never received those powers; and many exercised those powers who never belonged to Christ, [Matthew 7:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.22-23);) but we mean those special influences of the Spirit, whereby men are enlightened, and transformed into the Divine image. In this sense we affirm that we may have the Spirit of Christ.

Paul prayed that the whole Church at Ephesus might have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ;" and that they might be "renewed by the Spirit in their inward man, [Ephesians 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17); [Ephesians 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.16);" and, speaking of the Christian Church at large, he especially ascribes their attainments to the operations of the Holy Spirit; "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," says he, "but according to his mercy God has saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, [Titus 3:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.5-6)."

Why do the Scriptures speak so much respecting our having the Spirit? They teach us to pray for the Spirit, [Luke 11:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.13); they promise the Spirit to us, [John 7:37-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.37-39); they require us to make use of the Spirit and depend upon him in all holy exercises, "to live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, pray in the Spirit, [Galatians 5:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.25). Jude, verse 20." Would all this be spoken if we were not to expect the Holy Spirit? Is it enthusiasm for us to expect what all the first Christians had, what the Scriptures require us to have, and what we ourselves continually pray for? If we use these prayers for the Spirit's influence with sincerity, the world will call us enthusiasts; but we had better be accounted enthusiasts by man, than hypocrites by God. We would need to apologize for arguing so plain a point, if the daring infidelity of the age did not render it, alas! too necessary.

We must carry our assertion still further, and say,

***~~II. That we must have the Spirit—~~***

The aid of God's Spirit is necessary in order to our being Christ's:

***~~Without the Spirit we cannot know Christ—~~***

By nature, we are altogether blind to spiritual things. We are assured on most unquestionable authority, that "the natural man accounts the things of the Spirit to be foolishness, and that he not only does not receive, but cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned, [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14)." And, with respect to the knowledge of Christ in particular, our Lord tells us that, as no man knows the Father but the Son, so no man knows the Son but the Father, and he to whom God shall be pleased to reveal him, [Matthew 11:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.27). The Spirit of God must "take of the things that are Christ's and show them unto us;" he must "open our understandings to understand them;" and unless he "guides us into all truth," we shall wander in the mazes of ignorance and error to the end of our lives, and "perish at last through lack of knowledge,"

***~~Without the Spirit we cannot resemble Christ—~~***

We have altogether lost the image of God; nor can we ever recover it by any power of our own. That image consists in righteousness and true holiness, not the smallest part of which we can obtain without the Spirit.

If we would not go on fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, we must walk in the Spirit, [Galatians 5:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.16).

If we would mortify the deeds of the body, it must be through the Spirit, [Romans 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.13).

If we would have our trials sanctified, it must be through a supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, [Philippians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.19).

If we would "wait for the hope of righteousness by faith, it must be through the Spirit, [Galatians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.5)."

There is not any single grace which can be produced by any other means; they are all *fruits*of the Spirit, [Galatians 5:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.22-23); and as long as any man continues destitute of the Spirit, he must of necessity continue earthly and sensual, Jude verse 19. He, and he alone, can give us either to will or to do any good thing, [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.13).

Now is *holiness*necessary in order that we may resemble Christ; and is every part of holiness, both root and branch, the produce of God's Spirit; and can any one doubt whether it is necessary for us to have the Spirit?

***~~Without the Spirit we cannot enjoy Christ—~~***

We have not naturally any taste for spiritual enjoyments; we desire the things of time and sense, and those only. Indeed, how is it possible that we would enjoy him whom we do not know? Or how can his love be shed abroad in our hearts but by the Spirit? [Romans 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.5). If any one thinks he can enjoy Christ by any power of his own, let him only make the experiment; let him retire to his closet for one hour, and say, 'I will spend this hour in the enjoyment of Christ; I will delight myself in him with my whole heart.' Let him make the attempt, and he shall soon be undeceived by the most convincing of all arguments, his own experience. Nor are we afraid to rest the whole argument upon the outcome of such a trial.

Nor can we enjoy Christ hereafter any more than we can in this world, if we are not prepared for it by the Spirit of God. There is a "fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light" which we must have, before we can find comfort in the presence of our Lord. What pleasure could we take in him whom we do not at all resemble? "What communion could light have with darkness, or Christ with Belial, [2 Corinthians 6:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.14-15)." We find that even now, when our corruptions are so restrained, one single hour is irksome, if spent in spiritual exercises; and we may be sure we could not bear to be occupied without intermission to all eternity in those duties, for which we have no inclination, yes, from which we are most exceedingly averse!

But let one asseveration of the true and faithful Witness stand in lieu of ten thousand arguments: You MUST be born again, says our Lord; and that, not of water only, but of the Spirit; or else you can never enter into the kingdom of God! [John 3:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.5-7).

***~~We shall endeavor to improve this subject,~~***

***~~1. By a general inquiry—~~***

Have we the Spirit? Or are we yet destitute of his gracious influences? Some think this a needless inquiry, and one which cannot be satisfactorily resolved. But can we "be brought out of darkness into marvelous light," and be "turned from the power of Satan unto God," without knowing that we have experienced some change? Paul supposes such ignorance to be inconsistent with saving conversion to God: he asks, "Don't you know that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit? [1 Corinthians 6:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.19)." And again, "Don't you know that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are reprobates? [2 Corinthians 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.5)." Now here he not only declares that we are reprobates if we have not the Spirit of God, but considers this truth as known and acknowledged by all true Christians.

Inquire then, whether you have been enlightened, renewed and sanctified by the Spirit of God, and whether you are yet daily experiencing his powerful operations? Let not this matter hang in suspense, lest you be found reprobates and sons of perdition, when you are imagining yourselves saints, and heirs of glory.

***~~2. By a particular address—~~***

Let those, whose consciences testify that they have not the Spirit, stand convicted and condemned. The text speaks of all such without exception, "if *any*man," etc. Let it be remembered that, *however cultivated our minds may be with human literature, and however amiable our natural dispositions, we must have the Spirit of Christ, or we do not belong to him*. And what a dreadful state is this! For if we are not Christ's—then whose are we? It must be said to us, as our Lord said to the Jews, "You are of your Father, the devil." And are any of us willing to be disclaimed by Jesus in the day of judgment? Would we that he would then say to us, "You do not belong to me?" If not, let us now seek his good Spirit, and live henceforth under his influence and direction.

But let those who have reason to believe that they have the Spirit, rejoice. They are Christ's; they are his friends; they are the very members of his body; they are "his portion, the lot of his inheritance." O happy, happy souls, how highly privileged even now! and how unspeakably blessed in the future world! Be not afraid then of the scoffs of an ungodly world; let them curse, if God does but bless. Improve your present privileges: be careful lest by any means you "grieve the Holy Spirit whereby you are sealed:" look to him more and more to comfort and transform your souls; and expect with patience that blessed period, when Christ shall acknowledge you before the assembled universe, and number you among his *jewels*in the day that he shall count them up! [Malachi 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.17).

***~~#1863~~***

**THE OFFICES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**(continued)

***~~[Romans 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.9).~~***

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

Preached before the University of Cambridge, in November, 1831.

ON a remote occasion I endeavored to set forth in this place, the law; and, on a subsequent occasion, the Gospel. These two subjects, taken together, form a whole, so far as relates to Christianity as a system. But for the full development of our holy religion in its spiritual operations and practical results, the office of the Holy Spirit should be separately and distinctly considered. This part, therefore, it is now my intention to supply.

But, in entering on a subject so deeply mysterious as this, I may well ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Besides, in reference to it, there is a still further ground of discouragement, arising from the opposition which the subject itself meets with in the human mind. To a person who has never experienced anything of a work of grace upon his own heart, the work of the Spirit appears to be little better than an enthusiastic conceit; and when pressed upon his conscience as a matter to be experienced at the peril of his soul, it excites, I had almost said, a feeling of indignation, inasmuch as it requires of him a greater degree of submission to God than he is willing to yield, and a closer fellowship with God than he has any inclination to attain.

I think this admits of an easy illustration. It is an indisputable fact, that we are, by nature, altogether alienated from the life of God. Now we all feel, that, when alienated from a fellow-creature, however we may bear with him in a crowd, we are indisposed to have much personal fellowship with him alone. So, also we feel in reference to God. We can hear of him at a distance, and not be disturbed; but, by reason of our alienation from him, we are averse to be brought into very near communion with him. We can bear with a display of his perfections in the universe, because, though we see him as our *Creator*—he is not sufficiently near us to exercise any material control over us: but when he is brought near to us in the law, as our *Governor*—we feel somewhat of a painful constraint, because of our responsibility to him, and the account we must one day give of ourselves to him at his tribunal.

Let him then be brought still nearer to us in the Gospel, as our incarnate and suffering God, and our inquietude is proportionably increased; because we are made to realize more deeply the terrors of his wrath, which demanded such a sacrifice, and the personal obligation which lies upon us to surrender up ourselves unreservedly to him.

But, in the offices and operations of the Holy Spirit, we are led to view him, not merely as God, in the universe, displaying himself around us; or as God, in his Church, declaring his will to us; or as God, in our nature, interposing for us; but as God, in our hearts, dwelling and operating in us. This brings him into such immediate contact with us, and requires of us such a minute attention to all our ways, that we shrink back from every part of the subject, and, for the pacifying of our own minds, cast reflections upon it as visionary, unintelligible, and absurd. I do not mean to say that there is in the minds of men a distinct consciousness of such a process, but only that there is in reality such a process in the human mind, though men are not exactly aware of it.

Men do not like to have God too near to them; and the nearer he is brought to them, the more they show their aversion to that which is the means of presenting him to their minds. Under such circumstances, I scarcely know how to enter upon the work which I have undertaken. Indeed I am strongly reminded of the feelings of Paul himself, when, in reference to his ministrations at Corinth, he said, "I was among you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling! [1 Corinthians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.3)." Yet, from so interesting a subject, especially while I judge it necessary to complete the plan which I had originally proposed, I dare not draw back. The importance of it will plead my apology, if any apology be required for "declaring to you the whole counsel of God." Indeed, we need go no further than to the words of my text, to see the inconceivable importance of the subject which I am bringing before you.

What! If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him!" What can this mean? Who is this "Spirit?" What is it to "have" him? Why is the having him so indispensable to my welfare? What must I do in order that I may get possession of him? And what must become of me, if I possess him not!

I say, to any man that has the least concern about his soul, these thoughts must force themselves with an overwhelming power upon his mind. And it is in the hope that God may in his tender mercy make use of me, for the exciting and the satisfying of these inquiries, that I now address myself to this deep and comprehensive subject. But let me entreat, not only your candor, (for of that I am, from long and uniform experience, well assured,) but your prayers, also, that God may enable me so to speak, as to approve myself to him; and enable you so to hear, that you may derive eternal benefit to your souls; so that both "I who sow, and you who reap, may rejoice together in Heaven for evermore."

For the unfolding of the subject I shall endeavor to show, distinctly and separately in my four discourses—

**I.** Who is that Spirit whom all of us as Christians are expected to possess.

**II.** Why the possessing of that Spirit is indispensable to our being Christ's accepted followers.

**III.** What that Spirit will work in us in order that we may be Christ's.

**IV.** What he will work in us when we are Christ's.

And, while I speak, may "the word go forth with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven," and "come in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" to the hearts of all who hear me! [1 Peter 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.12). [1 Corinthians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.4).

**I. Who is that Spirit whom all of us as Christians are expected to possess.**The Holy Spirit here spoken of is the Third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity. As such he is set forth in the ordinance of baptism, which is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, [Matthew 28:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 28.19). And as such he is addressed in that blessing uttered by Paul, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen, [2 Corinthians 13:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.14)." In both of these passages his distinct personality is recognized, and his proper deity acknowledged.

Had he been a mere quality, as some have imagined, it is not to be conceived that his name would have been united with that of the Father and of the Son in these solemn acts of worship. But, in fact, the whole Scriptures bear witness to him as God, equally with the Father and the Son. Ananias, "in lying to the Holy Spirit, lied unto God, [Acts 5:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.3-4)." And we, in being his temples, are the temples of the living God, [1 Corinthians 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.17) with 6:19.

But, while in his *essential Godhead*he is equal with the Father and the Son, in his *office*he is inferior to them both, and acts, if I may so say, a subordinate part under the Gospel dispensation. And this accounts for his being called, The Spirit of the Father, [Matthew 10:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.20). [John 15:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.26); and The Spirit of the Son, [Galatians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.6), under which latter designation we are this time called more particularly to consider him.

My text says, "If anyone does not have the *Spirit of Christ*, he does not belong to Christ." Now it is of importance to ascertain, why this name is given to the Holy Spirit. I conceive that the following reasons may fitly be assigned for it. He is so called, I apprehend,

1. Because of his peculiar agency in reference to Christ himself.

**2.** Because of his subserviency to Christ in the economy of redemption.

**3.** Because of its being his special office to glorify Christ.

He is called The Spirit of Christ,

**First, because of his peculiar agency in reference to Christ himself.** It was he who formed the human nature of Christ in the Virgin's womb. Mary was told by the angel Gabriel, that she would conceive in her womb, and bring forth a son, and call his name Jesus: and, on her inquiring of him how that saying of his would be accomplished, seeing that she was a virgin, the angel answered her, saying, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore, also, that holy one who shall be born of you, shall be called the Son of God, [Luke 1:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.35)."

The endowments of the Lord Jesus for his heavenly commission were also communicated to him from the same source; as the Prophet Isaiah very distinctly foretold: "The Spirit of the Lord God 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, [Isaiah 11:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.2-3)." Indeed our Lord himself, when entering upon his ministerial office, purposely referred to another passage in the same prophet, expressive of the same truth, and declared to his audience, that that very Scripture was then fulfilled in their ears: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, [Luke 4:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 4.18-19) with [Isaiah 61:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.1-2)."

The solemn consecration also of the Lord Jesus to his office at the time of his baptism, was visibly attested and confirmed by this same divine Agent: "The Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him; and a voice came from Heaven, which said: You are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased, [Luke 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 3.22)."

Further, it was "by the Spirit that he was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, [Matthew 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 4.1);" and by that same Spirit, was enabled to vanquish that mighty foe; as our Lord himself declared: "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you, [Matthew 12:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.28)." By the same divine Agent also was he assisted in offering himself a sacrifice upon the cross; for "through the eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot to God, [Hebrews 9:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.14);" by him also was he afterwards raised up from the grave, to which his crucified body had been consigned: "He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, [1 Peter 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.18)."

Now, as ministering thus to the Lord Jesus, from the first moment of his existence to the period of his restoration from the grave, the Holy Spirit is peculiarly entitled to the name given him in my text, "The Spirit of Christ."

But this name further pertains to him on account of his subserviency to Christ in the economy of redemption. Christ, as Mediator, was sent by the Father, and acted in all things as a servant to his Father, [Isaiah 42:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.1); [Isaiah 53:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.11), doing nothing, and speaking nothing, but in accordance with the Father's will, and in obedience to the Father's commands. He himself says, "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment what I would say, and what I would speak, [John 12:49](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.49)." And precisely thus did the Lord Jesus Christ send the Holy Spirit to effect his will.

It was by the Holy Spirit that Christ spoke in the ministry of Noah to the antediluvian world, [1 Peter 3:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.18-20), and instructed all his people in the wilderness, [Nehemiah 9:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 9.20). It was by the Holy Spirit that he moved the prophets in succeeding ages to declare future events, [2 Peter 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.21), and especially to predict "his sufferings, and the glory that would follow." And in reference to this very thing, Peter calls the Holy Spirit, "The Spirit of Christ, [1 Peter 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.11)."

On all these occasions, Christ acted by the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, who, according to the plan fixed in the Divine counsels, was deputed to fulfill the will of Christ. This was made manifest by our blessed Lord while he was yet on earth: for on many different occasions, he promised to his disciples to "send them the Holy Spirit, [John 16:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.7)." He told them also that the Father would send them the Holy Spirit in his name, [John 14:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.26); yes, in an authoritative manner, "he breathed on them, and said, Receive the Holy Spirit, [John 20:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 20.22);" and on the day of Pentecost, he, according to his promise, sent forth the Holy Spirit on all his disciples, as it is said: "Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has shed forth this which you both see and hear, [Acts 2:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.33)."

In everything which from that period the Holy Spirit enabled the Apostles to do and teach, he acted as the deputy of Christ, not himself originating what he revealed, or speaking it of himself, but declaring to them what Christ himself had heard and received from the Father, [John 16:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.13); and what he, the Holy Spirit, had heard and received from Christ. Our Lord himself says, in one place, "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwells in me, he does the works, [John 14:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.10);" and again, "The word which you hear, is not mine, but the Father's who sent me, [John 14:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.24);" and then afterwards, respecting the Holy Spirit, he says, "When he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but, whatever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you, [John 16:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.13-15)."

But there is a yet further reason for the Holy Spirit being called "the Spirit of Christ," namely, that to him was delegated the express office of glorifying Christ. Our Lord, as you have just heard, said, "He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." Accordingly we find, that all the *miracles*which were wrought by the Apostles for the *confirming*of the doctrines which they preached, were wrought by the agency of the Holy Spirit, [Hebrews 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.4); and that, too, for the express purpose of bearing witness to Christ as the true Messiah, [John 15:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.26). It was "that one and the self-same Spirit who wrought all in all in all, [1 Corinthians 12:7-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.7-11)."

The different *graces*also which were exercised by the saints for the honoring of Christ, were formed in them by this same divine Agent; on which account they are called, "the fruits of the Spirit [Galatians 5:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.22)." In fact, as Christ was the fountain from which, in all cases, the living water flowed, [John 7:37-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.37-39), and the reservoir from whence the holy oil descended through the golden pipes of divine ordinances upon all God's waiting and obedient people, [Zechariah 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.6); [Zechariah 4:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.11-12), so in everything which the Holy Spirit either then did, or at the present moment does, impart to men, in a way either of gifts or graces—his object has ever been the same, namely, to bear testimony to Christ, and to fix our regards on Christ, as our only and all-sufficient Savior.

See this exemplified at the time of Peter's mission to Cornelius. Peter commending to Cornelius the Lord Jesus as the only Savior, whether of Jews or Gentiles, says, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins." Then we are told, that instantly, "while Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word," precisely as he had done on the Apostles at the day of Pentecost, [Acts 10:43-44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.43-44); [Acts 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 11.15).

Thus, in all that is now revealed to the souls of men respecting Christ, or that is imparted to them as the purchase of his blood, it is communicated to them by the Spirit; so that all, without exception, must say, "We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God, [1 Corinthians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.10); [1 Corinthians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.12)."

In this mode of speaking of the Holy Spirit, we may possibly be thought to have made him inferior to the Father and the Son. But the inferiority is not personal, but official; not as the Sacred Three exist in themselves, but as they sustain and execute their respective offices in the economy of redemption. As bearing, what may be called a subordinate part in the mysterious work of man's salvation, a disparity may be ascribed to him; and he may be called "the Spirit of the Father," and "the Spirit of Christ;" but, in himself, he is equal both with the Father and the Son, and is in every way entitled to the same respect, and "love," and confidence, as they, [Romans 15:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.30).

Be it then remembered, that this is He whom every Christian must have dwelling and abiding in him. Paul expressly calls him, "The Holy Spirit which dwells in us, [2 Timothy 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.14)." And if we mark carefully the whole passage from whence my text is taken, we shall find him designated by those different names, The Spirit of *God*, and The Spirit of *Christ*, and Christ himself. Hear the Apostle's words: "You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness; (that is, if Christ be in you, though your bodies shall suffer the penalty of death, your souls shall never die) but if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you. [Romans 8:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.9-11)."

Now then this Spirit we must all "have;" and if we have him not, we cannot belong to Christ.

But here it will be asked, What is meant by "having" the Spirit? Are we all to possess the power of "working miracles, and speaking divers kinds of tongues, [1 Corinthians 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.10)." No! the time for such things is long since passed. That they may be renewed at the time when God's ancient people shall be restored to his favor, and the Gentile world shall be converted to the faith of Christ, is probable enough: but no such power exists at this day, except in the conceit of a few brain-sick enthusiasts; nor, if it did, would it have any bearing upon the subject before us. The possession of that power would not constitute us as Christ's: for we have reason to think that *Judas*wrought miracles, as well as the other Apostles; and yet, as our Lord tells us, he was no better than a devil all the while! [John 6:70](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.70).

That possession of the Spirit of which my text speaks, is of such a discriminating nature, that no man who has the Spirit can fail to belong to Christ, and no man who has the Spirit not can have any part or lot with him. The Spirit of God is promised to us, to dwell in us as in his temple; for we are to be "the habitation of God through the Spirit, [Ephesians 2:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.22);" and he is further to operate in us effectually for all the ends and purposes of our salvation, producing in us all "the fruits of goodness, and righteousness, and truth [Ephesians 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.9)."

His motions may not unfitly be compared with the operations of the soul in the human body. Without the soul, the body cannot perform any vital function whatever: but when that spiritual inhabitant is present with us, and discharges its proper offices, we show, by the various exercises of our mind and body, that the Spirit really dwells in us. Now the Spirit of God performs in the soul an office somewhat analogous to this.

The soul by itself has respect only to things visible and temporal; but, when filled by the Spirit of God, it occupies itself about things invisible and eternal. And precisely as the body needs the presence and operation of the soul for the discharge of its offices in relation to this world, so does the soul need the influences of the Holy Spirit for the discharge of its duties in reference to the world to come.

To a carnal mind, this may appear strange. But it corresponds exactly with what Paul says: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me! [Galatians 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.20)." And again, he says, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory! [Colossians 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.4)."

The particular *operations*of the Spirit of Christ will come under our consideration hereafter. My present object is merely to show who that blessed Spirit is, whom we are to have dwelling in us, and for what ends and purposes he is promised to us. He is none other than God himself: and, as I have said, he operates as really and effectually in our souls, as our souls operate in our bodies.

I am aware that this is a truth but little considered; a truth, the very mention of which is, by the generality of Christians, accounted visionary at least, if not impious and profane. But if this truth is not admitted, yes, and admitted too as a matter of primary importance, all that we shall have to advance in our remaining discourses, will only create disgust. I beg, therefore, that this be duly weighed; that the text, in conjunction with the context, be diligently studied; and that prayer be offered by us all to Almighty God, who has promised to "give wisdom to those who ask it at his hands, [James 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.5);" so that our minds may be led to receive the word with candor, and our hearts be opened to embrace it. If we enter not into a candid investigation of this subject, the word will only prove a stumbling-block to our feet, and "become a savor of death unto death," instead of being, as I would wish it, "a savor of life unto life, [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.16)."

Truly there is a great fault, both among Christian ministers and Christian hearers, in relation to it. Ministers in general enter not, by any means, with sufficient clearness and fullness into this part of divine truth. Many, who, at the time of their ordination, have professed that they were "moved by the Holy Spirit" to take upon them the ministerial office. I say, many who have thus, in the presence of the whole Church, professed their faith as in perfect accordance with our subject, in their ministrations altogether overlook it, except at the time appointed by the Church for the special consideration of it; and even then they touch it but superficially, and bring it forward only lest the expectation of the people, who look for some instruction respecting it, would be disappointed.

And Christian hearers feel no lack, though they pass the whole remainder of the year, without ever being reminded of the truth of which my text speaks; that is, of the necessity of having the Holy Spirit imparted to us in order to our final salvation. Nay, even "Masters of Israel," of whom better things might be hoped, are yet ignorant of these things; and, when told that they must be born again of the Spirit, too often reply, with Nicodemus, "How can these things be? [John 3:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.9-10)."

In fact, we of the Church of England, having a season consecrated to the special consideration of this subject, have, from this very circumstance, our guilt greatly aggravated. We have heard, from year to year, the declaration in my text; and yet perhaps have never once put the question to ourselves, "Have*I*received the Holy Spirit?

Have*I* the Spirit of Christ dwelling in me?

Have *I* ever sought this gift, and earnestly implored of God to bestow it on me?

Have *I*, in the course of my whole life, so much as once felt any solicitude about it?"

Let this whole assembly put these questions to themselves; and then let them see in what a perilous state they are, and with what a disposition of mind they ought to come to the further consideration of this all-important subject. Indeed, indeed, I must declare, from Almighty God, that, whatever any man may think of his attainments or his virtues, he is not a Christian truly, if his soul is not a temple of the Holy Spirit. He may have many amiable qualities, but he does not belong to Christ; nor can he ever dwell with Christ in the eternal world, if Christ does not dwell in him, and abide with him, in this world.

Whence the necessity for this heavenly gift arises will be opened in our next lesson. But I must, in the mean time, warn all, that the subject is a matter of life and death. It is not to be listened to with mere curiosity, but as a point which at our peril we must understand, and at our peril must experience. If it is of importance whether we belong to Christ or not, it is of importance to ascertain whether we have this evidence of our belonging to him: for the declaration of God is unquestionable, and his decision is irreversible; nor is there any exception whatever made: "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

He may be in a high and dignified station in the church—but he is not therefore Christ's. He may be greatly distinguished for the variety and extent of his intellectual attainments—but he is not therefore Christ's. He may be looked up to as a pattern of moral excellence and virtue—but neither will that be any decisive evidence of his belonging to Christ. Whoever, or whatever he may be, if he has not the Holy Spirit abiding in him, he is none of Christ's. He may now make light of this truth; he may explain it away; he may "puff at it, [Psalm 10:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 10.5)" (as the Scripture speaks), with contemptuous indignation; but he shall find it true to his cost. Let me, however, hope that the minds of all shall "be opened, as Lydia's was, to attend to what shall be spoken, [Acts 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.14);" and that "the word being received with meekness as an engrafted word, shall prove as effectual, as it is able to save your souls! [James 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.21)."

But, while I would impress on all, a sense of*the absolute and indispensable necessity*which exists for our possessing this heavenly gift, I must not close my subject without declaring, for the comfort of my audience, the willingness of Almighty God to bestow the Spirit upon all without exception. He has told us, that if an earthly parent will not refuse bread to his famished child, much less will He refuse his Holy Spirit unto those who ask him [Luke 11:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.13).

Nor let any be discouraged on account of their unworthiness. A more unworthy character can scarcely be conceived than that of the Samaritan woman, whose guilt, it would seem, was not a little aggravated by refusing to our Lord a draught of water; yet to her did he say, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says unto you, Give me to 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); [John 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.14)."

Let all of us then come thirsting for this water of life. Nor let any erroneous presumption be harbored in our minds, as though there were nothing peculiar in this gift; but let every one of us seek it, yes, seek it earnestly, "with strong crying and tears," so that we may be heard and answered, and "the Savior be magnified in the midst of us, [Acts 19:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 19.17)," and "our souls be saved in the great day of the Lord Jesus! [1 Corinthians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 5.5)."

***~~#1864~~***

**OUR NEED OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** (continued)

***~~[Romans 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.9).~~***

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

THE Jewish religion, by the express command of its Divine Author, would not admit of any relaxation of its principles, or any departure from its established ordinances. Not only did it prohibit any connection with idolaters, but it forbade even the mention of the name of any false God. In all its appointments, it formed so broad a line of separation between the Jews and the rest of the world, that it was considered by the Gentiles as inspiring its followers with an utter hatred of all the human race.

The New Testament has, to a certain degree, shared among the heathen the same universal antipathy, and upon the same grounds. If the religion of the Lord Jesus would have admitted of any union with idolatry, he would have been readily received among the objects of worship which the Romans venerated; and his religion, instead of being universally hated, would have been judged worthy of general respect. But the Apostles were commanded to preach the Gospel everywhere, as requiring an exclusive regard; and to enforce it with this authoritative declaration, that "all who believed and embraced it would be saved, but that all who embraced it not would be damned! [Mark 16:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.16)."

Its doctrines were inculcated as so sacred, that "if even an angel from Heaven would attempt to establish any position contrary to them, he would be held accursed, [Galatians 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.8-9)." This inflexible spirit pervades the whole of our religion, so far as it relates to its fundamental truths. Every man must yield to it at his peril: and not to those parts only which are commended to us by our reason, but to those parts also which depend entirely on revelation, and to which reason is constrained to bow. Not to mention innumerable other passages which partake of this unbending character, I will take that which forms the subject of our present series: "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

Here is a declaration so broad, so explicit, so determinate, as to admit of no qualification, no exception whatever. To it every child of man must submit; and "whoever shall stumble over it as a rock of offense, shall be broken; and on whoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder! [Matthew 21:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 21.44)." Taking for granted that you have, agreeably to my request, examined carefully for yourselves my text in connection with the context, and that you see my interpretation of it to be correct, I proceed, with all humility, to the further consideration of the solemn truth which I have undertaken to develop.

Now, whether we could show the reasonableness of this declaration or not, it would be our bounden duty to receive it with implicit confidence, and to regard it as the avowed and unalterable determination of the Most High God. But I think it may be clearly shown, that this is by no means an arbitrary appointment, resulting merely from the sovereign will of God. It appears to be rather a declaration founded on the actual state of man as a fallen creature.

When man was in his original state of holiness, in himself complete, he needed neither a Savior to work out a redemption for him, nor the Holy Spirit to apply that redemption to him.

But, as a *fallen*creature, he stands in need of both. A Redeemer is necessary for him, that he may be brought back to God; and the gift of the Holy Spirit is necessary for him, in order that he may come to Christ aright, and find acceptance with God through Christ.

This need of the Spirit's influence is the part of my subject which I am now called to unfold; and I pray God, that, while I address myself to it with all Christian fidelity, "the word may come to every soul among you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

Let me however first, in a few words, repeat what we mean, when we say, that men must "have" the Spirit of Christ: for, unless we have definite ideas upon that subject, we can never fully comprehend the point which we are endeavoring to set before you.

It is obvious that the possession of the Spirit, which is here spoken of, must be somewhat very different from any natural or acquired endowment, since we may possess everything which constitutes us rational and accountable beings, and yet not be Christ's. While, on the other hand, however defective we may, in other respects, be, the possession of the Spirit will infallibly prove us to belong to Christ. If it is asked, What does this possession of the Spirit import? I answer, It is, as I showed in my last lesson, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our souls, as his temple, and his operating in us, as a quickening and influential principle of life.

That point being determined, we shall proceed, agreeably to the plan laid down in the preceding lesson, to show,

**II. Why the possession of that Spirit is necessary to our being Christ's accepted followers.** For the elucidation of this, there are three points to be established; namely:

first, That all our faculties are impaired by sin;

next, That, without an entire renovation of them, Christ can never accept or acknowledge us as his;

lastly, That none but the Spirit of Christ can ever accomplish in us this necessary work.

These points being established, the reasonableness, no less than the certainty, of God's declaration in my text, will appear, to the conviction of every gainsayer, and to the satisfaction of every unprejudiced mind.

***~~First, then, let it be remembered, That all our faculties are impaired by sin.~~***

It is clear, that we are not now such as we were when we first came out of our Creator's hands. We were created, originally, "after God's own image, [Genesis 1:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 1.26)." Our mind was in perfect accordance with his mind, and our will with his will. There was not so much as a thought of our hearts which did not emanate from him, and had not respect to his glory. Our bodies were every way fitted to aid the soul in all its operations. Not an inclination, affection, or appetite, existed in us, but in perfect unison with the proper offices of the soul, and in subservience to its dictates. Man's whole delight was in God alone. As far as God's happiness was in any respect derived from the creature, it was God in the creature, and not the creature itself, that was the real source of that happiness: the creature was only the medium of communication between him and his God. The goodness of God was seen and tasted by him in everything: and every object around him afforded him an occasion of admiration, and gratitude, and love. To dwell in the presence of God, to commune with him, to receive and execute every intimation of his will; in a word, to *admire*God in everything, to *adore*him for everything, and to *glorify*him by everything; this was the constant employment of man in his state of innocence, and the one uniform occupation both of his soul and body.

But what of all this is now left to us? We are altogether departed from God. Every faculty of our souls, and every member of our bodies, has become depraved, so that there remains in us no part of the moral image of our God. As beings of a superior order, we still are the lords of this lower creation; and, in the exercise of this authority, we, to a certain degree, resemble Him who is the governor of the universe, [1 Corinthians 11:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.7). But in righteousness and true holiness, which I call his moral image, we bear no resemblance to him whatever.

Our *understanding*is blinded, so that, instead of approving God's revealed will, we turn away from it with dislike.

His *law*, as contained in the Ten Commandments, is deemed by us unnecessarily strict; and the sanctions by which it is enforced are regarded as needlessly severe.

His very *Gospel*, which is the result of his eternal counsels, and contains in it "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, [Colossians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.3)," is treated by us as a cunningly devised fable. To the self-righteous among us, it is a stumbling-block; and to those who are wise in their own conceit, it is mere foolishness. We are, both in heart and life, altogether opposed to it.

In our eyes sin has no deformity, and holiness has no beauty. Communion with God affords us no pleasure. Prayer and praise are exercises which are a burden to us, rather than a delight; and instead of walking in constant and familiar fellowship with God, as Adam did before the fall, we flee from him, as Adam did after his transgression, and rather hide ourselves from him as an enemy, than go forth to meet him as a friend.

But "is it I who say this; or says not the Scripture the same also, 1 Corinthians 9:8." God's own account of us is, that "when he looked down from Heaven upon men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God, they were all gone aside, they were all together become filthy, there was not one that did good, no, not one! [Psalm 14:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 14.2-3) with [Romans 3:10-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.10-18)." He further adds, that "*every imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts was only evil continually*, [Genesis 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.5)." Nor let it be supposed that this was descriptive only of some more flagrant transgressors who lived at one particular age or place: for the Apostles themselves, previous to their conversion, were of this very character, as Paul most candidly confesses. Speaking of those "who walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in all the children of disobedience," he says, "Among whom we *all*had our conduct in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others! [Ephesians 2:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.2-3)." And again, "We ourselves also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and Pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another! [Titus 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.3)."

But, together with the Scripture, let me appeal to personal experience. What have been our own habits even from our youth? Have we delighted ourselves in God? Has it been the joy of our hearts to draw near to him in the exercise of prayer and praise? And have we sought after the communications of his grace and the testimonies of his love, as our supreme happiness? When the question has occurred to our minds, "Who will show us any good?" has the reply of David instantly been made, "Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us, [Psalm 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 4.6)." Must we not rather confess, that every vanity has been regarded by us with a deeper interest than our God, and every base lust been served in preference to him? Yes, we have, as the Scripture asserts, "worshiped and served the *creature*more than the *Creator*, who is blessed for evermore! [Romans 1:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.25)." And if at any time we have been reproved for this, our heart has risen up against the will of God, in the very spirit of Pharaoh, when he said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go [Exodus 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 5.2)."

And now I make my appeal to you. Is this overstated? If any thinks that it is, tell me who is there among us whose body has at all times been in perfect subjection to his soul, so as to render a prompt and uniform obedience to its holy motions? With whom has it not rather been in a constant state of rebellion against the soul; and in whom, unless he have been renewed by divine grace, does it not, with insatiable avidity, follow yet daily its own corrupt desires? It is true in all of us, though not exactly in the same way, that *the body, which was ordained to serve, exercises a tyrannic sway over, the soul; and the soul, which was ordained to regulate all the motions of the body, is made a very pander to its corrupt appetites*.

Now then, agreeably to what I mentioned as the second point to be considered, I beg you to inquire with care, and to judge with candor, whether, while we are in such a state, Christ can receive us, and acknowledge us as his? I think it clear that he cannot: for it would counteract all the purposes of God in the redemption of the world. If we trace up, as we must, the whole work of redemption to the eternal counsels of God—I ask: To what has he predestined his people? Is it not that they would be "conformed to the image of his Son, [Romans 8:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.29)." To what has he chosen them? Is it not that they may be "holy and without blame before him in love, [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4)."

Yes, to no one soul among us shall salvation ever be given, but "through sanctification of the Spirit," as well as through "belief of the truth, 2 Thessalonians 2:13." But how would these purposes be accomplished if men were saved with all their corruptions unmortified and unsubdued?

Besides, it would defeat all the ends of our Savior's mission. "He came to destroy the works of the devil, [1 John 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.8);" to "redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works, [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14)." Even at the time of his conception in the womb, his name *Jesus*was given him as declarative of this very thing, that he would "save his people," not *in*their sins, but *from*them, [Matthew 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 1.21). But he might as well have never come at all, if these ends are to be set aside, and mankind are to be saved without any respect to their moral character.

Further, the office of the Holy Spirit, as a sanctifier, would be altogether frustrated and superseded: yes, and the whole word of God would be invalidated and made void. God has declared, that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, [1 Corinthians 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.9);" and that "no unclean thing shall enter into his presence, [Revelation 21:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.27)." But what truth would there be in these declarations, if an unrenewed man could stand with acceptance in the sight of God?

But in fact, an unregenerate man could not be happy in the presence of God, even if he were admitted to it. For, how could so corrupt a creature endure the presence of a holy God; and a creature so full of enmity against God, be happy in immediate communion with him? How could a person who has never found any pleasure in holy exercises, bear to spend an eternity in duties for which he has no taste, no fitness, no capacity? He has no fitness for Heaven. He would be altogether out of his element there. Heaven would be no Heaven to him, for lack of the dispositions necessary for the enjoyment of it. If "two cannot walk together on earth, except they be agreed, [Amos 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 3.3)," then much less could the glorified saints and angels, all formed after the perfect image of their God, admit to their converse, and associate themselves with, those who bear upon their souls nothing but the image and deformity of Satan!

Paul puts this in a very striking point of view, and appeals to us for the justness of his sentiments: "What fellowship," says he, "has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he who believes, with an infidel 2 Corinthians 6:14-15."

If then Christ will not make void the eternal purposes of his Father, and the ends of his own incarnation and death—if he will not render nugatory the office of the Holy Spirit as the sanctifier of God's elect—and if he will not so dishonor himself as to number among his people those who have spent their whole lives in "treading under foot his blood, and doing despite to the Spirit of his grace, [Hebrews 10:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.29)." In a word, if he will not exalt to his glory those who have no taste, no capacity for the enjoyment of it, I think it clear, that Christ neither will nor can acknowledge any people as his, until they have received an entire renovation of their nature, and a fitness for that glory to which he would exalt them.

Let me not, however, be misunderstood. I am far from saying that our fallen nature renders us incapable of enjoying Heaven, provided we are washed from our guilt in the blood of Christ, and be renewed by his Spirit in our inward man. On the contrary, not only will the Lord Jesus Christ, in that case, receive and acknowledge us as his, but "God the Father also will rejoice over us with joy, and rest in his love, and rejoice over us with singing! [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.17);" and both the Father and the Son will be eternally glorified in us.

But this I say, that, until we are restored to the Divine image, the Lord Jesus can never have pleasure in us, nor can God the Father ever recognize us as his peculiar and redeemed people; for our Lord has repeatedly, and in the most authoritative manner, asserted, that, "Except we are born again, we cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven! [John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.3)." If ever we would belong to Christ, we must be so renewed, as to be made, if not in act—yet in desire and endeavor at least, "as pure, as Christ himself is pure [1 John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.3)," and "as perfect, as our Father who is in Heaven is perfect, [Matthew 5:48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.48)."

But here arises the question, By what power can this change be effected? And I answer, (as I undertook, in the third place, to show,) it is by the Spirit of Christ alone that this change ever was, or ever can be, wrought.

To imagine that this change is of necessity wrought in baptism, is a very fatal error. I presume not to say that God cannot accomplish it then as well as at any other time. Nor do I deny but that God does, on some occasions, make that ordinance the means of peculiar benefit to the soul. But the mere administration of the baptismal rite can no more sanctify a man, than the administration of the Lord's supper can. And if a man at the Lord's supper may, by receiving it amiss, "eat and drink his own damnation, [1 Corinthians 11:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.29);" so, by receiving baptism amiss, he may receive a curse rather than a blessing! This was actually the case with Simon Magus, who, though baptized by Philip the Evangelist, remained in the very "gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity! [Acts 8:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.23)."

There is, doubtless, (and I wish the avowal of it to be distinctly noticed,) a great change effected in baptism. But it is a change of state, and not of nature. By baptism a person is admitted into covenant with God, and obtains a title to all the blessings of the Christian covenant, exactly as a Jew by circumcision became entitled to all the blessings of the Jewish covenant. Paul says, "To them, as Israelites, (who have been admitted into covenant with God by circumcision,) to them "pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, [Romans 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.4)." But were they therefore renewed, and sanctified, and saved? Surely not: for the Apostle "appealed to God, that, notwithstanding their title to these blessings, he had "great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart" on their account, [Romans 9:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.2).

So then it is with those who have been baptized: they have a title to all the blessings of salvation; a title which, in an unbaptized state, they did not possess. But the actual possession of those blessings can only be obtained by the exercise of faith in Christ for the justification of their souls, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit for their restoration to the Divine image. To regard it in any other view, is to assimilate it to the *extreme unction*of the Papists, and to lead men into the most fatal error.

If, then, we do not of necessity receive a new nature in baptism, when and how are we to receive it? Can we, by any efforts of our own, form it in ourselves? I answer, No! It is called in Scripture "a new creation, 2 Corinthians 5:17;" and a man can no more create himself anew, than he could create himself at first. If any thinks that he has within himself a power to renew himself after the Divine image, he has, within his own reach, the means of proving it to demonstration. Let him set about it, and accomplish it, and he will at once disprove every word which the Scripture speaks respecting this matter. Our Lord says, "Without me you can do nothing, [John 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.5);" and Paul says, that "God alone can give us either to will or to do anything that is good, [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.13)." Yes, that of ourselves "we are not sufficient even to think a good thought as of ourselves: our sufficiency for it must be of God, 2 Corinthians 3:5." If any man thinks this not true, let him try it.

I readily acknowledge, that a man may correct some outward vices, and practice some outward duties; but can he bring himself to hate every kind and degree of sin, and to loath and abhor himself on account of his indwelling corruptions? Can he, without the Spirit's influence, so "mortify the deeds of the body, [Romans 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.13)," as no longer to live after the flesh? And can he sit loose to all the things of time and sense, and "set his affections" wholly and exclusively "on things above, [Colossians 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.2)." Can he, in a word, bring himself to love God supremely, and to delight himself truly in all holy exercises? Can he further so form his soul after the likeness of Christ, as, under the heaviest trials, to indulge no other tempers than those which he manifested, and willingly to lay down his life, as he did, and as every follower of Christ must be ready to do, [Luke 14:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 14.26), for the honor and glory of his God?

Let him do these things by any power of his own, and we will at once acknowledge the erroneousness of our present statement. But the more diligently the attempt be made, the more deeply will any man be convinced, that he must have the Spirit of Christ; and that, without the renovating influences of that Divine Agent, he can never become one of Christ's peculiar and approved people.

The Spirit of Christ must "open the eyes of our understanding, [Luke 24:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.45)."

The Spirit of Christ must "renew us in our inward man, [2 Corinthians 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.16)."

The Spirit of Christ alone can so reveal the Savior to us, that, with any measure of true affiance, we would "call him Lord, [1 Corinthians 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.3)."

No other power than his can ever assimilate us to the risen Savior, enabling us to die unto sin, and to rise again unto righteousness, [Ephesians 1:17-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17-21). Nothing, I say, but the mighty working of that power that raised Christ himself from the dead, can effect this change in us: and, consequently, the assertion in my text is clearly proved, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

Let it then be borne in mind, that, as this is not a mere arbitrary appointment of the Deity, so neither is it an enthusiastic conceit. It is a decision of the Most High, arising out of the necessities of our nature, and proceeding from the boundless riches of his grace, which has made such an astonishing provision for us.

I hope I may now consider this point as proved, and may henceforth assume it as an acknowledged truth, that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's influence is founded on the state and character of every living man. Indeed, if my statement upon this part of my subject has failed to carry conviction along with it, all that I shall have to bring forward in my two remaining discourses will appear destitute of any solid foundation, and unworthy of any serious attention. It is on this account that I have devoted one entire discourse to this part of my subject. I know whom I address, and that they will justly expect to see every step of my argument made clear and unquestionable. I have great and important truths to bring before you in my remaining discourses; and, if I show you not to your satisfaction the *foundation*on which they stand, then I cannot hope, or even wish, at any time, and least of all in these days of fanaticism and folly, that they would be favorably received by you. "I speak as unto wise men; and I call upon you to judge what I say, [1 Corinthians 10:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.15)."

But I do hope that the words which I have delivered have carried conviction along with them. And if any doubt remains on the mind of a single individual, I call upon him to study well the state of his own soul before God. If any one of you thinks himself not so fallen as I have represented, let him examine well the Scriptures, and compare them with the whole of his past life. Or, if he thinks he can restore himself to God's image by any power of his own, let it be seen that he can do so, and let him prove it by an actual appeal to fact. Or if, in the failure of these endeavors, he is disposed to maintain that he has no need of such a transformation of soul as I have spoken of, then let him inquire diligently, and see whether there is not on God's part an insurmountable obstacle to his admission into Heaven in an unrenewed state; and also, whether, if admitted into those blissful mansions, there would not be on his part an insuperable impediment to his enjoyment of them; and whether that be not true, which our Lord declared to the obstinate and unbelieving Jews, "Where I go, you cannot come! [John 8:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.21)."

But none of you will ever be able to satisfy yourselves on any one of these points. If you could establish any one of them, you would set aside the authority of the inspired volume, and disprove at once the whole of Christianity. But if you acknowledge, as you must, the truth of our preceding statement, then set yourselves immediately to make a due improvement of all that you have heard.

Beg of God, especially, that you may be impressed with a deep sense of your exceeding sinfulness, and of your need of the Holy Spirit's influence to renovate your souls. And do not rest in a mere outward acknowledgment of your guilt and helplessness, but cry mightily to God, and "give him no rest, [Isaiah 62:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.7)" until he bestows his Holy Spirit upon you. Nor harbor a thought of delaying this work to "a more convenient season, [Acts 24:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 24.25);" for, who can tell whether that more convenient season shall ever arrive? More especially now that Gods judgments are so visibly, and with such rapid strides, traversing the earth, and may, for anything we know be even already at our doors; who can tell, whether even a single day may be allowed to you for repairing your present neglect, and for acquiring that renovation of soul which you so greatly need. Indeed, this is no time for any of us to delay our preparation for death and judgment. [November 13, 1831, when the cholera had actually begun to show itself at Sunderland.]

On the contrary, the very circumstance of the proximity of danger, would give tenfold energy to our endeavors; since, in the event of any sudden seizure, a consciousness of having experienced this change, would tend to tranquillize our minds, and, by disarming death of its terrors, to counteract the effect of disease itself, which would otherwise gather strength from the fears that were excited by it.

I mean not, however, to be an alarmist on these matters: but on the matters of eternity I am an alarmist, even as the Apostle Paul was; and "knowing," as he did, "the terrors of the Lord, I would persuade men! [2 Corinthians 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.11)." Yes, I would persuade every one among you, old and young, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, to "flee from the wrath to come! [Matthew 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 3.7)," and to "lay hold on eternal life! [1 Timothy 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 6.12)."

I ask every one here present: Is my text true, or is it not? If it is true, what is it less than madness to waste the time now afforded you for obtaining the gift of God's Holy Spirit, and securing thereby the salvation of your souls? It will be too late to repent, when we are taken hence, or to "ask for even a drop of water to cool our tongues! [Luke 16:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 16.24);" when now, if we would but cry to God, we might obtain "rivers of living water, [John 7:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.38)."

Were we but in earnest, no soul among us would be allowed to seek this gift in vain. Our blessed Lord has promised his Holy Spirit to us; yes, he has himself received this heavenly gift on purpose that he may bestow it upon us, [Psalm 68:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 68.18). It is, "he received;" but in [Ephesians 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.8). "he gave." He received in order that he might give. But, however free his promises be, "he will be inquired of by us," before he will perform them, [Ezekiel 36:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.37). The promise runs, "Ask, and you shall have; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you, [Matthew 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.7)."

Let us then, in dependence on this promise, entreat of God to give us, in the first place, his Holy Spirit as a "spirit of grace and supplication, [Zechariah 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 12.10);" and then, in answer to our prayers, to "pour out his Spirit, even, as it were, in rivers and floods upon us, [Isaiah 44:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.3);" so that there might be accomplished in us that good work, which it is the Spirit's office to perform, by renovating our souls, and "causing us to walk in God's statutes, and to keep his judgments, and do them, [Ezekiel 36:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.27)."

Then, having obtained this inestimable gift, let us be careful to improve it aright, never "resisting his holy motions [Acts 7:51](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 7.51)," lest we provoke God to "withdraw his Spirit from us, [Psalm 51:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.11)," and with holy indignation to swear, that "his Spirit shall strive with us no more, [Genesis 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.3);" and that "we shall never enter into his rest, [Hebrews 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 3.11)."

The most important parts of my subject must of necessity be deferred to the remaining opportunities of addressing you. This, which I may call only a prefatory part, I will conclude with that beautiful Collect of our Church, in which the whole that has been brought before you is thus briefly and piously expressed: "O God, forasmuch as without you we are not able to please you, grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

(continued)

***~~#1865~~***

**THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN UNBELIEVERS** (continued)

***~~[Romans 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.9).~~***

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

IN our two preceding discourses, we touched on points necessary to be considered in order to a just apprehension of our subject; but they were rather of an introductory nature, than a direct unfolding of the subject itself. We now come to that which is of prime importance, and in which our present and eternal interests are most deeply involved, namely, *the work which the Holy Spirit accomplishes in men, in order to their becoming the people and the property of Christ*. And in our statements we will exercise all imaginable caution—not, on the one hand, to fall short of what the Scripture indispensably requires; nor, on the other hand, to strain any requirement of Scripture beyond what it plainly and incontrovertibly imports. For if, on the one hand, we are bound, at the peril of our souls, not to withhold anything that can be profitable to you; so we are extremely anxious, on the other hand, not by carrying any part of our subject to excess, to "make sad the heart of any whom God would not have made sad, [Ezekiel 13:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 13.22)."

In prosecution of the plan laid down above, I now come to state,

**III. What the Holy Spirit will work in us in order to our being Christ's.** And here I shall comprehend the whole in those three acknowledged duties: *repentance*, *faith*, and *obedience*. I say then, that, in order to bring us to Christ, the Holy Spirit will:

first, Convince us of sin;

secondly, He will reveal Christ to us, as the appointed and only Savior;

thirdly, He will lead us to an unreserved surrender of ourselves to God, in a way of holy obedience.

**First—He will convince us of sin.**This is the first work of the Spirit in bringing us to Christ; and until this is accomplished, we neither are, nor can be, Christ's. Of this work, there is not any real experience in the natural man. He may have, as we often see, a spirit of bondage; which appears from the apprehensions which men betray in the prospect of death and judgment: but as for any real humiliation for his sin, he has it not; nor can he form it in himself by any power of his own. It is only when Christ sends his Holy Spirit into our souls, that this great preparatory work is accomplished in us. It is that heavenly Agent alone, who can "take away from us the heart of stone, and give us an heart of flesh, [Ezekiel 11:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 11.19)." Hence our blessed Lord has promised to send his Holy Spirit for this very end: "I will send the Comforter unto you; and when he is come, *he will reprove the world of sin*,[John 16:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.7-8)."

Now, the Holy Spirit will convince us, not of the mere existence of sin, for nobody can be ignorant of that; but of the extent and heinousness of our transgressions. In order to this, he will reveal to us the spiritual import of the law. While in a natural and unconverted state, we have little notion of the law, except as it appears in the mere letter. But the Holy Spirit will show us that it extends to every motion of the heart; that an angry *wish*is murder; and an impure *look* is adultery, [Matthew 5:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.21-22); [Matthew 5:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.27-28); and an *inordinate desire*after anything whatever, is a violation of the tenth commandment, [Romans 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.7).

Thus he shows us that our sins, which to the generality appear only as the stars in a cloudy night, few, and at a great distance from each other—are, in reality, like the stars in the clearest night, viewed through a telescope of the largest power, when their numbers (the number of our sins) exceed all that we could ever have imagined; forming, as it were, one continuous mass through the whole space of our lives, [Psalm 40:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 40.12). The various aggravations of our sins are then, also, brought to light, and are revealed to us as:

the vilest ingratitude towards our heavenly Benefactor;

the most injurious rebellion against our almighty Creator;

and the most inconceivable folly, as destructive of our eternal welfare!

We are apt, for the pacifying of our own minds, to balance our virtues against our faults. But the Holy Spirit, by applying the law to our consciences, and showing us the extent of its demands, makes us to see that *our brightest virtues are, in fact, but splendid sins*, falling, as they do, infinitely short of that perfection which the law requires of us. Thus the Holy Spirit shows us, not only the *depth of our guilt*, but the *awfulness of our deservings*; and that, if we die in an unpardoned state, we have nothing to expect at God's hands, but wrath and fiery indignation!

But, in addition to all this, there is one sin in particular of which the Holy Spirit will convince us, and which is especially referred to by our Lord—the sin of *unbelief*. Our Lord says, "I will send the Comforter, to reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me, [John 16:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.7-9)." Now this is a sin of which the unconverted man makes no account. If he thinks of it at all, it is rather in extenuation than in aggravation of his other sins. He considers unbelief rather as his misfortune than his fault. He never once suspects that there is in him a corrupt bias, and an evil heart of unbelief; and that these are the main causes of his departing from the living God, [Hebrews 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 3.12). Nor is he at all aware that his unbelief owes its origin to the corruption of his heart, and not to any lack of clearness in the things revealed.

God has sent his only dear Son into the world, to reconcile sinners unto him, by his own obedience unto death. He has, also, given most abundant evidence of this, such as must of necessity convince any dispassionate and candid mind. And he invites all men to accept of mercy in this his appointed way. The heathen, who have never heard of this merciful provision made for them, are not accountable for their neglect of it; but we, who have been instructed in the knowledge of Christ, and who profess to be followers of that Divine Savior, have "made light of these things," and are utterly inexcusable for not having inquired more fully into the mystery of redeeming love, and for having practically said, "We will not have this man to reign over us! [Luke 19:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.14)."

Now, when the Spirit of God brings this to our view, it appears the very summit of our guilt and folly; for, in fact, instead of requiting the Savior's love as we ought, with all imaginable gratitude and self-devotion, we have done nothing, throughout our whole lives, but "crucify to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame, [Hebrews 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.6)."

Thus the Spirit of God brings to our view a sense of our guilt and danger. But this is not all. He breaks the heart, and humbles it in the dust, and makes us cry out, with the converts on the day of Pentecost, "Men and brethren, what shall we do! [Acts 2:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.37)." This effect is absolutely universal. There may be a difference in the degrees with which these feelings are produced in different people: but in quality, and effect, they are the same in all. In all do they produce that "broken and contrite spirit, which God will not despise, [Psalm 51:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.17)."

Now let not this work be mistaken. Where it exists, whether the person have been more or less moral, it reveals to the mind such a total alienation from God, such an entire lack of the Divine image, and such an hateful depravity of heart, as makes a man to say, with the prophet, "Woe is me! I am undone! [Isaiah 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.5);" yes, and to exclaim with Job, "Behold I am vile! I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes! [Job 40:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 40.4); [Job 42:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 42.6)."

These may be thought to be merely particular instances, peculiar to some distinguished saints, and that they are not to be realized or expected among us. But the Prophet Ezekiel tells us, that all of us without exception must "loath ourselves for our iniquities and abominations, and that not only before, but after, that God is pacified towards us, [Ezekiel 16:63](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.63); [Ezekiel 36:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.31)."

This is the very state which our Lord describes, when he says, that "he came to seek and to save that which was lost [Matthew 18:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.11);" and, *until we know ourselves to be thus lost, we never shall come to Christ aright*. We must feel ourselves, like Peter, actually sinking in the waves, and, under a sense of our perishing condition, must stretch out our hands, crying, "Save, Lord, or I perish! [Matthew 8:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 8.25)."

**The next, the second work of the Holy Spirit is, to reveal the Lord Jesus to us as the appointed and only Savior of the world.** For this also a divine agency is needed, as much as for the humbling of our souls before God. We may indeed acknowledge, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the appointed Savior. We may even contend for it as an article of our creed, and write learned dissertations upon it; but all this is widely different from that kind of view which the Spirit of Christ gives to the believing soul.

It is *not as a speculative truth*that the Holy Spirit brings this to the mind, but as a matter of indispensable importance to every soul of man; like that of pointing out the city of refuge to a man, who, hearing the pursuer of blood rapidly gaining ground upon him, feels that he must flee with all his might, if by any means he may attain the wished-for gate of safety, before the avenger shall have overtaken him.

The Spirit of God, as our Lord himself has expressed it, "takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them to the inquiring soul."

He shows to us what Christ has done and suffered for a ruined world: that he has left "the bosom of his Father [John 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.18)," and assumed our nature, and "borne our sins in his own body on the tree! [1 Peter 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.24)."

He shows us, that Christ is also a living Savior, sitting at the right hand of God to complete in Heaven the work which he began on earth; and that he is coming again in due season to receive us to himself, that where he is we may be also, [John 14:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.3).

He shows us, that our blessed Lord has, in all this work, accomplished everything that was either predicted concerning him in the prophecies, or shadowed forth in the Mosaic ritual.

He shows us, that by that one offering of himself upon the cross, he has made an ample satisfaction "for the sins of the world, [1 John 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.2)," and effected a perfect reconciliation between God and man, [Colossians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.20), so that now God can be "just, and yet a Savior, [Isaiah 45:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.21);" yes, he may be "just, and yet a justifier of them that believe in Christ, [Romans 3:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.26)."

He shows us, that, "if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh, much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God, [Hebrews 9:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.13-14)."

Convincing us, I say, of these things, he assures us, that, if only we "live by faith in this Savior," and "receive out of his fullness" our daily "supplies of his Spirit" and grace, we have nothing to fear; for that work that is now begun in us, shall assuredly be carried on and perfected "until the day of Christ, [Philippians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.6)." From this time the sinner builds on "Christ as the only true foundation, [1 Corinthians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11)," and glories in him as "all his salvation and all his desire, [2 Samuel 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 23.5)." Even a full assurance of faith he is now enabled to exercise, under a full conviction that "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1);" and that "all who believe in him are justified from all things, [Acts 13:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.39)."

A full assurance of hope, indeed, a true believer may lack; but a full assurance of faith he must have, and would never lose. Faith, being founded simply on the truth of God, would never vary, under any circumstances whatever; but hope is founded partly on the promises of God, and partly on a consciousness that we are in that state to which the promises are made, and, therefore, it may vary, yes, and would vary, according to the progress we have made in the divine life, and the fitness we have attained for the heavenly inheritance.

Faith is a duty, and can never be too strong.

Hope is a privilege, and would rise or fall according to circumstances.

The lack of an assured faith is sin. The lack of an assured hope may indeed argue a low, or even a sinful, state; but it is in itself rather a duty than a sin, provided we are not in a state that warrants such a hope. Strong faith will, doubtless, for the most part, generate a lively hope, and render it as influential for our safety, as it is conducive to our comfort. *Hope is, in fact, the daughter of faith*; and, when grown to maturity, will perform the same offices as faith, "purifying the heart after the Savior's image, [Acts 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.15) with [1 John 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.3)," and "saving the soul," both with a present and an everlasting salvation, [Romans 8:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.24).

This distinction between faith and hope is necessary for our comfort, and should be particularly borne in mind by those who minister in holy things; for many, from confounding the two, are adverse to the doctrine of a full assurance of faith; while many, from the very same cause, are induced to write bitter things against themselves without any just occasion for their disquietude, apprehending that their weakness of hope argues, of necessity, a lack of faith.

But a person may have strong faith, while yet he is very far from an assured hope. The Canaanite woman, who was repeatedly rejected by our Lord as an unfit person to enjoy the blessing which she solicited—("I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, [Matthew 15:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 15.24);" "I cannot take the children's bread, and cast it unto dogs, [Matthew 15:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 15.26),")—showed, by her persevering importunity, that her faith in Christ was strong; and, therefore, our Lord commended her, saying, "O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will, [Matthew 15:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 15.28)." This, then, I have spoken, lest any, because they have not an assured hope, would think themselves destitute of a saving faith. If our faith in Christ is simple and entire, "we shall be saved by him with an everlasting salvation, [Isaiah 45:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.17)."

If it is thought this knowledge of Christ is attainable by any human efforts, let the Apostle's declaration be borne in mind: "By grace you are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, [Ephesians 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.8)." And he elsewhere tells us, that "it is granted to us to believe in Christ, [Philippians 1:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.29)." It was "by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that any of old attained the knowledge of Christ, [Ephesians 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17);" and it is by the same divine Teacher that we must all be brought to him at this time; as it is said, "All your children shall be taught of God, [John 6:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.45);" and again, "No man can come unto me, unless the Father, who has sent me, draws him, [John 6:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.44)."

**But I observed, that the Spirit of Christ yet further (in the third place) enables the believer to devote himself wholly and unreservedly to God.**This is as necessary as either of the former. In fact, without this, where it can be effected, the others, even if they could exist, would be of no saving benefit to the soul. *An entire surrender of the soul to God is that for which the graces of penitence and faith are given. But this also is the work of the Spirit, and can never be wrought by any finite power.*

The man now possesses "a divine nature, [2 Peter 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.4)," totally distinct from that which he brought into the world with him. He is altogether "a new creature, [Galatians 6:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.15);" made so by him who created him at first, and "breathed into him a living soul [Genesis 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 2.7)." And can there be any doubt by whom this change is wrought? Let the Apostle's testimony determine this point: "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.10)." And again, "He who has wrought us for the self-same thing is God; who also has given unto us the pledge of the Spirit, [2 Corinthians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.5)."

I have said that the Spirit of God makes known to the believing soul, the mercies of God in Christ Jesus; and by this manifestation of God's love, he constrains the believer to "give himself up, a living sacrifice to God, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1);" and, from a consciousness, that "he has been bought with a price, to glorify God with his body and his spirit, which are his, [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20)."

From this time, the man enters on a new course, mortifying the whole body of sin, and crucifying all his corrupt affections; as it is written, "those who are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts, [Galatians 5:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.24)." From this time, also, all the fruits of the Spirit are brought forth by him, and he progressively abounds in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God, [Philippians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.11)."

*Holiness, in all its branches, is now the chief desire and delight of his soul*. "By walking in the Spirit, he is kept from any desire to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, [Galatians 5:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.16)." "He can no longer commit sin, as he once did, because he is born of God, [1 John 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.9)." Were it possible, he would become "holy, as God himself is holy, [Leviticus 19:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 19.2)." His continual prayer is, that "the God of peace would sanctify him wholly; and that his whole body, soul, and spirit, may be preserved blameless unto God's heavenly kingdom, [1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.23)."

As for the *world*, and all its vanities, he is crucified to it "by the cross of Christ; and the world, even in all its most attractive graces, is as a crucified object to him, [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14)." The relation between him and the world, like the tie of a departed relative, is dissolved, [Romans 7:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.4); and though in the world, "he is no more of the world, than Christ himself was of the world, [John 17:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.16)."

To walk before God, and with God, and to "maintain continual fellowship with the Father and the Son, [1 John 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.3)," is now his one ambition, his one pursuit. And it is only in proportion as he has attained this change, that he has any evidence that he belongs to Christ. In this way, allowing only for circumstantial varieties in different cases, the Holy Spirit completes in men the three different works which I mentioned, as necessary in order to our becoming Christ's.

I know that there are some who would call this a legal statement. But I have no hesitation in saying that it is the statement which is found in every page of the inspired volume; and that no part of it can, by any means, be dispensed with.

If we are not *penitent*, we can never come to Christ aright.

If we rely on anything but his meritorious blood and righteousness, we can never be accepted by him.

If we yield not ourselves up to him in a way of holy obedience, he will never acknowledge us as his.

The same Scripture which says, "Unless you repent, you shall all perish, [Luke 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.5)," says also, "He who believes not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him, [John 3:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.36);" and still further adds, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord, [Hebrews 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.14)."

Now no true disciple of Christ would wish any one of these demands to be waved, or softened down in any respect. He would most gladly comply with them all. He would assign . . .

no measure to his *penitence*,

no bounds to his *faith*,

no limits to his *obedience*.

In actual attainment, it is true, he has many defects, and much that affords him occasion for grief and shame: but, in heart and mind, he is like-minded with God; and he can appeal to God, that he would regard a perfect conformity to his revealed will as a very Heaven upon earth.

Now comes the *question*which it behooves every one of us to put to himself with all sincerity:

What evidence have I that I am Christ's?

Has the Spirit of Christ actually wrought these things in me?

Does my conscience bear me witness that I am deeply penitent before God: and that not merely on account of some flagrant transgression which I may have committed, but for the indwelling corruptions of my heart, and for the defectiveness of my very best duties?

Do I take the law as my rule of judgment, and feel that I have need, in reference to every one of the commandments, to pray from my inmost soul, "Lord, have mercy upon me for my past violations of this law, and incline my rebellious heart to keep it in the future?"

Can I also appeal to God that I do flee to Christ for refuge, renouncing utterly every other ground of hope, and "determining to know nothing, and rely on nothing, for my acceptance with God, but Jesus Christ and him crucified? 1 Corinthians 2:2."

Do I look with a holy jealousy and indignation on everything that would divide with him the honor of my salvation; and is this the most rooted and habitual sentiment of my heart, "God forbid that I would glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14)."

Further, does "the love of Christ constrain me to live, not to myself, but to Him who died for me and rose again? [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14-15);" and does my whole walk, both in public and private, bear witness for me, that I live only for God and for eternity; and that all my other pursuits, of whatever kind they are, are subordinated to this, and made subservient to it?

Let it be remembered, I am not now asking whether we do these things *perfectly*; but whether we do them *sincerely*and *habitually*; and whether every deviation from this heavenly course be a source of grief and shame to us? Yes, whether we are "laboring after perfection [2 Corinthians 13:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.9)," though we know we are not able to attain it?

Moreover, is all this manifest to those around us, and especially to those who are most conversant with us in our daily walk? Do they see, and can they testify in our behalf, that this is indeed the constant habit of our minds, and the uniform tenor of our life? Do they see a marked difference between us and the world around us; and that we are, in fact, "lights in a dark world, holding forth in our conversation the word of life? [Philippians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.16);" and proving to every beholder the truth of our profession by the consistency of our conduct?

Let us not put away from us these searching inquiries; let us not turn away from them as though this change were unattainable, or as though we could be saved without it. Let us remember what is at issue, and how deeply we are interested in it. I want to know whether I am Christ's. I want to know whether, if I were to die this day, Christ would acknowledge me as his; or whether I have not reason rather to fear, that he would say to me, "Depart from me; I never knew you! [Matthew 7:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.23)."

I am aware that some will endeavor to evade these things, by saying that we require too much. Then I demand, which of these things can be dispensed with?

Can repentance be dispensed with?

Can faith be dispensed with?

Can obedience be dispensed with?

There is not a person here who does not know, that not one of these things can be neglected, but to the certain destruction of our souls.

Again, I ask, which of these things can be wrought in us by our own power; or for which of them is not the operation of the Holy Spirit necessary?

If *repentance*can be wrought effectually in you by any power of your own, prove it.

If *faith*in Christ can, prove it.

If *obedience*to his commandments can, prove it.

But be careful not to mistake the shadow for the substance. Do not think that merely saying that you possess these things, or that you intend hereafter to attain them, will suffice. You must possess them; you must possess them in reality; you must possess them now, if you would have any scriptural evidence that you are Christ's, or any well-founded hope of dwelling with Christ in the eternal world.

I charge you before God that you examine, every one of you, your present state, and that you defer not any longer the attainment of the things on which your everlasting salvation depends.

Think, I beg you: if you do not belong to Christ, then you belong to the devil? Fearful thought! I pray God that no one among you may ever have to learn this by bitter experience; but that all of you may, from this moment, lay it to heart, and improve, while yet you may, this day of your salvation! I tremble, lest in any of you this day of grace be terminated by death; and, when you are vainly hoping for acceptance with Christ as his peculiar people, Satan would lay claim to you as his vassals, and possess you forever—sad trophies of his victorious power, and wretched monuments of his malignant sway!

And now, in conclusion, may God send down his Holy Spirit upon you all "to bear testimony to the word of his grace, [Acts 14:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 14.3)," which has been delivered to you, and render it "the power of God to the salvation of your souls, [Romans 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.16)." Amen and Amen.

***~~#1866~~***

**THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN BELIEVERS** (continued)

***~~[Romans 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.9).~~***

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

IN entering on this closing part of our subject, I feel peculiar difficulty, not from any lack of scriptural and incontrovertible materials, but from the very nature of those materials which, being wholly of an experimental nature, can only commend themselves to those who, by actual experience, are qualified to judge of them.

There are, as we all know, different kinds of life: *vegetable* life, *animal* life, and *rational* life—each rising above the other, and each, in its order, evincing a manifest superiority above that which is below it. But there is a fourth kind of life, of which the Scripture speaks; namely, a *spiritual*life, which rises as far above the rest, as any one of them does above another. All have their proper powers, which, however, they cannot exceed.

The *vegetable*life has productiveness, but no consciousness nor activity.

The *animal*life has feeling, but no perception of the deductions of reason.

The *rational*life apprehends moral truth; but forms no just conception of things which are spiritual.

The *spiritual*life is exercised on things that are matters of pure revelation, which reason is not of itself able to apprehend.

But I wish to guard against a common misapprehension respecting this spiritual life. It is by no means correct to speak of it as constituting a new sense; for then it would be a man's misfortune only, and not his fault, if he did not possess it. But it is correct to say, that *the spiritual man has a spiritual perception, which the natural man does not possess*.

The merely rational man has a film over his eyes; he views things through the medium of sense, and not of faith; and the medium through which he looks at objects, distorts them, if it does not altogether hide them from his sight.

But in the spiritual man, the Holy Spirit, as "eye-salve," clears away the film, [Revelation 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.18), and enables him to discern things as they really are. Faith also assists him, by bringing remote objects with greater clearness to his mind.

The power of the telescope to bring to our view things that are invisible to the naked eye, is well known. Now this is the office and effect of faith, which enables us, if I may so speak, to behold both God himself, and the hidden mysteries of God, [Hebrews 11:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.27), and to obtain a clear perception of things which are altogether beyond the reach of the eye of sense.

Hence it appears that the merely rational man labors under a twofold disadvantage in comparison with the spiritual man: he looks through a dense medium of sense, which distorts, or altogether conceals, the objects before him; and he lacks that peculiar looking-glass of faith, which would present them truly, and bring them, if I may so say, directly upon the retina of his mind.

This is what John means, when he says, "The light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not, [John 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.5);" and this is, in very explicit terms, declared by Paul to be a matter of universal experience, [1 Corinthians 2:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14-16). "The *natural*man (whoever he may be) receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him (being seen by him only in a distorted view): neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (and he lacks that spiritual perception, whereby alone he can truly apprehend them).

But he who is *spiritual*, judges all things (having a clear and just perception of them); yet he himself is judged of no man (for it were a downright absurdity for a blind man to sit in judgment on one who sees). For who (that is what merely natural man) has known the mind of the Lord, that he would instruct him (the spiritual man)? But we (we who are spiritual) have the mind of Christ" (and are, therefore, able to judge both ourselves and others).

But while, in order to guard against misapprehension, I speak thus, I well know that there are many, very many, in the midst of us, who can form the most accurate judgment of all we say, and who, if not in relation to every word, will yet, as a whole, set their seal to the truth of it; and, therefore, I hesitate not to lay before you what I truly believe to be in perfect accordance with God's revealed will, though on a subject so recondite and mysterious.

I am not, however, without a consciousness, and with deep grief I utter it, that, under a profession of bringing forth only scriptural truth—some give vent to the truest absurdities, talking about dreams and visions, and arrogating to themselves I know not what claims of supernatural endowments. But against all such delusions and conceits I would enter my most solemn protest.

The truth of God, though elevated above reason, is in perfect accordance with reason; and by its reasonableness as a part of divine revelation would I wish every word that I utter to be tried. I ask nothing more than this; that as God, of his own sovereign will and pleasure, bestows on some greater natural gifts than on others, so he may act in reference to spiritual gifts: and that, as all our natural faculties are called forth into action by things visible—our hopes and fears, and joys and sorrows, being excited by them according to the interest we have in them; so our spiritual faculties may be called into action by things invisible, even by all the wonders of redeeming love, according as the blessings of redemption are manifested to the soul, and our interest in them is made the one subject of our present and prospective happiness.

Having premised thus much, I now come to show, in the fourth and last place,

**IV. What the Holy Spirit will work in us when we are Christ's.** We must never forget that the Holy Spirit unites with the Lord Jesus Christ in the whole of his mediatorial office, though each sustains and executes in a more appropriate way that part which has been assigned to him by the Father: and, if any of us are "washed, and justified, and sanctified, it is in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, [1 Corinthians 6:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.11)." But it is the Spirit's office to which I must confine myself: and while I address myself to this arduous and momentous subject, may the Lord Jesus Christ himself "be with us," as he has promised, [Matthew 28:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 28.20), and "baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire, [Matthew 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 3.11)," to consume the dross that is within us, [Isaiah 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 4.4), and to kindle in our hearts an inextinguishable flame of love towards his blessed name!

The Holy Spirit then will perform in us the offices of a Teacher, a Sanctifier, and a Comforter.

***~~Let us view him first as a TEACHER.~~***

The young convert knows little beyond "the first principles of the oracles of God, [Hebrews 5:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.12)." He is like a person just landed on a newly-discovered country, the beauty and riches of which he has yet to learn. But the Holy Spirit of Christ will open things to us, even as the Lord Jesus himself did when on earth to his disciples, gradually, as we are able to bear them; and with increased knowledge, he will give us "senses proportionably exercised to discern good and evil, [Hebrews 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.14)," and thus will "lead us on to perfection, [Hebrews 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.1)."

The fundamental doctrine of salvation by faith is known by us when we first come to Christ. But there is much which as yet is very indistinctly seen.

For instance, the nature and difficulty of the *Christian warfare*is yet but very partially discovered. The deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart is but little known; (in fact, who but God can know it to its full extent, [Jeremiah 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.9).) "the deceitfulness of sin, [Hebrews 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 3.13)." also is by no means clearly discerned. As for "the devices of Satan, [2 Corinthians 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.11)," the young believer is still "ignorant of them" to a great extent; and of "the wiles" whereby that subtle adversary deludes the souls of men, he has scarcely any conception, [Ephesians 6:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.11). Little does he imagine what power that old serpent has to "beguile the minds of the simple, [Romans 16:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.18)," and "to corrupt them, even as he deceived our mother Eve, from the simplicity that is in Christ, [2 Corinthians 11:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.3)." Armor is provided for him against that great enemy of souls [Ephesians 6:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.13); but he knows not yet how to use it, so as to defeat him, who is but too justly called Apollyon, [Revelation 9:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 9.11)." He has in his hand "the word, which is the sword of the Spirit, [Ephesians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.17);" but he knows not how to use it with effect: "he is unskillful in the word of righteousness, [Hebrews 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.13)." It is not until after many conflicts that he learns, what are the parts on which he is most open to assault, what are the stratagems whereby that wily adversary most successfully ensnares him, and what are the means by which he is to ensure the victory over all his assailants. In the spiritual warfare, as in that which is temporal, experience can be gained only by active service. There is however this difference between them: in temporal warfare, proficiency is the result of human ingenuity; whereas, in the spiritual warfare, it is the Spirit of God alone who can inspire us with the knowledge whereby we are to vanquish the legions of spirits that are combined against us, [Ephesians 6:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.17-18).

But, further, the Holy Spirit will also discover to us the fullness and excellency of the Gospel salvation. The plan of salvation is, as I have already acknowledged, understood by the truest babe in Christ. But the excellency of it will be more and more unveiled to him, until, from the obscurity of the morning dawn, he attains the fuller light of the meridian sun; according as it is written by the prophet, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his goings forth are prepared as the morning, [Hosea 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 6.3);" and as Solomon also has assured us, "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day, [Proverbs 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 4.18)."

The young Christian knows little of that covenant to which all our salvation must ultimately be traced; the covenant entered into between the Father and the Son for the redemption of our fallen race.

The covenant, wherein *Christ*, on the one part, undertook to stand in our place and stead, and to endure, in his own person, the penalty which he had incurred.

The *Father*, on the other part, both gave unto him a chosen people, [John 17:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.2); [John 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.6); [John 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.9); [John 17:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.11-12); [John 17:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.24), and engaged to accept them as righteous, on account of what he would do and suffer for them.

"This covenant is ordered in all things, and sure:" and the blessings of it are all treasured up for us in Christ, our great head and representative, [Colossians 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.9), and are thus secured to us for ever: as it is written, "Our life is hid with Christ in God: and therefore, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory, [Colossians 3:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.3-4). These blessings, too, are to be received from him, [John 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.16). simply "through the exercise of faith, that thus they may be sure to all the seed, [Romans 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.16);" for no human being could ever have hoped to possess them, if they had been committed to any other depository, or if the attainment of them had been suspended on the strength and fidelity of man.

*To unfold these things to the soul is the Holy Spirit's office*. For this end he is given to us as "an unction that shall abide with us," and that shall, to a certain degree, by the clearness of his communications, supersede the necessity for human instruction, [1 John 2:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.27); and, being given to us for this end, he enables the believer gradually to dive more and more deeply into this mystery, which the human eye cannot penetrate, at least not so penetrate as to behold its excellency, [Ephesians 1:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17-18). These are among "the deep things of God, which the Spirit alone searches," even the things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, but which are revealed to the soul by the Spirit of God, [1 Corinthians 2:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.9-10), and can be known in no other way, 1 Corinthians 2:11-12.

True, these things are written plainly in the inspired volume, even as the figures are engraved with the utmost possible plainness on the sun-dial: but both in the one case, and in the other, are they written in vain, until light is given from Heaven to shine upon them: then only does the word perform its office in the one; and then only is the end answered for the illumination of the soul in the other. Until that takes place, "the natural man, however learned he is in other respects, will never discern aright the things of the Spirit of God: they will be no better than foolishness unto him."

The believer, thus taught of God, has a knowledge of the Deity, of which he had scarcely the slightest notion before. What astonishing views has he of the *wisdom*of God in devising *such a plan, whereby God's own justice might be duly satisfied, and his mercy flow down to man in perfect consistency with all his other attributes!*When he contemplates the *goodness*of God, thus exercised; the *holiness*of God, thus honored; and the *truth*of God, thus kept inviolate; and all the perfections of God, thus harmonizing and glorified—and all this for him; he is perfectly astounded; it seems too good to be true; it seems to him all as "a mere parable, [Ezekiel 20:49](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 20.49)."

But seeing how suited all this is to his necessities, and how sufficient for his wants, and that, in any other way than this, he could find no more ground of hope for himself than for the fallen angels—he is forced to believe it. He sees that it is revealed in the Bible as with a sun-beam, and established by evidence that admits not of the slightest doubt; and when he sees further, that *it has a transforming efficacy upon all who receive it*, he is constrained to receive it as the very truth of God, and to say, "Lord, to whom else shall we go? You, even you alone, have the words of eternal life;" and "we believe and are sure, that you are that Christ, the Son of the living God! [John 6:68-69](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.68-69)."

I merely give these things as samples of what the Holy Spirit will effect in the believing soul as a Teacher; for the same powerful agency is extended to every part of divine truth; and every part, also, of Christian experience, seeing that he is expressly promised to "guide us into all truth, [John 16:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.13)," so that, by his effectual teaching, "we may know all things, [1 John 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.20)."

**We will next consider his operations, under the office of a SANCTIFIER.**In this view we speak of him in our catechism, as "sanctifying the elect people of God." In fact, all that he does as a Teacher, is in order to his work as a Sanctifier.

Does he "reveal Christ in us," so as to give us brighter views of his person, and a more comprehensive knowledge of his work and offices? It is, that "we, beholding as in a looking-glass the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18)."

Does he further enable us to "comprehend the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know with progressive clearness and certainty the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge? it is, that we may be thereby "filled with all the fullness of God, [Ephesians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18-19)."

With increasing knowledge he gives an increase of spiritual perception; and with that perception, a spiritual appetite; and with that appetite, a spiritual attainment; and this continues to advance, until "the soul with all its powers is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ! [2 Corinthians 10:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.5)."

I think the whole process, though above the conception of the highest archangel, may, for all practical purposes, be brought down to the apprehension of a child.

Our blessed Lord compares it to the *wind*, which is mighty in operation, but visible only in its effects. "It blows when and where it wills, but we cannot tell either whence it comes, or where it goes, [John 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.8);" yet of its agency we have no doubt whatever. The truest child acknowledges it, while the wisest philosopher is unable adequately to explain it.

The *magnet*would furnish us with a similar illustration of this truth; for its influence, if not rendered visible by actual experience, would not be credited.

But there is another natural process which will give us a fuller, and, perhaps I may say, a more distinct, apprehension of this mysterious subject. A *river*flowing from its source in one current to the ocean, may serve to show us the natural man, with all his faculties, both of body and mind, departing from God, and proceeding with fatal indifference and perseverance, until he is finally lost in that abyss from whence there is no return. But, within a certain distance from the sea, we may behold that same river arrested in its course by the tide, and returning with equal rapidity towards its fountain-head: and in that we may behold the sinner returning to his God.

Even from the partial back-currents which are occasioned by local obstacles, we may behold the parallel yet more strikingly illustrated: for in either case, these may serve to show, that, as in man's departure from God there are some risings of compunction, and some little, though ineffectual, restraints, from the remonstrances of an accusing conscience; so, in the believer's return to God, there are some remnants of corruption, which betray a lack of that completeness of soul, which he will enjoy in the eternal world. But the point particularly to be noticed is: How is this change effected? How is it effected in the river? Is it through the power and instrumentality of man? No! it is by the invisible, but powerful, attraction of the moon. The operation of the moon is not seen but in its effects: yet it is not on that account denied: the effects are unquestionable; nor can they reasonably be traced to any other cause; at all events they cannot in the smallest possible degree be ascribed to man.

And how is the change effected upon the souls of men? It is the Holy Spirit who operates upon them to bring them back to God. True, his operations are not seen, except in the *effects*produced by them: but those effects infinitely exceed all human power: and in the unerring word of God they are ascribed to the Holy Spirit, whose peculiar office it is, not only to *regenerate*us at first, but progressively to change us into the Divine image, and to render us fit for our heavenly inheritance, [Titus 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.3); [Titus 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.5).

That there are defects in the best of men is certain; but that only makes the analogy more complete. There are, and will be, intervening obstacles, that will, at some times, and under peculiar circumstances, interfere with the believer's progress, [Romans 7:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.18-19); but these do not interrupt his general course, or give any just cause for questioning the influence under which he moves, [Romans 7:21-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.21-24). His habitual "walk is, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1); [Romans 8:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.5)."

We have said, that the work is *progressive*. He goes from grace to grace, [2 Peter 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.18), from victory to victory, "growing up into Christ in all things, until he arrives at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [Ephesians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.7); [Ephesians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.13)."

At first he is represented in the Scriptures as "a child, then as a young man, and then as a father, [1 John 2:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.12-14);" and the work in his soul is compared to the corn, which appears first in "the blade, then in the ear, and then as the full corn in the ear, [Mark 4:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 4.28)."

These very comparisons show that the believer is not at first all that he will be at a future period: his heart will be more and more weaned from earthly things, and with more and more intensity be fixed on things above, until he is "changed into the image of his God in righteousness and true holiness, [Ephesians 4:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.24)." This advance towards maturity will be more or less visible to all around him. There will be in him more solidity, more uniformity, more consistency. His principles will be more and more commended to all around him by their efficacy to "beautify his soul, [Psalm 149:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 149.4)," and to adorn his life, [1 Peter 3:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.3-4). In a word, he will be renewed, not in his mind only, but "in the spirit of his mind, [Ephesians 4:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.23)," and will become "an epistle of Christ known and read of all men," an epistle not "written by any human hand, but by the Spirit of the living God! [2 Corinthians 3:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.2-3)." He will be in himself, and will constrain all who know him to acknowledge that he is, what the Scriptures emphatically call, "A man of God, [2 Timothy 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.17)."

And what is the result of all this?

**What, but that in and by the whole of this work, the Holy Spirit performs the office of a COMFORTER?**Under this character, "the world knows him not, neither can receive him: but believers do know him; for he dwells with them, and shall be in them, [John 14:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.16-17)." throughout the whole of their earthly pilgrimage. Even at their first coming to Christ, the Holy Spirit, in some measure, discharges this office, speaking peace to their troubled consciences, and enabling them to rejoice in their unseen, but beloved Savior, [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.8).

This was eminently conspicuous on the day of Pentecost, when the whole multitude of believers who had just before been filled with terror, "ate their bread with gladness and singleness of heart, blessing and praising God, [Acts 2:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.46)."

*Through the whole course of their future life, he carries on this work, revealing Christ more and more clearly to them, and applying the promises with sweet assurance to their souls.*Hence the word so applied is said to "work by the power of the Spirit of God, [Romans 15:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.19)," and to "come to men, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, 1 Thessalonians 1:5;" and the Holy Spirit himself is called "the Holy Spirit of promise, [Ephesians 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.13)," because in this way he makes use of the promises for their good.

Thus he performs the office of a Comforter towards Christ's redeemed people: he gives them near "access to God" in prayer, [Ephesians 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.18); and in their supplications "helps their infirmities, [Romans 8:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.26) and Jude, verse 20," and "makes intercession for them, and in them, according to the will of God, [Romans 8:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.27)." He is in them a Spirit of adoption, enabling them to go to God with confidence, crying, Abba, Father! [Romans 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.15); and, "shedding abroad God's love in their hearts, [Romans 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.5)," he "witnesses with their spirits, that they are children of God [Romans 8:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.16)."

In this way, also, he establishes them in Christ, [2 Corinthians 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.21), and "seals them unto the day of redemption, [2 Corinthians 1:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.22) with [Ephesians 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17)," and "is within them a pledge of their heavenly inheritance, [Ephesians 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.14)." "A pledge" is a part of a payment, and a pledge of the remainder; and such is the Holy Spirit in the believer's soul, giving him already, in possession, a measure of the heavenly felicity, and assuring to him, in due season, the full and everlasting possession of it. In a season of affliction especially, do the communications of his grace abound. We read of those who "received the word with much affliction, and joy of the Holy Spirit, [1 Thessalonians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 1.6);" and "in proportion as any person's afflictions abound, the Holy Spirit will make his consolations to abound" with still greater and more transcendent efficacy, 2 Corinthians 1:5.

It is worthy, however, of observation, that the comforts which he administers at an earlier, and at a more advanced period—are, for the most part, widely different; the one being rather of a tumultuous nature, the other more serene; the one more transient, the other more abiding; the one elevating the spirits of a man on account of the good that has accrued to him; the other humbling and abasing his soul, on account of his great unworthiness; the one is a fire recently kindled, in which there is a considerable mixture of flame and smoke, the other like a fire that has become bright and solid, and burns with an unobtrusive, but mighty, efficacy.

In confirmation of what I have said, I need only add, that this is the very description which God himself has given us of his kingdom: that it "consists not in externals of any kind, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, [Romans 14:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.17)."

And now, will anyone say that these blessings were peculiar to the apostolic age, and are not to be expected by us? What then is the meaning of that interrogation, which Paul addressed to the whole Corinthian Church, "Don't you know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17." And, again, "Don't you know that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates, [2 Corinthians 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.5)."

Hence it is evident, that this is a truth of which we must not only have the actual experience, but a consciousness also, that it is realized in us: and the man who questions it as a matter of Christian experience, has yet to learn the very first principles of the Christian faith: for even to the murderers of our Lord did Peter on the day of Pentecost announce, that this blessing would be theirs; and that too even to their latest posterity: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit: for the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call, [Acts 2:38-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.38-39)."

In fact, this is the promise which was originally made to Abraham for himself and all his believing posterity, whether of the Jewish or Gentile world, even "the promise of the Spirit through faith, [Galatians 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.14)."

This objection therefore being set aside, I confidently ask whether I have carried any one of these matters to excess, either requiring more than the Scriptures require, or promising more than the Scriptures promise? I can truly say, that I have exercised all possible caution on this head. I know and lament, that there are crude and enthusiastic conceits entertained by some, who would have us believe that they are actuated by certain divine impulses, irrespective of the word as the medium of conveying them, and in despite of the vanity and folly which they themselves betray as their invariable result. But I trust, that not one word that I have spoken can be thought to have countenanced any such conceits as these.

***~~The written word is the medium by which the Spirit works, and the standard by which his agency must be tried; and, if his operations do not produce holiness, as well as light and comfort, they are no better than a delusion, a desperate and a fatal delusion.~~***

The offices of the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from each other. He is a Teacher, a Sanctifier, and a Comforter: and I advisedly place the office of a Sanctifier between the other two, because it is equally connected both with that which precedes, and with that which follows; with that which precedes, as the end for which divine teaching is administered, and with that which follows, as that without which no true comfort can possibly exist.

I entreat, then, that you will all look for the Holy Spirit to impart to you these blessings: and, I declare before God, that no one of you will ever behold the face of God in peace, if you do not both desire and obtain the Holy Spirit for these ends. The word of God is immutable; "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

If any be disposed to deride the sacred influences of the Spirit, imputing to Satan, as it were, what is wrought by the Holy Spirit, let them beware of the *sin against the Holy Spirit*; for they tread close upon it, if they do not actually commit it. I would have them remember, that, in proportion to the light against which they offend, and the malignity with which they utter their scoffs, they approach this fatal sin: and, if once they do commit it, our blessed Lord declares that "they shall never have forgiveness, either in this world, or in the world to come; and that they are therefore in danger of eternal damnation! [Matthew 12:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.32), and [Mark 3:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 3.28-29)."

On the other hand, if any have experienced the workings of the Holy Spirit to bring them to Christ, let them watch and pray against temptation and sin of every kind, lest by any open or secret declension from the ways of God, they "*grieve*, [Ephesians 4:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.30)." and "*vex*the Holy Spirit, [Isaiah 63:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.10)," and *quench* his sacred motions, [1 Thessalonians 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.19), and thus "their last end become worse than their beginning, [2 Peter 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.20)."

But "I hope better things of this assembly, though I thus speak, [Hebrews 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.9)." Scoffers do not abound at this day as once they did. The truths of the Gospel are better understood, and its mysteries are more justly appreciated: and, provided only the deep things of God be stated with modesty and sobriety, they find a favorable acceptance now, where once, perhaps, they would only have provoked a smile. On that head, therefore, I feel no occasion to dwell.

But this very circumstance, which renders a profession of piety more easy, makes the danger of departing from it more imminent; since, as in the case of the stony-ground hearers, that which is hastily received, is but too often as hastily relinquished, [Matthew 12:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.20-21). To every one of you then I say, "Hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown, [Revelation 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.11);" or rather, look to the Lord Jesus Christ for more enlarged "supplies of his Spirit, [Philippians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.19);" for "He has received this gift for men, even for the most rebellious, [Psalm 68:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 68.18). It is our privilege, not only to "have the Spirit," but to "be filled with the Spirit, [Ephesians 5:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.18)." Many of you, I would hope, "have already received the first-fruits of the Spirit, [Romans 8:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.23);" but be not satisfied with these. "Christ came, not only that you might have life, but that you might have it more abundantly! [John 10:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.10)." He has promised to "pour floods upon those who are thirsty, [Isaiah 44:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.3)." Yes, he would have you to "live in the Spirit, [Galatians 5:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.25)," and "walk in the Spirit, [Galatians 5:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.25)," and "purify your souls by the Spirit, [1 Peter 1:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.22)," and "abound in hope through the Spirit, [Romans 15:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.13);" and be filled with "joy in the Holy Spirit, [Acts 13:52](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.52)."

See to it, then, that you avail yourselves of these immense advantages; and beg of God to "pour out his Spirit more and more abundantly upon you through Jesus Christ, [Titus 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.6)," that, being "led in all things by the Spirit, you may be, and give decisive evidence that you are, the children of God, [Romans 8:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.14)." And may "the Holy Spirit be so richly poured out upon us from on high, that this our wilderness may become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be so luxuriant as to be counted for a forest, [Isaiah 32:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.15)."

***~~#1867~~***

***~~GOD'S DWELLING IN US IS A MOTIVE TO HOLINESS~~***

***~~[Romans 8:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.10-12).~~***

"But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it."

IN the Scriptures, *privilege*and *duty*are inseparably connected. By this means we are kept at an equal distance from presumptuous confidence and painful servility; and the best feelings of the soul are rendered subservient to our eternal welfare. This observation is verified, as in many other passages, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1) and [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20).

We propose to consider,

***~~I. The grounds of the conclusion—~~***

***~~Believers have God himself dwelling in them—~~***

God is here represented as a Triune God:

The *Father*raised Christ.

*Christ*dwells in all believers at the same instant.

And the *Holy Spirit*will raise the saints at the last day.

Can any one of these be less than God? Their *distinction*and *equality*may be further proved from [Matthew 28:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 28.19). It is observable also that in verse 9, the Spirit of Christ is called the Spirit of God; and he dwells in all his believing people, [2 Corinthians 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.16). [1 John 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.3) and [2 Corinthians 13:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.14).

Believers do not indeed pretend to distinguish the agency of one of these divine persons from that of another (for indeed no one of these persons acts separately from the others) but they exercise:

faith in the *Father*, as their protector and governor;

faith in the *Son*, as their mediator and advocate;

and faith in the *Spirit*, as their guide and comforter.

This is a most inestimable privilege to them, far greater than that mentioned in [1 Kings 8:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 8.27).

***~~By means of this they enjoy the richest blessings—~~***

Their *souls*are quickened from their death in trespasses and sins, and, by a new principle of life infused into them, are enabled to live unto God: and this "life they have because of Christ's righteousness" wrought out for them, and imputed to them.

Their *bodies*also, though doomed to "death, as the penalty of sin," "will be raised again by that very Spirit who now dwells in them:" and these shall participate with the soul the glory and felicity of the heavenly world.

Such being the premises from which the conclusion is drawn, we proceed to consider,

***~~II. The conclusion itself—~~***

***~~We certainly are "debtors to the flesh" to a certain degree—~~***

The flesh cannot exist without care and labor; and whatever is necessary for the preservation of life, or the restoration of our health, it is our bounden duty to do.

***~~But we are not debtors to obey its dictates—~~***

*To "live after" the flesh, must import a consulting of its ease, a complying with its solicitations, a devoting of ourselves to its interests*: to this extent we certainly are not debtors to the flesh.

***~~This may plainly be concluded, as from many other topics, so especially from the foregoing statement—~~***

***~~The privileges given to us strongly prohibit a carnal life. Can the Triune God, who dwells in us, be pleased with our living after the flesh? Is not the very intent of his mercies to bring us rather to live after the Spirit?~~***

The mercies too which we enjoy by means of those privileges, teach us the same divine lesson. The quickening of our spirit would lead us to "mind the things of the Spirit." And the prospect of endless felicity and glory for the body would keep us from seeking its present gratifications to the destruction of its eternal interests. To whoever we are debtors, we are not (in this extent at least) debtors to the flesh.

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How mistaken are the people of the world in their course of life!—~~***

The generality live as if they had nothing to do but to consult the flesh; and when exhorted to mind the concerns of their souls, reply immediately, "I must attend to the interests of my body." But in thus opposing the declaration in the text, they will ruin their bodies as well as their souls for ever.

***~~2. How unmindful are even Christians of their duty and interest!—~~***

The best of men find it difficult to "keep under their bodies;" and there are seasons when they are apt to yield to sloth or sensual indulgence: but let all remember their obligations and professions, and labor rather to pay what they owe to the Spirit.

***~~#1868~~***

***~~MORTIFICATION OF SIN~~***

***~~[Romans 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.13).~~***

"If you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live."

IT is of infinite importance to know our state as it is before God, and to ascertain on scriptural grounds, what our condition will be in the eternal world. Numberless are the passages of God's word which will afford us the desired information; but there is not in the whole inspired volume one declaration more explicit than that before us. It presents to our view two momentous truths, which, as they admit not of any clearer division or arrangement, we shall consider in their order.

***~~I. A carnal life will terminate in everlasting misery—~~***

***~~To "live after the flesh" is to make the gratifying of our corrupt nature the great scope and end of our lives—~~***

The "flesh" does not relate merely to the body, but to the whole of our corrupt nature. It is used to signify that innate principle of sin which governs the unregenerate, and continually fights against the spiritual principle in those that are regenerate, [John 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.6). [Galatians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.17). And its fruits comprehend the actings of the mind, no less than those of the body, [Galatians 5:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.19-20).

To "live after" this corrupt principle, is, to be governed by it in all our deliberations and pursuits. It signifies nothing what may be the immediate path which we choose for ourselves, provided our main object be to gratify ourselves. One may seek pleasure, another riches, another honor, another the knowledge of arts and sciences; but if they have no higher end of life than to attain these things, they all equally live after the flesh! Compare verse 5 with [Philippians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.19).

***~~The consequence of such a life will be eternal death—~~***

The death mentioned in the text cannot relate to the mere death of the body, because that must be experienced by the spiritual, no less than by the carnal man. It must import that death of the soul, which is emphatically called the second death, [Revelation 20:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 20.14). Nor can there be a doubt but that this will be the fruit and consequence of a carnal life. And shall this be thought a hard saying? Surely not, for such a sentence is only a repetition of what the person has before passed upon himself: he has practically said to God, "Depart from me; I desire not the knowledge of your ways! [Job 21:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 21.14-15), I will be a God to myself [Psalm 12:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 12.4), and make myself happy in my own way."

God replies to him, "You would not have me; and you shall not have me; depart from me for evermore! Compare [Psalm 81:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 81.11) with [Matthew 25:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.41)." The very state in which they lived, was a state of spiritual death, verse 6; no wonder therefore that it terminates in everlasting death.

As a counterpoise to the apparent severity of this truth, the Apostle adds, that,

***~~II. A life of mortification and self-denial shall terminate in everlasting happiness—~~***

***~~To mortify our corrupt nature ought to be the continual aim of our lives—~~***

The "deeds of the body" are of the same import with "the flesh" in the preceding clause. Our corrupt nature is often represented as a body, because it has many parts or members whereby it acts, [Romans 7:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.24), [Colossians 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.11). This we would endeavor to mortify in its outward actings, and in its inmost motions. As it consists principally in *making self our idol*, we must watch against it, and labor to bring it into subjection, that God in all things may be glorified by us. If we search our own hearts, we shall see a continual proneness to self-seeking, self-pleasing, and self-dependence. But instead of gratifying this propensity, we should make God's will the rule, and his honor the end, of our actions. We must therefore maintain a warfare against it, and resist it manfully, until it is subdued! [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.27).

***~~This however cannot be done effectually but by the assistance of the Holy Spirit—~~***

We can walk after the flesh without any difficulty: it is natural to us, as it is to a stone to roll down a precipice. But to *mortify*the flesh is impossible to man: it can be effected only by the mighty working of that power which raised Christ himself from the dead, [Ephesians 1:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.19-20) and [1 Peter 1:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.22) with the text; yes, *the inclination, as well as the ability, to mortify it is the gift of God*, [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.13). This however is no excuse for our subjection to the flesh, since the Holy Spirit's empowerment shall be given to all who ask, [Luke 11:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.13).

***~~The consequence of successfully combating the flesh shall be unspeakably blessed—~~***

*If eternal death be the fruit of self-indulgence, then eternal life shall be the fruit of self-denial.* There is this difference indeed; that whereas the former is the wages due to sin, the latter is the gift of God through Christ, [Romans 6:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.23). We may well wonder at this marvelous grace of God, who has annexed such glorious consequences to our poor and feeble endeavors. But he delights in mercy, and will not allow us to exert ourselves in vain.

***~~By way of improvement we shall add a word,~~***

***~~1. Of reproof—~~***

Suppose it had been written, "If you live after the flesh, you shall go to Heaven;" could the generality take any surer way to obtain the blessing, than that which they now pursue? And whence is it that, in direct opposition to the word of God, they can go on so confidently and so securely? The reason is, that Satan suggests to them, as he did to our first parents, "You shall not surely die!" But shall we believe Satan in opposition to God? Did not the crediting of Satan ruin the whole world? and will it not eventually ruin us also?

Be it known then that *we have but one alternative: mortification, or damnation. Either sin must be our enemy, or God will*. If therefore we would not perish for ever, let us immediately begin, in dependence on God's Spirit, to "mortify our earthly members, [Colossians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.5);" for it is an eternal truth, that, "if we live after the flesh, we shall die."

***~~2. Of caution—~~***

We are in great danger of mistaking the nature and extent of that mortification which is required of us in the text. We may be restrained from sin by the influence of education, as Joash, [2 Chronicles 24:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 24.2); or put away many sins, as Herod, [Mark 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 6.17); [Mark 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 6.20); [Mark 6:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 6.27); or set ourselves for a time against our besetting sin, as Judas under the terrors of a guilty conscience,. [Matthew 27:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 27.3-4); (as a mariner may cast all his goods out of his ship to save the vessel, without any aversion to the goods themselves). Or we may exchange our sins: prodigality for avarice, sensuality for self-righteousness, or the love of vanity for sloth and indifference.

But all this falls very far short of our duty: we must not be lopping off *branches*, but must lay our axe to the *root*. The besetting sin, though dear as a right eye, or needful as a right hand must he cut off; at least, its *dominion*must be destroyed, and its *motions*be incessantly resisted, [Mark 9:43-48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 9.43-48).

In short, to root out sin, and to serve, honor, and enjoy God must be our daily business, our unintermitted employment. Nor must we ever think that we belong to Christ, until we have the testimony of our conscience, that we are thus crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, [Galatians 5:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.24).

***~~3. Of encouragement—~~***

As we have ruined ourselves, God might well leave us to restore ourselves: and then indeed would our condition be most pitiable. But he graciously offers us the assistance of his Spirit; so that none need despair. None need to decline the work of mortification for lack of strength to accomplish it; seeing that "the grace of Christ is sufficient for us," and through the aids of his Spirit we can do all things, [Galatians 5:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.16) and [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13). Yes, "his strength shall be perfected in our weakness."

Let every one then address himself to the work: "Have not I commanded you? says the Lord: be strong, therefore, and of a good courage; for the Lord your God is with you! [Joshua 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 1.9)," "Be strong, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded! [2 Chronicles 15:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 15.7)."

***~~#1869~~***

***~~THE LEADINGS OF THE SPIRIT~~***

***~~[Romans 8:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.14).~~***

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

THOUGH Christ's obedience unto death is the only *meritorious ground*of our salvation—yet it is certain that Heaven is held forth to us as a prize which we are to attain by running, and as "a recompense of reward" which we are to gain by labor. Many shrink back at this idea, on account of the vast disproportion between the work and the reward: and well they may shrink back, if nothing is taken into the consideration but the intrinsic excellence of our works. But there is one point of view in which the disproportion will not appear so great, or perhaps will altogether vanish. We know that a poor man thinks himself liberally paid for his labor, if, after toiling a whole week, he receive a pound or two for his trouble: but the child of a monarch would account himself very ill rewarded for such work, though he would be paid at a much higher rate.

It is thus with respect to the point before us: If we are considered as men, the reward of eternal glory infinitely exceeds the labor of a few years of obedience: but, if we are considered as children of the living God, and as performing our works through the agency of his Spirit, the recompense of Heaven is no more than what is suited to our rank and dignity. This seems to be the idea of the Apostle in the text: he has observed, that "if through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live:" but, lest we would think it incredible that such a reward would follow a life of mortification, he assigns the reason of it; "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;" and consequently, they may expect a reward suited to their high character, and to the dignity of the Spirit who works in them.

In discoursing on these words, we shall show,

***~~I. Who they are that are led by the Spirit—~~***

It is obvious and undeniable that all are not led by the Spirit; and indeed the very text intimates that their number is limited to a part only of mankind. To distinguish precisely who these are, is a matter of some difficulty: for though we may easily show, what the Spirit will lead us from, or what he will lead us to, we shall speak to no purpose, unless we take such discriminating marks as are found in none but true Christians. To make the matter as clear as possible,

***~~1. We will propose some marks, which, though found in all true Christians, are insufficient to distinguish them—~~***

*A person is not necessarily led by the Spirit, because he follows the dictates of his natural conscience*. Every true Christian consults his conscience, and obeys its voice—but others may do so as well as he. Cornelius was evidently a conscientious man; but did not become a Christian until Peter set before him "words, whereby he and all his household would be saved, [Acts 11:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 11.14)." If that instance be thought doubtful we will adduce two others that admit of no doubt. The Rich Youth in the Gospel thought he had "kept all the commandments from his earliest youth:" and Paul, while he was a Jew, "had walked before God in all good conscience," and had been, "touching the righteousness of the law, blameless." But neither the one nor the other of these was led by the Spirit: the one renounced Christ rather than his riches, [Matthew 19:20-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 19.20-22); and the other was converted only by a miraculous interposition of the Lord Jesus, [Acts 9:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.1-6). From hence it is evident that *men may be honest, and upright, and conscientious, and yet have no just reason to conclude themselves children of God.*

Again, *a person is not necessarily led by the Spirit because he has experienced a change in his views and affections.* Doubtless, every Christian has experienced such a change: but the like is said of "the stony-ground hearers;" who not only received the word so as to inform their understanding, but so as to kindle in their hearts a lively joy, [Matthew 13:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.20). Though therefore we may be moved under a sermon, and find as much pleasure in it as Ezekiel's hearers, [Ezekiel 33:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.32)—yet this is no satisfactory evidence of our conversion to God.

Further,*a person is not necessarily led by the Spirit, because he makes an open profession of religion*. For though every true Christian will confess Christ openly—yet "the thorny-ground hearers" also do the same; and it is worthy of notice, that they are represented as never relinquishing their profession, [Matthew 13:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.22). Though therefore we may openly join ourselves to the Lord's people, and be numbered among them by others, and bear reproach for our attachment to them, and bring forth fruit which resembles theirs—yet all this will be no decisive proof that we are led by the Spirit, or that we have any part in the Christian's salvation.

***~~2. We will propose some marks which will distinguish the true Christian from every other person under Heaven—~~***

We may be sure that we are led by the Spirit, *if we come daily to Christ as perishing sinners*. No formalist or hypocrite can do this: he may talk about it, but he cannot do it: he has not that brokenness of heart, that contrition, that sense of his extreme need of mercy, which are necessary to bring him thus to Christ. There is in all unconverted persons an insuperable reluctance to come to him in such a humiliating way, a reluctance that nothing but an Almighty power can overcome. Our Lord himself says, "No man *can*come unto me, unless the Father, who has sent me, draw him [John 6:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.44)." If therefore we are daily coming to Christ with self-loathing and self-abhorrence, and building all our hopes of salvation on the merit of his blood, we can affirm, on the testimony of Christ himself, that we are of those who are under the leadings of his Spirit.

Another mark whereby this point may be ascertained, is *our being willing to receive Christ as our Lord and Governor*. The unregenerate, however desirous of being saved from misery, cannot be prevailed on cordially to submit to the yoke of Christ. The declaration of Paul is, that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit, [1 Corinthians 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.3)." By this expression we must understand, not an incapacity to utter these words, but an incapacity to utter them cordially in reference to oneself. If therefore we be enabled cheerfully to sacrifice our own will, and if we seek sincerely to have "the very thoughts of our hearts brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," we have another indisputable evidence that we are under the Spirit's influence and guidance.

A still further mark, which is also decisive on the point, is, *our mortifying of all sin without reserve*. The most specious hypocrite in the universe has some secret lust which he will not part with, and which he cannot, by any power of his own, subdue. "It is through the Spirit alone that we can mortify the deeds of the body, verse 13." If, then, there be no sin which we plead for; no sin, though dear as a right eye, or useful as a right hand, which we are not watching and laboring to destroy; it is evident, beyond all controversy, that we are led and strengthened by the Spirit of God.

This point being ascertained, we proceed to notice,

***~~II. The glorious state to which they are exalted—~~***

It is almost incredible that sinners, like us, would ever become children of the Most High God; yet is it certain, that all who are led by the Spirit of God, are exalted to this state—

***~~1. They are brought into the relation of God's children—~~***

Once they were "children of wrath," and "children of the wicked one:" but now they are *adopted*into God's family, and numbered among his children. Nor is it by adoption only that they stand thus related to him, but by *regeneration*also: for they are "begotten of God, even by the incorruptible seed, the word of God," and are made "partakers of a divine nature." Once they regarded God only as a Governor and a Judge; but now they have "a spirit of adoption given to them, whereby they can call him, "*Abba, Father*!" What an unspeakable honor is this! If David thought it "no light matter to be called the son-in-law of such a king" as Saul, what is it to be called the sons of the Most High God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords!

***~~2. They enjoy all the privileges of God's children—~~***

What are the privileges which are annexed to that relation among men? Think of them; comprehend them all; and they will fall infinitely short of those which it is your happiness to enjoy, both in this world, and in the world to come.

In this world you have every temporal blessing secured to you, to the utmost extent of your necessities, by the express promise of your heavenly Father. The children of men may say, of their respective possessions, this estate, or that kingdom, is mine. But of the children of God it may be said, "All things are yours." As far as it can conduce to your real happiness, the whole world is yours, yes, all things, whether present or future! [1 Corinthians 3:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.21-23).

As for *spiritual*blessings, there is nothing which the Lord Jesus Christ himself enjoyed when on earth, that is not made over to you also. You may have constant access to your Father's presence; you may ask of him whatever you will; you shall have his continual guidance in difficulties, support in trials, and consolation in troubles. Everything shall be ordered and over-ruled for your good; and you shall be carried on through all your destined labors, until you can say, "It is finished!" Of none but God's children can this be said; but of them it may be said without one single exception.

You may carry your views yet farther, even to the world to come; and there also shall your happiness extend. There is reserved for all the Lord's children "an inheritance, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and never-fading." If we are children, then are we heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ! Think then of all that God the Father has in Heaven to bestow; think of all that the Lord Jesus Christ, as your living Head, now enjoys there; and you will then have some faint idea of the inheritance reserved for you.

Among men, if an eldest son would inherit all his father's property, the rest of the family would be unprovided for. But in Heaven it is not so: every one has all that he could have, though there would be none but himself to possess the inheritance. Even here every man has all the light of the sun, notwithstanding millions of his fellow-creatures enjoy it together with him: and in like manner*in Heaven, all the glory and felicity of it is the portion of every saint around the throne of God*.

Are you then really under the leadings of the Holy Spirit? Rejoice and adore your God, who has called you into so near a relation to him, and invested you with honors higher than even the highest archangel is privileged to possess.

***~~From this subject we may further learn,~~***

***~~I. The importance of discovering by what spirit we are led—~~***

Many are not led by the Spirit of God, but by the spirit of the world; which, as Paul tells us [1 Corinthians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.12), and as experience too fatally proves, is contrary to the Spirit of God in all its actings. What spirit, I would ask, is that which leads the young into all manner of pleasure and gaiety; and causes those of middle age to be so immersed in cares, as scarcely to leave them a single hour to serve God? What spirit is that which even in advanced life engages the thoughts and affections still on the side of the world, when time has worn away almost all capacity to enjoy it? Yet this is the spirit by which the generality are actuated to their dying hour.

But even where religion appears to occupy the mind, many, alas! are led only by their own spirit. The very manner in which they speak and act shows, that pride and conceit and vanity are the predominant dispositions of their hearts. They have a zeal perhaps for some favorite tenets, or for their own particular party; but they lack the humility, the meekness, and the love which are the distinguishing features of all who are born of God.

It is not easy for persons to discern what spirit they themselves are of, even when all around them see how awfully they are deluded. But it concerns us all to examine carefully our own hearts and ways, that we may not deceive our own souls: for whatever we may imagine, *they alone are children of God, who bear the image of their Father*: and *those who fulfill the will of Satan, are, as God himself testifies, the children of the wicked one!*[John 8:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.44) and [1 John 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.10).

Surely we would guard against so fatal a delusion as this, lest, when we enter into the eternal world, expecting to behold the face of our God in peace—we meet only an accusing God, and an avenging Judge!

***~~2. The importance of honoring God whose motions we profess to follow—~~***

In professing to be led by the Spirit of God, you claim, of course, the honor of being the children of God. And if you claim this honor, O think what manner of conduct yours would be; how holy, how spiritual, how heavenly! It would not be thought sufficient to maintain what may be called a blameless conduct; you should shine as lights in the midst of a dark world, [Philippians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15-16), and "walk worthy of him who has called you to his kingdom and glory!"

Would you see the particulars wherein such conduct consists? read it in that direction which Paul gives to the Colossian Church: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity, [Colossians 3:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.12-14)." Here is living Christianity: this is to walk as Christ walked: and by this shall all men know that you are the disciples of Christ, "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."

***~~#1870~~***

***~~THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE AND THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION~~***

***~~[Romans 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.15).~~***

"You have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father!"*

OUR blessed Lord in his last discourse with his disciples, promised to send down from Heaven the Holy Spirit, who would "convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." And accordingly, on the day of Pentecost he did send down the Holy Spirit, who instantly wrought in the most powerful manner on the minds of thousands, filling them with the deepest convictions, and with the richest consolations. From that time the Holy Spirit has continued so to work on the minds of men: in some as a Spirit of bondage, and in others as a Spirit of adoption. The nature of the Holy Spirit's operations is the same in both cases; their use and tendency being to bring men to God: the difference which is found in the effects, is occasioned by the state of the persons on whom the Spirit works: in those whose minds are yet blinded by Satan, and enslaved by sin—he produces only bondage and fear; but those who are deeply penitent, and sincerely desirous of fulfilling the word of God, he introduces into a state of light and liberty and joy.

Corresponding with these different states of men was the difference between the Jewish and the Christian dispensations; the one of which was intended to introduce the other: and it was good, as far as it answered that end: but, as an ultimate state to rest in, it was bad: it consisted only of "weak and beggarly elements," and imposed an insupportable yoke, from which it is our happy privilege to be released. It is in reference to that dispensation chiefly that the Apostle uses the word "again;" because the Jewish converts at Rome had, previous to their embracing of Christianity, groaned under that yoke: but the others also, in their heathen state, had experienced a bondage not very dissimilar; and therefore the same expression may not improperly be applied to them also.

That we may have a distinct view of the whole of the Spirit's operations, we shall consider them,

***~~I. In reference to the dispensation under which we live—~~***

The Christian dispensation, as contrasted with the Jewish, is called "The ministration of the Spirit, [2 Corinthians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.8)," because under that dispensation the Spirit is poured forth far more abundantly than before.

***~~The Jewish economy tended only to bondage—~~***

The terrific manner in which the law was given, generated nothing but fear in all who heard it. Even Moses himself said on the occasion, "I exceedingly fear and quake." And the strict prohibition to all the people not so much as to touch the border of the mount, clearly showed to them that it was not a dispensation whereby they were ever to obtain a near access to God.

The two tables of the law, which were then given to Moses, were so holy, that though in the letter they might be observed, in the spirit they could not be kept by any child of man: and yet they were enforced with the most solemn sanctions, the smallest violation of any one command subjecting the offender to death, even eternal death. What but fear could result from such a dispensation as this?

The very *sacrifices*prescribed for the relief of those consciences which were oppressed with guilt, tended, in fact, to confirm, rather than relieve, the bondage of their minds. For how could they imagine that "the blood of bulls and of goats would take away sin?" Hence "the offerers were never made perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;" and the annual repetition of the same sacrifices confirmed their apprehensions, that their sins, so imperfectly atoned for, were not effectually removed. The sacrifices were to them only "a remembrance of sins from year to year, [Hebrews 10:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.1-4)."

Moreover, the people in their own persons could not approach unto their God: they must deliver their offerings to the priests and Levites. Nay, not even the priests could enter within the veil, nor even the high-priest himself, except on one day in the year, and then only in the precise manner that was prescribed to him. In all this, the Holy Spirit, who even under that dispensation was not altogether withheld from men, "signified to the Jewish nation that the way into the holy of holies was not yet manifested, [Hebrews 9:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.6-8)."

Even the *promises*that were given for their encouragement were, for the most part, only such as were calculated to work upon an earthly mind, and in no respect to bring them to a state of peace and joy. Hence, except those few favored saints who had an insight into the Gospel, and were enabled to look through the *shadows*of the law, to Christ as the *substance*of them—all were in bondage, serving God from fear, rather than from love; and rendering to him rather the reluctant services of the body, than the willing devotion of the soul.

***~~The Christian dispensation, on the contrary, tends to produce in us a happy childlike disposition—~~***

The new covenant, which it holds forth to us, offers life and salvation on far different terms than were prescribed by the old covenant. The old covenant said, "Do this and live!" The new covenant says, "Believe and be saved! [Romans 10:5-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.5-9)." The Gospel reveals unto us a sacrifice, that is, "Christ's sin-atoning sacrifice;" and offers us a Savior, who is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him."

Under this dispensation every one is privileged to enjoy the most intimate access to God, to "come with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, to draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having his heart altogether sprinkled and purged from an evil conscience, [Hebrews 10:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.19); [Hebrews 10:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.22)." Further, these rich blessings are revealed to us as the fruits of God's everlasting love, no less than as the purchase of the Redeemer's blood; and to the blessings of time are added all the glory and felicity of Heaven, as the assured portion of all God's chosen people!

But, besides this clearer revelation of God's grace and mercy, there is a manifestation of it made to the souls of the faithful by the Spirit of God, who "sheds abroad in their hearts the love of God" the Father, and "takes of the things that are Christ's to show unto them," and by his own sanctifying operations "delivers them from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

***~~With this contrasted view of the two dispensations agree the express declarations of God himself—~~***

The nature of the two dispensations is thus distinctly marked by a very striking allegory; in which the Spirit generated in those who were under them is contrasted by that of a *slave*and a *child*, [Galatians 4:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.1-6); moreover, the transition from the one to the other is illustrated by the very same images as have been already noticed, [Hebrews 12:18-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.18-24); and the final outcome of our adherence to the one or to the other is declared to be precisely such as might be expected: to the slave, banishment; and to the son, an everlasting inheritance, [Galatians 4:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.24-25); [Galatians 4:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.30).

But, to enter fully into the subject, we must consider it,

***~~II. In reference to the experience of individual believers—~~***

The Holy Spirit strives in a greater or less degree with all:

***~~In the unconverted, he works as "a spirit of bondage"—~~***

The Spirit is the true Author of every good desire. The least disposition towards what is good is as much his work as the most spiritual exercises of God's dearest children. His operation therefore must be traced as well in the hearts of the unconverted, as of the converted.

In the commencement, he operates in a way of *legal hopes*: in the progress, he impels to *slavish fears*: and, with those who are not the subjects of saving grace, he terminates his operations by instigating to *self-righteous endeavors*.

A person first beginning to think about his soul, (for which thought he is wholly indebted to the Spirit of God,) is desirous of putting the most favorable construction on all his former ways, and of dissipating all apprehensions about his eternal state. Hence he persuades himself, that he has never committed any great sins; or, if he has, that they were committed under such circumstances as greatly to palliate their guilt: that, at all events, God is too merciful ever to visit his offenses with such a terrible punishment as the Scriptures speak of: and that his good deeds, which he either has performed, or hopes to perform, will counter-balance all the evil he has done.

By degrees his mind becomes more enlightened, and he sees that his sins have been neither so few, nor so trivial, as he had imagined. And now his legal hopes vanish, and are succeeded by slavish fears. The declarations of God respecting the final condemnation of the wicked are credited by him; and his claims of innocence or good desert are seen to be destitute of any solid foundation. Now the thoughts of death and judgment are terrible to him; and, as Paul says, He, "through fear of death, is all his lifetime subject to bondage." To such an extent do "these terrors of the Lord" operate on many, that they hate their very existence, and would gladly surrender it up, if they could but perish like the beasts, and never be called to any future account.

These apprehensions lead, as may be expected, to self-righteous endeavors. The person who is under their influence, sets himself to read, and pray, and attend the ordinances. He dispenses alms to the poor; he renounces many practices which he once justified, and performs many duties which he once neglected; hoping, if possible, to make up for all the time that he has lost, and to conciliate the favor of his offended God.

As his light increases, and the insufficiency of human merit is discovered by him, he looks to the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to atone for his faults, and to supply his defects. Perhaps in time the folly of depending on human righteousness is seen by him; and he is willing to seek for salvation through Christ, provided he may but recommend himself to Christ by some obedience of his own, and have in himself the warrant for embracing the Savior, and for expecting his salvation. Thus he founds his hopes, if not entirely—yet in some measure, on his own good works; and though doing well, as far as respects the ardor of his exertions, he fatally errs in making *self*the ground of his dependence, and perishes for lack of a better righteousness than his own!

This was the progress of the Spirit's work in the unconverted Jews, [Romans 9:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.31-32); and such it is also in thousands at the present day.

***~~In those who are converted, he works as a Spirit of adoption—~~***

To these he imparts sublimer gifts, enabling them to look up with confidence to God, crying, *"Abba, Father!"* He gives them an assured testimony of their acceptance with God as a reconciled God and Father; setting, as it were, upon their hearts the Father's seal, [2 Corinthians 1:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.21-22), and witnessing with their spirits that they are the children of God, verse 16. Thus, drawing them by his gracious influences, he brings them into a state of holy "fellowship with the Father and the Son," causing them to walk with God as dear children, and to live habitually as in his presence; they "dwelling in God, and God in them;" yes, being "one with God, and God with them."

As brought into the family of God, they now, through the power of that same blessed Spirit, *live in a humble dependence upon God for all that they stand in need of for body and for soul, for time and for eternity*. "All their care is cast on Him who cares for them;" and the life which they live in the flesh they live by faith in the Son of God, "receiving everything out of his fullness," in the time and measure that Infinite Wisdom sees best for them.

Nor are these heavenly gifts uninfluential on their conduct. They now walk in the habit of grateful obedience to God, desiring and striving to be "perfect, even as their Father who is in Heaven is perfect." They serve their God no longer from fear, as slaves—but from love, as obedient children, whose ambition is to do their Father's will on earth, as it is done in Heaven.

Elevated thus, and sanctified by the Spirit's influence, they are filled with a joyful expectation of dwelling speedily, and to all eternity, in the immediate presence of that Savior, "whom unseen they loved, and in whom even here they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory." They "look for, and hasten unto, the coming of that blessed day," when they shall behold him face to face! The time seems long until they shall enjoy that bliss; and, with a holy impatience, they are ready to cry, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

They know that, as children, they are heirs: they have already, in the consolations of the Spirit, had "a pledge of their inheritance;" and they long for the full possession of it, "desiring to depart, that they may be with Christ."

Thus does the Spirit work, though certainly in different degrees, on all the children of God, inspiring them with *filial joys*, as he fills the unregenerate with *slavish fears*.

***~~In conclusion, we would entreat all of you to inquire: What spirit you have received?~~***

***~~1. Have you received the Spirit of God at all?~~***

Many, alas! have scarcely so much as "heard whether there be any Holy Spirit:" or, if they have, they regard all idea of his agency upon the soul as visionary and delusive. But let such persons know, that they are altogether dead in trespasses and sins. If the Spirit of God has not so far wrought upon our minds as to convince us of our lost estate, we have not as yet taken one single step towards Heaven. The declaration of Paul in the preceding context is, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

***~~2. Have you received the Spirit as a spirit of bondage?~~***

Despise it not: the fears and terrors with which he has filled your minds, may be introductory to your final liberty, and your complete salvation. It is thus that the Spirit usually, if not invariably, works in those who are "translated from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son." He first wounds, and then heals, the soul. He "convinces us first of sin," and then "of righteousness and of judgment:" he causes us to feel ourselves lost, and makes use of that feeling to lead us to Him who came into the world to seek and save us. "Despise not then the day of small things:" for "then shall you know if you follow on to know the Lord."

On the other hand, we must say: Do not rest in it. The spirit of bondage will generate fear; but it will not produce either love or holiness, both of which are necessary to your everlasting salvation. If we have no better principle than slavish fear to make us obedient to our God, what are we better than the heathen? The Christian must regard God, not merely as a Judge, but as a Father. He must obey, not through fear of the lash, but from a real love to his name, and a sincere delight in his holy will. The truth, if it enters into our hearts, will make us free: and it will "deliver us from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

***~~3. Have you received the Spirit as a Spirit of adoption?~~***

Then be thankful, and adore your God for the exceeding riches of his grace towards you. But take care that you do not deceive your own souls respecting it. It is possible to mistake in this matter, and to refer to God's agency, the delusions of Satan and of your own hearts. Many indulge a very unhallowed confidence in God. But, though it is our privilege to put away slavish fear, it is our duty to cherish to the uttermost a*filial fear of offending God*. We must "walk in the fear of the Lord all the day long." If we are on our guard in this particular, then our confidence cannot be too strong; since there is nothing which a loving father can bestow on his obedient child, which our God will not confer on us. Know then your privilege, and rejoice in it; and with all the confidence which the repetition of the word implies, go into the presence of your God from time to time, crying,*"Abba, Father!"*

But take that you "grieve not the Holy Spirit of promise, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption, [Ephesians 4:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.30)." Watch over your every action, word, and thought; endeavoring to walk "as obedient children," yes, "as dear children," worthy of the relation in which you stand to God; "being holy, as He who has called you is holy! [1 Peter 1:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.14-15)."

***~~#1871~~***

***~~THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT~~***

**[Romans 8:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.16).**

"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

THERE is a tribunal before which we must all appear at the last day: but we need not wait until that time to ascertain our true character. *Every man has a tribunal erected in his own bosom*. The *conscience*, according to the light it has received, accuses or excuses, those who will listen to its voice. This is common to heathen as well as Christians, [Romans 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.15). But God's people are favored with the additional testimony of the Holy Spirit. Of this the Apostle speaks in the passage before us.

We shall endeavor to show,

***~~I. What is the witness here spoken of—~~***

Witnesses imply a doubt of the thing which is to be confirmed. The thing to be ascertained here is, "That we are the children of God." Respecting this, many are in suspense all their days; but God has provided means for the removal of these doubts.

He has been pleased to give us the witness of his Spirit.

***~~1. Through the medium of rational deduction—~~***

*We may judge of our state by comparing it with the declarations of Scripture.*God has given many marks and characters of his own people, for example, in the book of 1 John. We may examine by these marks how far our practice corresponds with our duty, and know from the testimony of an enlightened conscience our real state. This is a scriptural way of judging: Paul used it He knew that God required real integrity of heart, [Psalm 51:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.6). He therefore labored to attain it, [Acts 24:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 24.16). He had the testimony of his conscience that he had attained it, [Hebrews 13:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.18). And this testimony was to him a ground of joy before God, [2 Corinthians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.12); and exhorts us to use it, [2 Corinthians 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.5). Peter represents the attainment of this as a principal part of our baptismal engagement, [1 Peter 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.21); John also assures us, that this is the way in which God would have us to know our state, [1 John 3:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.20-21).

***~~2. In a way of immediate impression—~~***

The Spirit, as a "Spirit of adoption," testifies to the believer's soul, that he belongs to God. Not that this testimony is given without any reference to the Scripture; yet it is imparted in a more instantaneous manner, and in a far higher degree, at some times than at others. God by his Spirit sometimes "sheds abroad his love in the heart" in such a measure, and shines so clearly on the work he has already wrought there, as to convey immediately a full persuasion and assurance of a saving interest in his favor. As by "the sealing of the Spirit" he stamps his own image on his children for the conviction of others, so by "the witness of the Spirit" he testifies of their adoption for the more immediate comfort of their own souls.

These manifestations are given, for the most part, to prepare the soul for trials, to support it under them, or to comfort it after them: but they cannot be explained for the satisfaction of others. We cannot convey to any man a just idea of sensations which he has never felt;*they must be experienced in order to be understood*.

The work of the Spirit in regeneration is not fully understood even by those who are the subjects of it, notwithstanding its effects are as visible as those of the wind, [John 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.8). We cannot expect, therefore, that his less visible operations would be more intelligible to those who have never experienced them at all. See [Revelation 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.17). Yet may they be sufficiently proved from Scripture to be the privilege and portion of true believers. See [Romans 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.15); 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; and [Ephesians 4:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.30); which clearly show, that the Holy Spirit does operate on the souls of God's people, and perform towards them the office both of a *sanctifier*and a *comforter*.

To guard the doctrine against every species of delusion, we shall show,

***~~II. How to distinguish it from all false and enthusiastic pretensions—~~***

Many, it must be confessed, have pretended to this witness on false grounds Some have imagined that the Spirit witnessed their adoption because they have had a singular dream, or a portion of scripture has been suddenly and strongly impressed upon their minds, or they have enjoyed peculiar comfort in their souls—and Satan is ready enough to help forward such delusions. But the witness of the Spirit may be distinguished from all enthusiastic pretensions to it, if we consider attentively,

***~~1. What precedes it—~~***

Conviction of our lost estate, faith in the Redeemer, and devotedness to God as our rightful Sovereign, must precede it. If we have not these things, we cannot be God's children; and we may be sure the Spirit will never attest a falsehood.

***~~2. What accompanies it—~~***

Humility of mind, a jealous fear of ourselves, and a love to the weakest of God's people, attend these divine communications. Whereas pride and conceit, with a presumptuous confidence, and a contempt of others, are ever found in deluded enthusiasts.

***~~3. What follows it—~~***

Manifestations of God to the soul always produce: zeal in his service; victory over sin; and a longing for the enjoyment of him in Heaven. But supineness, subjection to evil tempers, and a forgetfulness of the eternal world, generally characterize the self-deceiving professor. Let every one therefore examine his profession by these marks.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who know nothing of this testimony of the Spirit—~~***

You probably do not understand the regenerating influences of the Spirit; and yet you see them manifested in the lives of many around you. Do not then condemn the witness of the Spirit merely because you cannot comprehend it; rather pray to God that you yourselves may be his children, and that the Spirit may testify to you of your adoption.

***~~2. Those who profess to have received it—~~***

A delusion in this is above all things to be guarded against: if your dispositions are habitually bad, your professions are all a delusion: where the witness of the Spirit is, there will the *fruits*also of the Spirit be.

***~~3. Those who long to receive it—~~***

To have the full witness of the Spirit is desirable, but not necessary: it is a great mercy if we enjoy his lower attestations in a good conscience. Let us labor to serve God, and leave to him the time, manner, and degree, in which he shall reveal himself to us.

***~~4. Those who now enjoy this witness—~~***

The manifestations of God to the soul are a very Heaven upon earth; let them therefore be duly esteemed and diligently improved; but beware lest you "grieve the Spirit by whom you are sealed." Be looking forward with increasing earnestness to your inheritance; and while you enjoy the inward witness that you are the children of God, let the world have an outward evidence of it in your lives.

***~~#1872~~***

***~~THE PRIVILEGES OF GOD'S CHILDREN~~***

***~~[Romans 8:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.17).~~***

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory!"

THERE are many high-sounding *titles*among men, which are no otherwise profitable to the possessors of them, than as they please their imagination, and gratify their pride. But the honorable appellations given to the true Christian, are connected with real and substantial benefits, which every one who is counted worthy of them shall infallibly enjoy. Believers are called in Scripture, "Children of God." Now this name is not a mere figure of speech peculiar to Scripture: for though it is true that the Scriptures speak of children of promise, children of disobedience, children of the curse, importing only that the persons so called are of such or such a character; yet the term "Children of God" is of a more determinate meaning: it imports a relation to God as a Father; and includes all that is comprehended in that relation. Hence the Apostle, having spoken of believers under this term, immediately draws this inference from it; "If we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ."

In considering these words, we shall set before you,

***~~I. The privileges of believers—~~***

It is here taken for granted that believers are children of God: we therefore pass over that, and notice only the *privileges*attached to that relation. And here we find them.

***~~1. Briefly stated—~~***

We know what is usually understood by the term "heir." An heir is one who has a title to an estate, not as having earned or merited it, but simply by right of primogeniture (being the firstborn child). He comes to the full possession of it as soon as he is of age; and in the mean time he is supported out of it agreeably to the rank of life he is hereafter to sustain.

Now from hence we may see what is implied in the term, when applied to the children of God. They have a claim to Heaven itself as their inheritance, 1 Peter 1:3-4. But their right does not at all arise from anything they have done to deserve or purchase it: it is founded solely on their having been born of God through the operations of the Holy Spirit upon their souls, [John 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.13). They come to the full possession of it at the time appointed of the Father: but, while they continue as minors, they are educated, and maintained, in a manner suited to their high and heavenly birth: they have the Holy Spirit himself for their teacher, [1 John 2:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.27); they have manna from Heaven, even "angels' food," for their support, [John 6:53-55](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.53-55). [Psalm 78:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 78.25); they have the garments of salvation for their clothing, [Isaiah 61:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.10); and angels for their attendants to minister unto them, [Hebrews 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 1.14).

In some respects indeed the parallel does not hold: for, among men, the eldest only is the heir, and the younger have smaller portions allotted to them. But, of the children of God, every one has an equal right to the whole inheritance. Besides, the heirs of men may die, or be defrauded of their inheritance: but the children of God have their inheritance *reserved*for them; and they are kept for it, [1 Peter 1:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.4-5). Moreover, the heirs of men retain their possessions but a little time, and lose them entirely at death: but the children of God come to the full enjoyment of their inheritance when they die; and then possess it for ever and ever!

***~~2. Strongly amplified—~~***

When the Apostle says, "heirs; heirs of God," he does not intend merely to repeat the idea, but to enlarge and amplify it by a very important addition. The children of men, though denominated heirs of such or such a person, can only inherit the substance belonging to that person: but the children of God inherit all that God *has*, and, if we may so speak, all that he *is.*To them belong "all things," whether present or future, whether temporal or eternal, 1 Corinthians 3:21-23. To them belong also all the perfections of the Deity, so far at least as they need to have them exercised for their good in this world, and for their happiness in the next: they can say with David, "The Lord himself is the portion of my inheritance! [Psalm 16:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.5)."

Further light is thrown upon this subject by the additional expression, "joint-heirs with Christ." Christ is the Lord and "Heir of all things, [Hebrews 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 1.2)." But "he is not ashamed to call us brethren, [Hebrews 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.11)." By virtue of this relation to him, we are partakers of all that he inherits.

Has "his Father appointed unto him a kingdom? Such is appointed to us also!" [Luke 22:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.29).

Has his Father called him to a throne? We also are seated on it together with him! [Revelation 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.21).

Does he, agreeably to his Father's will, possess a glory and felicity infinitely surpassing our highest conceptions? The same also is given to us for our everlasting portion! [John 17:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.22).

But, whatever be the means of bringing us to the enjoyment of this portion, our right and title to it arises wholly from our relation to God the Father as his children; "If children, then heirs;" "if a son, then an heir of God through Christ, [Galatians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.7)."

We must not however forget,

***~~II. The condition on which they are bestowed—~~***

Though we are not required to do anything in order to earn these privileges, or to render an equivalent for them when bestowed upon us—yet conditions are imposed upon us; and we must submit to those conditions, if ever we would participate in the blessedness of God's children.

For the sake of clarity, we will show,

***~~1. What the condition is—~~***

Christ, our elder Brother, was a sufferer, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, [Isaiah 53:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.3)." In this respect all the family must resemble him: every one of them must learn obedience in the same way, [Hebrews 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.8), and be perfected by the same means, [Hebrews 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.10). It is appointed to all the disciples of Jesus to "take up their cross, and follow him." They must expect the same treatment from an ungodly world as he experienced: they must be hated, reviled, persecuted: "the disciple cannot be above his Lord; it is sufficient for him to be as his Lord:" "if they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they call those of his household."

Now it is not easy for flesh and blood to endure these things: we are ever ready, through pride and anger, to resent such treatment; or, through shame and cowardice, to shun it. But the condition is plain and absolute: *No cross, no crown!*"We must suffer with him, if ever we would be glorified together."

***~~2. The equity of it—~~***

Our sufferings are intended as a test of our love to Christ. There was no necessity for our blessed Lord to submit to sufferings, unless he chose to undertake our cause, and put himself in the place of sinners: yet, purely for our sakes, he endured even death itself, yes, the painful and accursed death of the cross. If our trials then were a thousand times more severe than they are, would it not befit us cheerfully to sustain them in proof of our regard for him? If he voluntarily bore so much for our good, it is surely reasonable that we would, when called to it, endure somewhat for his glory.

But our sufferings are also intended to secure to us, and augment, the inheritance itself. *Nothing tends more to wean us from the world, than the opposition we meet from worldly men.*Our "tribulation also works patience;" yes, it both exercises and confirms our every grace, [Romans 5:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.3-4). Strange as it may appear, the enduring of trials for Christ's sake tends greatly to the advancement even of our present happiness, inasmuch as "this will result in your being witnesses to them, [Luke 21:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 21.13)," and puts honor upon us, [Philippians 2:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.29). [1 Peter 4:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.13-14), and is, for the most part, attended with the richest consolations of the Spirit, [2 Corinthians 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.5). And, beyond all doubt, it will hereafter be recompensed "with a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! [2 Corinthians 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.17)."

Can we then complain of a condition, which at once conduces to God's glory, and to our happiness? We should rather rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer in so good a cause, [Acts 5:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.41); and be contented to obtain the inheritance in the way which our heavenly Father has ordained, [2 Timothy 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.12). [Acts 14:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 14.22)."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are afraid of the cross—~~***

Never think to alter the condition which God has imposed, for it is absolutely irreversible, [2 Timothy 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.12-13)." Consider the time when our Lord imposed the condition; and blush for your timidity, [Matthew 16:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.21); [Matthew 16:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.24).

Consider how little it is in the power of man to do against you, and what a sad alternative you prefer, [Luke 12:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.4-5). [Matthew 16:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.25); and let your cowardice humble you in the dust. Think what a worm it is that you are afraid of, and what an omnipotent Being you displease! [Isaiah 51:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.7-8); [Isaiah 51:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.12-13); and lastly, consider whether the inheritance will not abundantly repay all that you can endure in the way to it. Let such reflections as these occupy your minds. Count the cost at once, and learn to "sell all for this invaluable pearl! [Matthew 13:44-46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.44-46)."

***~~2. The suffering children of God—~~***

Think it not strange that you meet with fiery trials, [1 Peter 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.12); you have often been forewarned respecting it, [1 Thessalonians 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 3.4); and they are all working for your good, [1 Peter 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.7).

If you were to suffer for evil-doing, there would be reason for shame: but to suffer for well-doing is honorable, and acceptable with God, [1 Peter 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.19-20); 1 Peter 4:15-16.

While the heir feels the restraints of his minority, he comforts himself with the prospect that he shall before long be of age, and launch into the complete fruition of all his wishes*. Your trials are, as it were, a needful discipline to which you must submit for a little time: but soon they will for ever end, and all the felicity of Heaven will be yours!*"Be patient therefore until the coming of you Lord [James 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.7); [James 5:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.10-11),;" consoling yourselves with that delightful promise, "He who overcomes, shall inherit all things! [Revelation 21:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.7)."

***~~#1873~~***

***~~PRESENT TROUBLES AND FUTURE GLORY~~***

**[Romans 8:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.18).**

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!"

An *expectation of ultimate advantage*is that which gives activity to men in every situation of life. But, while it operates with full force in things relating to this world, its influence is scarcely felt by the generality of mankind in relation to spiritual and eternal realities. Hence they are easily drawn aside from the path of duty by the allurements of time and sense, or driven from it by the terrors of persecution. Whereas, if they would duly estimate the pleasures or pains of this present life, and weigh them in a balance against the glory and felicity of the world to come, they would be stimulated to patience and diligence in well-doing, since they could not but see with the Apostle, that the one were not worthy to be named in comparison with the other.

That we may judge of the Apostle's estimate, I will endeavor to set before you:

the *trials*of the saint in this life,

the *glory*that awaits him in the life to come.

***~~I. Distinctly—~~***

***~~The TRIALS of a saint in this life are great—~~***

"Man is born to trouble," and every man must expect his share of it in this world: but the saints have a greater portion of it than others. In common with, others, they are called to endure pain of body, distress of mind, loss of friends, poverty of circumstances, and every other evil incident to this mortal state.

But besides all this, they have many trials peculiar to themselves.

**From within**, they are often bowed down under a sense of guilt, or under their indwelling corruptions: they are sometimes harassed with temptations, which, as fiery darts, wound and inflame their inmost souls: and sometimes they are overwhelmed with the hidings of their Father's face, and ready to sink in utter despair. How grievous these sensations are, no words can adequately express.

They are also much tried **from without**. The contempt, the hatred, the persecutions they endure, are often grievous to be borne; and would shake their fidelity, if they were not upheld and strengthened by their God.

Let this accumulated load be weighed as in a balance, and it will be found exceedingly heavy, insomuch that, "if in this life only they had hope," the saints would be of all men in the most pitiable condition.

***~~But the GLORY that awaits him is also great—~~***

There is a glory that shall be revealed *to*us, and a glory that shall be revealed *in*us: both of these are included in the words before us; and, taken together, they comprise all the glory and felicity of Heaven.

The very place to which we shall be admitted, is described by all the powers of language, in order to convey to us some faint idea of its beauty, [Revelation 21:10-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.10-23). There we shall behold all the angelic hosts with the spirits of just men made perfect (how bright and blessed an assembly must that be!) Yes, we shall see the Lamb of God, that very Jesus who was crucified for us, seated on his throne; and we shall behold the Father also face to face—we shall see him as he is, in all the brightness of his glory.

Together with this, we ourselves shall be fully changed into the image of our God: we shall resemble him both in body and soul, as far as finite creatures can resemble the infinite Jehovah. We shall also participate in the blessedness of the Deity: and every vessel, according to its capacity, shall be filled with joy.

But it is in vain to estimate what is so infinitely above our comprehension; for "we know not yet what we shall be." Even our present privileges surpass all that the carnal eye; or ear, or heart, has ever seen, or heard, or conceived! 2 Corinthians 2:9; much more therefore must the happiness of Heaven infinitely exceed all that language can express, or imagination conceive.

Such being the two states of suffering and of glory as viewed distinctly, let us now bring them under our review,

***~~II. In a way of comparison—~~***

Sufferings, of whatever kind, are painful to flesh and blood; but when estimated according to the word of God, they are *light*, *mixed*, and *momentary*.

How *light*are they in comparison with what they might be: or of what we deserve: or of what Jesus endured for us: or of what myriads of our fellow-creatures are now enduring in Hell!

Besides, amidst them all, we have innumerable mercies for which to be thankful: and, if they were continued throughout our whole lives, they would be as *short*as the twinkling of an eye, in comparison with the state to which we are hastening.

The glory that awaits us is exceeding great, even "a weight" as great as the soul with its most enlarged powers is able to support. It is also *unmixed*with any alloy of sin, or sorrow: and its duration will be eternal, even co-existent with the soul itself.

What *comparison*then is there between them? So infinitely does the glory exceed all the sufferings that we can endure in this life, that if we add hyperbole to hyperbole, and strain all the powers of language and of thought, to express the difference, we never can do justice to the subject, or declare a thousandth part of that which really exists, [2 Corinthians 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.17). The Apostle's estimate was formed as the result of a minute and accurate computation; and therefore the accuracy of it is past a doubt. In fact, the Apostle does not institute a comparison between them (for they will not admit of any comparison); but he says that the sufferings are "not worthy" (not worthy of any consideration, no, not of a thought), when the glory that shall follow them is kept in view!

***~~Improvement—~~***

We may *learn*from hence,

***~~1. How to judge of God's dispensations—~~***

To those who look no farther than to the present life, "the ways of God appear unequal," since the godly are oppressed, and the wicked triumph. But let eternity be taken into the account, and all the seeming inequalities will vanish. The *godly*will be recompensed for their sufferings; and the *wicked*will receive the due reward of their impieties. The Judge of all the earth will not only do right, but will manifest the equity of all his dispensations.

***~~2. How to comfort the afflicted soul—~~***

When believers are complaining that their trials are exceeding heavy, and that they are ready to faint because of them, we would lead them to view their sufferings in a way of *comparison*, or in a way of *contrast*.

We would *compare*the good they lose or the evil they sustain—with the good and evil that are beyond the grave.

Or we would *contrast*the good to be enjoyed in a life of sin, with the evil which sin will hereafter bring upon us.

Or *compare*the evil to be sustained in this life, with the good with which it shall hereafter be compensated.

In either of these methods the Scriptures point out these distinctly: they compare present with future good, [Hebrews 11:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.16) and present evil with future blessings, [Luke 12:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.5). So also they contrast present good with future evil, [Ecclesiastes 11:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 11.9); and present evil with future good, [Hebrews 10:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.34). And the effect of both these methods in composing the mind is intimated in [2 Corinthians 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.18). We may, with God's help, put an end to their murmuring; and make them willing to bear their present afflictions, in expectation of the benefit that will result from them.

***~~3. How to regulate our own conduct—~~***

Are we under trials? We should view our sufferings as ordered by God himself in number, weight, and duration, and consider them as means appointed by him for the perfecting of his work within us. Then, whatever our trials be, we shall not give way to an undue depression of mind; but shall commit ourselves to God in silent resignation, and wait for our recompense in the eternal world!

***~~#1874~~***

***~~THE STATE OF GOD'S CHILDREN~~***

***~~[Romans 8:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.23).~~***

"Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

MUCH is spoken in Scripture respecting the happiness of the saints. And doubtless they are on many accounts the most blessed people upon earth. But they also experience in a great degree the sorrows that pervade the universe. It is not in this poor world, but in the future world, that they are to attain perfect uninterrupted felicity.

The Apostle is here encouraging the afflicted Christians to endure their trials patiently, in expectation of a rich eternal recompense. He tells them that the whole creation were supported under their present sufferings by a hope of some happier state: and that he himself, notwithstanding the privileges he enjoyed, participated with them in the common lot.

From his words we are led to consider,

***~~I. The state of the creation at large—~~***

This is fully developed in the four verses preceding our text. There are however considerable difficulties in those verses; but chiefly arising from the inaccuracy of the translation. Read them thus, and the main difficulties will be overcome: "The earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God: (for the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who has subjected the same;) in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now."

The whole creation was reduced to a very deplorable condition by the fall of man.

The *material*world underwent a most awful change: cursed was the ground for man's sake: the earth rendered barren without continual and laborious culture, or fruitful only in briers and thorns, which, if left unrestrained, would speedily overrun it: and the atmosphere rendered the source of fatal storms, and tempests, and pestilential vapors for the destruction of man, [Genesis 3:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.17-18).

The *animal*world, first subjected to man's control, and harmless in all their habits, had such a change wrought within them, that they all of various orders prey one upon another, and are more or less arrayed in hostility to man.

The *rational*world partook more largely still of this fatal change: for man universally, and without exception, was despoiled of the Divine image, and corrupted in all his faculties, whether of mind or body, and subjected to innumerable diseases, and miseries, and death.

***~~But things shall not always continue thus—~~***

There is a time coming, when God will manifest himself in a more especial manner to his own people; and it is therefore called, "The manifestation of the sons of God:" and then shall the sentence denounced against the whole creation be reversed, in order that every creature, according to its capacity, may partake of that universal blessedness.

The *material*world will become again what it was at first, beautiful in all its parts, fertile to the utmost extent of man's necessities, and healthful throughout every place and every climate.

The *animal*world shall have all their venomous propensities removed, and the prophet's description shall be fully realized among them, "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea! [Isaiah 11:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.6-9)."

The whole *rational*world shall then be converted unto God; "for the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

Thus throughout the whole creation shall, to a certain extent, the paradisiacal state be restored.

***~~Now, as this will be a state of inconceivable blessedness, the whole creation is represented as looking and longing for it—~~***

It will be remembered that our blessed Lord was foretold as "the person whom all nations desired." Now he was foretold under that character, not because all nations did desire him, but because all nations, if they had known him, would have desired him. So here the whole creation is said to look and wait for the day spoken of in my text, not because they do indeed expect it with such solicitude, but because they would expect it in that way, if they were fully apprised of the blessedness attendant on it.

And, as in other passages of Holy Writ, the woods and the hills are often spoken of as participating in, and expressing, the joys of God's people; so here, by a very strong figure, the whole creation is represented as stretching forth the neck with eagerness, in looking for it, and groaning with impatience for its arrival; yes, and as experiencing the pangs of giving birth until they shall be liberated from their present burden.

Nor are these expressions at all too strong, if the different parts of the creation were capable of discerning and appreciating the blessedness of the change that shall await each in its proper sphere, and to the full extent of its capacity. Every part is at this time "under the bondage of corruption," that is, under the curse introduced by sin; and every part, according to its capacity, shall be delivered from that bondage, and be brought, so far as it is capable of it, into a participation of the "liberty that shall then be accorded to the children of God."

These were the feelings assigned to the inanimate creation at the first advent of our Lord in his abased state, [Psalm 96:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 96.11-13); [Psalm 98:4-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 98.4-9); and the same creatures may well be said to pant for a renewal of their joys, when our Lord shall come again to establish his kingdom over the face of the whole earth.

But all this may, almost without a figure, be uttered as descriptive of,

***~~II. The state of God's children in particular—~~***

***~~Believers have already the foretaste of these joys in their own souls—~~***

The "first-fruits" were a part of any produce, devoted to God as an acknowledgment that the whole was from him: and while they sanctified the whole harvest, they assured to the possessor the full enjoyment of it, [Deuteronomy 26:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 26.2); [Deuteronomy 26:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 26.10-11). [Proverbs 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 3.9).

Now the harvest of "the Spirit" is that abundant effusion of holiness and happiness which God will pour forth on his people in the latter day, not unlike to what they enjoyed on the day of Pentecost, or to that which our first parents possessed in Paradise. And "of this Spirit God's people have now the first-fruits." They are renewed in the spirit of their mind after the very image of their God in righteousness and true holiness: and, with this renewal of their nature, they are also "filled with joy of the Holy Spirit;" even with a "joy that is unspeakable and full of glory!"

Now it might be supposed that these, by reason of their present attainments, would be less anxious for the promised period before referred to, when the whole creation shall be restored, as it were, to its original purity and happiness. But the very reverse of this is the case: for in every age these are the persons who most pant and long for the promised felicity. Yes, says the Apostle, "we ourselves who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of our body."

***~~Of the joys they now experience they look forward to the everlasting consummation—~~***

"Believers are now the children of God, [1 John 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.1)," his children both by adoption and grace.

Now *adoption*, among the Romans, was two-fold; first, private, in the house, and afterwards public, in the forum.

The former of these every believer has received already through the operation of the Spirit of God upon his soul, verse 15, 16; but for the latter he waits until that period when God shall come to gather together his elect from every quarter of the world, to restore to every soul its long moldered body, and to make the whole man, in body and soul, eternally blessed in his presence. That is the period when "the body will enjoy the redemption" that has been long since possessed by the soul; and a blessedness will be then imparted to the *whole man*, of which his present most exalted happiness is but a pledge and foretaste. Now the believer knows that that period shall arrive: and he longs for it, and "groans within himself," through the ardor of his desires after it.

Even here his anticipations of it have been sweet, infinitely beyond the powers of language to express, ("a joy unspeakable;") what then shall the full possession be in the complete enjoyment of his God? From the private adoption, by the testimony of the Spirit, he has been almost enrapt at times into the third Heaven, notwithstanding the clog which his body has imposed upon his soul.

What then shall the public manifestation of this honor in the presence of the whole assembled universe be, when his "redeemed body" shall possess all the purity and perfection of his soul, and not only partake of all the joys of his soul, but aid the sold in its everlasting possession of them? I wonder not that Paul groaned in this body, being burdened; yes, that he groaned, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with his heavenly house, namely, with his body in its renovated and perfect state, [2 Corinthians 5:2-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.2-5). This ought to be the state of every true believer; and it will be in proportion as he lives near to God, and has "his conduct in Heaven."

By some the period referred to in my text is supposed to commence at the Millennium, of which time Peter speaks when he says, "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness, [2 Peter 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.13)." And, if any find comfort in that view of the subject, I would not move a finger to rob them of it. I have no objection to persons following their own views of Scripture truth: every man has the same right to do it as I myself have. But, when these uncertain matters are made the subject of disputation in the Church of God, to the creating of dissensions and divisions, and to the turning of the minds of pious persons from the more clear and fundamental truths of the Gospel, then I bitterly regret it, and am ready to weep over it as "a device of Satan to turn men from the simplicity that is in Christ."

If any choose to apply this passage to the Millennium, and to look for its accomplishment then, let them. But let them bear with those who cannot see with their eyes, or feel that there is any advantage in their views.

Let all agree in this, to look and groan inwardly for the time of their consummate felicity, whether it occur at a little earlier or a little later period: for this is the point in which all are to agree; and in this consists the highest attainment of the Christian life: "We come behind in no gift, while we are waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, [1 Corinthians 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.7)" to perfect our felicity; and we are sure, that "to those who so look for him, he will appear a second time unto their everlasting salvation, [Hebrews 9:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.28)." My prayer therefore for all of you, my brethren, is, "May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into a patient waiting for Christ, 2 Thessalonians 3:5."

***~~That I may bring this subject home more powerfully to men's business and bosoms, I would add,~~***

***~~1. Let us not take up our rest in this poor world—~~***

This world is but a passage to a better; it is a *wilderness*which we must pass through in our way to the heavenly Canaan. As to our present accommodations, we need not be much concerned, whether they be a little more or less suited to our present convenience. We are but "pilgrims and sojourners here," hoping in due season to attain our rest hereafter.

Let us then look forward to "that rest which remains for us," and under all existing difficulties derive our consolations from the prospect of the happiness that awaits us.

This is, not the duty merely, but the high privilege, of the Christian. This it is which raises the Christian above all the world besides. What are crowns and kingdoms, if a man has no prospect beyond the grave? On the other hand, What is martyrdom itself to one who sees it as the very door of Heaven, and knows that *the body which agonized for a few moments, shall reign in glory for evermore?*

I say then to every one among you, "Set not your affection on things below, but on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God," and where "all who suffer with him now, shall be glorified together with him" to all eternity!

***~~2. Let us press forward more earnestly after the happiness reserved for us—~~***

Who can conceive the blessedness of that state to which we are hastening? If "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived the things which are enjoyed by God's people in this present world," then how much less can any just conception be formed of their future state?

If the possession of the first-fruits is so glorious, what must the harvest be!

If the privilege of being God's children be so delightful now, that the very hope of it raises us above all the joys or sorrows of this present world, what shall the full manifestation of it be when all the interests of time and sense are for ever passed away?

Let us then survey more and more the blessedness of Heaven, where we shall behold face to face that Savior who died for us, and be with him for ever, possessing, according to their capacity, all the fullness of his beauty, his felicity, and his glory!

Dear brethren, let this prospect swallow up every inferior consideration, and animate us to run with ever increasing diligence the race that is set before us. Let us "forget all that is behind, and reach forward to that which is before, and press on with all imaginable ardor for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus." And, in the desire of that full blessedness, let us cry continually with the beloved Apostle, "Come, Lord, and take me to yourself! Yes, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

***~~#1875~~***

***~~THE OFFICE OF HOPE~~***

***~~[Romans 8:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.24-25).~~***

"We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for what we do not have, then do we with patience wait for it."

If it is asked: What is that feeling of the mind, which, beyond all others, gives life and activity to rational agents? We answer: It is hope. Influenced by this, all persons in every department of life put forth their energies: the merchant braves the storms; the soldier encounters his enemies; the student consumes the midnight oil in his laborious researches.

To this also is chiefly to be referred the Christian's exertions in the service of his God. True it is, that love and gratitude have a constraining influence upon him: but it is also true, that these principles would be ineffectual to carry his soul through all its trials, if they were not confirmed and animated by the yet more powerful operation of hope.

Great, no doubt, are the privileges and enjoyments of the Christian in this present world: he is a child of the Most High God; and has "a spirit of adoption within him, enabling him to cry, Abba, Father." He has also "the witness of the Spirit testifying both in and by his own spirit, that he is a child of God."

But, after all, little solid comfort would he derive from these reflections, if he did not look forward to an inheritance, to which, by virtue of his relation to God, he is entitled. Hence the Apostle represents the Lord's people as deriving their chief consolation from the prospect which they have beyond the grave, verse 23, yes, and "as being saved by hope," through the operation of which upon their minds "they patiently wait for" the termination and outcome of all their present trials.

We propose on the present occasion to consider the nature and effects of the Christian's hope:

***~~I. The NATURE of the Christian's hope—~~***

We are most generally said to be saved by faith, [Romans 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.1); but here salvation is ascribed to hope. There is, in fact, a near affinity between the two: and we cannot adopt any better method of illustrating the nature and operations of hope than by instituting a comparison between it and faith. That faith and hope are very nearly allied, appears from this, that in Paul's account of Abraham, he represents the two principles as concurring with each other, and having an united influence on his obedience: "Against hope," says he, Abraham "believed in hope, [Romans 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.18)."

***~~In some things the two principles AGREE—~~***

They agree in their ORIGIN: both of them are the gift of God, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit's operation on the soul.

Have we faith? It is the gift of God, [Ephesians 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.8). [Philippians 1:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.29), the fruit of a divine operation, [Colossians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.12), a work of grace, [Acts 18:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 18.27).

If we have hope, we have been begotten to it by God himself, [1 Peter 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.3), even by his gracious influence on our souls, [2 Thessalonians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 2.16); and to his Holy Spirit must be ascribed all its increase in the soul, together with all the peace and joy that flow from it, [Romans 15:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.13).

They agree also in their USE: both the one and the other being intended to further the salvation of our souls. As we are *saved*by faith, [Romans 10:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.9), so are we by *hope*also, [Romans 8:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.24).

They agree yet further in their DURATION: they have no scope for exercise beyond this present life. Faith is by Paul opposed to sight, [2 Corinthians 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.7); and as in Heaven "we shall see God face to face, and know him even as we are known," the dark and enigmatical visions of faith will cease, [1 Corinthians 13:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.12).

In like manner we are told in our text, that "hope that is seen, is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for?"*We shall have in Heaven the actual possession of what is now the object of our hope. Then faith will be lost in sight, and hope in enjoyment.*

***~~In other things the two principles materially DIFFER—~~***

They differ in their foundation. Faith is founded solely on the veracity of God. Hope is founded, partly, on the word of God, and, partly on our conformity to that word. The word of God reveals a dispensation of mercy to sinful man. But what hope does that generate in the minds of the fallen angels? They believe it, as much as we do: but, having no evidence in themselves that they comply with the terms on which that mercy is given, they do not hope in it: "they believe and tremble! [James 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.19)." It is the penitent alone that has hope in God: and his hope arises from his consciousness that he does embrace the mercy offered him, and conform to the terms which God in his wisdom has prescribed to all who shall ultimately be saved by it.

They differ also in their qualities. Faith is properly a virtue; and the lack of it under all circumstances is a sin. As a virtue, there is no other so frequently or so highly commended; (where that has been exercised, humility, and love, and every other grace that has been exercised with it, has been overlooked, and that alone commended, [Luke 7:50](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 7.50);) and as a sin, no other is so strongly reprobated as unbelief, [Mark 16:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.16).

Hope, on the other hand, may rather be called a privilege than a virtue; and despondency, a curse, rather than a sin. So far indeed as hope agrees with faith in its foundation, so far it agrees with it in its moral qualities: but as far as it is founded, not on the word of God, but in a man's own conformity to that word, so far its moral qualities differ from those of faith: for instead of its being a sin for an ungodly man to despair of salvation in his present state, it is a sin for him to indulge a hope: it is the vilest presumption in him to think that he can ever be saved in an impenitent and unbelieving state: and to despair of salvation in such a state is his very first step towards Heaven.

They differ yet further in their objects. Faith is incomparably more extensive than hope. Faith has respect to both good and evil: it embraces in its view both Heaven and Hell. But hope has good alone for its object.

Faith comprehends everything that God has revealed, whether past, present, or future: hope looks only to what is future.

Faith regards every declaration of God, whether historical or prophetic, promissory or menacing, hortatory or preceptive: but hope has respect to the promises alone. It invariably terminates on some good, which is yet future, and which God has promised.

Lastly, They differ also in their offices. Though both of them agree in their general use, to promote the salvation of men, they have exceedingly distinct offices.

Faith apprehends the Lord Jesus Christ, and, by uniting us to him, interests us in all that he has done and suffered for us: it also receives out of his fullness all those graces and blessings which the Father has been pleased to treasure up in him for the benefit of his Church.

Hope merely expects those blessings: and, by presenting future good to our view, stimulates us to diligence in the pursuit of it.

Both of these principles "save us;" but faith brings that good into the soul which hope had only anticipated; and, by presenting invisible realities to our view, gives to hope a more ample scope for exercise.

Faith is the parent of hope: but hope, once formed in the soul, becomes an active helper to faith. Neither can operate to any good effect without the other. Faith without hope is paralyzed; and hope without faith is dead. But, when faith duly apprehends Christ, and hope leads us to wait patiently for his full salvation, then the work of God goes on prosperously within us, and we are in the sure way to everlasting life.

Such being the nature of the Christian's hope, we proceed to inquire into,

***~~I. The EFFECTS of the Christian's hope—~~***

These are represented under the general term, Salvation, "We are saved by it." But how does it effect salvation for us? We answer, By it,

***~~1. We are comforted in our afflictions—~~***

Afflictions are the lot of all, but especially of the Lord's people. All of them have a cross to bear; and tribulation is their appointed way to the kingdom of Heaven. Indeed, so painful are the trials which they have to endure for the Lord's sake, that, "if in this life only they had hope, they would be of all men most miserable," or, at least, most to be pitied, [1 Corinthians 15:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.19). But the prospect of eternal glory so lightens their burden, as to make it quite easy to be borne, [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24).

To this effect the Apostle speaks in the chapter before us; (and he delivers the sentiment as the result of his own most careful investigation,) "I reckon (I compute by accurate calculation) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us, verse 18." In another epistle he gives a full and accurate description of his views and feelings on this subject. "He was continually delivered unto death for Jesus' sake," but he was perfectly satisfied with his condition, because "he knew, that he who had raised up the Lord Jesus, would raise him up also by Jesus, and present him, together with his beloved converts, [2 Corinthians 4:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.11-14)," "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy! Jude verse 24." The prospect of that blessed event made all his "afflictions light," yes, lightness itself, [2 Corinthians 4:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.17-18).

It may be thought, perhaps, that this superabundant grace was given to him as an Apostle, and is not to be expected by us. But it is to be expected by every saint whom "God has begotten to a lively hope:" for our blessed Lord tells all his followers, not merely to bear their persecutions with patience, but to make them a ground of joy and exultation, because of the glorious recompense that awaits them in the eternal world! [Matthew 5:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.10-12).

And who that has ever suffered much for righteousness' sake, has not found this to be the effect of his hope towards God? Many among us may say with David, "I would have fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, [Psalm 27:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 27.13)." But under the influence of this hope their consolations have abounded in proportion to, yes, and far above, all their accumulated afflictions, [2 Corinthians 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.5).

***~~2. We are supported in our conflicts—~~***

To all true Christians there are, on some occasions, "fightings without, and fears within." But the grace of which we are speaking, serves them as a helmet, that will resist the stroke of their most potent adversary. In the panoply of God, this piece of armor yields to none in point of efficacy and importance: salvation is pre-eminently ascribed to it: it is called, "The helmet of salvation, [1 Thessalonians 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.8) with [Ephesians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.17)." It is well known that persons clothed with armor from head to foot, especially if contending with persons not so protected, enter into the combat with peculiar confidence. This was particularly observable in the French cuirassiers at the memorable battle of Waterloo. And thus especially does the Christian whose mind is well established by hope: he is "strong and very courageous," not doubting but that God is with him, and that he shall be "more than conqueror through Him who loved him."

The assaults which he has to sustain may indeed be violent and very terrible, even like the waves of the sea, that threaten to overwhelm the tempest-tossed bark. But his "hope, like an anchor sure and steadfast, enables him to out-ride the storm, [Hebrews 6:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.19)." That "anchor cast within the veil," keeps his mind composed [Isaiah 26:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.3), and assures him, that he is safe, though earth and Hell would combine their efforts to destroy him, [2 Timothy 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.12).

How this grace operated on the saints of old, we may see at large in Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. Many, under its influence, "took joyfully the confiscation of their goods [Hebrews 10:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.34);" and many, even of the weaker gender, when called to endure the severest torments that could be inflicted on them, "would not so much as accept the deliverance" that was offered them, because "they hoped assuredly to obtain a better resurrection, [Hebrews 11:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.35)."

Thus will it operate on us also. Precisely as the expectation of a future harvest leads the gardener to encounter all difficulties, and cheers his mind during the long continuance of an inclement winter, so the prospect of reaping in due season enables the Christian to endure unto the end, [James 5:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.7-8). He has never seen the felicity which he pants after; but he expects assuredly the ultimate possession of it; and therefore "patiently waits for" the final consummation of all his hopes, [Romans 8:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.25).

***~~3. We are encouraged in our exertions—~~***

To a man who has Heaven in his eye, nothing is impossible. Behold Moses, when at the summit of human grandeur and power: an alternative was before him, "to suffer affliction with the people of God—or to enjoy the pleasures" and honors of the court of Pharaoh. Which did he prefer? He chose "the reproach of Christ, esteeming it to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." And what guided him to this strange decision? It was hope; "he had respect unto the recompense of the reward, [Hebrews 11:24-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.24-26)."

In like manner Paul "pressed forward with incessant ardor in his heavenly course, forgetting what was behind, and reaching forward to what was before." And, if we inquire into the principle which animated him to such exertions, we shall find that it was precisely that which is mentioned in our text—the hope and prospect of securing "the prize of his high calling."

We may even say that our blessed Lord himself, as a man, was actuated by the same divine principle; since it was "for the joy that was set before him, that he endured the cross and despised the shame, and rested not until he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)."

And we too, if we would "run our race with patience," must imitate him in this respect, [Hebrews 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.1); we must keep our eye steadily fixed on him, and continue without intermission "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ! [Titus 2:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.11-13)." Then shall we "be steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord," when we are convinced in our mind, "that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord, [1 Corinthians 15:58](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.58)."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those whose hopes are presumptuous—~~***

There is no man who does not hope that he shall be saved at last. But we ought to be "able to give a reason of the hope that is in us, [1 Peter 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.15)." If we cannot do this, and a satisfactory reason too, our hope is altogether vain and delusive. We have before said, that hope, as well as faith, must, in part at least, be founded on the word of God. Look to it then, that your hope is truly scriptural, and that you seek with all diligence that humility and contrition, that faith and love, that purity and holiness, that zeal and devotedness to God—which are the distinguishing characters of all who shall ultimately attain the kingdom of Heaven. If you are "without Christ, you are without hope, [Ephesians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.12);" but if you flee to him for refuge, you may be perfectly assured of acceptance with him, [Psalm 130:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 130.7-8). [John 6:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.37).

***~~2. Those who are harassed with doubts and fears—~~***

There are many, of whom there is reason for a good hope, who yet do not enjoy that comfort in their minds which the religion of Christ is calculated to impart. In some this disquietude arises from imperfect views of the Gospel: they do not see the freeness and fullness of that salvation that is provided for them in the Gospel; and they are looking for some qualifications in themselves to warrant their confidence in the Savior. They do not distinguish aright between the offices of faith and hope. They do not see that the vilest creatures under Heaven are warranted to believe in Christ for salvation, and to hope for acceptance with him in his appointed way of penitence and faith; but that to hope for Heaven as persons actually brought into a state of salvation, requires an evidence in our own souls, that we are, in a measure at least, transformed into the Divine image.

To such persons then we would say, Do not look for qualifications in yourselves to warrant your application to Christ, or your affiance in him; but, while you accept salvation freely through his blood and righteousness, look to him also for the communications of his grace to renew and sanctify your hearts, and to make you fit for his inheritance.

With some indeed these doubts and fears originate rather in a consciousness of some unmortified lust, or of habitual negligence in the divine life: and where this is the case, we must declare, that peace and confidence would be a curse to them. We must "awake to righteousness, and not sin," if we would have any comfortable evidence that we are the Lord's people, or any happiness in looking forward to the eternal world. But, from whatever cause men's doubts arise, we would address to them that encouraging exhortation, "Turn to your stronghold, you prisoners of hope, [Zechariah 9:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 9.12)."

***~~3. Those who have a good hope through grace—~~***

Rejoice in the exalted privilege to which God has called you; and endeavor to render to the Lord according to the benefits he has conferred upon you. It is said by John, that, "he who has this hope in him, purifies himself even as Christ is pure, [1 John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.3)." Take care then that your hope operates in this way—let it stir you up to the utmost possible exertions in the way of holiness. Rest not in low attainments: think nothing yet attained, while anything remains to be attained. Keep your evidences clear: let them not be clouded by any unmortified lust, or secret neglect: and then shall you "hold fast the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end, [Hebrews 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 3.6)." This is the way to be both holy and happy: and, thus living, you may be well assured, that your "hope shall never make you ashamed! [Romans 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.5)."

***~~#1876~~***

***~~THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN STRENGTHENING MEN FOR SUFFERING OR DUTY~~***

***~~[Romans 8:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.26).~~***

"Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we would pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself makes intercession for its with groanings which cannot be uttered."

A HOPE of eternal happiness is as an anchor to the troubled soul; it enables a person to bear up under the heaviest afflictions. But the mind of a believer would soon faint, if it were not strengthened from above. God therefore communicates his Spirit to his people under their trials. By his Spirit he enables them to go forward in the way of duty. Paul has been speaking of sufferings as the Christian's portion here, verse 17, 18. He has mentioned "hope" as a principal support to the soul under them, verse 24. He now specifies the Holy Spirit's agency as another means of confirming and establishing the soul.

This agency of the Spirit we may consider,

***~~I. In seasons of suffering—~~***

***~~Men are, in themselves, too weak to sustain many or severe trials—~~***

There is much impatience in the heart of every man. It too often reveals itself even in those who are, on the whole, pious. Sometimes it is called forth by small and trifling occasions. How passionately did Jonah resent the loss of his gourd? [Jonah 4:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jonah 4.8-9). How bitterly would the disciples have revenged an act of unkindness? [Luke 9:54](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 9.54). There is no trial so small but it would overcome us, if we were left to ourselves; and those who have endured heavy trials, often faint under small ones.

***~~But God sends his Spirit to help the infirmities of his people—~~***

We cannot exactly discriminate between the Spirit's agency and ours. Indeed the Spirit acts in and by our endeavors. Feeble therefore as our strength is, we must exert it: and if we cheerfully put our hands to the work, the Holy Spirit will always afford us effectual support. He leads us to see the source and tendency of their trials. He strengthens the natural vigor of our minds. He suggests to us many consolatory thoughts. Thus he fulfills to us that gracious declaration, [Psalm 147:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 147.3).

These operations of the Spirit are yet more manifest,

***~~II. In seasons of prayer—~~***

***~~God's people "know not even what to pray for"—~~***

A great variety of passions may agitate their minds. When this is the case, their petitions may be unfitting and sinful. Even a sense of guilt will often stop the mouth before God. Compare [Psalm 32:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 32.3); [Psalm 32:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 32.5). Sometimes also trouble itself will utterly overwhelm the soul, and incapacitate it for prayer, [Psalm 77:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.4). Our Lord himself seems to have experienced such a disturbance of mind, [John 12:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.27); nor are there any praying persons who have not often found themselves straitened in the exercise of prayer.

***~~It yet oftener happens that they know not how to pray "as they ought"—~~***

*We may easily utter good and suitable words before God; but it is by no means easy to pray with fervent importunity*. An insurmountable languor or obduracy will sometimes come upon the soul. Nor though we were ever so fervent can we always exercise faith. Many have felt the same workings of mind with David, [Psalm 77:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.7-10). At such seasons they cannot pray as they ought.

***~~But the Holy Spirit will "make intercession for them"—~~***

Christ is properly our Advocate and Intercessor, [1 John 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.1); but the Spirit also may be said to "intercede for us." The Spirit intercedes in us at the throne of *grace*, while Christ intercedes for us at the throne of *glory*. He sometimes enables us to pour out our hearts with fluency. This he does by revealing to us our needs, quickening our affections, and testifying to us God's willingness to answer prayer. He does not, however, always operate in this way.

***~~He will make intercession "with unutterable groans"—~~***

The joy of Christians is represented as being sometimes inexpressible [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.8); but frequently a sense of sin overwhelms them. Then sighs and groans are the natural language of their hearts. Nor are such inarticulate prayers unacceptable to God. We have a remarkable instance of their success in the history of our Lord, [John 11:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.33); [John 11:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.38); [John 11:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.41). Perhaps no prayers are more pleasing to God than these! [Psalm 51:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.17).

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How many are there who live all their days without prayer!~~***

Those in whom the Spirit intercedes are often made to feel their inability to pray aright. Under a sense of their infirmities they are constrained to cry to God for the help of his Spirit: but many pass all their days without any painful sense of their weakness. They satisfy themselves with a *formal performance*of their duties. Such persons never pray in an acceptable manner, [John 4:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.23). Real prayer implies fervor and importunity, [Isaiah 64:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.7); and it is in vain to think that we have the spirit of grace, if we have not also the spirit of supplication, [Zechariah 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 12.10). May we therefore never be found of the number of those, whom the prophet and our blessed Lord have, on account of their formality in prayer, condemned as hypocrites, [Matthew 15:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 15.7-8).

***~~2. What comfort may this passage afford to praying people!~~***

Many are discouraged by the difficulties which they experience in the duty of prayer. If they feel not an enlargement of heart, they doubt whether their prayer will be accepted. But God will notice the groaning of his people, [Psalm 38:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 38.8-9). Such inward desires may often be more pleasing to him than the most fluent petitions: they are, in fact, the voice of God's Spirit within us. Let not any then be dejected on account of occasional deadness. Let every one rather follow the advice of the prophet, [Habakkuk 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 2.3). God, in due time, will assuredly fulfill his promise, [Psalm 81:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 81.10).

***~~#1877~~***

***~~ALL THINGS WORK FOR GOOD~~***

**[Romans 8:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.28).**

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose!"

TRUE believers have the greatest encouragement to draw near to God; they have supernatural assistance when pouring out their hearts before him, and are assured by God himself that their prayers shall be heard. Yet sometimes, like the Israelites in Egypt, the more they renew their requests, the more they find their burdens increased, [Exodus 5:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 5.6-8); hence, like them, they are also sometimes ready to murmur and despond, [Exodus 5:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 5.20-21); but, by grace they are enabled to wait patiently the Lord's leisure, and invariably, in the outcome, the clouds which they so much dreaded, burst in blessings on their heads.

This Paul declares to be the experience of all true believers. In his words I wish you to notice,

***~~I. The description he gives of true Christians—~~***

Christians are sometimes described in the Scriptures by their regard for God, and sometimes by God's regard for them. The text leads us to speak of them in both points of view:

***~~1. Their regard to God—~~***

The "loving of God" is a character peculiar to true Christians: others are represented rather as "haters of God," and enemies to him in their minds, [Romans 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.30). [Colossians 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.21); but those who are partakers of his grace, have their natural enmity removed: they behold his excellency, and are sensible of their obligations to him: hence they love him, and strive to love him with their whole hearts.

***~~2. God's regard for them—~~***

Their regard for him sprang not from any good dispositions in themselves; it resulted purely from the manifestations of God's love to them: he formed "purposes" of love to them from all eternity, [Jeremiah 31:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.3). In due time he "called" them by his grace, and made them his people; and this distinguishing favor is the true source of their love to him. To this effect both our Lord and his beloved Apostle testify, [John 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.16). [1 John 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.19).

To the eternal purposes of God, therefore, and not to the inclinations of our carnal minds, must all the good that is in us be traced.

To persons of this description the Apostle announces,

***~~II. His strange yet assured confidence respecting them—~~***

It is under sufferings that the superiority of the Christian's state is to be seen to the greatest advantage. Of them the Apostle speaks; and declares that, of whatever kind they are, they shall work for the good of those who love God—

The Christian may be called to bear the heaviest *afflictions*; but they shall bring him to consideration, stir him up to prayer, wean him from the world, and lead him to seek his rest above.

He maybe assaulted also with the most distressing *temptations*; but these will show him the evil of his heart, and the faithfulness of his God. They will also teach him to sympathize with his tempted brethren.

Even *death*itself will be among the number of the things that shall prove beneficial to him. This is the most formidable enemy to fallen man: it cuts him off from all means and opportunities of salvation, and seals him up under endless and irremediable misery; but to a true Christian it is a most invaluable treasure, [1 Corinthians 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.22). Death puts an end to all his sorrows and temptations, and introduces him to the immediate, everlasting enjoyment of his God.

***~~Nor can we doubt of this blessed truth—~~***

The Apostle speaks of it not as a matter of conjecture, but of certainty: as he knew it, so may "we know" it, from the declarations and promises of God, [Psalm 25:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 25.10). Both David and Paul have attested it also from their own experience, [Psalm 119:71](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.71). [Philippians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.19); nor is there any Christian in whom it has not been realized.

It is not however singly or separately that all things work for good, but as taken "together" in a collective view. Separately considered, many things may have wrought for evil, by producing sinful tempers or actions; but when viewed as connected with all their effects and consequences, the most untoward circumstances will be found to have worked for good.

***~~This subject naturally suggests,~~***

***~~1. A rule whereby to judge of God's electing love—~~***

Our election of God can be known only by its effects, [1 Thessalonians 1:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 1.4-5). To ascertain it, we must inquire whether we have been called by his grace, and whether, in consequence of that call, we love God supremely? If we experience these effects, we may safely conclude that God has entertained eternal purposes of love towards us; but if we trace not these effects, our pretensions to a saving interest in his electing love is a fatal delusion. Let them, in whom these evidences are found, rejoice; but rejoice with trembling.

***~~2. A ground of comfort under his apparent frowns—~~***

Afflictions are not at the present joyous, but grievous; and because they are his rod, we are ready to say, "All these things are against me!" But Scripture tells us, that "the trial of our faith is precious, [1 Peter 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.7)." Let the afflicted then consider what "good" may be accruing to them.

Their troubles may be working so as to reveal, prevent, punish, or destroy *sin*.

Or they may be working to impart, exercise, strengthen, or perfect *grace*.

What reason, in either case, have the afflicted to take comfort! We think little of inconveniences if they do but promote our temporal interest. Would we then be averse to any trials that may tend to our spiritual advantage? Let us wait to see "the end of the Lord," and *be solicitous rather about our future benefit, than our present ease*.

***~~3. A motive to love and serve God with our whole hearts—~~***

Things are never represented as working for the good of the wicked; on the contrary, their temporal "blessings are often cursed" to them; yes, even spiritual blessings only aggravate their guilt and condemnation, [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.16). Christ himself proves, not a Savior, but a stumbling-block to them, 1 Peter 2:7-8. But for God's people, all things, sin excepted, work for good. Would they not then love him for such distinguishing mercy? Can they ever do enough for him, who so marvelously overrules all events for them?

***~~#1878~~***

***~~PREDESTINATION CONSIDERED~~***

***~~[Romans 8:29-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.29-30).~~***

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

THE subject of predestination is confessedly very deep and mysterious: nor would it be entered upon without extreme caution, both as to the mode of stating it, and to the persons before whom it is stated. It is much to be lamented, that there exists in the minds of many a strong prejudice against it; insomuch that the very mention of it is deemed by them little short of heresy; I had almost said, of blasphemy. But this surely is not a way in which any part of God's revealed will is to be treated.

That the inspired writers do speak of it, is undeniable: and that our own Church also has made it an Article of faith, which all her ministers and members are to receive, is also certain. On these accounts we must not discard the doctrine through fear of offending any who may be hostile to it; though on the other hand we ought not so frequently or so strongly to insist upon it as unnecessarily to wound and grieve them. The true medium which a minister would aim at, is, to give to this doctrine, as well as to every other doctrine, as precisely as possible that measure of prominence and importance which it bears in the sacred writings. To be bringing it forward on every occasion, just as if it were among the first principles of religion, we consider as very injudicious, and detrimental to the best interests of religion: but to omit it altogether, we deem unworthy of a faithful servant of Christ.

To the doctrines which have an opposite aspect, we give all due weight; and therefore we may be allowed to put this also before you, according as it is plainly declared in the passage which is now under our consideration.

The Apostle having designated "those who love God" as persons "who have been called according to God's purpose," proceeds to show, that *from first to last God is the author of their salvation:*he foreknew, and predestined them from all eternity to the privileges which they enjoy; and will infallibly complete his purpose respecting them, in their effectual calling, their free justification from all their sins, and their final glorification at his right hand for ever.

In the Apostle's statement we may see,

***~~I. The principal ends of predestination—~~***

God acts in all things according to his own sovereign will and pleasure: yet is that will regulated by the counsels of infallible wisdom, [Ephesians 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.5); [Ephesians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.11). While therefore in all things he consults primarily his own glory, he has respect to such ends and objects as are most suited to promote his glory. The ends he has proposed to himself, in predestinating men to life, were two-fold:

the immediate end respected us;

the ultimate end respected his beloved Son, through whom all his purposes were to be accomplished.

***~~1. The immediate end respected us—~~***

He decreed that all the objects of his choice "would be conformed to the image of his Son." But how were they to be conformed to him? We answer: In *holiness*, in *sufferings*, and in *glory*.

We are to be conformed to Christ in holiness. Our blessed Lord was altogether without spot or blemish, a perfect exemplar of universal holiness: his bitterest enemies could not find any imperfection in him; and John's testimony concerning him is, "In him was no sin, [1 John 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.5)." Such, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ," are we to be also, [Ephesians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.7). Like him we must live, not unto ourselves, but unto our God alone; making it "our food and our drink to do his holy will." Though in the world, we must not be of the world, any more than he was [John 17:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.14); [John 17:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.16); we must rise superior to all its *concerns*, resist all its *temptations*, mortify all its *lusts*, and "walk in all things as Christ walked, [1 John 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.6)."

The same mind altogether that was in him, must be in us also, [Philippians 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.5). And to this we are predestined. We were not chosen of God from eternity, or made the subjects of his new-creating grace in time, because we were holy, or because he foresaw that we would be holy; but that we "might be holy." "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we would walk in them, [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4); [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.10)." These two passages deserve the most attentive consideration in this view.

We are to be conformed to Christ in sufferings. Throughout his whole life our Savior was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "Though he was a Son—yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered:" and "he was made perfect through sufferings."

In like manner we also must be "a poor and afflicted people, [Zephaniah 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.12)." We must "take up our cross daily, and follow him:" we must be "hated by all men for his sake." "If they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they call those of his household." "The servant cannot expect to be above his Master." "We must "follow him outside the camp, bearing his reproach." To this also we are predestined. So Paul expressly affirmed respecting himself, 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4; and so he affirms respecting us also: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution! [2 Timothy 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.12)."

We are to be conformed to Christ also in glory. "He is now seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" and there shall we also in due time be seated. Yes, "having *suffered*with him, we shall also *reign*with him," and "be glorified together with him, verse 17 with [2 Timothy 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.12)." We shall be like him in glory: "our vile body will be fashioned like unto his glorious body, [Philippians 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.21); our soul also will be changed into his perfect image, [1 John 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.2); and our blessedness be altogether assimilated to his, [Revelation 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.21). And to all of this also our predestination extends.

It is not to the means of grace only that "we are chosen, but to salvation itself, and to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. See also [Acts 13:48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.48) and [1 Thessalonians 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.9)."

***~~2. The ultimate end respected our Lord Jesus Christ himself—~~***

The first-born were entitled to many privileges: to them belonged dominion, and the priesthood, and a double portion of the inheritance. In respect of all the rest of the creation, not excepting even the angels themselves, we may be styled the first-born, [Exodus 4:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 4.22). [Hebrews 12:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.23). The whole family of believers are "kings and priests unto God," and are entitled to inherit the kingdom of our heavenly Father, [Revelation 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.6). [Matthew 25:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.24).

But in respect of us, Christ is the First-born; for "He in all things must have the pre-eminence, [Colossians 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.18)." He is to be the Head of all his Church and people, [Ephesians 1:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.21-22); and to this He is predestined; yes, it is in order to this that they also are predestined to the attainment of his glory. It was decreed in the eternal counsels of his Father, that "if he would make his soul an offering for sin," he would have "a seed to serve him," and would assuredly "be satisfied with the travail of his soul, [Psalm 22:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.30) with [Isaiah 53:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.10-11)."

Had not this been absolutely decreed, it might have happened that not so much as one might ever have been saved, and that, consequently, Christ might have shed his blood in vain. For, *if everything had been left entirely dependent on the free will of man, all might have used their free will precisely in the same way; and every child of man might have rejected him, exactly as the great mass of mankind are actually doing*.

But can we conceive that God would have given his Son to bear the iniquities of a ruined world, and have left it to mere chance, whether any single individual would ever obtain mercy through him, or become a jewel in his crown? We cannot conceive this; in fact, we know that it was not thus left to *chance*. We are sure that there is a chosen people, who were from eternity given to Christ, to be redeemed by his blood, and to be saved by his grace: and that of those who were so given him, he neither has lost, nor ever will lose, so much as one! [John 17:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.2); [John 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.6); [John 17:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.9-12); [John 17:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.24). How many these are, God alone knows: but we are sure they are "many," even "a multitude, whom no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation! [Revelation 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.9); [Revelation 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.9)."

The only difference lies in this: that those who maintain this doctrine refer all the glory of man's salvation to God alone, making him the Author and the Finisher of it, from first to last: while those who deny the doctrine, give a great measure of the glory to the creature—for, however they may acknowledge that salvation through Christ is a gift to mankind at large, they make every individual the first moving cause of his own salvation: and exactly in proportion as they ascribe salvation either to human merit, or human agency as independent of God's grace, in that proportion they give to man a ground of glorying before God.

Whatever they may say, according to them, *it is man "who makes himself to differ;" and his salvation must ultimately be ascribed to him as its true, proper, original, and moving cause*.

It is in this view that we are anxious to have the doctrine of predestination properly understood. As a mere abstract and speculative point, we could very contentedly wave the discussion of it: but, as involving the honor of God, we cannot but consider it as deserving our most serious attention. Nevertheless, if any man cannot receive it, we are not disposed to contend with him, but are contented with pressing on his consideration such matters only as are of primary and fundamental importance.

Hoping however that the truth of the doctrine has approved itself to you, we shall proceed to state,

***~~II. The way in which those ends are accomplished—~~***

The order and method of God's dispensations, from eternity to eternity, are here clearly marked:

***~~1. He "foreknows" elect men as objects of his love—~~***

As far as relates to mere prescience, all things are equally exposed to the view of the omnipresent God; and those who shall ultimately perish, are as much "foreknown" by him, as those that shall be saved. Many in this sense are foreknown by him, who are not predestined, or called, or justified, nor ever will be glorified. But the word here used imports more than mere prescience, and includes *an affectionate regard to the persons foreknown*. In this sense it is elsewhere used John, 10:14. [Romans 11:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.2) and in [1 Peter 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.20), the same word is rendered, by a far stronger term, "fore-ordained." And in this sense it must be understood in the passage before us. It is equivalent to that expression of the prophet Jeremiah, "He has loved us with an everlasting love! [Jeremiah 31:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.3)." And if we inquire into the reason of this love, we can assign no other than that which our blessed Lord has assigned, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight! [Matthew 11:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.26)."

***~~2. He then "predestinates" them unto life—~~***

We speak of this, as though it succeeded the former in point of time: but with God there is no interval between his foreknowledge and fore-ordination. The inward affection, and the decree consequent upon it, are perfectly co-existent. But in God's predestination, he has respect both to the end and to the means; or rather to the end by the means. He does not ordain men to life in a way of sin, but, as we have already shown, in a way of holiness. This is strongly asserted by Paul, in a fore-cited passage; "God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth! 2 Thessalonians 2:13." And Peter to the same effect says, We are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, [1 Peter 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.2)."

***~~3. In due time he "calls" them by his word and Spirit—~~***

The calling here spoken of, is not the mere external call of the Gospel: for many are so called, who, rejecting the call, are never justified or glorified. It is the *effective internal call*, whereby they are "made willing in the day of God's power." "The word comes to them in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," and they are "turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, [1 Corinthians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.4). [Acts 26:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.18)." This is the call which they experience, and which is the combined result of God's eternal purpose, and his effectual grace, [2 Timothy 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.9).

***~~4. These, as soon as they believe, he "justifies" them—~~***

Whatever sins a man may have committed, they are all blotted out of the book of God's remembrance, the very instant that he obeys the Gospel call: "All who believe," says the Apostle, "are justified from all things, [Acts 13:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.39);" nor shall so much as one of "his sins and iniquities ever be remembered against him anymore! [Hebrews 8:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.12)."

***~~5. These, in due time, he "glorifies" them—~~***

Yes, blessed be God, *the chain of God's purposes reaches from eternity to eternity; nor shall one link of it be broken.*The glorification of the saints is in part effected, even in this life; inasmuch as "the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon them, [1 Peter 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.14);" and "they are changed into Christ's image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord, [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18)." But in Heaven their, felicity will be perfect. There "all that was in part will be done away:" they will "see as they are seen, and know as they are known;" and will be like, and with, their God, for ever and ever.

Here, it may be observed, is no distinct mention made of sanctification; and this may be supposed to give some countenance to those who imagine that sanctification is unnecessary to our final salvation. But sanctification is not omitted here: on the contrary, it is interwoven with the whole statement. For respecting whom are all these things spoken? Respecting those "who love God." Now love to God is the root and summit of all holiness: and therefore it is plain, that the persons spoken of as called, and justified, and glorified—must be holy. Moreover, the thing to which they are predestined is, "to be conformed to the image of Christ." But how can that be if they be not holy?

Again, sanctification is yet further implied in their justification, from which it must of necessity spring, as an effect from a cause; as also in their glorification, to which it is necessary as a means to an end: for without a "fitness for their inheritance" they could not possibly enjoy it. We see therefore that the omission is in appearance only, and not in reality; and that there is no ground whatever afforded for antinomian licentiousness.

Many who do not in their hearts disapprove of this doctrine—yet think of it as affording matter for speculation only, and as of little, if any, use with respect to practice.

***~~But, in fact, it is a doctrine of great practical importance; for it lays the axe to the root of:~~***

***~~1. All boasting—~~***

If any man is disposed to boast, he must, in his own opinion at least, either have *merited salvation*in some measure by his own goodness, or effected it by his own power. They who deny the doctrine of predestination do unavoidably give some occasion for men to boast: for whether they make God's predestination to be influenced by something done, or something foreseen—still it is the inherent and independent goodness of man that is made the determining ground of God's choice, and the original cause of man's salvation!

But the doctrine of predestination plucks up all such conceits by the very root! It makes God's sovereign choice the primary source of man's happiness, and God's immutable purpose the means of its final consummation.

If it is asked: Why did God love him? it must be answered, "Because he would love him, [Deuteronomy 7:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 7.7-8); [Deuteronomy 9:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 9.4-5)."

If it is further asked: Who "has wrought all his works in him?" it must be answered, *God!*[Isaiah 26:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.12). [2 Corinthians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.5). It is God who laid the foundation, and who carries on the spiritual building even to the end: and when the top-stone is brought forth, every sinner in the universe must "cry: Grace, grace unto it!" [Zechariah 4:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.6-9)."

***~~2. All presumption—~~***

The doctrine of predestination is objected to by many, under the idea that it authorizes and encourages persons to say, "I am elected, and have therefore no cause to fear, or even to take heed of my ways." But, if any man were so to abuse the doctrine, we would immediately ask him this question: Are you conformed to the image of Christ? Here is a test whereby to try our pretensions: and it will instantly reveal of what value they are in the sight of God.

If a man has an evidence in his own soul, that a work of grace has been begun within him, and that he has been enabled, in a considerable degree, to "put off the old man, and put on the new," then, in proportion as that change is manifest, he may infer from it his election of God: but, if that change does not appear in his life and conduct, then he may know infallibly, that, in speaking of himself as one whom God has predestined unto life, he deceives his own soul, and gives advantage to his great adversary to destroy him.

Let this then be well known, that we must try ourselves whether we be in the faith: and we must determine the matter, not by any groundless conceits of our own, but by our proficiency in righteousness and true holiness.

***~~3. All despondency—~~***

The doctrine of predestination, if abused, may generate both presumption and despondency: as our Church, in her 17th Article, has told us. But this does not militate against the doctrine itself; for on the same ground, we might decry every other doctrine of Christianity. Be it so: a man has not at present any evidence that he is one of God's elect. Does this warrant him to conclude that he is given over to a state of reprobation? Surely not: for, if he looks into the Scriptures, he will find that even the Apostles themselves were once in a carnal unconverted state, yes, "were children of wrath, even as others, [Ephesians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.3)."

But as the Apostles were in God's own time delivered from that state, so may we be, notwithstanding we are at this moment in a state which is most unpromising. *God did not choose the Apostles for any good that was in them, or that he foresaw would be in them*: and therefore he may magnify his grace towards us, even as he did towards them. His grace is his own, and he may confer it on whomever he will: and it is a most consolatory thought, that, as he may, so he often does, cause his grace to abound where sin has most abounded.

This we are sure is the doctrine of our Church; and we cannot do better than refer you to her Article upon this subject. Nevertheless, if any man be not able to receive this doctrine, we would on no account press it upon his mind: we would rather say to him, Discard it from your mind: and take the broad promises of Scripture, wherein it is declared, that "the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin," and that he "will save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him." Take, I say, these promises, not with any reference whatever to God's eternal counsels towards you personally, but with a perfect confidence that he will fulfill them to all who rely upon him; and that no sinner in the universe who comes to him in his Son's name, shall ever be cast out.

***~~#1879~~***

***~~GOD'S GIFT OF HIS SON A GROUND FOR EXPECTING EVERY OTHER BLESSING~~***

**[Romans 8:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.32).**

"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

IF we contemplate the mysterious work of redemption, and the grace of God as displayed in it, we shall be filled with wonder and amazement, verse 30; and in the view of it we shall defy all the enemies of our salvation, verse 31; but if we contemplate the *means*by which redemption has been effected, even by the gift of God's only dear Son, our exultation will rise to the highest summit of confidence and triumph. We may then assure ourselves, as the Apostle does in the text, that God's past goodness to us is a just ground for expecting every other blessing at his hands.

In these words we notice,

***~~I. What God has done for us—~~***

The state of fallen man was desperate: no possible way was left whereby we might restore ourselves to God's favor. God, in compassion to us, "spared not his own Son—may either mean that he spared him not in a way of justice, that is that he exacted of him the utmost farthing of our debt (see [2 Peter 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.4).) or that he spared him not in a way of bounty, that is, withheld him not. The latter seems to be the sense in this place."

Nothing less than the incarnation and death of the Son of God could remedy the miseries which mankind had brought upon themselves; yet, such was God's regard for our sinful race, that, rather than they would perish, he would not withhold his only Son.

***~~He even "delivered him up" to death—~~***

God sent not his Son merely to instruct us: he gave him to make atonement for our sins: he sent him to die even the accursed death of the cross.

***~~We "all" were the persons for whose sake God thus delivered him—~~***

All indeed are not alike benefitted by this gift; but it was designed alike for all, and there is a sufficiency in the death of Christ to expiate the sins of all. If any receive not salvation through him, they owe it, not to any lack of love and mercy in the bosom of Jehovah, (for he wills not the death of any sinner,) nor to any lack of merit in the Savior, (for his blood can cleanse from all sin,) but altogether to their own obstinate unbelief. Every one, who desires acceptance through him, may confidently say, He was delivered up for me.

This manifestation of Divine goodness affords abundant ground for,

***~~II. The inference drawn from it—~~***

***~~God will "give us all things" that are needful—~~***

The general expression "all things" must be understood in a limited sense. God will not give worldly riches and honors to his people; but all things that are good for them he will bestow, whatever they need for body or soul, for time or eternity.

***~~He will give us all things "freely"—~~***

He does not need to have blessings extorted from him by importunity: he is far more willing to give than we are to ask; nor does he give because we ask, but stirs us up to ask, because he before determined to give: he will bestow everything on his people as a father on his own children.

***~~This may be inferred from what he has already done—~~***

*Will not he, who has given his own Son, give smaller things?*Will he, who was so gracious to his enemies, forget his friends?*Will he, who did so much unsolicited, refuse those who cry day and night unto him?*

This inference is so obvious, that the Apostle appeals to the reason of every man to judge of it. He insinuates that to doubt it would be the height of absurdity: he seems to think that God could not act otherwise.

***~~By way of improvement,~~***

***~~1. Let us endeavor to estimate aright this gift of God—~~***

God's own Son is infinitely above all creatures: all the hosts of angels and all the glory of Heaven are nothing in comparison with him. Had he been a mere creature, the Apostle's inference had been inconclusive. If our Lord were only a creature, the reasoning would be to this effect: 'If God delivered up one creature to endure temporal pain, how shall he not deliver millions of creatures from enduring eternal misery? If he gave one creature, who was infinitely below himself, to be deprived of life for a time, how shall he not give himself, who is infinitely above all creatures, to be our everlasting portion?'

What force or propriety would there be in such reasoning as this? He, against whom the sword of vengeance was put forth, was Jehovah's fellow, [Zechariah 13:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 13.7). [1 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 3.16). Let our gratitude rise in proportion to the excellency of this gift: let us contemplate its excellency, until we exclaim with the Apostle, "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" [2 Corinthians 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 9.15)

***~~2. Let us avail ourselves of the encouragement given us to ask for more—~~***

We daily need many things both for our bodies and souls, and we have the fullest assurance that God will grant us what we need. Let not anyone then say, "I am too unworthy to ask." What worthiness was there in man to obtain the gift of God's own Son? After him, can there be anything too great for God to bestow? Surely then the weakest and the vilest may enlarge their petitions. If we "open our mouths wide, God will fill them."

***~~3. Let us be chiefly solicitous to receive Christ himself—~~***

God will bestow everything "with Christ." We cannot receive his blessings without him, nor him without his blessings. Let us then in every state labor most to secure our interest in Christ. If he be ours, we cannot but have everything in, and with him, [1 Corinthians 3:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.21-23).

***~~#1880~~***

***~~PAUL'S CONFIDENCE~~***

***~~[Romans 8:33-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.33-34).~~***

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies.

Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

OF all the systems that mankind have devised for reconciling themselves to God, there is not any that will afford solid confidence to the soul: they have never been able to fix a standard that would be a sufficient test of men's attainments, or to draw a line of distinction between those who would attain salvation, and those who would fall short of it. Hence, after all their labors, they are left in a painful uncertainty about their eternal state. But the Gospel removes all suspense on this subject; and gives to those who cordially embrace it, a full assurance of their acceptance with God.

In the New Testament we find scarcely any intimation of believers being harassed with doubts and fears: but there are many instances wherein they express the most assured expectation of happiness and glory. In confirmation of this, we need look no further than to the words before us; wherein Paul speaks of them as having communion with Christ in his most exalted privileges, and as possessing the very same confidence as the Messiah himself enjoyed. Compare [Isaiah 50:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.7-9) with the text. He, not in his own person only, but in the behalf of all God's people, challenges the whole universe to lay anything to their charge, so as ultimately to condemn them.

We shall consider,

***~~I. His confident challenge—~~***

***~~The name by which he characterizes God's people is most appropriate—~~***

Among the ungodly world, there is scarcely a more sarcastic or contemptuous expression ever used, than that by which God himself designates his own people. When they say, "There is one of the elect," they mean by it, "There is a sanctimonious hypocrite, and a contemptible fanatic." But, whatever opprobrium they may attach to the word "elect," be it known, that there is an elect people, whom "God has chosen in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world, [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4)," and that too, irrespective of any works that they would afterwards perform, [2 Timothy 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.9). [Romans 9:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.11). He chose them because he would choose them, and loved them because he would love them, [Deuteronomy 7:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 7.6-8). And if any are disposed to quarrel with this exercise of sovereign grace, let them tell us, who made the distinction between the Jews and the rest of the world; and why he did so. Let them also tell us, why he, who in that sovereign way chose nations, may not also choose individuals: and why he, who chose some to enjoy the means of salvation, may not choose others to salvation itself. Proud man may frame distinctions, if he pleases: but if the exercise of God's sovereignty is unjust in the one case, it must be unjust also in the other; and if it is admitted in the one case, it must be also in the other.

Ignorant men are ready to think, that this is a proud title: but it is the most humiliating title that can be imagined; because it acknowledges that *no man on earth would ever have chosen God, if God had not first chosen him*. It is the rejection of this title, not the assumption of it, that argues pride; inasmuch as it implies, that some have within themselves an excellence, which has attracted the notice of Almighty God, and induced him to confer on them the most distinguished privileges.

***~~In behalf of these he expresses the most assured confidence of their salvation—~~***

No assertion, however strong, could so fully declare his confidence, as the challenge does which he gives to the whole universe.

We are not to understand him as saying, that there is no ground for accusing and condemning the elect; but, that they are brought into such a state that nothing ever shall be laid to their charge so as finally to effect their ruin.

Let us then, with him, give the challenge to all who may be supposed most likely to prevail against us; to the law, to Satan, to conscience, yes, with reverence be it spoken, even to God himself.

The *law*indeed may accuse us of having violated every commandment in ten thousand thousand instances: yet will we defy it to condemn us.

*Satan*may affirm with truth, that we have been his vassals far the greater part of our lives: yet he shall not prevail against us.

As for *conscience*, that will testify against us, that we have indulged many secret lusts, and been guilty of innumerable transgressions: yet shall not its allegations be heard to our confusion.

It is needless to say what the *omniscient God*might lay to our charge, what rebellion against his Majesty, what neglect of his dear Son, what opposition to his Holy Spirit: but yet, notwithstanding all, so is the believer circumstanced, that God himself can find nothing for which to condemn him.

Doubtless these are strong assertions; and we may perhaps be ready to question the truth of them. But, if there were the smallest room for doubt, would the Apostle have been so confident in his challenge? Would he have repeated the challenge in such unqualified terms, if he could have been answered in so easy and obvious a manner as some imagine?

As arrogant as the Apostle may appear, we shall cease to think him so, if we consider,

***~~II. The grounds of his confidence—~~***

His answers might be read, like the questions themselves, in the form of interrogatories; and they would derive much additional spirit and force from this construction, which indeed both the preceding and following context seem to countenance. But in whatever way his words are pointed, the import of them is much the same. He grounds his confidence on,

***~~1. The sovereignty of the Father's grace—~~***

The elect, having believed in Jesus, are actually brought into a justified state. Justification implies a free, a full, an everlasting remission of all our sins. It is a free gift bestowed upon us, not as saints, but as sinners: we are not first made godly, and then justified; but are first justified, and then made godly. Paul expressly gives this title to God, "The justifier of the *ungodly,*[Romans 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.5)." When God of his infinite mercy vouchsafes to justify a sinner, he does not put away some sins, and retain others; but "blots them all out as a morning cloud, [Isaiah 44:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.22)," and "puts them from us as far as the east is from the west, [Psalm 103:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 103.12)." It is a blessed and a certain truth, that "all who believe are justified from all things, [Acts 13:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.39)." Nor does God cancel our debt for a time only, intending to call us to account for it at a future period: for he covenants with us, that "our sins and iniquities he will remember no more, [Hebrews 10:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.17);" and he assures us, that "his gifts and calling are without repentance, [Romans 11:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.29)."

Now if God thus justifies his elect, we may well ask, "who shall condemn them?" If he "cast all our sins into the very depths of the sea, [Micah 7:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 7.19)," who shall bring them up again from thence, and lay them to our charge? He "beholds no iniquity in Jacob, [Numbers 23:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 23.21)," but views us as "complete in Christ [Colossians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.10);" and has formed a chain that shall not be broken: "whom from eternity he foreknew and *predestined*, them, in his appointed time, he called and *justified*; and them he will also *glorify*" for evermore! [Romans 8:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.30).

***~~2. The perfection of the Redeemer's work—~~***

Every part of Christ's work was considered by the Apostle as a security for the salvation of God's elect. His death, his resurrection, his ascension, his intercession, are so many pledges, that no one shall ever trust in him in vain.

For what end was it that Christ died, but to procure "eternal redemption" for his people! [Hebrews 9:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.12). "He gave his own life to be a ransom for them! [Matthew 20:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 20.28)." "He shed his blood for the remission of their sins! [Matthew 26:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.28)." "He died that they might live no longer to themselves, but unto him who died for them, [2 Corinthians 5:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.15)."

We confess, that, if we look only at *their*steadfastness, they may come into condemnation; and "the weak brother for whom Christ died, and that has been actually washed in his blood, may perish, [Romans 14:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.15) and [1 Corinthians 8:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.11);" but *their security is in Christ*, who will not readily forego the ends of his death, or give up to Satan the souls which he has purchased at so dear a rate!

The *resurrection*of Christ is a great additional security to the believer; because it was a liberating of our surety from the prison to which he had been carried on our account; and consequently it argues the full discharge of that debt which he had taken upon himself. Hence a peculiar stress is laid upon it in the text; as also in another place, where it is said, "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life! [Romans 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.10)." Now if he "died for our offenses, and rose again for our justification, [Romans 4:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.25)," will he allow this end to be defeated? We may be well assured he will not.

From the *ascension*of Christ a yet fuller assurance may be derived, because he is gone to "the right hand of God" both as our forerunner and our head. He is not only "preparing places for his people," but is invested with all power in Heaven and in earth, and has the government of the whole universe committed to him, on purpose that he may put down all his, and his people's, enemies, [1 Corinthians 15:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.24-25). If then he kept his people when he was on earth, so that not one of them was lost, [John 17:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.12), will he now allow any to pluck them out of his hand? No! he has said, that "they shall never perish! [John 10:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28);" and he will assuredly fulfill his word.

If anything further be requisite for the comfort of our minds, we find it abundantly supplied in the *intercession*of Christ. The only doubt that can arise on this subject is, whether our manifold backslidings will not provoke the Father to cast us off? But "Christ ever lives to make intercession for us," and thereby preserves that peace, which otherwise would be interrupted every hour.

If indeed our transgressions were willful and habitual, we would prove ourselves at once not to be of the number of God's elect. But if they be only such as arise from the infirmity of our nature; if they be lamented, resisted, and diminished; and if they make us to cleave more earnestly to Christ, Christ will be "our Advocate with the Father, [1 John 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.1)," and will prevail so as to "save us to the uttermost, [Hebrews 7:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 7.25)."

From all these grounds we may affirm with the fullest assurance, that "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus! [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1)."

***~~To improve this subject, let us stir up ourselves,~~***

***~~1. To humble inquiry—~~***

Are we of the number of "God's elect?" This is no difficult point to ascertain: for though we cannot look into the book of God's decrees, to see whether God have chosen us—we may search the records of our own conscience, to see whether we have chosen God: and this will determine the point at once. If we have chosen God as our portion, and Christ as our way to the Father—it is an indisputable evidence that God had before chosen us; because we never would have loved him, if he had not first loved us. But if we feel no such delight in God, we have no reason to think that we belong to him. Let this mode of inquiry be instituted; and let it be pursued with the seriousness which it deserves.

***~~2. To grateful adoration—~~***

What debtors are we to the grace of God, that grace that chose us, that grace that treasured up a fullness for us in Christ Jesus! What do we owe to him, who, when he had *passed by angels*, was pleased to choose us; and when he might justly have driven us beyond the hope of mercy, has placed us beyond the fear of condemnation! Surely, if we do not pour out our hearts in devoutest gratitude before him, the very stones may well cry out against us!

But while we render to him the tribute of a thankful heart, let us also glorify him by a holy life. It is "to good works that we are chosen, [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.10). [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14)," and "to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, 2 Thessalonians 2:13;" and therefore we must answer the end of our election, if we would finally enjoy its blessings. Let us then walk worthy of our high calling, and cultivate all the dispositions of God's elect; and be as studious to avoid all grounds of accusation, as to escape the miseries of condemnation itself.

***~~#1881~~***

***~~PAUL'S ASSURANCE OF PERSEVERING~~***

***~~[Romans 8:38-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.38-39).~~***

"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature—shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!"

AS there is a typical resemblance between that good land which was promised to the Jews, and that better country which is reserved for us in Heaven, so is there a striking resemblance between those, whether Jews or Christians, who have looked forward to the accomplishment of the promises. We see Moses while he was yet on the other side of Jordan, and Joshua soon after he had arrived on the borders of Canaan, appointing the boundaries of the twelve tribes, settling everything with respect to the distribution of the land, and ordering various things to be observed, just as if they were already in full possession of the whole country without one enemy to oppose them.

This appears at first sight presumptuous; but they knew that God had given them the land; and therefore, notwithstanding the battles which were yet to be fought, they doubted not in the least but that they would obtain the promised inheritance. Thus also the Apostle, in the passage before us, speaks in the language of *triumph*on behalf of himself and of all the Christians at Rome—and that too even while they were surrounded with enemies, and conflicting on the field of battle.

It will be profitable to consider,

***~~I. The point of which the Apostle was persuaded—~~***

"The love of God" is that which God has manifested to us "in Christ Jesus," not merely in sending his Son to die for us, but in forgiving our sins, and adopting us into his family for his sake.

From this love the Apostle says: "Nothing shall ever separate us from the love of Christ!" and, to strengthen his assertion, he calls to mind the various things which might be supposed capable of effecting a separation; and declares concerning each, that it never shall.

He mentions four distinct couplets.

First, "neither *death*nor *life*" shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ!

*Death*is that which is most of all dreaded, [Hebrews 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.15), and life is that which is most of all desired, [Job 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 2.4). More especially, if the one be attended with bitter agonies, or the other with all the pleasures of sense, their influence over us is exceeding great. But neither the one with all its terrors, nor the other with all its comforts, shall ever dissolve the union that exists between God and his believing people!

Next, "neither *angels*, nor *principalities*, nor *powers*" shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ!

By *angels*must certainly be meant the evil angels, since the good angels are employed in ministering to the heirs of salvation, and would rather confirm them in the love of God than separate them from it. Whereas, the evil angels, like a roaring lion, are constantly seeking whom they may devour.

"*Principalities*and *powers*" are civil magistrates, who hold dominion over the visible, as the devils do over the invisible, world: and who, alas! too often unite their influence with that of Satan to destroy the Church.

But neither the one nor the other, nor both combined, shall ever separate a believer, however weak he may be, from the love of God!

Moreover "things *present*or things *to come*" shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ!

*Present*things may be so embarrassing as greatly to perplex us; and things *future*may appear so formidable as to make us think it almost impossible for us to maintain our ground against them; but they shall never prevail to destroy a child of God.

Lastly, "neither *height*nor *depth*" shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ!

To some the height of earthly *prosperity*is a dreadful snare; to others the depth of *adversity*and distress. But the believer may defy them both: for not only they shall not be able, but "nothing in the whole creation" shall be able to separate him from the love of God!

This confidence of the Apostle being so extraordinary, let us consider,

***~~II. The grounds of his persuasion—~~***

These were twofold; general, as relating to others; and particular, as relating to himself; the former creating in him an assurance of faith; the latter an assurance of hope. We notice,

***~~1. The general grounds—~~***

These are such as are revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and are common to all believers.

The *stability of the covenant* which God has made with us in Christ Jesus, warrants an assurance, that all who are savingly interested in it shall endure to the end. It secures to us not only a *new heart*, but a *divine agency*, "causing us to walk in God's statutes, [Ezekiel 36:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.26-27)." It engages that God shall never depart from us, nor we from him, [Jeremiah 32:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.40). In short, it promises us both "grace and glory, [Psalm 84:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 84.11)."

Now this covenant shall not be broken: if Heaven and earth fail, this shall not, [Isaiah 54:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.10); there shall not be one jot or tittle of it ever violated: it is "ordered in all things, and sure, [2 Samuel 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 23.5)." Consequently the believer shall never be deprived of any of its blessings.

The *immutability of God*is another ground of assured faith and hope. Why did God originally set his love upon us? Was it for our own goodness, either seen or foreseen? Alas! we had no existence but in God's purpose: and, from the moment we began to exist, we have never had one good thing in us which we did not first receive from God, [1 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.7). If then God loved us simply because he would love us, [Deuteronomy 7:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 7.7-8), and not for any inherent loveliness in us—will he cast us off again on account of those evil qualities which he well knew to be in us, and which he himself has undertaken to subdue? This would argue a change in his counsels: whereas we are told that, "with him there is no variableness neither shadow of turning, [James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.17);" and that "his gifts and calling are without repentance, [Romans 11:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.29)."

The *offices of Christ*may also be considered as justifying an assured hope of final perseverance. For our Lord did not assume the priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices merely to put us into a capacity to save ourselves; but that his work might be effectual for the salvation of all whom the Father had given to him. At the last day he will be able to say, as he did in the days of his flesh, "Of those whom you have given me, I have lost none!" If he is ever living on purpose to make intercession for them, and is constituted Head over all things to the Church on purpose to save them, then he will keep them; none shall ever pluck them out of his hands! [1 Samuel 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.9). [1 Peter 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.5). [John 10:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.38), nor shall anything ever separate them from the love of God!

***~~2. The particular grounds—~~***

We need not resort to any express revelation made to Paul, in order to account for his confidence: for he could not but know that he had believed in Christ, and that he was as desirous of being *sanctified*by his grace as of being *saved*by his blood; and consequently, he could not doubt his saving interest in the promises. And wherever conscience testifies that this is the real experience of the soul, there a person may entertain the same assured hope as Paul himself did.

It would not indeed be expedient for young converts to indulge too strong a confidence; because their sincerity has been but little tried, and they are by no means sufficiently simple in their dependence on God. In proportion therefore as the evidences of their faith are defective, and the means of stability are overlooked, they must relax their confidence of persevering to the end.

As for those who are continually living in a sinful state, it would be a most horrible delusion in them to say, that nothing would separate them from the love of God: since they have reason to doubt at this moment whether they be at all savingly interested in his love.

But a humble contrite person, that is living by faith in the Son of God, and maintaining a suitable conduct in his heart and life, he may conclude himself to be in the love of God, and be persuaded firmly that nothing shall be able to separate him from it. He then stands in the very situation of the Apostle, as far as respects his own personal experience, and therefore may indulge the same joyful hope and persuasion that he shall endure unto the end.

Nor need he be at all discouraged on account of his own weakness, since the more weak he feels himself to be, the stronger he is in reality, [2 Corinthians 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.10); inasmuch as he is made more dependent on his God.

In a word, an assurance of *faith*respecting the accomplishment of God's promises to believers, should be maintained by all, since his word can never fail: but an assurance of *hope*respecting our own personal interest in those promises, should rise or fall according to the evidences we have of our own sincerity.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who know nothing of this joyful persuasion—~~***

Do not condemn that of which you are not capable of judging aright: but seek a saving interest in the love of God; and believe in Christ, through whom the Father's love shall be secured, and by whom it shall be revealed to your soul. When "the love of God has been shed abroad in your own hearts," you will be better able to judge of the confidence which that love inspires.

***~~2. Those whose persuasion accords with that of the Apostle—~~***

Nothing surely can be conceived more delightful than to possess an assured hope of eternal happiness and glory. But let it never be abused to the encouragement of sloth. If we profess that nothing shall separate us from the love of God, then let us take care that nothing does separate us from it. Let not the *temptations*of Satan, or the *persecutions*of men, not the *comforts*of life, or the *terrors*of death, let nothing felt at present, or feared in future, let nothing in the whole creation draw us aside from the path of duty, or retard our progress in the divine life! Jude, verse 20, 21.

***~~#1882~~***

***~~THE PRIVILEGES OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS~~***

***~~[Romans 9:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.1-4).~~***

"I speak the truth in Christ--I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit--I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises."

*IT is generally thought an office of love to conceal from persons any truths, the recital of which will afford them pain: but true love will rather stimulate us to declare such truths as are necessary to be known, though it will incline us to declare them with the greatest tenderness*and circumspection. An admirable pattern presents itself before us in the text.

The Apostle was about to enter on a most offensive subject to the Jews, but a subject that ought never to be concealed frzom them, namely, the determination of God to cast off their nation, and to engraft the Gentiles on their stock. But, as it would be thought that he was actuated only by a spirit of revenge, he declares to them, in the most solemn manner, and appeals to God for the truth of it, that so far from wishing their hurt, he was affected with the deepest sorrow on their account; and that there was nothing he would not do or suffer, if it might but be the means of saving them from the impending eternal ruin.

His enumeration of the privileges which they abused, and his pathetic lamentation over them, may well lead us to consider,

***~~I. The exalted privileges enjoyed by true Israelites—~~***

***~~The Jews, as a nation, were favored beyond all the nations upon earth—~~***

God honored them with an adoption into his family, he regarded them as his children, [Exodus 4:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 4.22-23). [Jeremiah 31:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.9-10), and acted towards them as a father, [Deuteronomy 32:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.6); [Deuteronomy 32:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.10); [Deuteronomy 32:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.13-14). He given to them a symbol of his presence: the ark, and the Shechinah, or bright cloud, upon it, were visible tokens of his presence, and were regarded as the "principal glory" of that distinguished people, [1 Samuel 4:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 4.21-22). [Psalm 80:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 80.1).

He "gave" them also from Heaven a revelation of his will:

The *moral*law he promulgated in the form of "a covenant," and wrote with his own finger on two tables of stone. The covenant was but one: but it is spoken of in the plural number, either because it was given on two tables, or because it was repeatedly published in different forms.

The *judicial*law he formed as a code, according to which he himself, and all the magistrates under him, were to govern them.

And the *ceremonial*law he instituted for "the service" of his temple, that they might worship him in a befitting manner.

Because the sacred oracles were so great a blessing, [Deuteronomy 4:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 4.7-8). [Romans 3:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.1-2), the Apostle speaks of them in three different views. To all these he added "a promise" of his rest, and a continued enjoyment of it, unless they would provoke him by their iniquities to deprive them of it, [Deuteronomy 30:15-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 30.15-20).

***~~But their privileges were only a shadow of those enjoyed by true Israelites—~~***

As, under the Jewish dispensation, "all were not Israel who were of Israel, [Romans 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.6)."

Just so, under the Gospel, "those who are Christ's, are the true seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise, [Galatians 3:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.29)."

Now to those who are "Israelites indeed" belong those infinitely rich blessings, which, in a figure, were enjoyed by the national Jews. They are really the sons of God, as soon as ever they believe in Christ, [John 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.12). 1 [John 3:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.1-2). [Ephesians 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.19), and have a spirit of "adoption" given them whereby they cry, *Abba, Father!*[Romans 8:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.14-15). They have God, not merely residing in a bright cloud, but dwelling in their own hearts, [1 Corinthians 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.16), and displaying to them his "glory" in the face of Jesus, [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6). To them is revealed that "covenant," which is "ordered in all things and sure, [2 Samuel 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 23.5)," together with the whole of their duty both to God and man; so that, by adhering to his directions, they are sure to prove both duteous citizens, and accepted worshipers.

Lastly, they have also exceeding great and precious "promises," comprehending everything that is good for body and for soul, in time and in eternity, 1 Timothy 4:8.

But, by how much the more exalted our condition under the Gospel is, by so much the more may we see,

***~~II. The disposition we should manifest towards those who despise these privileges—~~***

The expressions used by the Apostle admit of different interpretations. Some consider him as saying that he was willing to be excommunicated from the church of God, and to be treated by them, even as he was by his enemies: and others, as saying, that he was willing to suffer for them after the example of Christ. In the Greek, "Be as I am, for I was as you are." The same idea is more fully expressed in [Acts 26:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.9-11). According to this interpretation, the Apostle's words are a plain and obvious reason for his excessive grief: for, having been in their situation, and knowing from bitter experience the evil of it, he could never think of them without the keenest sensations of sorrow and compassion.

If the strength of the expression, "I wished myself accursed from Christ," appears to militate against this interpretation, we observe, that the Apostle puts the effect for the cause, that is, the ultimate effect of his aversion to Christ for the aversion itself. A similar mode of expression repeatedly occurs in Scripture. See [Isaiah 28:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.15); [Isaiah 30:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.10). See also [Acts 13:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.46) and [Revelation 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.24), where the depths of Satan import what those depths were in reality, and not what the people themselves called them. But, in whatever sense they are taken, they certainly import that,

***~~1. We should be deeply concerned about their state—~~***

There were various things which grieved and wounded the Apostle's mind, yes, that occasioned him great heaviness, and continual pangs, compare [Galatians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.19); he was much affected, not only with the numbers of those that were rejecting his message, but with the peculiar advantages they had for knowing the truth, the strong obligations which their very profession, as God's Israel, laid them under to receive it, and the aggravated guilt under which they must speedily and eternally perish!

All these reasons are incomparably stronger as applied to those, who while they call themselves Christians because of their infant baptism, are unmindful of the privileges they enjoy. Who can think of the many thousands that bear the Christian name, who yet never draw near to God with filial affection, never behold the light of his countenance, never lay hold on his covenant of grace, never stay themselves in truth upon his promised mercy; who, I say, can think of these, and not wish that his "head were a fountain of tears to run down for them night and day, [Jeremiah 9:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 9.1)."

If one soul is of such value, that the whole world can never compensate for the loss of it, how shocking is the thought of millions of souls perishing under such an accumulated load of guilt! Surely no heaviness can be too great, no anguish too abiding—when we are surrounded with such objects, objects despising their own mercies, and "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath."

***~~2. We should account nothing too much to do or suffer for their salvation—~~***

When God threatened to destroy the whole Jewish nation, and offered to raise up from Moses a nation in their stead, Moses begged that he himself might be blotted out of the list of God's visible church, rather than that tremendous threatening would be executed, [Exodus 32:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 32.32). And certainly the Apostle Paul, whose labors and sufferings for the good of his fellow-creatures were unparalleled, [2 Corinthians 11:23-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.23-27), would gladly have submitted to any temporal calamity, if it might but operate for the salvation of Israel.

And who that considers what Jesus has done for the salvation of men, does not see the reasonableness of such a disposition? Who does not condemn himself for his lack of love to his fellow-immortals, and his lack of zeal in their service? If we condemn the world for their supineness, methinks the people of God have yet more occasion to blush for their own! For, what the world do, they do ignorantly; but they, who are taught of God, can see the state of those around them, and yet too often look upon them, either with cold indifference, or inactive pity. But let every Christian cultivate a better spirit; nor ever be satisfied, until he can appeal to God, and say, "I would endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory! [2 Timothy 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.10)."

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How far are they from a Christian spirit, who not only use no means for the salvation of others, but oppose and thwart them that do!~~***

If a faithful servant of God exerts himself for the good of mankind, how many will cry out against him as bothersome and fanatical, ostentatious and uncharitable! Who, among the Prophets, or Apostles, or who, even in the present day, has ever shown, in the smallest degree, the disposition manifested in the text, without exposing himself to much calumny and contempt?

But let the opposers of vital godliness and holy zeal, compare themselves with the Apostle, and ask, whether they breathe anything of his spirit? And let them no longer persist in fighting against God, and destroying their fellow-creatures; but rather turn unto God, that they themselves may be partakers of his offered mercy.

***~~2. How earnest should every professing Christian be in seeking his own salvation!~~***

If we ought to be deeply concerned about the souls of others, and to be willing either to do or suffer anything, in order to promote their welfare—then how much more should we lay to heart our own state, and exercise self-denial for the good of our own souls! If we duly estimated the privileges which God has given us, if we considered the happiness to which an improvement of those privileges would lead, and the misery that will infallibly result from the neglect of them, we would engage with incomparably greater zeal in the work of our salvation; we would make it our food and drink to do God's will; nor would life with all its joys, or death with all its terrors, be allowed to divert us from the prosecution of our purpose.

***~~#1883~~***

***~~OUR DUTY TOWARDS THE JEWS~~***

***~~[Romans 9:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.1-5).~~***

"I speak the truth in Christ--I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit--I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen."

FIDELITY in ministers is absolutely indispensable. Without it we cannot approve ourselves either to God or man. Yet in the exercise of it we should maintain a tenderness of spirit, "speaking the truth" indeed, but speaking it "in love." When at any time, as frequently we must, we bring painful truths to the ears of our hearers, we should convince them, that we are not actuated by anything but a spirit of love. Paul was especially careful upon this head; as may be seen in all his epistles, but especially in this which is before us.

It is pre-eminently deserving the attention of ministers. He is constrained to declare to the Jews, God's determination to reject the Jews from being his people, and to admit the Gentiles in their stead to those privileges which the Jews had hitherto exclusively enjoyed. But, as this was a topic which must of necessity be most painful to their feelings, he labors to convince them, that, in all which he would declare respecting it, he was actuated only by a sense of duty, and not by any unkind feelings towards them; and that, so far from wishing them this evil, he would submit to anything to deliver them from it. He calls God to witness, that he had nothing more sincerely at heart, than that, as they had already possessed, so they would ever continue to possess, the most distinguished tokens of God's love and favor.

In the words which we have just read, we may see,

***~~I. The distinguished privileges of the Jewish people—~~***

In setting these forth, the Apostle addresses them, not as strangers, but as "his brethren, his kinsmen, according to the flesh;" and then records the distinctions that had been conferred upon them; specifying both those which had been bestowed for their own personal benefit, and those which had been conferred for the benefit of the whole world.

They were "Israelites," descended from *Jacob*, who, in remembrance of his wrestling with the angel, and prevailing with God in prayer, was honored with the name of *Israel*. "To them pertained the adoption," they, as a nation, being regarded as "God's first-born." To them had been given "the glory," even that bright cloud, which was the symbol of the Deity; which guided their forefathers through the wilderness, and afterwards abode both in the tabernacle and the temple, resting upon the ark, and residing between the cherubim, until the temple itself was destroyed by the Chaldean army.

Theirs also were "the covenants;" both the covenant of grace, which was given to Abraham; and the national covenant, which was made with them in the time of Moses.

To them had God also "given the law," proclaiming it with an audible voice from Mount Sinai, and delivering it to them written with his own finger upon tables of stone.

To them also was given the *ceremonial*law, comprehending every minute particular respecting "the service of God;" so that in no case whatever were they left in doubt how they would approach him with acceptance.

The *promises*also were theirs, both those which related to the sending of the Messiah, and those which related to the possession of Canaan.

"Theirs too were the fathers," Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, than whom none of the children of men had ever been more highly favored with divine and heavenly communications.

But to these benefits, which may be considered as personal, we must add that which infinitely exceeds them all, and in which the whole world are interested, namely, that "of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." Yes, when the ever-blessed, the co-equal, the co-eternal Son of God came into the world, that by his own obedience unto death, he might accomplish the redemption of sinful man, he assumed his human nature from them, even from a Jewish Virgin; so that, in a more strict and appropriate sense than any other person, a Jew may say of him: He is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.

Consider now how glorious these distinctions were. To what other nation was any one of them ever given? Or what has the greatest monarch upon earth, who can be in any degree compared with them? The honors which come of man are lighter than vanity itself, when compared with those which come from God: and when weighed in this scale, the highest monarchs in the universe are not so elevated above a slave, as the basest Jew is exalted above them.

But what shall we say to the giving birth to the Messiah, who was "the mighty God," "Emmanuel, God with us!" Here all words fail us: in vain does the imagination attempt to grasp so wonderful an event. "God manifest in the flesh!" How "great this mystery of godliness!" and how infinitely ennobled are that people, to whom the ever-blessed God is so nearly related!

The more we contemplate the privileges of the Jewish people, the more we see,

***~~II. The deep concern which we should feel for them—~~***

The Apostle declares his compassion for them in the strongest terms; in considering which, it will be proper to notice,

***~~1. What is implied in Paul's words—~~***

It is plain that Paul did not approve of that *spurious charity*which is so prevalent in our day. Most people cannot endure to think that any would finally be left to perish. They regard it as the summit of uncharitableness, to suppose that Jews and Gentiles are all in a state of guilt and condemnation, and that they can be saved only by their conversion to the faith of Christ. But let anyone refer to our text, and he will see at once what Paul's opinion was on this most interesting subject.

If the Jews in their unconverted state were safe—then why was Paul so grieved on their account? Should he have felt such "great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart" for them, or made such solemn appeals to God respecting his concern for them, if they had been in a state of favor and acceptance with God? There cannot possibly be a doubt on this subject: he regarded them all as perishing in their sins, according to that declaration of our blessed Lord, "If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins! [John 8:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.24)."

Let this then be borne in mind in reference to that unhappy people, yes, and in reference to ourselves also, if we are not truly and sincerely devoted to God, as a penitent, believing, and obedient people.

***~~2. What is expressed in Paul's words—~~***

The terms, especially those in the third verse of our text, are so strong, that commentators have been at a loss to explain them, so as to render them consistent with what may reasonably be supposed to have been the actual experience of Paul. As for his wishing himself eternally banished from God for his brethren's sake, it could not be: though he might, like Moses, be contented to be blotted out from the list of God's people here in this world, [Exodus 32:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 32.32), or even to be treated as accursed after the example of Christ, for his brethren's sake.

But we need not have recourse to either of these interpretations; for by only putting a part of the Apostle's words into a parenthesis, the sense will be perfectly simple. He once was as full of enmity against Christ, and determined to have no connection with him, as any of his brethren: and he knew that, in effect, this was to "wish himself accursed from Christ, See [Isaiah 28:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.15). where the effect is put for the cause precisely in a similar way."

He tells them therefore, that, having been in the same perilous circumstances with themselves, he felt the more deeply for them. Thus by putting into a parenthesis those words, "I once wished myself accursed from Christ," the sense will exactly accord with what the Apostle says in his Epistle to the Galatians, "Be you as I am: for I was as you are, [Galatians 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.12)."

But though by this explanation of the text we get rid of that from whence it seems to derive its greatest force, enough remains in it to serve as an example to the whole world. Paul knowing that his brethren, while they continued in unbelief, were perishing in their sins, "had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart on their account," and regarded nothing too much to do or suffer, if by any means he might be instrumental to their salvation.

This is what every Christian should feel; and it is a shame to the whole Christian world that so little of it is felt among us. How few can truly join in the solemn appeal which is here made to the heart-searching God! Instead of an appeal to God respecting the greatness and continuance of our sorrow on behalf of the Jewish nation, does not conscience rather call for a confession, that we have had no more heaviness or sorrow of heart for them, than if they had been in a state of perfect safety? Alas! when have we spent one single hour in *prayer*for them? What *sacrifices*have we made, or what *exertions*, for the enlightening of their minds, and the saving of their souls? If we would say, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved," would not our daily experience give the lie to our profession? Surely we have need to blush and be ashamed, every one of us.

Had we seen a vessel wrecked, and all the crew perishing in the ocean, there is not one among us so inhuman, but he would be filled with the tenderest concern for them, and exert himself to the uttermost, if by any means he might save some of them. But we have seen millions of God's ancient people perishing for ever, and have had the means of saving them within our own reach, and yet have made no efforts for their welfare, nor felt a pang on account of their destruction. O brethren! let it not be thus with us any longer: but let us cultivate the spirit of the Apostle, and labor henceforth as he did, for the salvation of our Jewish brethren.

It will be in vain, however, to urge you to exertions for others, if you begin not with your own souls. Here is, in reality, the root of all our neglect of others: we are not truly and thoroughly concerned even about ourselves! Alas! if we were to make, respecting our own souls, the appeal to God which the Apostle made respecting his Jewish brethren, then how few could utter it in truth! Let us try it one moment: "O my God, I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart" on account of my own sins; I feel them as a heavy burden, too heavy for me to bear; and I find no rest in my soul, but by coming weary and heavy-laden to my Lord and Savior.

Beloved brethren, is this true of you? can you say it and "not lie?" Does your conscience attest the truth of it? and does the Holy Spirit, the heart-searching God, bear witness to it?

What a fearful state must you then be in, if, with your superior advantages, you are yet impenitent and unbelieving, like the Jews themselves? Surely there is need that your brethren in Christ, who once were in your perilous condition, but have been converted by the grace of God, should weep and mourn over you, even as the Apostle did over the unbelieving Jews!

Will you say, that there is no occasion for you to fear, since in your infant baptism you were made "members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of Heaven?" True, you have by baptism all that the Jews derived from circumcision. See the Church Catechism, which with great propriety represents us as enjoying by *baptism*, all the privileges which the Jews enjoyed by *circumcision*.

But notwithstanding those *privileges*, we must perish for ever, if we believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ. The external title to those blessings we obtain as soon as by baptism we are admitted into covenant with God: but the actual enjoyment of them we can obtain only by the exercise of faith in Christ. But this is the very reason why you should weep the more for your sins; because, when you already possess such glorious advantages, even as the Jews did by circumcision, you would lose them all, instead of securing the everlasting possession of them through the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle acknowledges the exalted *privileges*of the Jews, "to whom pertained the adoption" into God's family: but he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for them notwithstanding, because their guilt was the greater, and their condemnation would be the heavier on account of their impenitence and unbelief.

And so, while you are exalted to Heaven, even like Bethsaida and Capernaum, in the privileges you enjoy, there is reason to fear that you will be cast the deeper into Hell for your misimprovement of them, and that in the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yes, and for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you.

Begin then, all of you, with your own souls; and then extend your concern to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And do not think that your labors for them will be in vain; for the same power which can convert and save you, is able to effect the same blessed work for them.

Less than omnipotence will not suffice for you—and to omnipotence all things are alike easy. See what God did for the Jews in the first ages. See what he did for the benighted Gentiles, who were quite as far from God as the Jews at this hour can be. Think of our forefathers once bowing down to stocks and stones, and see what Britain now is. Or, if you are yourselves renewed by divine grace, see what wonders have been wrought for you.

At all events, do what you can to serve your God, and to benefit your fellow-creatures, fully confiding in that gracious declaration, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

This subject being important in reference to the Jews, a short and easy mode of treating it is here subjoined—

***~~#1884~~***

***~~ISRAEL IN THE MIDST OF ISRAEL~~***

**[Romans 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.6).**

"They are not all Israel who are of Israel."

EVIL as have been the dispositions of those who have set themselves against the doctrines of the Gospel, we have been greatly indebted to them: since they have called forth statements which we would never otherwise have received; and have drawn from the Apostles of our Lord a disclosure of their inward motives and principles, which nothing but an absolute necessity for the vindication of their own character could ever have elicited.

The epistle before us is full of objections started against every doctrine which the writer of it maintained. In the former part of the third chapter the objections are urged with a pertinacity and boldness, which compelled the Apostle to say respecting the persons who so urged them, that "their damnation was just! [Romans 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.8)."

In the sixth and seventh chapters, the objections against both the Law and the Gospel gave rise to an elucidation of them, so clear, that there can be no doubt entertained respecting their proper use, or their transcendent excellence.

In the chapter which we are about to consider, the Apostle begins with expressing his deep and continual sorrow on account of the judgments impending over the Jews for their obstinate rejection of their Messiah. He then anticipates an objection which would be brought against him; namely, that if, as he had supposed, the Jews were to be cast off, the word of God, which had promised all manner of blessings to Abraham and his seed, would be made void. But to this he replies, that the promises were made to Abraham and his *spiritual*seed: and that all others, however they might be descended from him after the flesh, would assuredly be cast off, since "all were not Israel, who were of Israel;" neither, because they were the natural seed of Abraham, were they necessarily to be numbered among the children to whom the promises were made, verse 6, 7.

Now, in considering this reply, I shall notice,

***~~I. The affirmation itself—~~***

It is here supposed that the whole nation of Israel possessed the same advantages, and, in appearance, enjoyed the same blessings. Yet the Apostle distinguishes between some of them and others; and affirms, that some had claims and privileges, to which the others were not entitled. This was true respecting them: and it is true at this time, also, in relation to ourselves. For, as then, so now also,

***~~1. All are not objects of the same electing love—~~***

It is undeniable, that God chose Abraham out of an idolatrous world, and gave to him a promise of blessings which were withheld from others of the human race, and which had never been merited by him. To his seed also were these blessings promised; but not to Ishmael, who was then alive: no, they were entailed on a son who would afterwards be born, and would be born too after that neither the father nor the mother could, by reason of their advanced age, expect any progeny. Here, then, was the same sovereignty manifested as in the selection of Abraham himself.

In the children of Israel, too, was the same sovereignty displayed: for, even while the twins were in their mother's womb, God's determination respecting them was made known; and it was appointed that the blessings of the covenant would descend to the younger in preference to the elder: as it is written, "Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls--she was told, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." [Romans 9:10-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.10-13)

In this, the intention of God to display his sovereignty in the disposal of his blessings is expressly asserted, as the end for which he made the appointment at that precise time: for it was impossible that they would have done either good or evil previous to their birth; and, consequently, nothing of theirs could be the ground of God's dispensation towards them.

The same point is no less clearly seen in the *objections*which are urged against it.

The objector replies, that, if this doctrine is true, then God must be unrighteous, since he withholds from one, what he gives to another verse 14.

Now, what room can there be for any such objection as this, except on the supposition that the Apostle has been maintaining the sovereignty of God in the disposal of his favors? On any other supposition, it would be impossible for the idea to arise, that there was, or could be, "unrighteousness with God." The Apostle's answer shows the same: for he proves that the doctrine which he had maintained was declared to Moses, when God said to him, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion verse 15." And the conclusion which the Apostle draws from the whole clearly confirms the same: "So, then, it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy verse 16." I ask again, What room could there be for such an answer, and such a conclusion, if the Apostle had not asserted and maintained the doctrine of *election*as exercised by God according to his own sovereign will and pleasure?

But the same is pursued still farther.

Paul, not contented with having established his point, prosecutes it yet farther; and declares that God had exercised the same sovereignty in raising Pharaoh to the throne of Egypt, and in making use of the pride and obduracy of that haughty monarch as the means of displaying his own almighty power, and of confirming the word which he had previously declared to Moses, verse 17, 18.

And this calls forth another objection: "You will say then unto me, Why does he yet find fault? for who has resisted his will verse 19." Here again, you will perceive, is an objection which could not possibly arise, but on the supposition that the Apostle is maintaining the absolute sovereignty of God. And his answer to it proves the same: "Nay, but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him who formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? verse 20, 21."

Of all the images that could ever be thought of, it would not be possible to find one which could more strongly illustrate the sovereignty of God than this. It is here indeed supposed, that all men are alike corrupt and sinful, all one mass of sin; no part of which has any greater claim upon God for mercy, than the potter's clay has on him for distinguishing favors at his hands.

Let this reasoning be candidly considered, and the inference from it will be clear. Nothing but our high thoughts of *self*, and our low thoughts of *God*, could ever make us entertain a doubt about the truth which is here maintained. Indeed, we see it at this day, as well as in former ages. God chose the Jews of old, and distinguished them above the rest of the world: so he has done with the Christians now. Moreover, he had an Israel in the midst of an Israel then: and so he has now a people within a people; a Church within a Church; an elect within a mass who are partakers only of external privileges. Yes, as then, even so at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6).

***~~2. All are not partakers of the same converting grace—~~***

The Jews had all the same ordinances of grace; but did not all make the same improvement of them. In the ministry of John the Baptist, those who were the least likely to receive his word were the most effectually impressed with it: "The tax collectors justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John; but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized by him, [Luke 7:29-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 7.29-30)."

The *twelve Apostles*were chosen by our blessed Lord according to his sovereign will and pleasure; and for them were reserved advantages, not known to any others. To them our Lord explained in private the parables he delivered in public; saying to them, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven; but to others, in parables; that seeing, they may not see; and hearing, they may not understand, [Luke 8:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 8.10)." To them, in like manner, was peculiar favor shown after our Lord's resurrection; for "then he opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures, [Luke 24:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.45)."

But see this matter yet more plainly in the *Apostle Paul*. He was full of wrath, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against the whole Church of Christ; and yet, while pursuing his murderous career, he was stopped, and converted by the grace of God; the Lord Jesus Christ himself appearing to him in the way, and revealing himself to him; while, of all who were present, not one except himself was permitted to hear the words that were spoken to him. *Was here no proof of God's electing love?*

Take the ministry of this Apostle: some received his testimony, and others rejected it. And whence was it, that, at Philippi, a poor woman, named Lydia, embraced the truth, while the magistrates and a great mass of the inhabitants joined in persecuting the Christians who proclaimed it? We are told, that "the Lord opened her heart to attend to the things that were spoken by Paul! [Acts 16:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.14-15)." The same words made one cry out, "Paul, you are beside yourself;" and another, "You almost persuade me to be a Christian! [Acts 26:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.22); [Acts 26:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.28)."

And is it not so at the present day? Are not still, as formerly, "many called, and few chosen?" Does not the Savior himself, as preached unto men, still become a sanctuary to some, while he proves a stumbling-block and a rock of offense to others? [1 Peter 2:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.6-8). And whence is this? To what must it be traced, but to *God's electing love!*

Assuredly, to that does the Apostle trace it, in the case of his Thessalonian converts: for, in his first epistle to them he says, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God; for our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, [1 Thessalonians 1:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 1.4-5)."

So then it is in every instance, where persons are enabled to receive the word aright: "it is *given*them to believe, [Philippians 1:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.29);" and "they believe through grace, [Acts 18:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 18.27);" or, in other words, they are "quickened from the dead, [Ephesians 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.1)," and "made willing in the day of God's power, [Psalm 110:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 110.3);" and to God must they trace their new creation, as entirely and exclusively as the creation of the world, [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.10). To these "the word becomes a savor of life unto life; while to others it is made a savor of death," to their deeper condemnation, [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.16).

***~~3. All are not heirs of the same eternal glory—~~***

All are not vessels unto honor. But this, however, must be remembered, that while it is God alone who prepares any to glory, *the wicked fit themselves for destruction*. This is marked, in a peculiar manner, in the chapter from whence my text is taken, verse 22, 23; and we must never forget it: for *though the salvation of man is altogether of God, his condemnation is of himself alone, the fruit of his own willful perseverance in sin!*That those who are saved owe their happiness to God's electing love, is clear from hence, that "God has from the beginning chosen them to salvation, [2 Thessalonians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 2.13);" and "called them unto his eternal, glory [1 Peter 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.10)." The process, as ordained in God's mind, and executed in time, is thus declared in the chapter preceding that which we have been considering: "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 8:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.30)."

Among those who are exalted to glory, there will be no difference in relation to this matter: they will all acknowledge that "they did not choose God, but God chose them, [John 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.16);" and that "they loved him, because he first loved them, [1 John 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.10); [1 John 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.19);" and, in ascribing glory to his name, they will remember this saying, "To him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and the Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen! [Revelation 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.5-6)."

Having shown, I trust, the truth of the affirmation, I proceed to state,

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

Among the diversified uses to be made of it, I will mention three:

It would teach us,

***~~1. A holy fear and jealousy respecting ourselves—~~***

[Editor's note: We do not agree with the Anglican theology expressed in the next paragraph.] It is here admitted that we are of Israel: that, as the Jews had all been admitted into covenant with God by circumcision, so have we by baptism; and that, as "to them belonged the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises," so do all the blessings of the Gospel belong to us [Romans 9:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.4-5), precisely in the same manner and to the same extent that the privileges of God's ancient people belonged to them.

But as, then, "all were not Israel who were of Israel," so now all are not Christians indeed who are called by the name of Christ. Our descent from Christian parents will do no more than the descent of Israel from Abraham did for them. We are expressly told on this head, that the unconverted among them were not the true circumcision: "the true circumcision were those who worshiped God in the Spirit, and rejoiced in Christ Jesus, and had no confidence in the flesh, [Philippians 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.3)." And this is the description of the true Christian: no one deserving that name who does not answer to that character.

The Apostle further confirms this, when he says, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart; in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God, [Romans 2:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.28-29)." Would we not then fear, lest we deceive ourselves, just as the Jews of old did? Would we not carefully "examine ourselves, and prove our own selves, whether we be in the faith? [2 Corinthians 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.5)." Would we not compare our character with that of the saints of old, to see whether we be "Israelites indeed, in whom is no deceit? [John 1:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.47)." Let it be well settled in our minds, that we are not indeed children of Abraham, unless we "walk in the steps of Abraham, [Romans 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.12)," and "do his works [John 8:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.39)."

***~~2. A humble acquiescence in reference to God's sovereign election—~~***

*We are extremely prone to rise against the sovereignty of God, and to deny him the right of disposing of things according to his own will and pleasure.* Yet we arrogate that right to ourselves; and if we were called unjust for bestowing our alms on one and not on another, we would indignantly reply, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? [Matthew 20:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 20.15)." But do what we will, we cannot deny the election of God in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob! We cannot deny that there were given to the Jews means of grace, which were withheld from all the world besides. We cannot deny the same in reference to Christians at this day: for we have in our hands the blessed Gospel, which reveals unto us the way of salvation, while five-sixths of the world never so much as heard of Christ! Nay, more: of those who most dispute against the doctrine of election generally, it may be doubted, whether one can be found who, when deeply convinced of his own guilt and misery, will not go to God, and implore mercy for mercy's sake, as much as the most zealous advocate of that offensive doctrine. He will scarcely venture to claim mercy on account of his own merits, whether past, present, or future. And, if he obtains a sense of God's pardoning love, I much doubt whether he will deliberately refuse to make that acknowledgment, "By the grace of God I am what I am! [1 Corinthians 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.10)."

That there are depths in this doctrine which we cannot comprehend, I readily admit. But, would the denial of it involve us in no depths? or is there any other doctrine of our holy religion which we can fully fathom? Let us know this, that whether we can comprehend God's ways or not, "the Judge of all the earth will do right! [Genesis 18:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 18.25);" and whether we are pleased to acquiesce in them or not, "He will be justified in his sayings, and be clear when he is judged, [Romans 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.4)." Let us, then, not presume to sit in judgment upon God, or dare to "charge him foolishly:" but let us make our supplication to him, assured that "none shall seek his face in vain;" and that "not one who shall come to him in his Son's name shall ever be cast out! [John 6:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.37)."

***~~3. An adoring gratitude, if we have been made partakers of his sovereign mercy—~~***

We cannot but see, whether the doctrine of election is true or not, that there is an Israel within an Israel; and that, while a small remnant only are truly alive to God, the great mass of the Christian world are as careless about salvation as even the Jews themselves. If, then, God has in mercy favored us, and made us partakers of his saving grace, shall we "sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own dragnet, [Habakkuk 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 1.16)." God forbid. Let us rather bow with humble adoration before our God; saying, "Why me, Lord? Why am *I*chosen, when so many others are left? [Luke 17:34-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 17.34-36)." In truth, this is the spirit that befits us.

Even for the favors conferred upon us in *providence*, it befits us to bless and magnify our God, with a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and with a lively gratitude for such undeserved bounties. But for the blessings of his *grace*, O what thanks should we render unto the Lord! Hear the Psalmist, when contemplating these things: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget none of his benefits!" Let such be the state of our minds. Surely, *the more we are sensible of our obligations to God, for his free, unmerited, and sovereign grace—the more profoundly we shall adore him*, and the more determinately shall we serve him.

***~~#1885~~***

***~~GOD'S SOVEREIGN MERCY THE SOURCE OF ALL OUR BLESSINGS~~***

**[Romans 9:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.16).**

"So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy."

THE Apostle, being about to declare the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, introduces his subject with a most solemn appeal to God, that he had "continual sorrow and heaviness in his heart," on account of the unhappy state of his Jewish brethren. He knew that the subject would be very painful to the Jews; and yet he could not, consistently with his duty to God, conceal it from them: but he strove as much as possible to lessen the offense it would occasion, by assuring them of his unbounded affection for them, and his willingness to endure anything, if it might but be subservient to their eternal welfare.

The subject as treated by the Apostle is no less offensive to the great mass of nominal Christians, than it was to the Jews: for *he insists so strongly on God's right to dispense the blessings of his Gospel according to his own sovereign will, that the proud heart of man cannot endure it.*We are apt to think we have a claim upon God; and that he is bound to do for us all that he has at anytime done for his most favored servants: and, *when we are told, that he has a right to do what he will with his own, we deny him that right, and accuse him of injustice*, precisely as the Jews themselves did. But the servant of God must speak, whether men will hear, or whether they forbear: he must declare to men the whole counsel of God, "even though briers and thorns be with him, and he dwell among scorpions."

At the same time, it would be his most anxious endeavor to "speak the truth in love." This we would do. God knows that it is painful to us to give offense; yet not so much on our own account, as on account of those who are not able to receive our word. We would gladly do, yes, and suffer too, whatever would be necessary for their welfare: but still we cannot conceal the truth, or "keep back anything that is profitable unto men." We entreat however, that, if we speak anything which may not at first approve itself to those who hear it, they will give us credit for seeking conscientiously their best interests, according to the light that God has given us.

The words of our text are evidently a conclusion drawn from a preceding argument. To view them therefore aright, we must consider,

***~~I. The statement on which the conclusion is founded—~~***

Having intimated the danger to which his countrymen were exposed of perishing in unbelief, he anticipates an objection which they were disposed to make; namely: That they were in no danger, because, as descendants of Abraham, they were savingly interested in the covenant made with him, and were heirs of all the blessings which were promised to him and to his seed: and that, consequently, if they were to perish, "the word of God would have been of no effect, verse 6." To this the Apostle replies that *the promises were not made to Abraham's natural seed, but to his spiritual seed, who would be partakers of Abraham's faith*: and that, as they were yet in unbelief, they had no part or lot in Abraham's blessings, verse 7, 8. This he proceeds to prove to them,

***~~1. From undeniable and acknowledged facts—~~***

The blessings of the covenant were not given to all Abraham's natural seed, even in the very first instance. Ishmael, who was born according to the course of nature, had no part in that covenant; the blessings of which were restricted to Isaac, who was born many years afterwards, not according to the common course of nature, but solely by virtue of an express promise. Here then was a proof, even in the immediate children of Abraham, that persons might be lineally descended from him, and yet be left without any saving interest in the covenant made with him.

But a further, and still stronger, proof of this took place in the children of this very Isaac, to whom the promise was restricted. His wife Rebecca bore him twins: and while these children were yet in the womb, and "before they could possibly have done either good or evil, it was said to her, The elder shall serve the younger, verse 9-12;" which prophecy was accomplished to their last posterity, as the Prophet Malachi attests, saying, "Jacob have I loved; but Esau have I hated! verse 13 with [Malachi 1:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 1.2-3)."

Now if they would think that in the former instance respect was had to the character of the two children, Ishmael and Isaac, and that the decree was founded on that, such a notion is altogether excluded from the present instance, because the children had done neither good nor evil; and the reason of the decree is expressly said to be, "that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him who calls."

Here then an exclusion of a part of the natural seed is further proved, and that too by the sovereign disposal of God himself, irrespective of the characters of the persons respecting whom the decree was made. How much more therefore might those of Abraham's descendants who would continue obstinate in unbelief, be excluded from the blessings of that covenant, which they themselves were so averse to embrace.

***~~2. From the express declarations of God himself—~~***

The Jews in the Apostle's days trusted in the words of Moses, which they interpreted as comprehending all the Jewish nation without exception within the bonds of the covenant. To Moses therefore the Apostle has recourse; and appeals to what God himself had spoken to him. As in the foregoing instances God had exercised his own sovereign will in appointing who would, and who would not, be partakers of his covenant, so, in his communications with Moses also he had claimed to himself the same right, and declared that he would act in the same sovereign way: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion! verse 15 with [Exodus 33:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 33.19)."

Here God considers all the human race as in a state of guilt and misery, no one of them having any claim on him for mercy, or anything that could entitle him to a preference beyond his brethren: and he declares, that *as he would exercise his own sovereign will in dispensing his blessings to them, so he would have his sovereign grace and mercy acknowledged by all who would receive them.*

This point is further confirmed by the Apostle's adducing what God had spoken also to Pharaoh. God had exalted Pharaoh to the throne of Egypt, and had invested him with the most arbitrary and unbounded power. Such power was necessary, in order that there might be full scope for the rebellion of man, and the consequent triumphs of God over him. God knew that there were in the heart of Pharaoh all those dispositions which would resist him to the uttermost; and that he would thus call forth eventually those judgments which God, for his own glory, had determined to inflict on the oppressors of his people: and, while Pharaoh was in the very act of rebellion, and hardening himself more and more against his God, God said to him, "For this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth!" The Apostle, having cited this in confirmation of what he had said respecting Moses, asserts in yet stronger language than before, "Therefore he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens."

Thus the Apostle has proved beyond all contradiction *the unquestionable right of God to give, or to withhold, his blessings, according to his own sovereign will and pleasure.*

But before we proceed to the conclusion which the Apostle draws from hence, we would guard what has been already spoken from any misconstruction. *Though God's right to give or to withhold his blessings is asserted, together with the actual bestowment of them according to his sovereign will—yet he never withholds his blessing from any creature who humbly seeks it at his hands*; much less does he ever infuse evil into the mind of any man in order to glorify himself in his destruction. His hardening of Pharaoh's heart consisted in leaving him to himself, and to the unrestrained exercise of his own evil dispositions: and *if we were all left as Pharaoh was, we would harden our own hearts precisely as Pharaoh did*. In a word, *God's blessings are never dispensed but in a way of grace; his judgments are never executed but in a way of righteous retribution*.

Having thus stated the argument on which the Apostle's conclusion is founded, we come to the consideration of,

***~~II. The conclusion itself—~~***

The conclusion is justly formed from the premises. It is indeed a humiliating conclusion, and a truth which our proud hearts are very averse to acknowledge; but still we must join issue with the Apostle, and say, "It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God that shows mercy!"

***~~Let not this however be understood, as though it sanctioned any lack of exertion on our part—~~***

God does not here forbid us to will or to run, nor does he exempt us from the duty of both willing and running: no such thing is here expressed, nor can any such thing be deduced from it. How grievous is it that any would be found impious enough to cite this passage as discountenancing exertions on our part! In the whole sacred records, from the beginning to the end, there is not to be found one single word that can warrant such an idea as this. On the contrary, God always complains of us for not exerting ourselves, and refers our final condemnation to this as its proper ground and cause: "You will not come unto me, that you might have life," says our Lord. "How often would I have gathered you together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!" As for those who say, "I can do nothing without God, and therefore, until God comes, I may as well sit still, and attempt nothing;" God, so far from giving occasion for such a sentiment and such conduct, calls us most earnestly to exertion, and promises that we shall not exert ourselves in vain: "Ask and you shall have; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "Whoever comes unto me, I will never cast out!""When said I ever to the seed of Jacob, Seek me in vain?" Know then, that to found any such sentiment on the words of the Apostle, is a gross perversion of the word of God, and an impious plea for antinomian licentiousness. But, that you may have a just view of this assertion,

***~~Its plain import is, that God's free grace and mercy are the true and only sources of all good—~~***

Whatever be our success in the divine life, we must not refer it to our own volitions, or our own exertions. For, what inclination has the natural man to that which is truly good? None at all: *there is not one good thought or desire in the heart of an unregenerate man: his will is altogether towards what is evil*[Genesis 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.5); and if a good inclination be manifested by any one of us, it has been previously put into our hearts by Him who "gives us to will and to do, of his own good pleasure, [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.13)." Nor can any exertions of ours in our natural state be of themselves effectual; for our blessed Lord expressly says, "Without me, or separate from me, you can do nothing." We must therefore "never sacrifice to our own net, or burn incense to our own dragnet."

God must have all the glory: it is "he who works all our works in us:" "Of him is our fruit found," and to all eternity our song must be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto your name be the praise."

It is impossible for us ever to be too jealous upon this head. We are told, that "*of*him are all things, and *for*him are all things:" and therefore to him we must look for everything that we need; and to him, even *to his sovereign grace and mercy, must we ascribe everything that we have received*. If we differ, either from others, or from our former selves, we must never forget for one moment, "who it is that has made us to differ:" and If we are able to say with the Apostle, "I have labored more abundantly than others," we must instantly correct ourselves, and add, "Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me!

There are some who put a totally different construction on our text, and interpret it as though the Apostle had said, "It is not of him only that wills, etc." Thus, by their interpolation, they expressly contradict the Apostle, and subvert the whole train of his reasoning. If this were the meaning of the Apostle, what occasion would there be for the objections of his adversaries in verse 14 and verse 19? Alas! that ever such liberties would be taken with the word of God!"

***~~It remains only now that we show you,~~***

***~~1. How these sentiments are to be maintained—~~***

We confess with grief and shame that many carry these sentiments too far, and maintain them in a very **unhallowed**way. But, while we maintain what God has so plainly taught, we would lift our voice without ceasing against every abuse of these doctrines. To those who accord with these views of divine truth, we most affectionately suggest the following cautions:

Take heed to the manner in which you maintain these truths. Let none of you maintain them presumptuously, as though you could fathom the depths contained in them, or as though they gave you any licence for sloth and supineness. They contain mysteries, which God alone can fully comprehend, and difficulties which he alone can fully reconcile: but be it remembered, that there are far more and greater difficulties involved in a denial of them: and that our wisdom is to receive every word of God with child-like simplicity, and to say, "What I know not now, I shall know hereafter."

Nor let any hold them **irreverently**. Some will speak of these deep things of God as familiarly as if there were no mystery at all in them, or as if they were the uninspired dogmas of some ancient philosopher. But when we enter on "such holy ground," we would, as Moses, "take off our shoes," and proceed with reverential awe. "God is in Heaven, and we upon earth; therefore should our words be few," and diffident, and humble.

Nor would they be maintained **uncharitably**. Many there are who cannot see these truths, who yet are in a state truly pleasing to God; yes many, at whose feet the best of us may be glad to be found in Heaven.*It is a great evil, when these doctrines are made a ground of separation one from another, and when the advocates of different systems anathematize each other.*Let all such dispositions be banished from the Church of God. *Whoever may be wrong, they never can be right who violate charity, or refuse to others the right of judging for themselves*. For the fundamental truths of Christianity, we must contend to the uttermost, (though even for them with meekness and love,) but in reference to truths which are involved in so much obscurity as those which relate to the sovereignty of God, mutual kindness and concession are far better than vehement argumentation and uncharitable discussion.

Lastly, let not these truths be maintained **exclusively**. Many are so partial to these deeper truths, that they can hardly condescend to speak of repentance and faith; and, as for exhortations to duty, they are apt to think such things legal and carnal.

O beloved! flee from such a spirit, as you would from the plague: wherever it exists, it betrays a sad lack of humility. Be as little children: let every word of God be dear to you; and be as ready to dwell upon the invitations, and precepts, and exhortations of the Gospel, as on these deeper mysteries, which may easily be strained too far, and may give occasion for inferences, plausible indeed, but erroneous, and contrary to the analogy of faith.

***~~2. How they are to be improved—~~***

The proper use of these deeper truths is to abase us with humility, as creatures destitute of all good; and at the same time to exalt us, as creatures infinitely indebted to the grace of God. Make this improvement of them, and they can never do you any harm: yes, receive them for these ends, and there are no other truths whatever that will operate to an equal extent. Who ever maintained the doctrines of grace more strenuously than the Apostle Paul? Yet who ever so labored in the cause of his adorable Redeemer? Take him then for your pattern, both in your sentiments and conduct; and then you will show that nothing so "constrains, as the love of Christ;" nothing so stimulates to a compliance with God's will, as a sense of obligation to the riches of his grace.

***~~#1886~~***

***~~GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY NOT TO BE ARRAIGNED BY MEN~~***

**[Romans 9:19-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.19-24).**

"One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?"

THERE are some persons so partial to, what we may call, the high doctrines of the Gospel, that they can scarcely endure to hear anything else: they are like persons whose taste is vitiated by strong drink or highly-seasoned food; they have no appetite for anything which does not savor of their favorite opinions. This is a great evil in the Church, not only as injuring the souls in whom it exists, but as tending exceedingly to strengthen the prejudices of others against the doctrines which are so abused. Those who are thus disposed towards "the deep things of God," fancy themselves edified, merely because their corrupt taste is gratified: but their edification is not real and scriptural; for, if it were, it would incline them to receive with meekness and humility every word of God; whereas they treat with contempt everything which seems to savor of plain practical religion. We regret exceedingly that such persons exist: but we must not, on their account, run into an opposite extreme, and keep these doctrines altogether out of sight: we must "not shun to declare unto men the whole counsel of God."

Whatever is revealed in the sacred records must be brought forth in its season: nor are we at liberty to "withhold from men anything that may be profitable unto them." We therefore address ourselves to every subject in its place: though on such subjects as that which is before us, we would do it with fear and trembling, conscious how unable we are to do justice to it, and fearful lest by any means we would make it an occasion of offense to those who are not prepared for the investigation of it.

***~~The sovereignty of God is to the proud heart of man an unpalatable subject; but in the passage before us we are called to vindicate it against the objections of those who are disposed, like the Jew in our text, to contend against it.~~***

To place the matter in its true light, we shall consider,

***~~I. The point at issue between the objector and Paul—~~***

Paul had strongly intimated, that the Jews were now to be rejected from the Church of God, and that the Gentiles were to be admitted into it. This he knew was a most offensive subject to the Jews; and therefore he had shown, both from God's word to Moses, and his dealings with Pharaoh, that *God had a right to communicate his blessings, or execute his judgments, in such a way as would conduce most to his own glory*. The Jew, not convinced, is represented as declaring, that, if God exercise his sovereignty in this way, the blame of man's condemnation must be transferred to God himself, since it was impossible for man to resist God's will.

That this was the question between them, is evident; for to this end Paul's arguments had tended; and nothing less than this could have given rise to such an objection: to this also the answer of the Apostle directly applies. The objection, it is true, did not fairly arise out of Paul's statement: but the Jew took occasion from his statement to found his objection upon it: and to the question, thus stated, we must now reply.

***~~II. The Apostle's determination of it—~~***

Paul hearing such a blasphemous objection as this, "Why does God yet find fault? for who has resisted his will?" replies to it,

***~~1. In a way of just reprehension—~~***

"Who are you, O man, that replies against God?" Consider yourself as a creature; What right have you to sit in judgment upon God? Do you understand all his counsels? Are you able to fathom the depth of his wisdom? Can you "find out the Almighty to perfection?"*How can you presume thus to arraign the conduct of your God*, and to "condemn him that you may be justified?" What would you think of your own child, if he, while yet a child, would stand up and accuse you as unwise and unjust, in the most deliberate exercise of your counsels? Or, what would you think of an ignorant peasant who would presume thus to sit in judgment upon the counsels of a learned judge? *Are you then authorized to arraign the conduct of your God?*

But consider yourself as a *sinner*, and how atrocious does your conduct then appear! You who might justly have been consigned over to perdition the first moment you had sinned, do you complain of your God as unjust and tyrannical, if he dispenses to others the blessings which you have refused to accept? Impious wretch! As well might the clay rise up against the potter, and condemn him for having fashioned it according to his own will.

***~~2. In a way of sound argument—~~***

Two things Paul proceeds to substantiate against his objector: the one was, That God had a right to dispose of everything according to his own sovereign will and pleasure: and the other was, That in the way he had hitherto disposed of them, and had determined still to dispose of them, he was fully justified.

Let us consider these assertions more fully—

A potter, it is acknowledged, has a sovereign right over his clay: and so has God over all the works of his hands. When he formed angels, was he bound to furnish them with all the faculties they possess? And, having formed them, might he not have annihilated them again, and consigned them over again to their former non-existence? When he formed man and beast of the same clay, might he not have given higher faculties to the brute creation, and less to man? Or might he not have reduced man immediately to the state of the beasts, without doing any injury to man? Is not this, in reality, what God is doing every day, as it were, before our eyes; bereaving one and another of his mental faculties, and reducing him to a state far below the beasts? It is evident, that God may of the same lump make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor, either in their first creation, or in their subsequent use and destination.

The same also we may say in relation to the eternal states of men, if only we consider them as they really are—one vast mass of guilt and corruption.

When *Adam*fell, God was at liberty to leave him as he was, in all his guilt and corruption—or to redeem him from it, and to make him a vessel of honor by his new-creating power.

When God chose *Abraham*out of the whole world of idolaters, he was at liberty to have chosen others besides him, if he had been pleased to do so, or to have restricted the blessings of his covenant to Ishmael and Esau, instead of limiting them to Isaac and Jacob. If he had seen fit to do this, whom would he have injured? Or who would have had any right to complain?

Whom did he injure when he chose the *Jews?*Did he by separating them from the rest of mankind, and granting exclusively to them the ordinances of his grace, do any injustice to the Gentile world? Or, now that he is pleased to send his Gospel to the Gentiles, does he do any injustice to the Jews? In favoring us with the full light of revelation, does he injure the millions of Muhammadans and Pagans who are less favored than ourselves? In like manner, if he sends to some of us fuller opportunities of instruction than to others, or richer communications of his grace—is he not at liberty to do so?

Let it be remembered, that the question is not, Whether God shall punish an innocent person, or a guilty person beyond his deserts? That could receive no other answer than that given by the Apostle, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!" But the question is, Whether, *when all mankind are in a state of guilt and condemnation, God may not "have mercy on whom he will have mercy?"*And to this question we reply by asking another, "May He not do what he will with his own? [Matthew 20:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 20.15)."

But let us turn to the latter part of the Apostle's answer; wherein he asserts confidently, that if we attend carefully to the way in which God has disposed of men, and has determined still to dispose of them, he is, and ever must be, justified.

God has determined glorify himself from his dealings with mankind, whether they will it, or not. He will be glorified both in those who are saved, and in those who perish.

"What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endure the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" is he not at liberty to do so?

Take, for instance, *Pharaoh*. If God had pleased, he might have cut off Pharaoh on his first refusal to let the people of Israel go; or at any one of the ten successive plagues: but he was not obliged to do so: he was surely at liberty to spare him, and exercise forbearance towards him, and to remove in succession the different plagues from him, and to give him space for repentance, until he had filled up the measure of his iniquities, and was quite ripe for those signal judgments that had been denounced against him.

In like manner, the *Jews*might justly have been cut off, when they renounced their allegiance to God, and worshiped the golden calf. God might, without any impeachment of his justice, have executed then the threatened judgment of destroying instantly that rebellious nation, and raising up another from the loins of Moses. But he saw fit to exercise mercy towards them, and to impart to them yet more abundant communications of his grace and favor. Surely in this he did them no injury.

So also under all their provocations in the wilderness, during the space of forty years, and under all their apostasies from him in the land of Canaan for the space of fifteen hundred years, he might, if he had seen fit, have destroyed them: and, to say the least, he did them no injury in bearing with them, until, by the crucifixion of their Messiah, they had "filled up the measure of their own and their fathers' iniquities." God's fore-knowing how much they would abuse his mercies, was no reason why he would not exercise mercy towards them: for by his forbearance his mercy was displayed; and by their accumulated guilt and aggravated condemnation his indignation against sin, and his power to avenge it, were more conspicuously displayed.

The same we may say in reference to any person or number of persons; God is not bound to cut them off the moment they sin against him: he may continue to cultivate the barren fig-tree year after year, if he is pleased to do so, in order to show more clearly its incurable sterility, and his own justice in its final excision. Thus, I say, He may act towards "the vessels of his wrath."

So also he may pursue a similar line of conduct towards "the vessels of mercy," in order ultimately to "make known upon them the riches of his glory."

He was not compelled to bring out *Abraham*from his family and his country, while he was yet a child: he was at liberty to leave him bowing down to stocks and stones, like all the rest around him, until the hour which he in his secret counsels had appointed for his effectual calling was arrived. Nor, when God called Abraham, was he compelled to call all other Gentiles at the same time: he was at liberty to "leave them to their own ways" until the times of the Messiah, in order to show more fully, that "the world by wisdom knew not God," and that, if left to themselves, nothing but universal ruin must ensue.

Paul tells us, that God, in his secret counsels, had "separated him as a chosen vessel, even from his mother's womb:" yet had God left him for many years to his own heart's lusts, and to the perpetration of the most enormous wickedness. Was God unjust in this? Was God bound to convert him before? Was he not at liberty to leave this man to the dictates of his own deceived conscience, that he might gain the more glory in his conversion, and "show forth in him all long-suffering, for a pattern to all who would hereafter believe in him to life everlasting, [1 Timothy 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.16)."

The *dying thief*as well. Was not God at liberty to let him go on as he did to the last hour of his life, that he might show in him what divine grace and mercy could effect, even at the eleventh hour? God would have done no injury to any of these, if he had never so distinguished them by his power and grace: nor, in having so distinguished them, has he done any injury to others, either to Paul's companions in his journey, or to the other thief upon the cross.

It was thus that our blessed Lord acted in reference to *Lazarus*. When called to come and heal him, he stayed until he had been dead four days on purpose that, by raising him after so long a time, his own power might be the more abundantly glorified. [John 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.6); [John 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.15); [John 11:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.40). And did he do any wrong in this?

*But if our proud hearts be yet disposed to rise up against God*, and reply against him, the extraordinary caution with which Paul gives his answer must silence us for ever. Between the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy, he makes this striking distinction; that the vessels of wrath are prepared for destruction, but the vessels of mercy are prepared for glory by their God. The judgments executed on the ungodly, at whatever period they are inflicted, are brought on them, not by any absolute decree of God, but by their own willful and obstinate continuance in sin: but the blessings imparted to the godly are solely the fruit of God's sovereign grace and mercy. Those who perish must take all the shame to themselves; and those who are saved must give all the glory to their God.

The manner in which the Apostle states his argument, would not be altogether unnoticed. "What if" so and so? Who has anything to reply against it? Is there anything in it contrary to reason? let him bring it to the test of reason. Is there anything contrary to Scripture? Let him consult the passages to which I now refer him, and he shall see, that this very mode of dealing towards all mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles, is precisely that which all the prophets have taught us to expect at the hands of God, verse 25-27.

He has, for his own glory, left the Gentiles for two thousand years, and taken the Jews for his peculiar people; and now, for his own glory also, will he for a season leave the Jews, and take the Gentiles. In this matter, neither the one nor the other have any claim upon him: in taking the one and leaving the other, he did no injustice formerly: and in now abandoning those whom he formerly took, (more especially since they have filled up the measure of their iniquities,) and in taking those whom he then left, he does no injustice now: but in both he is, and will be, glorified. He even in this world glorifies, both in the one and in the other, his patience and long-suffering, and forbearance; but, in the world to come, he will glorify his perfections upon both of them in a more appropriate way; on the vessels of wrath, his power; but on the vessels of mercy, his free, and sovereign, and unbounded grace.

Having investigated with care the Apostle's answer, we will conclude with suggesting,

***~~III. The proper improvement of the subject—~~***

The subject offers many important hints,

***~~1. To objectors—~~***

These, alas! are a very numerous body, even in the Christian world. Favored as we are above the rest of the world, it might be hoped that we would be the last to arraign the sovereignty of Almighty God. Yet among us there are many who will dispute against the *doctrines of grace*, precisely in the way that the unbelieving Jew is represented as doing in our text. One would be ready to suppose, from the confidence with which they urge their impious objections, that *they*had been the secret counselors of the Most High. They determine, without any hesitation or doubt, what will, and what will not, consist with the Divine attributes.

Beloved brethren, this is not the way in which it befits frail dust and ashes to proceed: and if you will presume thus to reprove God, you must "answer it" at your cost, [Job 40:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 40.2). Be assured that such conduct ill befits you, and is most offensive to your God, [Job 40:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 40.8); and your wisdom is to forbear all such impiety in future, [Job 40:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 40.5).

Go to any person deeply versed in sciences of any kind; and he will tell you paradoxes without number which you cannot understand, which yet he knows to be true, and is able to prove, if you had sufficient knowledge of that particular science to comprehend him. Know then, that God also, if he has revealed what appears paradoxical to you, can fully reconcile his own declarations, and will do so in the eternal world; though, if he were now to do it, you would not have capacity sufficient to discern the truth and excellence of his communications. Be assured, that, "as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his thoughts and ways high above yours."

But there are many among those who pretend to vindicate the ways of God, who are scarcely less worthy of reproof than those who presume to condemn them. There are many who speak of "the deep things of God," as if they were as plain and easy and intelligible as the simplest truth that can be mentioned. They dwell exclusively on these great and hidden mysteries, and leave all the plainer doctrines of repentance, faith, and obedience, as low matters, unworthy of their attention, and as unprofitable to any good end. Nothing pleases them but what brings immediately to their view the Divine decrees: and of these they speak in a way that the Scriptures by no means authorize. They draw conclusions from partial statements, without giving due weight to things which God himself has spoken on the opposite side: and then they vindicate with unhallowed boldness and confidence what they themselves have put, as it were, into the mouth of God.

This was the very conduct of Job's friends; and justly were they rebuked by God for their presumption. They took partial declarations of God, and then put their own unqualified construction upon them, and deduced from them inferences which they were never intended to bear. In this way they bore down righteous Job as an ignorant self-deceiver. But God declared that they had not spoken the thing that was right, as his servant Job had done; and required them to humble themselves for their folly and impiety.

Let not any of you ever subject yourselves to the same reproof: for "Woe to him," says God, "who strives with his Maker! [Isaiah 45:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.9)." It befits you, doubtless, to investigate, and as far as possible to understand, every truth of God: but, in things so infinitely beyond the reach of human intellect, it befits you to be humble, modest, diffident: and in things respecting which the most pious men may differ in their judgment, it befits you cheerfully to concede to others the liberty which you arrogate to yourselves. And we are well persuaded, that *mutual candor and forbearance among those of opposite principles, would do infinitely more towards the bringing all to just views, than all the angry contentions of violent partisans.*

***~~2. To all persons without exception—~~***

You, brethren, have other things to do than to be wasting your time about unprofitable disputes. You are all at this very moment vessels of wrath—or vessels of mercy! You are now, even while I am speaking to you, under the hands of the Potter. You are actually upon the lathes, preparing and fashioning, either for vessels of honor, or vessels of dishonor. The question that most concerns you is, for which are you preparing? and how you may know for which you are destined? In order to ascertain this, you need not look into the book of God's decrees, but simply examine the state of your own hearts.

For what are you preparing? Are you diligently seeking after God from day to day? Are you living by faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ, washing daily in the fountain of his blood, and renewed daily by the operations of his Spirit? Are you progressively advancing in the enjoyment of his presence, the performance of his will, and the attainment of his image? Are you, in a word, beginning to live the life of Heaven upon earth? This will mark you as vessels of honor: and the lack of this is sufficient to stamp you vessels unto dishonor.

It is not necessary that you would be committing any flagrant sins in order to constitute you vessels of wrath: it is quite sufficient that you are not growing up into Christ as your living Head, and devoted altogether to his service and glory. Let these inquiries then occupy your mind, and trouble not yourselves about the "secret things which belong only to your God." *Whether you are pleased with the Potter or not, he is going on with his work*; and in a short time he will cut you from the lathe, and fix your everlasting destinies! But, blessed be his name! He is able to change both your form and use: and, if you call upon him, he will do it; and he can do it as easily as a potter can mar the clay which has been formed only for a degraded use, and fashion it into a vessel of the most dignified description. While you are upon the lathe, nothing is impossible! Who can tell but that you have been allowed, even to this hour, to fit yourselves for vessels of wrath, in order that God may be the more glorified in the change that shall be wrought in you? Yes, perhaps the hour is now come for Saul's conversion: perhaps this is the hour when he has decreed to humble you in the dust before him, and to make you a vessel of honor that shall display, almost beyond all others, the riches of his glory! O lift up your hearts to him, and pray, that at this time his grace may be magnified in you, and that you may be *monuments of his love and mercy to all eternity.*

But perhaps with others the hour is come, when the measure of your iniquities shall be filled, and when, like Pharaoh, you shall be made signal monuments of God's wrath and indignation. What a fearful thought! The Lord grant that it may not be realized in any of you. But beware! His mercy and forbearance will have an end; and that end may be much nearer than you expect. Let not one hour more pass unimproved, but "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near."

As for you who have reason to hope that you are already vessels of mercy, O! bless and praise your God. Remember, you were taken from the same mass of clay, as others who bear a very different shape. Remember, too, to whom you owe the distinction that has been conferred upon you. Had you been left to yourselves, you would have been in as degraded a state as any. It is God, and God alone, who has made you to differ, either from others, or from your former selves. Give him then the glory of his rich and sovereign grace, and seek daily to become more and more "vessels of honor, fit for your Master's use! [2 Timothy 2:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.20-21)."

***~~#1887~~***

***~~CHRIST REJECTED BY THE JEWS, AND BELIEVED ON BY THE GENTILES~~***

***~~[Romans 9:30-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-33).~~***

"What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

*A VERY great proportion of the controversies which exist in the Christian world, arise from an over-straining of just principles, and carrying them to an undue extent.* Many are not contented with maintaining what God has plainly declared; but they will found on his declarations everything that appears to be deducible from them. But, however legitimate any *deduction*may appear to us, we should make a great difference between it and the word on which it is founded; more especially if there be in the Holy Scriptures other passages directly opposed to our deductions. We should remember, that *our finite faculties are incapable of comprehending all that the infinitely wise God has seen fit to reveal:*and therefore, when we advance even a hair's breadth beyond what God has expressly authorized, we should proceed with the utmost caution.

A rash and presumptuous mind will, without hesitation, build the doctrine of *reprobation*upon the declarations of Paul in this chapter. But Paul forbears to press his principles so far, because, however such an inference might appear just in the eyes of fallible man, it would have been in direct opposition to other declarations of Almighty God. His moderation is beautifully exhibited in this chapter.

In order to silence the blasphemous cavils of an objector, he had been constrained to occupy high ground, and to assert God's sovereign right to dispose of all his creatures, even as the potter has power over the clay, which he has prepared for his own use. But when he comes to sum up his argument, he does not refer the rejection of the Jews to the mere sovereign will of God, but to their own obstinate pride and unbelief: thereby showing us, that, while we properly refer all good to God—we must trace all evil to ourselves. *If we are saved, it is God who saves us, from first to last; but, if we perish, we perish through our own fault alone.*

For the further elucidation of our text, we shall consider,

***~~I. The fact here stated—~~***

***~~It was a plain and undeniable fact, that the Gentiles had embraced the Gospel, and the Jews had rejected it—~~***

The GENTILES, until they heard the Gospel, were in a most deplorable state of wickedness. See Romans 1 throughout. Nor did they, at least with very few exceptions, at all think of seeking after God. Having but little sense of their guilt, and no idea whatever of any way in which their guilt might be removed, they concerned not themselves about a future state. The sentiment of the great mass among them was, "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die." But, on the first proclamation of the Gospel to them, they received it gladly, and experienced, throughout all the Roman empire, its saving benefits. Thus was fulfilled in them that prophecy, "I am sought by those who asked not for me: I am found of those who sought me not, [Isaiah 65:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.1)."

The JEWS, on the other hand, many of them at least, had a considerable desire after a righteousness that would justify them before God: and they actually sought after such a righteousness, by conforming to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law. But through their undue attachment to that *law which was now fulfilled and abrogated in Christ Jesus*, they set themselves against the Gospel, and thereby cut themselves off from all participation of its benefits.

The offer of salvation, through the merits of another, was a stumbling-block to them: they thought, that if they observed the duties of the moral law, and compensated for their defects by a strict attention to the ceremonial law, then all would be well: and being persuaded of this, they would not hear of a salvation, which dispensed with the observances on which they placed so great a dependence. It was to this alone, and not to any secret and irresistible decrees of God, that they were thus left to perish.

Thus it was that the Gentiles embraced the Gospel, and were saved by it; while the Jews, with all their superior advantages, rejected it, and perished.

***~~But this fact only verified what had been long ago predicted by the prophets—~~***

Christ had been represented as "a *foundation-stone*," on which whoever would build would live for ever, [Isaiah 28:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.16). On the other hand, he had been represented as a *stone of stumbling*, and a rock of offense, over which many would fall to their heavier condemnation, [Isaiah 8:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.14-15). Thus the very Scriptures that announced his advent, declared that he would be "set for the *fall*, as well as for the *rising*again, of many in Israel, [Luke 2:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.34)." This, if viewed abstractedly, was a very improbable event: for, however he might be disregarded by the Gentiles, the probability was that the Jews, of whose nation he was, who expected his advent, and, from their own prophecies, might have learned his character; who actually saw all his miracles, and heard all his discourses; who, moreover, were assured on the most infallible testimony respecting his resurrection from the dead; who saw also the very same miracles wrought by his followers as had before been wrought by himself; I say, the probability was that the Jews would have immediately become his most devoted followers. But the conduct of this infatuated people was altogether contrary to all such expectations; and they fulfilled the prophecies which they did not understand.

Such was the fact stated by Paul. Let us now attend to,

***~~II. The instruction to be gathered from it—~~***

Surely, in this fact, we may see the following truths:

***~~1. That however earnest we may be after salvation, we never shall attain it if we seek it in a self-righteous way—~~***

Some of the Jews, we know, were very earnest in their endeavors to fulfill their law. Paul's description of himself in his unconverted state, abundantly proves this, [Philippians 3:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.5-6). So at this time many are very studious to approve themselves to God, according to the light that is in them: but they know not in what way to come to him.

They do not see the nature and extent of the moral law; which, having been once violated, can never justify an immortal soul, [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10).

They do not see that there is a new and living way opened for them into the holy of holies by the sacrifice of the Son of God, [Hebrews 10:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.19-20).

They know not what our blessed Lord has so plainly told them, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me [John 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.6)."

But we must declare to all such persons, that they are fatally deluded: "their zeal is not according to knowledge:" while they go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and refuse to submit to the righteousness provided for them by God, they cut themselves off from all the blessings of the Gospel, [Romans 10:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.2-4). Nor is it only by an avowed reliance on their works alone that they bring this evil on themselves: they do it with equal certainty by blending their own works in any measure, or in any degree, with the merits of Christ, [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2); [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4) with [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6).

Know then, all of you, that, if ever you would be partakers of Christ and of his salvation, you must seek to be found in Christ, not relying in any respect on your own righteousness, but trusting altogether in his righteousness alone, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9); If you would gain the prize, you must not only strive, but "strive lawfully," according to the rules that have been prescribed, [2 Timothy 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.5).

***~~2. That however regardless we have been about salvation hitherto, we shall attain to it the very instant we sincerely believe in Christ—~~***

The Gentiles at large give us a very just, but awful, picture of man's depravity: yet, when they were altogether dead, God "passed by them, and bade them live! [Ezekiel 16:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.6) with [Ephesians 2:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.4-5)." Thus, if his voice in the Gospel reaches our ears, and enters into our hearts, we also shall live before him. There was no interval between the obedience of Zaccheus to the Savior's call, and "the coming of salvation to his house." The converts on the day of Pentecost were justified, the very instant they believed; and in like manner shall "all who believe be justified from all things."

The most perfect representation of this truth may be found in the ordinance of the *brazen serpent*which shadowed it forth. There was but one way of cure for all who were dying of their wounds; and that was, a sight of the brazen serpent. On the other hand, there was no interval between their use of that remedy, and their experience of the cure.

Thus, then, the Lord Jesus Christ says to us, "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!" and, if we will in a full reliance on his word direct our eyes unto him, "we shall never be ashamed" of our hope.

***~~3. That however calumniated this way of salvation is, the very calumnies that are raised against it, attest its truth—~~***

We must not be understood to say, that the mere circumstance of any plan of salvation giving offense proves that plan to be true and scriptural: for even the Gospel itself may be so crudely and injudiciously stated, as to give just offense; but this we say, that any plan of salvation which gives no offense to self-righteous men, is certainly not of God.

Objections without number were made against Paul's statements. When he said that salvation was altogether of *grace*, his enemies replied, that in that case God must be partial and unjust. When he said it was by *faith*, then they replied, that he dispensed with good works.

The same objections even to this hour are universally brought against the same statements: and we may be infallibly sure that if no objections of the same kind be urged against us, we do not state the Gospel as Paul did: we are accommodating ourselves to the pride and prejudice of an ignorant world, instead of preaching the Gospel as freely and as fully as we ought.

Let none then be discouraged when they hear the Gospel evil spoken of; neither let them wonder If it is "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness," as in the days of old. It is so, and it must be so, as long as man shall continue unhumbled before God: and if you find it so among the circle in which you move, know that, as far as that circumstance goes, it is no proof whatever that what you hear is erroneous, but a strong presumptive evidence that the word you hear is the very truth of God, the same glorious salvation which Paul preached. Only be truly willing to have God exalted, and your own souls humbled in the dust before him—and then you will find that the Gospel offers you precisely such a remedy as you need, and that "it is the power of God unto salvation to all those who believe."

***~~#1888~~***

***~~PAUL'S LOVE TO HIS BRETHREN~~***

***~~[Romans 10:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.1).~~***

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved."

TO seek the salvation of our fellow-creatures is but an unthankful office. The intimations which we are obliged to give them respecting their guilt and danger, are considered by them as uncharitable censures, rather than as friendly admonitions; and thus we call forth only the resentment of those whose eternal interests we are most anxious to promote.

Paul, who was most abundant in labors for the salvation of his brethren, experienced, beyond all others, their hatred and contempt. Aware that this would be the effect of his exertions, he was always studious to counteract it; and scarcely ever mentioned an offensive truth without testifying by some following observations, that it was dictated by love.

Throughout the whole Epistle to the Romans, this appears in a very striking light. Having shown, in the second chapter, that the Jews, notwithstanding their being in covenant with God by circumcision, were as much in need of salvation as the idolatrous and abandoned Gentiles, he corrects the apparent severity of his remarks, by saying, "What advantage then has the Jew? Much in every way! [Romans 2:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.28-29) with 3:1, 2."

Proceeding afterwards to show that the law could not justify any man, and fearing that he might on that account be thought an enemy to the law, he removes all ground for that suspicion; "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; we establish the law, [Romans 3:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.28) with 31."

Comparing afterwards his connection with the law to the state of a woman that has lost her husband, who is therefore at liberty to be married to another; and observing, that sin took occasion from the law itself to bring forth fruit unto death; he guards them against imagining that he meant thereby to cast any reflection upon the law, as though it was itself sinful, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid! [Romans 7:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.1-6) with 7."

Having yet further, in the prosecution of his argument, asserted, that the incapacity of the law to save men was the reason of God's sending his own Son to save them, he (after some enlargement on this subject) appeals to God in the most solemn manner, that, instead of speaking these things from any ill will to his Jewish brethren, he "could wish himself even accursed from Christ for them," if by that means they might be saved, [Romans 8:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.3) with 9:1-5.

Thus also, in the passage before us, having shown that the Gentiles were admitted into the Church and made partakers of salvation, while the Jews were cast out, he assures them that nothing could be more adverse to his wishes than this awful dispensation, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved!"

The same *caution*would we also use in ministering to you the Gospel of Christ. We are of necessity obliged to declare to you many unwelcome truths: but God knows that our only motive in declaring them is to benefit and save your souls; and that, while that is the object of our public ministrations, it is also the frequent subject of our secret prayers.

Let us, in elucidating our text, consider,

***~~I. What it was that the Apostle desired in their behalf—~~***

Paul had no wish to proselyte men to a party, or to procure followers to himself.

***~~His object was to "save" them—~~***

Salvation comprehends not only a deliverance from all the penal effects of sin, but a restoration to the favor and image of God, and an exaltation to all the glory and felicity of Heaven.

Salvation is the *greatest*of all blessings. The concerns of time and sense are of no value in comparison with it: yes, crowns, kingdoms, worlds, are lighter than vanity itself!

Salvation is a blessing which all equally stand in *need*of. There is no man that is not a sinner before God, and therefore no man that is not exposed to his everlasting displeasure. Though men may differ with respect to the degrees of their guilt, there is no difference whatever with respect to their liableness to the wrath of God, and their need of his saving mercy.

Salvation is a blessing, without which existence itself will prove a curse. If those who did not partake of it could be annihilated, or if there were a purgatory, where those who die unprepared for it may be rendered fit to enjoy it, we might account our present life a blessing. But there are only two states, in the one or other of which all must be fixed for ever. Those who enjoy not the felicity of Heaven, must endure for ever the miseries of Hell!

Let us consider for a moment what those miseries are, and we shall need nothing more to show us the value of salvation.

***~~This object lay near Paul's heart, and called forth his most earnest exertions—~~***

He was not contented to obtain salvation himself: he was concerned for the welfare of his fellow-creatures, and laid to heart their interests, as though they were his own. Nor did he rest satisfied with good wishes and desires: he labored with incredible assiduity and self-denial, suffering all things cheerfully, not excepting imprisonments and death itself, for the advancement of their eternal happiness! [2 Corinthians 11:23-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.23-29). [2 Timothy 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.10). In secret also did he "labor fervently for them in prayer night and day." He knew the efficacy of intercession; and therefore besought God, with strong crying and tears, to take the veil from their hearts, and to enlighten them with the saving knowledge of his truth.

For our own information, it will be proper to inquire,

***~~II. In what way he directed them to seek salvation—~~***

The whole Epistle to the Romans was written with the express view of setting forth the way of salvation. It shows at large that we are fallen and ruined creatures; that God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world to redeem us; and that all who would be saved, must seek for mercy through his meritorious blood and righteousness. But in a more peculiar and emphatic manner did he urge these truths in that part from whence our text is taken.

***~~He showed them that they must found all their hopes on Christ alone—~~***

Consult the preceding context. There he states a matter of fact well known to all; namely, that the idolatrous and abandoned GENTILES, who had never thought about salvation, had been prevailed upon to seek after it, and had actually attained it, because they were willing to accept it in God's appointed way—by faith in Christ alone.

Whereas the JEWS, who had shown considerable attention to the concerns of their souls, had failed of attaining salvation, because they disdained to seek it in this way. He tells them that this fact agreed with the prophecies, which actually foretold this very event, and declared (many hundred years earlier) that Christ would thus become a stumbling-block to that self-righteous people, [Romans 9:30-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-33).

The same he sets forth also in the following context. He confesses that his Jewish brethren had a zeal to serve God; but it was a mistaken zeal. In three things they fatally erred:

1. they were ignorant of the plan which God had devised for justifying sinners;

2. they were seeking to establish a righteousness of their own, by which they might be justified before him;

3. and when a better righteousness was proposed to them, even the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, they would not trust in it, or submit to be saved in such a humiliating way.

That these were errors, even the law itself might teach them; for "Christ was the end of the law for righteousness." He was the very object to whom both the ceremonial and moral law directed them, for the obtaining of such a righteousness as would justify them before God: and this righteousness they were to obtain by faith in him.

The moral law shut them up to this method of obtaining salvation, because it denounced nothing but curses against every one that had violated it even in a single instance! [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10); [Galatians 3:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.23-24); and the ceremonial law taught them to look to that Great Sacrifice which Christ was in due time to offer for the sins of the world, verse 2-4.

Thus plainly did he direct them unto Christ, as their only, and all-sufficient Savior.

***~~In pointing them thus to Christ, he did most effectually consult their everlasting welfare—~~***

***~~The way of salvation by faith in Christ is plain, suitable, safe, and glorious!~~***

Nothing can be more plain. Suppose a person about to be imprisoned for debt has that debt discharged by a surety; he will see as clear as the light what is the true ground of his deliverance. Such then is the deliverance which we have by Christ.

And this way of salvation is suitable. If you were to propose any other method whatever, it would be altogether unsuitable for fallen man: but this is suited to the greatest of sinners; and that too even in their dying hour.

How safe it is, must appear to all who consider that Christ is God equal with the Father; that he assumed our nature, and died upon the cross, on purpose to make atonement for us; and that the promise and oath of Jehovah are pledged for the acceptance of all who truly believe in Christ.

And glorious will it be found to all eternity, inasmuch as all the perfections of the Deity are honored by it, and the happiness of all that shall be saved is enhanced by it beyond all calculation or conception!

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are careless about their souls—~~***

We are bound to desire and pray for your salvation: and we hope that in some small measure we can adopt respecting you the language of the text. But you must desire salvation, and pray to God for it yourselves; or else it will be in vain ever to expect it. We appeal to you, whether God will bestow it upon those who are too proud to ask for it, and too thoughtless to desire it?

***~~2. Those who are seeking salvation, but in a mistaken way—~~***

Do not think it sufficient that you desire to be saved; or that you are zealous in seeking after salvation. The Jews were not only zealous in their way, but confident that they were right; and yet never attained the object of their pursuit. Remember, you must be humbled; you must be contrite; you must rely on Christ alone.

***~~3. Those who have obtained mercy of the Lord—~~***

While we desire, and pray to God for, the salvation of others, we rejoice and bless our God for you. We consider the prosperity of your souls as the richest recompense of our labors. You have "received Christ Jesus the Lord." See to it then that you "walk in him," and "abide in him," and "cleave unto him with full purpose of heart."

***~~#1889~~***

***~~CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS~~***

**[Romans 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.4).**

"Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes."

ZEAL, if directed to a good object, is highly commendable: as the Apostle says, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." In reference to the concerns of religion, it is indispensably necessary for all who would approve themselves to God: "Whatever our hand finds to do, we should do it with our might." But in proportion to its value when operating in a good cause, is the danger of it, when engaged on the side of error. This appears from the havoc which Paul in his unconverted state made of the Christian Church; purely from a desire to render, as he thought, an acceptable service to the Lord.

Such, alas! is yet the zeal of too many: it is well-intentioned, but blind, and ignorant, and injurious: nevertheless, such a zeal, conscientiously exercised, at all times deserves respect, and should be treated with respect even by those who suffer from it.

The conduct of the Apostle towards the unbelieving Jews was, in this point of view, worthy of universal imitation. He was constrained to tell them that they were in error, and that their error was replete with danger to their souls: but he told them of it in terms as conciliatory as love could dictate, or language could afford. He assured them, that they were objects of his tenderest regard, and that he felt the deepest concern for their welfare. He even bore testimony in their behalf, that, in the zeal they manifested, they had a sincere desire to serve God. But unhappily they were mistaken in their views of the Mosaic law, which was never intended to afford them a justifying righteousness, but was designed rather to lead them to that very Jesus whom they so hated and despised, and who was indeed "the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes."

The information here given to them is of vital importance to every child of man. To place it in a just point of view, we propose to show,

***~~I. What is that righteousness which God has provided for fallen man—~~***

In the verse preceding our text, mention is twice made of "the righteousness of God;" by which expression we are not to understand that attribute of the Deity which we call righteousness, but that way of obtaining righteousness and salvation which God has provided for sinful men. In this sense the expression is used in other parts of this epistle, especially in the third chapter; where it is said, "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is unto all, and upon all those who believe, [Romans 3:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.21-22)." But,

***~~What kind of righteousness is this?~~***

However much God may graciously desire the salvation of men, we cannot for a moment imagine, that for the attainment of it he will disregard the claims, and violate the rights, of justice, or holiness, or truth. We may be sure, that, if he has provided a righteousness for man, *that righteousness will be found consistent with all his perfections, and with the honor of his moral government*. How such a righteousness could be devised, was far beyond the reach of finite wisdom to conceive: but God's wisdom is infinite; and he has, *by the substitution of his own Son in the place of sinners, provided precisely such a righteousness as was worthy of God, and suited to the necessities of man*.

The law required obedience, and denounced death as the penalty of one single transgression. Man transgressed its commands, and became obnoxious to its curse. Before he could be restored to the favor of his God, the penalty must be inflicted, and the obedience paid. But this it was impossible for man to do, seeing that the penalty was everlasting death; and man was despoiled of all power to do the will of God.

Therefore God was pleased to send his co-equal, co-eternal Son into the world, that, as*man's substitute, he might endure the curse which we had merited, and render the obedience which we owed*. Thus, by this wonderful contrivance, every obstacle to man's salvation is removed.

Must the penalty denounced against sin be inflicted? It has been inflicted on God's only dear Son.

Must the law be fulfilled in all its extent? It has been fulfilled to the uttermost by him.

So that to those who have him for their surety, there is a plea in arrest of judgment; a plea, which God himself will admit, as just, and adequate, and perfectly consistent with his own honor.

***~~And where shall we find this righteousness?~~***

It is treasured up for us in Christ Jesus; who, having been sent into the world, "to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24)," executed the work assigned him: and, being now constituted the Head of his Church, and having all fullness of spiritual blessings treasured up in him for our use, *he imparts this righteousness to every one who truly believes in him*. Indeed, he is himself made righteousness unto them; as Paul has said, "He is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, [1 Corinthians 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30)."

This shows how we are to understand that declaration of the Prophet Jeremiah, "This is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness! [Jeremiah 23:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.6)." We are not merely to compliment our Savior with this title, but really and truly to rely upon him in this particular view, as possessing in himself all that righteousness whereby we are to be justified, and as imparting it to all who are united to him by faith. In a word, we must all "look unto him in order to obtain salvation," and, with an express recollection, that all which we have is not in ourselves, but in him, "we must say, In the Lord I have righteousness and strength! [Isaiah 45:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.22); [Isaiah 45:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.24)."

What an agreement there is between the Old and the New Testament in relation to this righteousness, will appear, while we show,

***~~II. How the law itself directs us to it—~~***

Had the Jews understood the true import of their own law, they would never have rejected Christ, for he was the very scope and end,

***~~1. Of the moral law—~~***

The law, when given to man in innocence, was intended to justify him, if he would continue to obey it to the termination of the period destined for his probation. But when once he had fallen, there was no possibility of his ever obtaining justification by it. We, as partakers of his guilt and corruption, are in the same predicament with him: "in him we have died;" and, if ever we obtain life, we must seek it in the way pointed out to him, even in that "Seed of the woman who was in due time to bruise the serpent's head." Paul tells us, that, "if there had been a law given, which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law, [Galatians 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.21)." But this being impossible, (since man in his fallen state could not fulfill it; nor could God, consistently with his own holiness, relax its demands,) God re-published it from Mount Sinai, to show unto men how greatly they had departed from it, and to drive them by its terrors to that Refuge which he had prepared for them. That these were the true ends for which the law was given, is expressly asserted: Paul puts the question, "What then is the purpose of the law?" And he answers it by saying, that "it was added because of transgressions, until the Seed would come to whom the promise was made." It was given to convince them of their transgressions, to stop their mouths with a sense of their guilt and misery, [Galatians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.19) with [Romans 3:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.19-20); and to "shut them up unto the faith that would afterwards be revealed." In a word, instead of ever being given to afford a ground of hope to men by their obedience to it, the law was intended "to be a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith, [Galatians 3:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.22-24)." Haw it effected this, may be seen in the Apostle Paul, whose hopes it utterly destroyed, and whom it constrained to seek acceptance through Christ alone, [Romans 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.9).

***~~2. Of the ceremonial law—~~***

This, it is true, was appointed to make an atonement for sins, so far as to screen the transgressor from the penalties that were to be inflicted by the civil magistrate. But it never really took away sin: "it was not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins, [Hebrews 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.4)." The annual repetition of the same sacrifices showed, that "they could not make a man perfect as pertaining to the conscience." They were, in fact, only "remembrances of sins made every year," in order to direct men to that Great Sacrifice, which would in due time be offered, and which alone could effect reconciliation for us with our offended God, [Hebrews 9:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.9-10); [Hebrews 10:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.3-4).

The very circumstance of the ceremonial law making no provision for the expiation of presumptuous sin, showed that it could not answer the necessities of fallen man, [Numbers 15:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 15.30). Hence the Apostle tells us, that the law was only a "shadow of good things to come, [Hebrews 10:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.1);" a shadow, of which Christ was the body, [Colossians 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.17). Agreeably to this, the most noted types of Christ are expressly applied to him, as having in his own person fulfilled their office, and abrogated their use.

The paschal lamb proclaimed to Israel, that unless their houses were sprinkled with its blood, they would fall by the sword of the destroying angel: and Paul says to us, that "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us, 1 Corinthians 5:7." Again, the lamb offered every morning and evening in sacrifice, we are told, shadowed forth the Lord Jesus Christ, as the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world! [Revelation 13:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 13.8)," even that "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, [John 1:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.29)." In a word, all the sacrifices proclaim to us this truth, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin."

Thus it appears, that neither the moral nor ceremonial law could provide us with any righteousness wherein we might stand before God; but that both the one and the other directed us to Christ, "in whom alone all the seed of Israel can be justified, and in whom alone they must glory, [Isaiah 45:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.25)."

But it remains yet to be inquired,

***~~III. In what way we are to be made partakers of it—~~***

In reference to this there exist among us, even as among the Jews, the most fatal mistakes.

***~~The great mass of those who feel a concern about their souls, seek for righteousness by the works of the law—~~***

As for those who really think that their own works have such an exalted merit in them, as to deserve Heaven by themselves without any reference whatever to Christ, we would fondly hope, that they are very rarely to be found among us. But there are two ways in which men, while they profess some reliance upon Christ, do in reality make their own works the foundation of their hopes; namely, *by looking for salvation by their works for Christ's sake, or by Christ for their works' sake*.

There are a great many shades of difference between persons who may be arranged under these two heads, and many precice distinctions have been drawn in order to show the various delusions which men harbor in their minds in reference to this subject: but all this different classes may be safely reduced to these two.

Let us pause a moment, to consider whether we ourselves do not belong to the one or other of them.

There are many who, as we have said, **seek salvation by their works for Christ's sake**. They will not go so far as to say, that Christ has done nothing for man's salvation: on the contrary, they think that they are much indebted to him; for that to him they owe it, that *their imperfect obedience shall be accepted for their justification before God*. They do indeed suppose that their repentance, their reformation of life, their alms-deeds, and their attendance on divine ordinances, will procure to them the favor of God: but then it is not because these things are absolutely meritorious, so as to deserve and purchase Heaven; but because the Lord Jesus Christ has procured a relaxation of the perfect law of God, and obtained for them that their sincere obedience shall be accepted instead of perfect obedience. And, if their obedience would not be altogether sufficient for the desired end, they expect he will add a portion of his merits to theirs, so that there shall be no deficiency upon the whole.

But a very little knowledge of God's perfect law is sufficient to dispel this fatal delusion. The law neither is mitigated, nor can be mitigated: it never can require less than it did.*It required of man to love God with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and to love his neighbor as himself*. But from which of these has God released us? Or from which, consistently with his own honor, can he release us? The law remains the same as ever it was, both in its requirements and its penalties: and, as our works never did, nor ever can, come up to its demands, it can never do anything but denounce a curse against us, as long as we continue under it. As the Apostle says, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;" for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10)." *While therefore it curses us, it of course can never justify: nor can our defective obedience to it form any part of our justifying righteousness before God.*

When men are driven from this refuge, they then flee to the other, of which we have spoken, and **look for justification by Christ for their works' sake**. They see that in Christ alone can be found such a righteousness as the law requires; and they now look to him as their righteousness. But yet they dare not go to him, as it were, with all their sins upon them; they think they must wash themselves first with the tears of penitence, and make some compensation for their past iniquities by newness of life: and then they hope that he will accept them, and present them faultless before his heavenly Father.

And if they cannot see in themselves such a measure of penitence and reformation as they think necessary to recommend them to him, they dare not go to him: they think it would be presumption in them to trust in him: they cannot conceive how his mercy would extend to such wretches as they see themselves to be.

On the other hand, if by much prayer and diligence they have attained some measure of the goodness which they are striving after, then, I say, they can go to him with courage, and feel a comfortable persuasion that he will accept them. Thus *they found their hopes, not simply on his merits, but on some measure of goodness in themselves, which they carry with them as a price to purchase his favor*.

But the Scriptures tell us, that we must go to receive salvation at Christ's hands, "without money and without price, [Isaiah 55:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.1);" that salvation must be wholly of grace, from first to last, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6); that we must go without any work whatever, to be "justified by him as ungodly, [Romans 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.5);" and that, if we attempt to carry to him anything of our own, either as a joint ground of our hope, or as a warrant for our hope, in him, "he shall profit us nothing, [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2); [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4)."

***~~We must be made partakers of Christ's righteousness solely and entirely by faith—~~***

This is asserted so strongly, and so frequently, that one can scarcely conceive how any one who has ever read the Scriptures would entertain a doubt of it. Nor is it asserted only, but maintained frequently, in a long course of argument in direct opposition to the Jewish notion of salvation by works, [Romans 4:1-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.1-14). The reasons for it also are stated again and again. Salvation "is by faith, that it may be by grace, [Romans 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.16)." It is "by faith, lest any man would boast, [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.8-9)." It is by faith, that the whole universe may glory in Christ alone, [1 Corinthians 1:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.31).

The reproof which Paul gave to Peter at Antioch puts this matter in the clearest light. Peter had preached to the Gentiles, salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Some Judaizing teachers, who, while they professed to believe in Christ, were zealous for the observance of the Mosaic law, coming thither, he feared to offend them; and, to ingratiate himself with them, he required the Gentiles to conform to some Mosaic rites to which they had never before been subjected, and from which the Jews themselves, had they known their liberty, were free. We are not told that Peter promised them salvation by these works: but he evidently taught them, that, though Christ was the only Savior, they might recommend themselves to him, and confirm their interest in him, by the observance of these rites. Thus, in fact, he adulterated and undermined the Gospel, and endangered the eternal welfare of all his followers.

On this account Paul blamed and reproved him before the whole Church: and the reprehension which he gave to Peter has been transmitted to us, that we may see of what importance it is to maintain the doctrine of salvation by faith, uncontaminated and undisguised. Hear the account which Paul himself gives of it: "When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. [Galatians 2:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.14-16)."

This shows us, that nothing is to be blended with, and nothing to be added to, the faith in Christ; but that all who are justified, must be justified simply, and solely, by faith in Christ.

We must not be understood to say that good works are not necessary after we are justified; for they are indispensably necessary, to prove the sincerity of our faith. But it is in reference to the matter of *justification*only that we now speak: and there good works must be excluded altogether. Christ is our only righteousness: and it is by faith alone that we can ever apprehend him.

***~~The whole state of the Apostle's argument in the passage before us, leads us to conclude with the following advice:~~***

***~~1. Seek not to establish any righteousness of your own—~~***

Self-righteousness is deeply rooted in the heart of man. Its workings are numerous and subtle, and the danger arising from it is more than can be conceived.

It robs God of his glory.

It subverts the very foundations of the Gospel.

It usurps the office of the Savior.

It invades the unalienable prerogatives of God.

Do not think that self-righteousness is a light sin. Do not hastily conclude that you are free from it. Search and try your hearts. See what is the ground of your hopes. See whether you are willing to go to Christ as the very chief of sinners; or whether you are not rather wishing to find some worthiness in yourselves, that may serve as a ground of confidence in your approaches to him, and as a foundation of your hope of acceptance with him. For be assured, that if you stumble over this stumbling-stone, you will frustrate the grace of God, and cause the death of Christ, as far as respects yourselves, to be in vain! [Galatians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.21).

***~~2. Submit humbly and cheerfully to the righteousness of Christ—~~***

Strange indeed is it that it would be any act of submission to believe in Christ: but it is in reality such a submission as our proud hearts are never brought to without much difficulty. We may see a spirit of pride in Naaman, when he was told by the prophet to "wash in Jordan, and be clean." Had he been told to do some great thing, he would have complied immediately: but to "wash in Jordan" appeared to be so inadequate a remedy, that he would not condescend to try it.

Thus, when we say to men, "Believe, and be saved," we seem to propose to them a remedy of no value. Were we to lay down *rules*for them, and tell them what penances to inflict on themselves, and what services to perform in order to the purchasing of Heaven—we would find them willing to undertake whatever we might prescribe. The very thought of being their own saviors would suffice to carry them through the greatest difficulties.

But when we say to them, "Believe only, and you shall be saved," they are ready, like Naaman, to "turn away in a rage." This however is what we are commissioned to say: and, if an angel from Heaven were to give you any direction contrary to that, he would be accursed! [Galatians 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.8-9).

O let your hearts be humbled before God. Methinks, when Jesus said to the lepers, "Go and show yourselves to the priests;" or, when to the blind man, "Go and wash in the pool of Siloam," they found no reluctance to comply. Why then would you be reluctant to trust in Christ alone for salvation?

Can you cleanse your own leprosy?

Can you open your own eyes?

Can you effect your own salvation?

No assuredly, you cannot. If any man could have saved himself, methinks it was the Apostle Paul. But he, disclaiming all thoughts of ever accomplishing such a work, "desired to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9)." Brethren, be like-minded with him; and then you may, like him, be "always triumphing in Christ," and be assured, that, "when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory! [Colossians 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.4)."

***~~#1890~~***

***~~GOSPEL SALVATION~~***

***~~[Romans 10:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.8-10).~~***

"But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

IF we would know with certainty what the Gospel is, we should examine carefully what the Apostles preached. But in various places their discourses appeared to have a different aspect, according as they were called to lay the foundations of religion, or to build up the superstructure: and therefore we are concerned to receive from these inspired teachers a summary of their own doctrines: and this is precisely what we are favored with in the passage before us. Let us, then, take these words as our guide: for in them we may clearly see,

***~~I. The terms on which salvation is offered to us—~~***

We are told, in few words, what was "the word of faith which Paul preached." Two things he insisted on, as indispensably necessary to our salvation:

***~~1. Faith in Christ as our crucified and risen Savior—~~***

The Lord Jesus Christ was "sent of God to be the Savior of the world, [1 John 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.14)." All that was necessary for man's salvation he effected on the cross: and God, in token that he himself was satisfied, raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, and exalted him to his own right hand, that there he might carry on and perfect the work assigned him. Of us he requires that we believe in Christ, as thus sent, thus accepted, thus qualified: and that, discarding every other hope, we place our dependence on him alone.

This mode of salvation is contrasted with *the law, which proposes obedience alone as the ground of hope*. But by obedience can no man living be saved; because we have already violated the law; and, even if at this moment our past violations of it were forgiven, we would be unable to render to it the obedience it demands. That ground of hope, therefore, being renounced, we must rely simply on the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek salvation altogether by faith in him.

***~~2. A confession of Christ under that character—~~***

No confession of ours can add anything to his all-finished work. Yet are we required to confess him openly; because his glory, and the good of man, demand it of us. If we would conceal our faith in him, who would be benefitted? Or in what respect would he be glorified? Methinks such concealment would reflect on him the greatest disgrace; and it would assuredly tend to harden others in their unbelief. Hence our blessed Lord required, that "all who would derive benefit from him should deny themselves, and take up their cross daily, and follow him." And if we do not this, he declares that he will not acknowledge us as his disciples. Our faith, destitute of this fruit, will be in vain. Thus, though confession cannot add to faith, it is equally necessary with faith; the one being the root; the other, the fruit proceeding from it.

For our encouragement, we are informed what will be,

***~~II. The certain outcome of a compliance with those terms—~~***

Whoever shall thus believe in Christ, and thus confess him, "shall be saved." This expression is plain, positive, unqualified. But we are informed in our text what will be the bearing of each requirement, and in what respect a compliance with each will tend to the attainment of the end proposed. To each of them has the Lord Jesus Christ assigned its proper office:

***~~Faith will invest us with his "righteousness"—~~***

He has wrought out a perfect righteousness for sinful man; a righteousness fully commensurate with the utmost demands of law and justice, verse 4. This righteousness faith apprehends. In truth, it cannot be apprehended in any other way. If we were able to purchase an interest in it by any works of our own, salvation would in fact be by works; seeing that to purchase salvation, or to purchase that which gives us salvation, is, in reality, and in effect, the same.

We are continually told, that this righteousness becomes ours by faith: "It is revealed from faith to faith, [Romans 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.17);" and "it is unto all, and upon all those who believe, [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22)." From the moment that any one believes in Christ, this righteousness becomes his; yes, "Christ is made unto him righteousness. [1 Corinthians 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30);" and he is entitled to call the Lord Jesus, "Jehovah our Righteousness! [Jeremiah 23:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.6);" and to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength! [Isaiah 45:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.24)." Arrayed in this spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, he will be so pure that the eye of God himself will not discern a spot or blemish in him! [Ephesians 5:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.27).

***~~Confession will insure to us his final approbation—~~***

True, it will add nothing to Christ's perfect righteousness: but it will evindence the sincerity of our faith: and on it will the very sentence of our Savior's approbation be grounded, as displaying, beyond a doubt, the equity of his procedure. Our Lord has said, that on this shall his ultimate proceedings with us depend: "Whoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in Heaven, [Matthew 10:32-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.32-33)."

Nor is this a mere arbitrary appointment: for the confessing of Christ openly has a great tendency to improve our character, and to prepare us for his glory. Doubtless it will be an occasion of many trials and many sufferings: for the ungodly world will hate the servants even as they hated the Master, and persecute them even as they persecuted him. But Jesus "was made perfect through sufferings, [Hebrews 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.10);" and by the fire of affliction must we also be purged from our dross! [1 Peter 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.6-7). Our afflictions are but, in fact, the completing of that which was yet lacking in his, [Colossians 1:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.24); and, in enduring them, we are assimilated to his image, [1 Peter 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.13).

Thus, though our confession of him adds not anything to his perfect righteousness, it tends to fit us for the recompense which his overflowing bounty will accord to us. Assuredly, therefore, we may expect, that "if we *suffer*with him, we shall also *reign*with him," and to all eternity "be glorified together with him! [2 Timothy 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.12). [Romans 8:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.17)."

***~~Let, then, your faith in Christ be cordial—~~***

It is not to be a *mere assent*of the understanding, but an *acquiescence of the heart*. Twice is this mentioned in our text: nor is it possible for us to lay too great a stress upon it. In point of strength, I doubt not but that the faith of devils is superior to that of men: but they have no love to Christ, nor any delight in anything relating to him. But you, beloved, must see a glory in the whole of his mediation, and must feel exquisite delight in committing yourselves altogether to him. Nor must this be an occasional act, but the daily habit of your minds: "The entire life which you now live in the flesh, you must live by faith in the Son of God, who has loved you, and given himself for you! [Galatians 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.20)." Nor must there be in you the least bearing towards any righteousness of your own. You must indeed endeavor to be "righteous even as he is righteous, [1 John 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.7);" but your dependence must be on him alone,

***~~2. Let your confession of him be uniform and unreserved—~~***

Never, for a moment, should you give way to fear [Luke 12:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.4-5), or allow any carnal consideration to influence your minds, so as to damp your zeal in his service, [John 12:42-43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.42-43). It is not necessary that you should be obtrusive, and force religious subjects on those who are utterly averse to them: this would be to "cast pearls before swine." But you should watch for opportunities to honor the Savior, and to lead others to the knowledge of him. And on no account would you ever be "ashamed of him, [Mark 8:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 8.38);" but would be ready, at all times, to "follow him outside the camp, bearing his reproach, [Hebrews 13:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.13).

If you possessed, like Moses, all the treasures of Egypt, you would consider them as of no account in comparison with the infinitely richer treasure which you will find in "the reproach of Christ, [Hebrews 11:24-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.24-26)." If only "Christ may be magnified in you," it would be equally a welcome service to you, "whether it be by life or by death! [Philippians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.20)."

***~~#1891~~***

***~~SALVATION BY CHRIST UNIVERSALLY TO BE PROCLAIMED~~***

***~~[Romans 10:12-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.12-15).~~***

"For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

MEN, as sinners, need to be reminded from day to day, that there is a Savior provided for them, and that the salvation wrought out by him is offered freely to every man. To declare this is the special work of the ministry; which is therefore called, the *ministry of reconciliation*, because the end and object of it is to proclaim this truth, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

In delivering this message, we sometimes appear to ourselves as in danger of wearying our audience by needless repetitions; but we check ourselves when we hear Paul apologizing for the same conduct in these words, "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous; but for you it is safe." We might diversify our subjects more, and thereby administer to the gratification of "itching ears;" but there is no subject in the universe of such vital importance as this; and therefore we most prove ourselves faithful to our high calling, when, like Paul, "we know nothing among you but Christ, and him crucified."

Paul, in all the preceding context, has shown that salvation is simply by faith in Christ: and that, in publishing it equally both to Jews and Gentiles, he had only done what Moses and the prophets had done before him; and what must be done, if ever either Jews or Gentiles are to be made partakers of it.

The words which we have read will naturally lead us to set before you,

***~~I. The way of salvation—~~***

***~~There is but one way of salvation for all mankind—~~***

As soon as ever sin entered into the world, the way of salvation by the works of the law was closed. From that day to this, "the flaming sword, once placed at the east of Eden, has prohibited all access to the tree of life," except that which was opened in the promise, that "the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head, [Genesis 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.15); [Genesis 3:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.24)."

From that time, this way of salvation was shadowed forth in sacrifices, with the skins of which our first parents were clothed, to remind them that they must be clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which alone could cover the shame of their nakedness from the eye of their offended God, [Genesis 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.21) with [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22) and [Revelation 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.18).

The prophets all bore testimony to this same truth: Isaiah speaks of Jesus as that "foundation which God has laid in Zion, and declares that whoever believes in him shall not be ashamed, [Isaiah 28:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.16);" and Joel, in the words quoted in our text, affirms, that "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved, [Joel 2:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Joel 2.32)."

These words deserve somewhat more of a distinct consideration. They refer beyond all doubt to the Messiah, and to the dispensation which he was to introduce. All the preceding context indisputably proves this, [Joel 2:28-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Joel 2.28-31); and Peter, on the day of Pentecost, expressly declares that they were fulfilled by the descent of the Holy Spirit to testify of Christ, and to convert souls to him, [Acts 2:16-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.16-21). But in the prophet Joel the person on whose name we are taught to call, is Jehovah: it is no subordinate Lord, but Jehovah himself: from whence we know assuredly, that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is there spoken of, is "Emmanuel, God with us." O blessed truth! He who was "a Child born, a Son given, is the Mighty God!" "God manifest in the flesh." "God over all, blessed for evermore! [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6). [1 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 3.16). [Romans 9:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.5)." Him we are to invoke, and on him we are to rely, as "The Lord our righteousness:" and, if we do so in sincerity and truth, renouncing every other hope, we shall be saved: his righteousness shall justify us; his Spirit shall renew us; and his grace shall keep us even to the end; "In him we shall be saved with an everlasting salvation; we shall not be ashamed or confounded world without end! [Isaiah 45:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.17)."

***~~This salvation is equally free for all—~~***

"There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek." This way of salvation existed before there was a Jew in the world: and the only advantage which the Jews enjoyed, was, that this way of salvation was made known to them in types and shadows, when it was altogether forgotten by the world at large. This distinguishing mercy, however, made no difference as to the way in which they were to be saved: it afforded no new ground of hope to the Jew; it took not away any old ground of hope from the Gentile. If a Gentile, like Job or Melchizedek, looked to the Great Sacrifice that was in due time to be offered, he was saved by it, though he did not descend from the loins of Abraham: and, in like manner, now, every creature in the universe who shall believe in Jesus, shall be saved by him: for "this same Lord over all (the Lord Jesus, [Acts 10:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.36).) is rich unto all who call upon him:" there is no limitation, no exception whatever; for, "whoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

Behold then in few words the way of salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ, who bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and "made reconciliation for us by the blood of his cross," is the one object of our faith and hope: and all who with humility and earnestness call upon him for salvation, shall surely find it, both in time and eternity.

This salvation being designed for all, we cannot doubt,

***~~II. The duty of diffusing universally the knowledge of it—~~***

***~~Without the instrumentality of human agents, it cannot be hoped that the knowledge of salvation would be spread throughout the earth—~~***

Doubtless God, if he pleased, might, as in the first creation, speak the word only, and there would be spiritual light throughout all the dark regions of the earth. But this is not the way in which God has ever wrought; nor has he given us reason to expect that he ever will work in this way, for the conversion of those who are yet in darkness and the shadow of death. He has sent forth an order of men on purpose to preach his Gospel throughout the world.

The Jews indeed could not endure this dispensation: they condemned with most inveterate malignity the Apostle's conduct in preaching to the Gentiles: but he asks them in our text: How the Gentiles ever could attain the knowledge of salvation, if it were not preached to them? The Apostle's argument is this: You Jews, know from your own prophets, that salvation is confined to those "who call on the name of the Lord." I by inspiration know, that that Lord is the Lord Jesus Christ. And now I ask, "How can the heathen call on him of whom they have not heard? Or how can they hear without a preacher?" This argument is incontrovertible: and we appeal to it as a complete vindication of all the efforts that are made by different societies to diffuse the knowledge of salvation throughout the world.

***~~It is by this instrumentality that God himself has taught us to expect the wished-for salvation—~~***

The words cited from the Prophet Isaiah are undoubtedly to be understood in reference to the Gospel dispensation. They primarily indeed describe the joy occasioned among the captive Jews in Babylon, when they saw the messenger hastening over the distant hills to bring them certain tidings of their redemption; but all the following context shows that they refer to an event in which the whole world was interested, seeing that "God had made bare his arm in the eyes of all nations, and that all the ends of the earth were to see the salvation of God, [Isaiah 52:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.7); [Isaiah 52:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.10)."

Contemplate then the passage in this view. See the messenger of the Lord Almighty running over the mountains to proclaim salvation to a ruined world. Those who are unconscious of any bondage, may deride his folly for giving himself so much unnecessary trouble. But how would it be with those who saw themselves under a sentence of condemnation, and were expecting the executioner to inflict the judgment denounced against them? Would they not behold with interest his every step? Would not his every motion, as it were, appear lovely in their eyes? Would not the tidings produce on all who believed them, the effect once wrought on the liberated Grecians, who all night long rent the air with that cheering sound, "A Savior, a Savior!" Look at the converts on the day of Pentecost; and know assuredly, that if, like Peter, we will unite in extending the knowledge of the Gospel, thousands shall in due time arise to attest, and to rejoice in, the tidings we proclaim. Yes, "the Gospel of peace" will be received by them as "glad tidings of good things."

***~~Now, in conclusion, we will call upon you,~~***

***~~1. To perform your duty—~~***

Let no Jewish prejudices or heathen infidelity (both of which, alas! are but too prevalent among us) discourage you. You must expect, not only that those who feel no value for their own souls will frown at your attempts to convert the souls of others, but that persons who really mean well, yes, and some who are truly pious, may, on some account or other, not be able cordially to unite with you in the blessed work. But know that the salvation of mankind is a work which every redeemed soul should labor to promote. We would not overlook indeed the things of minor importance: but we should not allow them to stand in the way of such a work as this. What would have become of the whole Gentile world, if the Apostles had waited until their unbelieving brethren, or even the Judaizing Christians had given their consent to have a free salvation offered to the Gentile world? Alas! we would have been in darkness even until now.

Labor then, beloved brethren, in every possible way to promote the knowledge of salvation among both Jews and Gentiles, yes, and among those who, though they call themselves Christians, are so only in name and profession. Circulate the Scriptures in every language under Heaven. Send missionaries to the ends of the earth. Seek also to bring into the fold of Christ the lost sheep of the house of Israel: and whatever be the office to which your situation and circumstances appear to fit you, be ready to execute it: and, in answer to God's inquiry, "Who will go for us?" be ready to reply, "Here I am, Lord; send me!"

***~~2. To enjoy your privileges—~~***

All the blessings of salvation, if only you believe in Christ, are yours! Yours is that peace of God which passes all understanding! Yours are all the treasures both of grace and glory. Holiness is yours, as well as pardon; for the faith that brings you into a state of peace with God will "work by love," and "purify the heart."

You are not straitened in your God: be not straitened in your own souls. Ask much; expect much; for your "Lord is rich unto all who call upon him." Set not limits, either to the objects of his bounty, or the riches of his grace; for his riches are unsearchable; and they are promised indiscriminately to all who call upon him.

What a blessed word is that, "Whoever!" Here is no limitation, no exception: all that is required of us is, to believe in Christ, and to call upon him. O! call upon him day and night; be earnest; be importunate; wrestle with him, as Jacob did; and let him not go, until you have received his blessing.

Well I know how unbelief is apt to interpose between him and your souls. You will be ready perhaps to say, "True; but I fear I do not call aright." Ah! brethren, this is a device of the enemy to rob you of the blessings which Christ is ready to bestow. If you call not on him as you would, still call upon him as you can: lie at the foot of his cross: trust in him: if you cannot trust, then hope in him. In a word, look unto him, renouncing every other ground of hope; and fear not but that he will make all grace abound towards you; and that what he has begun in time, he will perfect in eternity!

***~~#1892~~***

***~~CHRIST MADE KNOWN TO THE GENTILES~~***

***~~[Romans 10:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.20-21).~~***

And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me." But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

*IT is scarcely to be conceived to what a degree prejudice will close both the eyes and ears of men against the plainest truths.* Nothing could be plainer than the avowed purpose and determination of God to cast off the Jews in the event of their continued impenitence, and to admit the Gentiles to a participation of those privileges of which the Jews in the first instance had the exclusive enjoyment. Moses had declared it in the most direct terms; that "God would provoke the Jews to jealousy by those who were not a people, and by a foolish nation he would anger them:" the plain import of which was that he would transfer his favors to the Gentiles, in case the Jews would continue to abuse them.

But Isaiah, as my text expresses it, was very bold; affirming in a way of prophetic anticipation, that God was already found by the Gentiles, to whom his Gospel, so long slighted by the Jews, was now proclaimed. See [Isaiah 65:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.1-2). Yet as strong as these assertions were, *the Jews could not for a moment admit the idea, that the Gentiles would be admitted to a participation of their privileges*. But Paul assures them, so that it had been determined many centuries before, and, in fact, that so it had been done.

In discoursing on the predictions here cited, we shall consider them,

***~~I. As prophecies fulfilled—~~***

In them we see,

***~~1. God's promise to the Gentiles—~~***

The Gentiles are here plainly designated. They "sought not God, nor asked after him" at all: they were altogether ignorant of God, and unconcerned about him. They did not regard the notices of him which were visible in all the works of his hands. They were content to live without him in the world; and so far did they put him from them, that "he was not in all their thoughts."

Yet to these was God now made known in the person of his Son: the glad tidings of salvation had been proclaimed to them; the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon them; and Christ, in all his fullness, and in all his glory, had been revealed in their hearts. God had now been found of them, not as a Creator merely, but as a Savior; a Father, a Friend, a Portion, "an everlasting great Reward!" Though they had been in darkness and the shadow of death during all the time that God had made himself known to the Jews—yet at last "the light had risen upon them, and God's glory was seen upon them." "As soon as they heard him, they obeyed his call;" and within a few years from the publication of the Gospel to them, such multitudes became obedient to the faith, that they filled, as it were, every part of the Roman empire; so gloriously was the prediction fulfilled in the eyes of the whole world.

***~~2. His complaint of the Jews—~~***

For two thousand years had *the Jews*been the Lord's peculiar people, the sole depositories of his revealed will, the only visible monuments of his saving grace. During all this time had God stretched out his hands to them with more than parental tenderness and affection, entreating them to accept his overtures of mercy, and urging them not to put away from them the blessings which he of his own sovereign love had prepared for them. He had assured them, that in and through their Messiah they would possess all the blessings both of grace and glory. He had spared no pains to draw them to himself. He had wrought such miracles for them as had never been wrought for any other people from the foundation of the world. He had loaded them with benefits without number, given them his statutes, his ordinances, his Sabbaths, and sent from time to time his prophets to instruct and warn them. In short, everything that could be done for his vineyard, he had done in it.

But how had they requited all this unbounded love? Had they turned to him? Had they loved, and served, and glorified him? No! from the beginning they had been "a disobedient and gainsaying people." Hear how God complains of them by the Prophet Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 35:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 35.13); [Jeremiah 35:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 35.15). But the most perfect contrast between his tenderness towards them and their obstinacy will be found in their treatment of Hezekiah's messengers, when he sent them through the whole land to entreat and importune them to return to God, [2 Chronicles 30:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 30.6-9). Mark the extreme tenderness with which God here "stretches out his hands to them."

And how did they receive these gracious communications? "Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth!" they "laughed the messengers to scorn, and mocked them." Thus did they also in the days of Christ and his Apostles; they were always "disobedient, always gainsaying" and opposing everything that was said or done for their welfare; until at last, by their "contradictions and blasphemies," they constrained the Apostle Paul to turn from them, and to execute without any further reserve the commission he had received to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, [Acts 13:44-47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.44-47).

With what a different spirit the Gentiles received these tidings was immediately made manifest: "they heard the Apostle with gladness, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many of them as were ordained to eternal life, believed! [Acts 13:48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.48)."

Thus, in reference both to Jews and Gentiles, was this prophecy clearly and undeniably fulfilled.

But it will be proper to view these prophecies,

***~~II. As events yet daily accomplishing—~~***

***~~Truly God is yet found of those who sought him not—~~***

We speak not now of men's conduct after they have received the grace of God; for no man who has been made partaker of God's grace can possibly neglect to seek him. But the question is, Whence arose their good desires? Were they of themselves, or of God? Let this be answered from our Liturgy: "O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." Yes, it is "God, who of his own good pleasure gives us both to will and to do;" or, as our article expresses it, "who works in us, that we may have a good will, and works with us when we have that good will."

Here we will appeal to every humble mind, to every one that has found the Savior in truth: What was your state when God first stirred you up to seek him? Were you not careless and unconcerned; or, at least, resting in a mere form of godliness, without any experience of its power? Did you apprehend him, before he apprehended you? Did you *love*him, before he loved you? Did you *choose*him, before he chose you?

A proud Pharisee may arrogate to himself the glory, and say that he made himself to differ: but not so will anyone who is really taught of God. The true Christian will say with Paul, "It was not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Wherever there is one really united to Christ by faith, and washed in his blood, and renewed by his Spirit, there is one who will say from his inmost soul, "By the grace of God I am what I am!"

***~~On the other hand, thousands who are sought by God with all imaginable tenderness—yet continue in a state of willful and obstinate disobedience—~~***

This is the case with the generality of those who bear the name of Christ. God comes to them by his providence, his word, his Spirit, and seeks to turn them to himself: but they refuse to "hear the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely." For how many years has God been striving with some among us, who yet continue alienated from the life of God through the blindness and hardness of their hearts! Think in what diversified ways he has dealt with us, in order that he might fulfill in us his good pleasure, and accomplish in us the rich purposes of his grace! From the first moment that reason began to expand and operate, he began also to work upon our consciences, and to draw us by the influences of his Spirit.

Say, you who are now in the vigor of youth, or grown to man's estate, whether you cannot call to remembrance many interpositions of the Deity, when he sought to stop you in your career of sin, and to bring you to repentance? And you who are advanced in life, say, whether every year that has been added to your lives has not brought with it much additional ground for God's indignation against you!

Behold then, the conduct of the Jews is realized and renewed in us: and the Lord Jesus Christ has reason to repeat over us the complaint once poured forth over the disobedient Jews, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings! but you would not." Yes, at the day of judgment shall this be our condemnation, "I would—but you would not."

There is yet a further point of view in which these prophecies may be considered; namely,

***~~III. As truths illustrative of the whole economy of salvation—~~***

***~~The Gospel is altogether a dispensation of grace—~~***

This is its most distinguishing feature: it is a plan devised and ordained of God for the displaying of "the exceeding riches of his grace." *Everything that God has bestowed upon fallen man in relation to it, has been unsought, and unsolicited*.

We may see the whole exemplified in our first parent Adam. When he fell, did he cry to God for mercy? Did he ask for a Savior? Did he implore such measures of grace as might restore him to the Divine image? No! instead of "seeking after" God, or even asking of God whether there were any possibility of ever being restored to his favor—he fled from God, and hid himself; and, when called forth from his hiding-place, he cast the blame of his transgression on God himself.

This shows us what every man by nature does, and would continue to do, if God, of his own grace and mercy, did not infuse into his mind a better disposition.

Man in his fallen state is dead, "dead in trespasses and sins:" he is like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision, until God breathes upon him, and bids him live. Nay, he would revert to that state again, if God did not uphold him every moment. In vain would be all his past experience of redeeming love—if Christ, in whom his life is hid, were not constantly to impart more grace to him, and grace sufficient for his multiplied necessities.

Brethren, it is to this state of conscious and willing dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ that we wish you to be brought: this is what the Apostle calls "living by faith in the Son of God." This alone answers the end of the Gospel dispensation: this alone honors God, or can bring solid peace into the soul. We pray you to seek this "spirit of faith," and to abound in it more and more.

To the Lord Jesus Christ must you give glory from first to last: it was He who opened your heart, as he did Lydia's of old, to attend to the concerns of your souls; and He, who was "the Author of your faith, must also be the Finisher of it." Regard him in this view; and live upon him in this view; and give him glory in this view: and the more grateful your acknowledgments to him, the more abundant will be his communications to you, both in time and in eternity.

***~~But those who partake not of this grace have themselves only to blame—~~***

God "wills not the death of any sinner, but rather that he come to repentance and live." He even condescends for our encouragement, to declare this upon oath: "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live." And then he further confirms this by the kindest and most affectionate entreaties; "Turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?"

Let no man think to excuse himself by saying, "If God gives me not his grace, how can I help myself? For God offers his grace to every man freely: "Ho! every one that thirsts, come to the waters; come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price!" Our blessed Lord gave a similar invitation; "If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink; and out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." In like manner, in the book of Revelation it is written, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come! And whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." What will you say after such invitations as these? Will you say, We cannot? If you do, we will tell you, beforehand, our blessed Lord's reply, "You will not come unto me, that you may have life."

You are to "seek him: and then he will be found by you," "Seek, and you shall find," is a rule to you, though it is not to God. He may dispense his blessings to whoever he will, and under whatever circumstances: but you must seek his blessings; and, if you seek them not, you must abide the consequences. What those consequences will be, you may judge from the Jews. Has not God punished them at last? "Go to Shiloh, and see what he did to them there:" go to Judea, and see how his anger has burned against them there: look at them in every quarter of the globe; and know, that, as he has scattered them, so will he fulfill his threatenings upon you! When he shall say, "Bring hither those my enemies, and slay then) before me," you will be silent, not having a word to say in arrest of judgment.

Be prevailed on then to seek his face, yes, to seek him with your whole heart. Take encouragement from the patience he has already exercised towards you, and "account his long-suffering to be salvation." Be assured, that at this moment he waits to be gracious unto you; and that if you will only be content to "go on your way weeping, bearing precious seed, you shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you," even an everlasting harvest of felicity and glory!

***~~#1893~~***

***~~THE LORD'S PEOPLE, A CHOSEN REMNANT~~***

***~~[Romans 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.5).~~***

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

IT is the part both of wisdom and of love to guard our statements against misconception. We are of necessity constrained sometimes to state truth in strong and general terms: but in all such cases it befits us to anticipate, and to remove, as much as in us lies, all occasion for misapprehension or mistake: we would make everything so clear, that the ignorant would have nothing to ask; the captious nothing to object. Paul was ever alive to this duty: he foresaw and answered every objection that could be urged against the truths he maintained. He had in the preceding chapter spoken of the Gentiles as adopted into God's family, while the Jews, for their obstinate disobedience, were cast off. Hence it might have been supposed, that God had cast off his people altogether: but he tells them, that this was not the case; for that he himself, though a Jew, was a partaker of all the blessings of salvation: and that, as in the days of Elijah, there were among the Jews more faithful servants of Jehovah than was supposed, so it was at that time; "there was a remnant," and a considerable remnant too, "according to the election of grace."

We will,

**I.** Show that God's people are "a chosen remnant"—

The Lord has at this day a remnant of faithful people—

In every age of the world there have been some faithful worshipers of Jehovah. Even in the antediluvian world, when all flesh had so corrupted their way that God determined to destroy them utterly, there was one pious man, who boldly protested against the reigning abominations, and, with his family, was saved from the universal deluge. Abraham, Melchizedek, and Lot, were also rare instances of piety in a degenerate age; as were also Job, and his little band of friends. In Israel too, even under the impious and tyrannic reign of Ahab, there was an Elijah, who was a bold and faithful witness for his God. Thus at this day also there are some who serve their God with fidelity and zeal. Neither the example of the multitude, nor the menaces of zealots, can induce them to bow down to Baal, or "to walk after the course of a corrupt world." "They are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world;" "nor will they conform to it" in its spirit and conduct: they will "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but will rather reprove them." To serve, to enjoy, to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, is all their desire; and they "cleave unto him with full purpose of heart."

They are however but a remnant—

"The world at large lies in wickedness." The broad road that leads to destruction is crowded; while those who enter in at the strait gate, and walk in the narrow way that leads unto life, are few [Matthew 7:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.13-14). True it is, that the servants of God may now, as in Elijah's days, be more numerous than we imagine: there may be many, who, being remote from public ordinances, are unknown; or, from being poor, are unobserved; or, from peculiar diffidence, are kept from joining themselves to the Lord's people; or, from their weakness, are not yet able to encounter the opposition which they expect to meet with. We are persuaded that there are many Nicodemuses and Nathanaels at present in the shade, who yet in due time will come forth to light, and be "burning and shining lights "in their day and generation. We mean not by these observations to express an approbation of worldly shame, or of the fear of man: for it is the duty of every Christian to "confess Christ" boldly, and to "follow him outside the camp bearing his reproach:" but so it is, that, from a variety of causes, some of the Lord's people remain unknown to us, and will be found at the last day, if not before, among the "hidden ones," that were known to God and accepted of him: and it is a comfort to think, that, as "there were seven thousand men in Israel who had not bowed their knee to Baal," while Elijah conceived himself to stand alone, so there may be at this day thousands in the world who, in the sight of God, are "faithful and beloved," though they have not at present any name or place in the Church of Christ. Yet, after all, in comparison with the careless and ungodly world, they will be found "a small remnant," "a little flock [Luke 12:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.32)."

And for their distinguished privileges they are altogether indebted to the electing love of God—

All by nature are alike "dead in trespasses and sins;" and if not quickened by divine grace, must continue dead even to the end. Look into the Scriptures, and see if you can find so much as one who raised himself to newness of life. Did the converts on the day of Pentecost? Did Paul? Did Lydia? Did any make themselves to differ, or present to him what they had not previously received from him [1 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.7). Can you find one that did not say with Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am?" Was there one to whom God did not "give to will, as well as to do, and that of his good pleasure?" To all without exception must it be said, as it was to the Apostles, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. God, in choosing men, has no respect to anything but his own glory. He is not moved by anything in them, either present or foreseen: "he loves them, because he will love them [Deuteronomy 7:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 7.6-8);" and in predestinating them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, he does it "according to the good pleasure of his own will" and "to the praise of the glory of his own grace [Ephesians 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.5-6)."

We would not state these things in a crude and rash way. We know, they are deeply mysterious; and we are most anxious to,

**II.** Guard this doctrine against abuse—

Much is this doctrine hated: much too is it abused: but, however hated, or however abused, it is the truth of God, and therefore must be maintained. Let none however pervert it, or draw false conclusions from it. Let none say,

**1.** If this doctrine be true, no blame attaches to me—

What! No blame attaches to those who live in sin; to those who live "without God in the world!" Has any one compelled you. to act thus? Have you not been free agents in everything that you have done? What if you were not able of yourselves to fulfill the will of God, did not God exhort you to come to him for grace and strength, and did he not promise to give grace sufficient for you? Has there not been much that you might have done, which yet you have neglected? and much that you might have abstained from, which yet you have committed? Will any one go into the presence of Almighty God and say, 'I sought you, but you would not hear: I endeavored to the utmost of my power to comply with all your injunctions; but you withheld from me the assistance that was necessary: I chose you, but you rejected me without a cause?' No! profane as many are, there is not a man to be found in the universe who will dare thus to insult his God. We all have a consciousness that sin at least is our own, whatever holiness may be: it is the fruit of our own choice, the work of our own hands: and every man who has not on the wedding garment in the last day, will be mute before his God, and not have one word to say in vindication of himself, when the Master of the feast shall order him to be tied hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness See [Matthew 22:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.11); [Matthew 22:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.13).

**2.** If this doctrine be true, I may sit still, until God shall come and help me—

Where, we would ask, do the Scriptures countenance any such inference as this? They invariably enjoin the use of means, and promise a blessing to those who use them in a dependence upon God; "Ask and you shall have, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asks, receives, etc." Will you after this sit down and say, "I will not ask?" Be it so; you are helpless in yourselves, and incapable of doing anything that is truly good: but so was the man with the withered arm: yet, when our Lord said to him, Stretch out your arm, did he reply, 'Lord, I cannot?' No! he attempted to fulfill his Lord's command; and in the attempt was strengthened to perform it. So is it your duty to use the means to the best of your power, in obedience to God's command, and in dependence on his grace: and if you do so, you are assured that "you shall never seek his face in vain." You would do as much for yourselves, as if you had in yourselves an all-sufficiency for all things: but, while doing it, you would remember, that "your sufficiency is of God" alone. This is precisely what Paul has taught us. He addressed persons who were asleep, yes, dead; yet did he bid them awake, and act; and promised, that in obeying his injunctions they would obtain from Christ all needful aid: "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light [Ephesians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.14)."

**3.** If this doctrine be true, I am in no danger, whatever I may do—

Does any one who professes to believe the doctrine of election make this use of it? He needs nothing more to prove, that he at least is not of God's elect: for, if there be one mark of a reprobate more strong and decisive than another, it is that of "turning the grace of God into licentiousness." There is not a word in all the book of God that gives any man a hope of salvation while he lives in sin. On the contrary, it is expressly declared, that, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." If we are "chosen of God before the foundation of the world," it is "that we may be holy, and without blame before him in love [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4);" if "we are chosen to salvation, it is through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth [2 Thessalonians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 2.13)." God will never make his own Son "a minister of sin." If he save us at all, it will be from our sins, and not in them. Hear how indignantly God rejects the idea of his leaving men at liberty to sin: "Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you commit all manner of sins, and come and stand before me in this house which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Behold, even I have seen it, says the Lord Almighty [Jeremiah 7:8-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 7.8-11)." Yes; God does see it; and whoever maintains such a delusion as this, shall before long find, to his cost, "whose word shall stand; God's, or his [Jeremiah 44:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 44.28) with [Galatians 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.7-8)."

That no solid objection lies against this doctrine, will appear, while we,

**III.** Suggest the proper improvement of it—

**1.** It would encourage all to seek for mercy at God's hands—

If God's election were determined only by some good that was naturally inherent in man, and man's hope of the Divine favor were built on some superior excellence that was in him above others, who could venture to cherish any hope at all? Certainly there would be a fearful prospect for those who have long continued in their sins: for they would naturally say, How can God ever look with compassion on such a sinner as me? The old therefore, and the dying, would at once be driven to despair. But when we are told, that God "has mercy on whom he will have mercy," and dispenses his blessings freely to whoever he will, the vilest sinner in the universe may say, 'Then I will not despair: I know, I have nothing whereby to recommend myself to him: but he is at liberty to show mercy to the very chief of sinners: and in that character will I apply to him, that he may glorify himself in me.' This is a just and scriptural way of arguing: and it in may be adopted by all who "know the plague of their own heart," even though they may have lived in sin throughout their whole lives, and be now come to the borders of the eternal world: they may say, 'His grace is his own; he may dispense it as he will; and, where sin has abounded, His grace may superabound. He chose Paul in order "that in him he might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern" to the Church in all ages; and I will hope, that in me also he will show, before the whole assembled universe, how far his grace can reach.' This is the true, legitimate, and only use which an unconverted sinner would make of God's electing love.

**2.** It would fill all who are the subjects of it with the deepest humility—

Many ignorantly imagine, that the idea of God having elected us would fill us with pride: and if his election had respect to some goodness in us above others, and were founded on our superior merits, there were some ground for pride. But when God, in ordaining men to life, has respect only to his own sovereign will and pleasure, and to the manifestation of his own glory, no man has any ground to boast: nor will any man who is a partaker of this grace wish to boast. On the contrary, he will be disposed rather to say with the profoundest adoration, "What was I, Lord, that you would visit me?" This is the effect which the conferring of an undeserved favor has on every humble mind. Elizabeth, when the blessed Virgin, after her miraculous conception, came to visit her, exclaimed, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord would come unto me [Luke 1:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.43)." How much more then will the saint be filled with wonder that the Lord himself would come, and take up his abode within his very soul! Again; when Mephibosheth was told by David that his Father's property would be restored to him, and that he would cat continually at the king's table, "he bowed himself, and said, What is your servant, that you would look upon such a dead dog as I am [2 Samuel 9:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 9.7-8)." How much more then will the child of God abase himself as the most unworthy of mankind, when the King of kings, of his own sovereign love and mercy, tells him, that all the glory of Heaven shall be his, and that he shall feast for ever at the marriage supper of the Lamb! This was the effect produced on Paul, who, because there was no word in the whole Greek language sufficiently strong whereby he might express his sense of his own unworthiness, made a word for himself, that places him beneath the least and lowest of all the saints of God: he calls himself, "less than the least of all saints." That is our proper appellation; and the more just sense we have of God's electing love, the more ready we shall all be to adopt it for our motto.

**3.** It would stimulate them also to universal holiness—

If we are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people, it is that we may show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into marvelous light [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9)." Yes; we are "created unto good works, which God has before ordained that we would walk in them." We are to be as "lights in a dark place;" as "a city set upon a hill:" we are to be "epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." Man expects this of us: and God also expects it of us. Man will naturally say, 'What proof do these people give that they are the elect of God? If we look at them, what do we find in them more than others?' These expectations are reasonable: and, if you are not more holy than others, they may reasonably say, that you are hypocrites and deceivers. I would call upon you then to show by your fruits that you are trees of the Lord's planting. I call upon you to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" in the whole of your conduct. Hear the exhortation of an inspired Apostle: "Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, affections of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do you [Colossians 3:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.12-13)." These are the graces that you are called to exercise, and these are the fruits whereby you are to be known. By thus exhibiting to the world the mind that was in Christ, you will prove your title to the character of his saints as "called, and chosen, and faithful [Revelation 17:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 17.14)."

***~~#1894~~***

***~~GRACE AND WORKS OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER AS GROUNDS OF SALVATION~~***

***~~[Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6).~~***

"And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace."

IN reference to the doctrines of grace, Paul maintained a most watchful and "godly jealousy." On points of a less vital nature, he was ready to concede as far as possible; but on the point of salvation by grace through faith he was firm and immoveable. He would not give way for a moment, even though all the college of Apostles had opposed him, [Galatians 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.5), or an angel from Heaven had professed to have received a commission to proclaim anything that was inconsistent with it, [Galatians 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.8-9).

In the superstructure of our religion there might be errors, yes, considerable errors, as he tells us, and yet our souls be saved. Injurious indeed they would be, extremely injurious, to our welfare; but still they would not be utterly subversive of our hopes. But if the error affected the foundation of our religion, he declared it to be utterly incompatible with our final salvation, [1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11-15).

This jealousy of his is peculiarly visible in the words which we have just read. They were not necessary to the Apostle's argument. In the preceding context he is showing that God has among the Jews, as well as among the Gentiles, a chosen remnant: but having called them "a remnant according to the election of grace," he lays hold on the opportunity to confirm his favorite position, that salvation is altogether of grace; so entirely of grace, as absolutely to exclude works altogether from having any share in meriting or procuring it.

The observation thus introduced deserves the deeper attention; because it shows how near to the Apostle's heart the truth was that is contained in it. Let us then, in considering this observation, attend to,

***~~1. The truth of it—~~***

The observation is simply this: That salvation must be altogether of grace—or altogether of works; for that the two cannot possibly coalesce; since each of them excludes the other as much as light and darkness. Now,

***~~This observation is true—~~***

The Apostle has before drawn the distinction between "a reward of grace, and a reward of debt, [Romans 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.4)." And it is clear, that if a thing be a gift, it cannot have been earned; and, on the other hand, if it has been earned, it cannot be a gift. It is true, the sum required may bear no proportion to the blessing bestowed: but still, however small the sum be, it is, as far as it goes, a price paid for the thing obtained: and whether that be more or less, it equally destroys the notion of a free gift.

We readily concede that all the works that Paul himself performed would be as nothing in comparison with eternal life: but yet, If it is only a thousandth part of his works that has been paid for eternal life, that life is so far earned by works, and ceases to be a gift of grace: and though we may admire the goodness of God in giving Heaven for so small a consideration, the person to whom it is given will have to boast that he paid for it the consideration that had been demanded of him.

***~~It is true in reference to every part of our salvation—~~***

It is true in reference to our first *election*of God. If God chose us on account of some good works which he foresaw we would perform—then those works must to all eternity be acknowledged as the true ground of our salvation; and our salvation must therefore be of works, and not of grace.

We are not now inquiring, whether any such works as would be proper to influence God's mind, can be performed by man, by man too in his fallen state, and unassisted by his God, (these are points which at the present we leave untouched,) we are only showing now, that, supposing such works to be wrought, and God's election to be determined by them, election would be of works, and not of grace.

In like manner, if our *justification*is on account of any work of ours, we may boast that it has been not a mere act of grace and mercy for Christ's sake, but a debt paid to us for something done by us.

As to the comparative value of the work and the reward, we again say, that it is nothing to the purpose: it may serve to illustrate the goodness of God in annexing so great a reward to so small a work; but still the reward so conferred bears, and must ever bear, the character of a debt, and not of a gift.

To this it may be objected, that good works are represented in the Scripture as objects of reward, nay more, as forming the measure of that reward. This is true: but it does not in the least degree militate against the position before stated. Let us bear in mind what the Apostle's statement is: it is this, that if, in any part of our salvation from first to last, our works form the meritorious ground of our acceptance with God—then our salvation is not of grace, but of works; and that consequently, if salvation be of grace, all works of ours must be excluded as forming the ground of our acceptance with him. But this is not contradicted by anything which God may do *after*we are accepted by him.

The whole case is then altered:

The works done, are done, not in our own strength, but by the operation of God's Spirit within us.

They are done, not in order to purchase Heaven, but to manifest our love to God, and promote his glory.

They come up to God, not as claiming anything on account of their own intrinsic excellence, but as washed in the Redeemer's blood, and perfumed with the incense of his all-prevailing intercession.

They come, not as demanding a recompense on the footing of justice, but as owing all their hope of acceptance to God's free and gracious promises.

They come, not to set aside the grace of God, but to illustrate, adorn, and magnify it.

If any one of these works were to arrogate to itself the office of recommending us to God—then its value would be lost; and so baneful would be its influence, that it would destroy the value, and prevent the reward, of all the other works that the person had ever done.

Hence then it is evident, that though God may, for the magnifying of his own grace, bestows gifts upon his children, that can be no reason why man, while an enemy to God, would, on the footing of justice, for the gratifying of his own pride, demand of God a reward of debt.

God is at liberty to give what, and when, and to whom, he will: and whatever, of his own free grace, he has promised, he most assuredly will perform: but this gives no right to man to claim what God never has promised, and what he has in ten thousand places declared he never will give.

We again therefore revert to our position, and say, that, if salvation be by grace, it cannot in any respect, or any degree, be of works: and, consequently, works must be for ever renounced as a ground of our acceptance with God, and we must look for everything from grace—free grace alone.

The truth of the Apostle's observation being established, we proceed to show,

***~~II. The importance of it—~~***

We have already called your attention to the way in which the observation is introduced, and which, we conceive, marks very strongly the importance of it in the Apostle's mind. And we may notice the same from the very pointed way in which the observation is made. The Apostle seems determined that nobody shall misunderstand him, and he has effectually secured his object in that particular.

To show the importance of his observation then, we say, that,

***~~1. It establishes beyond all doubt the freeness and fullness of the Gospel salvation—~~***

In many places, both in the Old and New Testament, does God guard his people against arrogating anything to themselves. He warns the Jews by Moses, that they would be ready to indulge this propensity, but that his mercies to them had been in no respect the fruit of their own goodness, but wholly of his free and sovereign grace, [Deuteronomy 9:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 9.4-6). The only thing which they could behold on a retrospect, and which they ought to look back upon with never-ceasing shame, was, one continued scene of wickedness and provocations, [Deuteronomy 9:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 9.7). Compare [Ezekiel 36:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.31-32).

Thus Paul again and again reminds us, that it was "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his own mercy that God had saved us [Titus 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.5);" and still more plainly in another epistle, that "he had saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, [2 Timothy 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.9)." But the words of our text are so strong, that no one can attempt to get over them, without showing, that he is manifestly "wresting" them from their proper, and obvious, and only meaning. Be it known then, that salvation is, and ever must be, of grace, from first to last.

Our *election*from eternity,

our *justification*in time, and

our *glorification*when time shall be no more,

are all the fruits of God's free and sovereign grace!

The *foundation*was laid in grace;

the *superstructure*is raised by grace;

and "when the *head-stone*shall be brought forth, we must still cry, Grace, grace unto it! [Zechariah 4:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.6-7); [Zechariah 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.9)." There is not a soul in Heaven that must not to all eternity say, "By the grace of God I am what I am!"

***~~2. It secures against all invasion on the honor of God—~~***

Men are ever attempting to rob God of his glory: they cannot endure that all the honor of their salvation would be given to God alone. When they see the crown placed on the Redeemer's head, they feel as if they themselves were injured and dishonored. They think that some part of the glory belongs to them; that their works must be considered, in part at least, as forming the ground of their justification; and that God's election of them was determined by his foresight of their superior goodness.

But, when they come to these words, and see what an insuperable obstacle they oppose to all such vain conceits, they find that there is no alternative left them, but to earn salvation by a perfect obedience to the law, or to accept it as the free gift of God in Christ Jesus. They see, that, to blend the two is impossible; and that, if they do not receive salvation wholly by grace, they are forced altogether upon the covenant of works, and are cut off from all hope of salvation by Christ Jesus! [Galatians 5:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2-4).

This alternative they dare not for a moment to adopt; and therefore they are constrained to give to God the glory due unto his name, and to acknowledge Christ both as "the Author, and the Finisher, of their faith, [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)." In a word, they are made willing to "glory in Christ alone."

***~~3. It makes clear the path of the true penitent—~~***

Persons in the earlier stages of repentance are apt to be much perplexed. They think they ought to have something of their own to unite with Christ's merits, or at least something to recommend them to his favor. But this they cannot find, and the more they discover of the evil of their own ways, the farther they appear to be from possessing any of those qualifications which they desire. This greatly alarms them, and makes them fear it would be presumptuous in such unworthy creatures as they to hope in Christ.

But when they see the force of the Apostle's observation, they are convinced, that hitherto they have proceeded on wrong grounds, and that the only true way of going to Christ, is, *to go with all their sins upon them, and receive salvation from him as the purchase of his blood, and the gift of his grace.*This, when once seen, dissipates all the clouds and darkness that have obscured their way, and makes their path to life as clear as the sun at noonday. They see themselves in the predicament of the *wounded Israelites*, when directed to look to the brazen serpent; or of the *jailor*, when bidden to believe in Christ. They believe; they look; they live!

***~~On the observation thus explained we ground a few words of advice—~~***

***~~1. Accept with gratitude this free salvation—~~***

Do not allow the pride of your hearts to rise against it. Do not grudge unto God the honor of saving you by his own grace. Were you sinking in the midst of the ocean, would you refuse deliverance, unless you were left to earn it, or some of the honor of your preservation were to be assigned to you? Be not then such enemies to yourselves as to reject a free salvation from death and Hell. You know full well, that you did nothing to induce God to send his only Son into the world. You know also that you contributed nothing to Christ, to give perfection to his obedience, or virtue to his sacrifice. You must know too, if you are not blinded even to infatuation, that you can do nothing which does not need mercy on account of its own imperfections.

Be prevailed upon then to accept with thankfulness a free and full salvation: you can add nothing to what Christ has done and suffered for you, and the consequence of attempting to add anything will be inevitable and eternal ruin. Let Christ have all the honor of his own work, and you shall have all the benefit.

***~~2. Give no occasion for the objections that are raised against salvation by grace alone—~~***

Those who are averse to the doctrines of grace, always represent the favorers of those doctrines as embracing them in order that they may live in sin. And if they can find a person who turns the grace of God into licentiousness, they will not be contented with blaming him, but will cast the blame on the Gospel itself, and represent such conduct as the natural result of such principles. One such instance of hypocrisy will be made a subject of great notoriety, when a thousand instances of blameless and exemplary piety will be overlooked. Be careful then, brethren, to give no occasion for such observations. Be careful not to cast a stumbling-block before the ungodly world; for, if there be a "woe to the world because of offenses," there will be a ten-fold heavier "woe unto him by whom the offense comes!"

Be watchful against the incursions of sin, and the temptations of Satan; "that he who is on the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."

***~~3. Recommend and adorn the grace of God by a holy conduct—~~***

Show by your lives what the proper tendency and effect of grace is. We are told that "the grace of God which brings salvation, teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, and soberly, and godly in this present world." Show then, by all your dealings with men, what true righteousness is. Show, by your perfect self-government in all your tempers, dispositions, and habits, what true sobriety is. Show, by the spirituality of your minds and the heavenliness of your lives, wherein true godliness consists. This will recommend the Gospel more effectually than all the encomiums that can be lavished upon it, and will operate more strongly to convince men of its excellence than all the arguments that can be urged.

Let it be seen then, that while you magnify and extol the grace of God, you are the truest friends of good works; for that, though you exclude them from your *foundation*, you display them in your *superstructure*, and, in fact, raise them higher, and of a nobler quality, than any other people in the universe.

***~~#1895~~***

***~~THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS, A BLESSING TO THE GENTILES~~***

***~~[Romans 11:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.11-12).~~***

"Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!"

"THE ways of God are in the great deep, and his footsteps are not known." They are utterly inscrutable to us! "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts." We cannot see the end of any one of his dispensations.

Who could ever have conceived the designs of God in allowing *Joseph*to be sold into Egypt? Yet did God intend by that dispensation to keep the whole Egyptian nation from perishing by famine—yes, and the very persons who sold him thither.

No less mysterious are his dealings with the *Jews*: they are cast off: they are led captive of all nations: yet are they suffering for the good of all the people among whom they dwell; and even for their own ultimate advantage also.

This is strongly asserted in the passage before us, where their fall is said to be "the riches of the Gentiles," as their recovery also will be in a far more signal manner and degree.

We presume not to think that we can ever fathom this deep mystery: yet will it be profitable for us to consider it as far as it is revealed: and therefore we shall endeavor, according to the light given us, to show you: What an interest the Gentiles have in God's dealings with the Jews; particularly in,

***~~I. Their present dispersion—~~***

***~~This was designed by God for the salvation of the Gentiles—~~***

Doubtless the Jews richly merited this judgment: and therefore, whatever good may be designed for others, no injury is done to them. And God too, if he had pleased, might have given mercy to the Gentiles, without rejecting the Jews: his heart was large enough to embrace both, and his power to save them both. But*he, in his own infinite wisdom, ordained otherwise.*It is not for us to inquire, Why he acted thus? It is sufficient for us that he has seen fit to do so: and "he gives no account to us of any of his matters." This advantage from it at least we see, that he has by this means exhibited, in a contrasted view, "his severity to them, and his goodness to us, verse 22;" and consequently, has illustrated and glorified at the same time his apparently opposite perfections of justice and mercy. But, however this may be, so he has ordained, and so he has done: and it is an undoubted fact, that,

***~~The fall of the Jews has led to the salvation of the Gentiles—~~***

The very circumstance of the Gospel being rejected by the Jews, was favorable to the reception of it among the Gentiles; inasmuch as it demonstrated that there was no confederacy among the Jews to deceive them; that the Apostles, who brought the tidings of salvation to them at the peril of their lives, were men of strict integrity; and that the Scriptures which the Jews so unwittingly fulfilled, must be true.

The conduct of the Jews in relation to the Gospel did actually produce this effect. Their enmity against it at the very first promulgation of it caused them to persecute the Church with the utmost vehemence: that persecution drove multitudes of Christians (almost all except the Apostles) from Jerusalem, and *scattered*them through all Judea and Samaria: and the people, so scattered, "went everywhere preaching the word." So that, instead of suppressing the Gospel, as they hoped, the Jews were instrumental to the sending forth of thousands, all at once, to preach it! [Acts 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.1); [Acts 8:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.4).

Again, when Paul and Barnabas had preached to the Jews, as they had hitherto invariably done in the first place, at Antioch, the inveterate malignity of the Jews determined them henceforth to preach to the Gentiles, agreeably to the command which had been given them in the Scriptures: and the consequence of this was, that multitudes of the Gentiles immediately embraced the Gospel, and "glorified the word of the Lord, [Acts 13:46-48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.46-48)."

Thus, "the fall of the Jews became the riches of the Gentiles," inasmuch as it was the occasion of the tidings of "reconciliation being published to the Gentile world," and "the unsearchable riches of Christ" being scattered in rich profusion over the face of the whole earth.

***~~The present rejection of the Jews is ultimately designed also even for the good of that benighted people—~~***

God designed that the transfer of his blessings to the Gentiles would "provoke to jealousy" his own forsaken people: and Paul, in preaching to the Gentiles, had that very object in view, namely, "to provoke to jealousy those who were of his own flesh, and thereby to save some of them." While possessing exclusively all the tokens of God's favor, they were regardless of it: but when they saw that the gifts of miracles and of prophecy were transferred from them to the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles were made happy in the enjoyment of their God—they were led to inquire more candidly into the truths delivered by the Apostles, and thus were in very many instances converted to the faith. Nor can we doubt but that the same effect would yet more frequently flow from that cause, if the lives of Christians continued to be such as they were in the apostolic age.

But still richer benefits will flow to the world from,

***~~II. Their future restoration—~~***

***~~That the Jews will in due time be converted to Christianity, is certain—~~***

When Paul asked, Whether their fall was final and irrecoverable, he shuddered at the idea, and declared, that God had certainly no such purpose respecting them: that, on the contrary, he had entered into covenant with them to restore them in due season, and to confer on them, as well as on the Gentiles, all the blessings of redemption. The period he had fixed in his divine counsels was, "When the fullness of the Gentiles would come in;" that is, when there would be among the Gentiles such a measure of concern about the Gospel, as would show that the time for their fuller and more general reception of it was arrived, verse 25-27. compared with [Isaiah 59:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.20-21). (It is the commencement and not the close, of this period, that must be understood by "the fullness of the Gentiles being come. As soon as the fall of the Jews commenced, the benefit began to arise to the Gentiles; and as soon as the time for the more general conversion of the Gentiles shall commence, the time for the conversion of the Jews will commence also.")

Then shall "the fullness of the Jews" also be brought in. Multitudes in every place shall then begin to be converted to the faith; and with greater or less rapidity will the whole nation be turned to the Lord. "The first-fruits were holy; and so is the lump: the root was holy; and so are the branches." Hence their restoration is assured to them; for "God's gifts and calling are irrevocable, verse 16, 29."

***~~The effect of this upon the Gentiles will be blessed in the extreme—~~***

The Jews being dispersed over the whole world, the change wrought on them will attract universal attention: and carry such conviction with it to the minds of the beholders, as nothing can withstand. Besides, the Jews feeling the truth and importance of the Gospel themselves, will, as in the apostolic age, become preachers of it themselves; and their Gentile neighbors, knowing what enemies to Christianity they lately were, and seeing the wonderful revolution that has taken place in their minds, will be led to inquire into the Gospel themselves, and will be constrained to yield to its influence. So rapid will their conversion be, that they will "flock to Christ even as doves to their windows," and "a nation will be born in a day!"

We have before shown the beneficial effects which have resulted to the Gentiles from the fall of the Jews: and if such inestimable benefits have been conferred on the world by their fall, "how much more" shall the same, and greater, benefits arise from "their fullness?"

Mark the force of the argument here. The Jews, when the Gospel was preached to them, rejected, blasphemed, and opposed it with all their might. But when they themselves shall be converted by it, they will embrace it most cordially, they will cry mightily to God for the success of it, and they will labor to the uttermost to diffuse the knowledge of it throughout the world. If then their rejection of it was so productive of benefit to the Gentile world—then how much more shall their acceptance of it be! if their blasphemies against it—then how much more their prayers for its diffusion! if their most envenomed opposition to it—then how much more their zealous cooperation in extending the knowledge of it! We have seen the former; and we may with certainty infer the latter.

***~~From this subject the following reflections naturally arise:~~***

***~~1. What compassion should we feel for the Jewish nation!~~***

Once were they the most highly-favored people upon earth: the privileges which were exclusively conferred on them, almost exceed belief: But how degraded are they now! they are "a hissing and a reproach to the whole earth, [Jeremiah 29:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 29.18)." Yet behold, such are they become for us! Incredible as it may seem, "they were broken off, that we might be engrafted on their stem, verse 19;" they were disinherited, that we might possess their property, verse 28, 31. Can we consider this, and feel no compassion for them? Can we pass them by, as the priest and Levite did, and show them no mercy; especially when God has told us, that the very end for which he has had mercy upon us, is, that we may be the means of extending that mercy unto them, verse 28, 31.

Even in reference to the needs of the body, God has said, "If a man see his brother have need, and shuts up his affections of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?" How much more then is this true respecting the needs of the soul! Beloved brethren, judge yourselves in reference to this matter; and try your love to God by the measure of your compassion to his benighted people: and never think that your own souls are right before God, until you have learned to pity, and pray for, and to seek the salvation of, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

***~~2. How should we fear and tremble for ourselves!~~***

Highly favored as the Jews once were, they are now outcasts from God, and monuments of his just vengeance: and, if we abuse our privileges, a similar fate awaits us also. "If God spared not the natural branches," says the Apostle, "take heed lest he also spare not you! verse 21." It was "for their unbelief that they were broken off: and it is by faith that we stand. O then, be not high-minded, but fear! verse 20." Fear "lest there be in you also an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

Do not imagine that a *mere outward profession*of Christianity is of any value. No, it is "a seeing of Him who is invisible:" a "walking by faith, and not by sight:" it is the exercise of that "faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" in a word, it is "a life of faith upon the Son of God, who has loved you, and given himself for you."

This, beloved, is the life to which you are called by the Gospel: and it is by such a life that you are to "provoke the Jews to jealousy." And, if you live not in this way, or, having begun to live thus, turn away from it, it would be better for you never to have heard the Gospel; yes, it were better that you had been born Jews, or heathen, and infinitely "better that you had never been born" at all.

***~~3. How earnestly should we labor for the conversion of the Jews!~~***

God has decreed that they shall be converted: and we have reason to believe that the period fixed for it in the Divine counsels is not far distant. It is a fact that multitudes in the heathen world are expecting a change in their religion: the Muhammadans and Hindus throughout our eastern empire are strongly impressed with this idea: and the exertions making in every possible way for the conversion of the heathen world, warrant us to hope that "their fullness" will speedily commence. At all events, "we are debtors to the Jews," and should seek to discharge our debt, [Romans 15:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.27). Though they are at this time "enemies for our sakes, they are still beloved for their fathers' sakes, verse 28;" and if, notwithstanding their present enmity against Christ, they are beloved of God for their fathers' sakes, should they not be beloved of us? Think how indebted we are to their fathers, to those who, at the peril of their lives, brought the glad tidings of salvation home to us: and should we not labor to recompense all this in acts of love to their descendants?

It is a favorite notion with many, that to attempt the conversion of the Jews is a hopeless task. But what ground is there for such a desponding thought as this? Are they farther off from God than the Gentiles were, when the Gospel was first published to them? or is it a harder thing for God to convert them than to convert us? God expressly tells us, that it is a work of less difficulty: "If you were cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and were engrafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree, how much more shall these, which are the natural branches, be engrafted into their own olive-tree, verse 24."

Despair not then of doing them good; but exert yourselves in every possible way for their conversion to the faith of Christ. You are told, that "if they abide not in unbelief, they shall be engrafted in again—for God is able to engraft them in again, verse 23." Seek then to convince them of the truth of Christianity, and to bring them to the knowledge and love of their Messiah.

If you desire only the conversion of the Gentile world, you should begin with the Jews; because it is the fullness of the Jews that is to operate on the Gentiles, and to effect, as it were, among them, "a resurrection from the dead, verse 15." But it is for God's sake, whose people they are; and for Christ's sake, who bought them with his blood; and for your own sake, who must give an account of the talents entrusted to your care, that I call upon you to be workers together with God in this great cause: and, if you have any sense of God's "goodness to you," seek to avert and terminate "his severity to them, verse 22 with [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.16)."

***~~#1896~~***

***~~NEGLECT OF THE JEWS REPROVED~~***

***~~[Romans 11:17-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.17-21).~~***

"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either."

IT is surprising, considering how minutely the Apostle has explained the subject contained in this chapter, and how strongly he has marked its almost unparalleled importance; it is surprising, I say, that it would so little have attracted the attention of the Christian world.

The Apostle, after contemplating it, exclaimed, "O the depths!" But we, after having read his statement times without number, have seen no depths in it; or, at least, none which we have been at all disposed to fathom. There is one point in particular, which, in considering this subject, we have overlooked; and that is, that God still regards the Jews as to a certain degree, his peculiar people; and that, notwithstanding their degradation and depravity, there is a holiness about their whole nation, and a halo, as it were, around the head of every individual belonging to it. The offering of the first-fruits to the Lord sanctified the whole harvest; and the offering of a cake of the first of the dough sanctified the whole lump, [Leviticus 23:10-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 23.10-17) and [Numbers 15:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 15.19-21). Thus the consecration of the patriarchs to Jehovah conferred on all their posterity a relative kind of holiness: and still more did the separation of Abraham unto the Lord, as "the root" of that elect people, impart a *federal*holiness to all the branches that would ever spring from it.

This relative or federal holiness attached to the whole nation; to the ten tribes, as well as the tribes of Judah and Benjamin: and it adhered to the Jews during their captivity in Babylon, as well as before and after that period. It still continued, also, many years after their crucifixion of their Messiah, and after their privileges had been transferred to the Gentile world. The Apostle, in the words before my text, speaks of it as yet existing: and therefore it must exist at this time, because the reason of the thing exists as much as ever: "If the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches." And on this is grounded the admonition to the whole Christian Church, "Boast not against the branches."

Now, by marking thus the connection of our text with the preceding context, we shall see the propriety of noticing the use which we are to make of the rejection of the Jews. This solemn dispensation would fill us with,

***~~I. Compassion for them—~~***

***~~There is here, as you will perceive, a fact acknowledged—~~***

"Some, even very many, of the branches have been broken off from the olive-tree which God's right hand had planted: and we Gentiles, who were only a wild olive-tree, have been engrafted into their stock, and are with them at this moment partaking of the root and fatness of the olive-tree." This fact it is impossible to deny. They, instead of enjoying the ordinances of God's worship, as in former ages, are scattered over the face of the whole earth, and are utterly incapable of worshiping God according to their law. They have no temple, no priest, no altar, no sacrifice, with which to approach their God. But these blessings are transferred to us; and we enjoy them in all their fullness. Through the one sacrifice once offered upon Calvary, we have the most intimate access to God, and a rich effusion of his blessings upon our souls whenever we draw near unto him in his Son's name. There is not a privilege that was ever enjoyed by the most favored of God's saints in the days of old, but we possess the same, so far as our necessities require it.

***~~But mark the sad abuse of it that prevails—~~***

Instead of feeling compassion for the Jews in their present degraded state, we are ready to look down upon them with contempt, and to exult over them, as objects of God's merited indignation. Thus we "boast against the branches," and indulge a secret satisfaction in their fall. In fact, we treat them nearly in the way in which they formerly treated the Gentile world. They regarded the Gentiles as "dogs;" and actually designated them by that opprobrious term: and, though that term is not in use among us in reference to the Jews, the contempt expressed by it is as deeply rooted in our hearts as ever it was in theirs.

But they, in comparison with us, had reason on their side: for the Gentiles, whom they despised, had no knowledge of God whatever, but were bowing down to gods of wood and stone: whereas the Jews are still worshipers of the true and living God; and have been distinguished by him above all other people upon earth; yes, and are still distinguished by his peculiar care, and are reserved as objects wherein he will yet be more than ever glorified; and as instruments, too, whereby he will hereafter dispense his richest blessings to the whole world. Are these, then, to be treated with contempt? Are these to be regarded as "branches, against which it befits us to boast?"

***~~Let us hear God's own correction of this abuse—~~***

In what have we any right to glory over them? Have they ever been indebted to us, or received any benefits at our hands? Have not we, on the contrary, received from them every blessing that we enjoy? What *knowledge*have we of God, that has not been transmitted to us from them? What *hope*have we towards God, that has not arisen from communications made by them? What comfort have we in *life*, which is not administered by them? What hope have we in *death*, which is not founded upon information derived from them? What *glory*can we look for in another world, but that which has been unveiled to us by them? Take from us the instruction which we have received from them, and we shall be reduced at once to all the darkness and misery in which our early ancestors were involved, and in which the whole heathen world are at this very moment immersed.

Admirable is the illustration which the Apostle gives us of this truth. Conceive a "branch boasting against the root;" and saying, 'I am more exalted than you, and more estimable in every respect. Behold my foliage, and my fruit: what have you of worth or beauty, in comparison with me?' How would this arrogance be silenced in a moment, by the answer which the root would of course return! 'You boast of your beauty and your fruitfulness. Whence did you derive them, but from me? What would you ever have possessed, if it had not been communicated to you by me? Instead of boasting therefore over me, acknowledge your obligations to me, and confess that all which you either are or have, you have derived from me.'

Thus, in relation to all that we possess or hope for as the people of the Lord, we stand indebted to the Jews; while they, on the contrary, owe nothing to us; but rather have reason to execrate us, for withholding from them the light we have enjoyed, and putting every obstacle in their way, to perpetuate their ruin. What, then, would be our feelings towards them? What, but the tenderest compassion for their state, and the most earnest desire to restore them to God's favor?

To our pity for them we would add,

***~~II. Watchfulness over ourselves—~~***

***~~What use is commonly made of their rejection, may be seen in the self-vindicating reply which is here anticipated—~~***

You will say then, "The branches were broken off that I might be engrafted in." The Apostle attempts not to deny this solemn and mysterious truth: yes, he accedes to it; saying, "Well," it is so. But, granting this, is it any reason for boasting against them? Is it not rather a reason for pitying their undone condition?

Were we to see a man deprived of his paternal inheritance, and perishing with hunger; and were we informed that he had been disinherited, merely that we, who had no worthiness in ourselves, and no relation to his father, might possess his estate; would we feel disposed to glory over him and insult him? Would we not rather wish to administer to him such relief as he stood in need of, if we could do it without injury to ourselves? Would not a lack of such consideration for him be justly accounted the greatest cruelty?

***~~But hear the phenomenon accounted for—~~***

True it is that God has broken them off, and engrafted us in; and that he has "broken them off, that he might engraft us in." But we are mistaken if we think that God has in this matter acted altogether as a sovereign. In the first *choice*of Abraham and his posterity, he did exercise his *sovereignty*: but, in *rejecting*them, he acts upon the grounds of *strict justice*. And this is a distinction which we are too apt to overlook.

In the bestowment of his *favors*, God finds his motives solely in his own bosom.

In the execution of his *judgments*, he finds them solely in the conduct of those whom he resolves to punish. They have brought upon themselves his displeasure by their inveterate unbelief. Though they saw all God's wonders in Egypt, and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, they were always full of unbelief, and ready to trust in gods of their own creation, rather than in him. Nay, more: when they had seen all the evidences of Christ's Messiahship, instead of believing in him, they cried, "Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him!" For these iniquities God cast them off: and in their rejection it befits us to see and acknowledge the righteousness of his ways.

Had it pleased God so to order it, he could have united us with them on the same stock, which would have borne both as easily as one: but God saw fit *to make the Jews monuments of his righteous indignation against sin*: and, when we ourselves are so prone to sin, it ill befits us to triumph over them. Bear in mind this proceeding,

***~~And attend to the instruction founded upon it—~~***

Hear what the dispensation says to you: "You stand by faith;" and have the same reason to tremble for fear of God's judgments as they had. If they had continued to exercise faith in God, they had never been cast out: nor shall you, if you "live altogether by faith in the Son of God, who loved you, and gave himself for you."

But if you distrust God, and rebel against him, and rely on anything of your own, instead of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's anger will smoke against you in like manner; and you also will become monuments of his righteous indignation. If God spared not the natural branches, there is no reason to think he will spare those which have been taken from a wild olive-tree, and engrafted in among them. The improvement, therefore, which you are to make of this dispensation, is, "Do not be proud, but fear." Put away all your self-preference and contempt of others: and, under a consciousness of your liability to fall, beg of God to strengthen your faith; and endeavor to "walk in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

***~~And now, brethren,~~***

***~~1. Accept thankfully this reproof—~~***

You cannot but be sensible, how shamefully the Jews have been neglected, not only by you, but by the whole Christian world, these seventeen hundred years. Any excuse has been quite sufficient to justify your indifference for their welfare. "The time for their national conversion is not come." Was it come, then, eighteen hundred years ago? Who has spoken more strongly respecting their rejection than Paul? Yet did he labor with all earnestness, if by any means he might save some. And this also we ought to do, even though we had eighteen more centuries to wait for this event. But the time, we have reason to think, is very near at hand; as events, no less than the prophecies, appear to indicate. But, be this as it may, I call on you to blush and be confounded for having so long boasted against them; and henceforth, by every possible means, to concur in promoting their conversion to the faith of Christ.

***~~2. Follow diligently the counsel given you—~~***

Improve the situation, wherein, through God's tender mercy, you are placed. Are you partakers of the root and fatness of the true olive-tree? See to it, that you bring forth such fruits as this root produced in former days. Look at Abraham, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Paul; and see that the grace of God operates as effectually in you as it did in them. And when you call to mind what efforts were made by the holy Apostles for your benefit, let a measure of the same love animate you in behalf of those in whose place you stand.

***~~#1897~~***

***~~AGAINST PRIDE AND CARNAL SECURITY~~***

***~~[Romans 11:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.20).~~***

"Do not be proud, but fear."

*THE deep mysteries of our religion are calculated at once to encourage sinners, and to humble saints.* The sovereignty of God is a great depth; and it was solemnly displayed in the rejection of the Jews, and the admission of the Gentiles into his Church. This is the subject of which the Apostle speaks in the whole context: and he makes use of it as the means of provoking to jealousy the Jews themselves, and at the same time of guarding the believing Gentiles against self-preference and self-security.

In considering his exhortation, we shall,

***~~I. Explain its import—~~***

***~~The former part of it contains a dissuasive from pride—~~***

*The proper tendency of the Christian religion is to produce humility; but, through the corruption of our nature, pride will take occasion even from the grace of God itself, to rise in our hearts. What self-delight will sometimes arise from a consciousness of our superior attainments in truth and holiness!*What acrimonious severity towards those, who dishonor their profession! And what contemptuous disregard of those who are yet immersed in ignorance and sin!

Together with this self-preference we are also too apt to indulge a secure and self-depending spirit, and to think "our mountain so strong, that we can never be moved, [Psalm 30:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 30.7)." But as the former disposition is most hateful to God, [Isaiah 65:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.5), so the latter also is an object of his utter abhorrence, [Jeremiah 17:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.5). [Proverbs 28:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 28.26). In both these views therefore it becomes every believer to attend to the Apostle's advice, and, instead of entertaining too high an opinion of his own wisdom, strength, or goodness, to "think soberly, [Romans 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.3)."

***~~In the latter part the Apostle recommends humility and watchfulness—~~***

By "fear," we are not to understand a slavish dread of God's wrath; for that, so far from being opposite to pride, is in many cases the offspring of it. That which is here recommended is, a *holy jealousy over ourselves, lest by any means we be tempted to walk unworthy of our high privileges, and thereby provoke God to deprive us of them*.

***~~We are in the midst of an ensnaring world, beset with many and subtle adversaries, and ready to be beguiled by a treacherous and deceitful heart! Hence, like Paul himself [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.27), we are necessitated to use the utmost watchfulness, diligence, and self-denial, lest, after all our exertions, our labor proves in vain.~~***

To show the importance of this exhortation, we shall,

***~~II. Point out the reasons of it—~~***

Many reasons might be assigned, but we shall content ourselves with noticing three:

***~~1. We have no stability in ourselves—~~***

As all our ability and inclination to what is good, are derived from God at first, so must we receive continual supplies from him, even as of light from the sun. Without his constant superintendence, both the visible world, and the new creation in the soul of man, would soon revert to their original chaos. This the Apostle elsewhere urges as a motive to diligence, [Philippians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.12-13), and, in the words before us, to humility and care. Nor can we well have a more powerful argument; for if "we stand by faith" alone, and not by any wisdom or strength of our own, it befits us to maintain a spirit suited to our weak and dependent state.

***~~2. Others, apparently as safe as we, have been rejected—~~***

Many have long made a profession of religion and departed from it at last, 1 Timothy 1:19.

*Demas*stands as a solemn monument of human weakness, [2 Timothy 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 4.10).

*Lot's wife* is pointed out to us in the same view, [Luke 17:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 17.32).

The *Jews*, who were brought out of Egypt, and yet were destroyed in the wilderness, are expressly set forth as examples to us, Jude verse 5. 1 Corinthians 10:11. See also [Jeremiah 7:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 7.12).

And, above all, the *rejection of the Jewish nation*for their iniquities, after they had been so long the peculiar people of God, speaks loudly to us. This in particular is urged by the Apostle in the words following the text, verse 21, 22; and it teaches us, never so to value ourselves either on our relation to God, or our experience of his goodness, as to forget that we also may be rejected, if we do not rely upon him, and unreservedly devote ourselves to him.

***~~3. That which was the ground of the rejection of the Jews, is very prevalent in us—~~***

God had given to the Jews a revelation respecting the Messiah, but they disbelieved his record, and rejected his Son: and for this their unbelief they were "broken off from the olive" which God's right hand had planted.

A still clearer revelation God has given unto us: and is there not much unbelief in our hearts with respect to it? Are even the most advanced Christians so much affected with the declarations of God's word, as they would be, if faith were in constant and perfect exercise? Alas! the faith that realizes things invisible, and gives a present existence to things future, [Hebrews 11:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.1), is found in but few, and operates but weakly in the best: and, if it would wholly fail, Satan would sift us as wheat, and we would be found chaff at last! [Luke 22:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.31). When therefore we consider how weak our faith is, and that it is "by faith we stand," we have reason to fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into God's rest, any of us would seem to come short of it, [Hebrews 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.1).

***~~We shall conclude the subject with some suitable advice—~~***

***~~1. Bear in mind what you once were—~~***

To "look to the rock from whence we were hewn, and to the pit from whence we were dug," will be a good antidote to pride. While we remember what we were, we shall see no reason but for humiliation and thankfulness before him, who has made us to differ both from others and from our former selves [Titus 3:3-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.3-6). 1 Corinthians 4:7.

***~~2. Consider what you still are—~~***

You are, we trust, "brands plucked out of the fire:" true; but you still bear the marks of the fire upon you; and have a disposition to catch fire again, the very instant you are exposed to temptation. Let everyone view himself in this light; and he will see need enough of attending to the exhortation in the text.

***~~3. Be aware of the deceitfulness of your own hearts—~~***

In ten thousand instances we must have seen how liable we are to err even in things wherein we are most confident.*So blinded are we at times by pride, passion, or interest, that we think ourselves to be right*, when others evidently perceive that we know not what spirit we are of. Let us be aware of this tendency to deceive ourselves; and beg of God both to search our hearts, and to guide our feet.

***~~4. Guard against temptations to sin—~~***

Many are the temptations that assault us from *without*. From these we should flee, shunning both the occasions and the very appearance of evil.

Many also are our temptations from *within*. These we should resist in their very first rise. We may easily extinguish a fire at its commencement, when all our efforts may be baffled, if we allow it to proceed.

For all is that direction necessary, "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation!"

***~~5. Live wholly in dependence on the power and grace of Christ—~~***

Without this, all our other efforts will be fruitless. All "our fresh springs are in Christ," "without whom we can do nothing." "Except he keeps the city, the watchman wakes but in vain." Let us then "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Then, though weak, "we shall be able to do all things!" And though fiercely assaulted, we shall be "more than conquerors through him who loved us!"

***~~#1898~~***

***~~THE DISPENSATIONS OF GOD TOWARDS JEWS AND GENTILES~~***

***~~[Romans 11:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.22-24).~~***

"Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!"

AMONG those who believe the Holy Scriptures, no doubt is entertained, but that the Jews, who have engaged more of God's regard than any other nation upon earth, are yet destined to act a most important part upon the theater of the world. They are at present, it is true, so scattered and degraded, that, according to all human appearance, they are, so far at least as respects them in their national capacity, irrecoverably sunk. But though for their multiplied iniquities they are cast off by God, their rejection is neither total nor final:

not total; for there is yet among them "a remnant according to the election of grace:"

nor final; because God has determined, that in due season he will restore them to his favor, and unite them with the Gentile Church, as one fold under one Shepherd.

This is fully declared in the whole preceding and following context: and justly is it represented as a most mysterious dispensation; so mysterious, that the Apostle, after contemplating it, exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God? How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! verse 33."

The points particularly noticed are,

the rejection of the Jews;

the calling of the Gentiles to fill their place; and

the restoration of the Jews to their lost and forfeited inheritance.

Of this complicated dispensation I propose, at this time, to speak; and, in accordance with my text, to Mark,

1st, Its true character;

and Secondly, Its final outcome.

***~~I. Let us notice the character of this dispensation—~~***

It is spoken of by the Apostle as a mixture of "goodness and severity:

on them that fell, severity;

but towards us Gentiles, goodness."

That we may have a clear insight into the subject, we will mark it, first of all, as exhibited in a plain statement of facts; and then, as viewed through the medium of a most striking illustration.

The facts which we have to mention are all plain and acknowledged.

The Jews were once God's highly-favored people. They had been chosen in Abraham, according to God's sovereign will: and when they were multiplied in Egypt, they were brought out from thence with mighty signs and wonders, and taken by God under his own peculiar care and protection. There was given to them a revelation of God's will, written upon stones by the very finger of God himself. Statutes also, and ordinances, were delivered to them, that they might know how to serve God acceptably, and to secure a continuance of his favor. During the space of forty years, God, in a cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night, guided them through a trackless wilderness, and provided them with everything necessary for their support. At last he brought them into the promised land; and drove out before them seven nations, greater and mightier than they, and gave them such prosperity and power as rendered them the admiration and envy of surrounding nations.

In the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple, God manifested himself to them by a visible symbol of his presence; accepting their services, and communicating to them his richest blessings.

In a word, he showed that he regarded them as his peculiar people, and that he was, in a pre-eminent and appropriate manner, their God. From time to time he visited them with mercies and with judgments, if by any means he might prevail upon them to live obedient to his will. But they rebelled against him; and provoked him at last, especially by the murder of their Messiah, to cast them off. Accordingly, he gave them up into the hands of the Romans, and scattered them as dust over the face of the whole earth; depriving them, not only of his own immediate presence, but of all power to serve him according to their appointed ordinances; so that they are the only people upon earth who are incapable of serving their God in the way which their own consciences would dictate, and their own religion requires. In this state they have been kept almost eighteen hundred years—living monuments of God's righteous indignation, and a proverb of reproach to the whole world. That, however, which *most of all marks the "severity" of God towards them, is, that they are given over to judicial blindness and obduracy*; so that, with the Scriptures in their hands, and with the plain accomplishment of them before their eyes, they cannot see the fulfillment of them in their Messiah, or repent of the evil which they have committed in putting him to death.

"They are blinded," we are told, "according as it is written, God has given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they would not see, and ears that they would not hear, unto this day. And David says, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompense unto them; let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always, verse 7-10."

This is, beyond all comparison, the heaviest judgment that can be inflicted upon man in this life; because, when subjected to it, he lives only to "fill up a greater measure of iniquity," and to "treasure up for himself wrath against the day of wrath." This is the unhappy state of the whole Jewish nation at this time; so that it may well be said, in relation to them, "Behold the severity of God; on them that fell, I say, *severity*."

If we turn our attention to the Gentile world we behold in them a no less striking display of God's "goodness." They were sitting universally in darkness and the shadow of death; and being given up to their own hearts' lusts, they were living in all manner of abominations. *Their very religion was nothing but a compound of wickedness and superstition*. But, while they were in this state, altogether "without God, and without hope," God was pleased to send his Gospel to them, and to render it effectual for their conversion; so that what God has said in reference to them, is literally true, "I am found of them that sought me not; I am made manifest unto them that asked not after me, [Romans 10:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.20)."

Thus, from among us idolatrous Gentiles, has he chosen to himself a people, whom he regards as "a crown of glory, and a royal diadem in his hand, [Isaiah 62:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.3)." To us has he given a fuller revelation of his will than ever he gave to his ancient people: the light which to them was only like the early dawn, shines before us with the splendor of the noon-day sun.

We, too, have a far nearer access to God than they, and a more filial spirit in our walk before him. The Holy Spirit, who was neither generally nor freely given to them, is on us "poured out abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior." "He takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them plainly to us;" yes, the great work he has undertaken, is to "glorify Christ" in our hearts. The interpositions of God in our behalf are not indeed so visible as formerly; but they are not a whit less real, or less important; or rather, I would say, they exceed the former expressions of his love, as much as the concerns of the soul and of eternity exceed those of time and sense.

If, then, we observe with awe his "severity" to his ancient people, must we not behold with admiration and gratitude his "goodness" to us? In fact, his mercies to them were mere shadows of those given to us: so that we may well exclaim with the prophet, "How great is his goodness! How great is his beauty!"

But the character of this dispensation will yet more fully appear, if we view it through the medium of the image by which it is illustrated.

The Apostle represents the Jewish Church as an olive-tree planted by the hand of God himself, and watered with the dews of Heaven. For a time, it brought forth fruit: but, after a season, it became barren, and disappointed wholly the expectations of the divine Gardener. At last, Almighty God determined to express against it his merited displeasure, and to display in it his righteous indignation. Accordingly, he broke off, in quick succession, all its branches, and scattered them over the earth, as warnings to an ungodly world. In every place under Heaven has he caused them to be despised and trampled under foot: and, from being the joy and admiration of the whole earth, they are become "a hissing and a curse," to all who behold them.

Not willing, however, that the stem would stand in all its naked deformity, God has taken, from a wild olive tree, branches to supply the place of those which have been broken off. The wild olive was in itself as worthless as any tree of the field, and utterly incapable of bringing forth any fruit at all: but, by engrafting its branches into the good olive tree, and making them partakers of its root and fatness, God has rendered them "fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God."

Thus are the Gentiles now growing in the very place of the Jews who have been broken off, and enjoying all the privileges which in former ages belonged exclusively to them. But, to see this in its true light, we must contemplate the end that awaits them both; the scattered branches withering, and shortly to be gathered as fuel for the fire; and the engrafted scions forming a noble tree, luxuriant and fertile beyond all former precedent, and shortly to be transplanted to the paradise of God, a glorious and eternal monument of God's power and grace!

Say whether, if this image be realized in our minds, we must not adore both the severity and the goodness of God, acknowledging equally the justice of the one, and the unbounded riches of the other?

Such is the character of this dispensation, which we now proceed to consider,

***~~II. In its final outcome—~~***

It will be observed, that in the dispensation, as far as we have hitherto considered it, the sovereignty of God is most conspicuous. It was altogether of God's sovereign will and pleasure that he chose *Abraham*out of an idolatrous world, to make him the head and father of an elect seed. It was no less an act of sovereignty in God to confine his blessings to the line of Isaac, while Ishmael, an elder son, was overlooked. The same sovereignty was displayed, also, in the descendants of Isaac; *Jacob*the younger being chosen to the exclusion of Esau, "while they were yet in the womb, and consequently could have done neither good nor evil," to be the ground of God's future dispensations towards them.

It was also purely of his own sovereign will and pleasure, that God chose the *Gentiles*to inherit the blessings which the Jewish people had forfeited and lost.

It is impossible to view this matter in any other light; and we must be as blind as the Jews themselves, if we do not see that we ourselves are monuments of God's sovereign grace, in that we behold the full radiance of the Sun of Righteousness, while on millions of our fellow-creatures not so much as one ray of his light has ever shone. But, while in these things we acknowledge the sovereignty of God, we hesitate not to declare, that, in their final outcome, God will proceed altogether in a way of righteous retribution.

This I conceive to be the true way of reconciling those systems, which are supposed to be so opposite, and which have produced so much contention in the Church of God. I repeat it; In its commencement, every blessing is the fruit of free and sovereign grace; but in its termination, it is administered to us, not in a way of merit indeed, but on principles of perfect equity, according to our respective characters and attainments. And the subject before us will now furnish us with a fit occasion for maintaining the latter position, as we have already asserted and maintained the former.

God will ultimately deal with us, us Gentiles, according as we improve, or abuse, the privileges given unto us. His goodness will operate to our ultimate advantage, only on the supposition that "we continue in his goodness; for otherwise, we also, like the Jews themselves, shall be cut off."

To enter into the full meaning of these words, let us consider what we ourselves would expect of a scion which we had engrafted on a fertile stock. We would expect it to produce fruit answerable to the advantage conferred upon it. In husbandry, indeed, we engraft a good scion on an inferior tree; whereas God engrafts a worthless scion on a good tree. But the ultimate effect is to be the same: we expect it to bring forth good fruit.

Now what are the fruits which God's people of old produced? They may be comprehended in these three—repentance, faith, and obedience: and these may therefore most justly be expected of us. It may well be expected that we humble ourselves before God for all our former unfruitfulness, and mourn over all the corruptions of our nature, and all the evils of our lives. This we would do like the Prodigal: "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son." Even if we had been as holy as Job himself, we must, like him, "abhor ourselves in dust and ashes."

Under a sense of our guilt and desert of condemnation, we must cry to God for mercy, and "flee for refuge to the hope that is set before us," even to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Savior of fallen man. We must renounce utterly every other hope; and desire, like Paul, "to be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in him." We must also surrender up ourselves to God, "living not to ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again." As the scion ceases to be connected with the stock from which it has been taken, and lives wholly by that into which it is engrafted, and for the use of him who has separated it for himself, so must the true Christian be, in spirit, dead to the world; and must live for that Savior, to whose grace and favor he owes every blessing he enjoys.

But this is only a part of what is comprehended in the words of our text. By "continuing in his goodness," there is intimated a danger of apostasy, to which we are continually exposed. A scion, however favorable its situation may be, is exposed to storms and tempests, which may break it off; or to unfavorable seasons, which may prevent the ripening of its fruit. But the person that is engrafted into the good olive tree must suffer nothing to prevail against him, nor anything to destroy his fruits. On the contrary, everything that has a tendency to endanger his steadfastness, or impair his fertility, must cause him to cleave the more steadfastly to Christ, and to receive the more abundantly out of his fullness, the grace which he stands in need of. In this way he must "endure even to the end, if ever he would be saved:" for it is only "by a patient continuance in well doing, that he can ever attain eternal life."

This is fully declared in the passage before us. Yes, the Apostle Paul, who is so often and so justly referred to as maintaining the doctrines of grace, is certainly not a whit less strenuous in asserting our liability to fall and perish. If we are not constantly watching against temptation, and crying daily to our God to hold us up. "Be not proud," says he, "but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not you. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them that fell, severity; but towards you, goodness, if you continue in his goodness: otherwise, you also shall be cut off."

What can be plainer? And how do all human systems vanish before such declarations as these. It is worthy of remark, that while Calvinists complain of Arminians as unfair and unscriptural, in denying personal, though they admit national, election—they themselves are equally unfair and unscriptural in denying the danger of personal apostasy, while they admit it in reference to churches and nations.*It is lamentable to see the plain statements of Scripture so unwarrantably set aside for the maintaining of human systems.*Happy would it be for the Church, if these distinctions were buried by the consent of all parties, and the declarations of Holy Writ were adhered to by all, without prejudice or partiality!

The Author's views of this subject are simply these.

All **good**is from God, dispensed by him in a way of sovereignty according to the counsels of his own will, and to the praise of the glory of his own grace.

All **evil**, whether moral or penal, is from man; the moral, as resulting from his own free choice; the penal, as the just and necessary consequence of his sins.

The Author has no doubt but that there is in God's blessed word a system: but it is a far broader system than either Calvinists or Arminians admit. His views of that system may be seen in the Preface to this Work.

And says not our Lord also the same? Yes, precisely the same: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned! [John 15:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.6)." Here is precisely the same idea as in my text. Our Lord speaks of all his people as engrafted into him. The fruitful branches he purges and prunes, in order to render them more fruitful: but the unfruitful branches are broken off, and cast into the fire. Thus it is, and thus it shall be: and it befits every person, who professes to have been engrafted into the true olive-tree, to look well to his ways: for if he improves not duly the Lord's goodness to him, or, having begun to do so, continue it not to the end, he shall surely perish; and the very profession that he has made, and the advantages he has enjoyed, will only aggravate his final condemnation! If an unbelieving Jew must perish for rejecting Christ, then much more shall the disobedient Christian, who "crucifies him afresh, and puts him to an open shame."

Towards the Jews, also, will God proceed upon the same principle of equitable retribution. In the days of old, he always returned in mercy to them, when they sought him with penitence and contrition: and at this very hour would he restore them to his favor, if they would "look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn." The Apostle affirms this in our text, saying, "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be engrafted in again."

We are apt to imagine that the blindness and obduracy of the Jews are utterly incurable. But there is nothing impossible with God: "He is as able to engraft them in again," as ever he was to engraft in scions from among the Gentiles. Indeed, whatever we may imagine to the contrary, the restoration of the Jews is a far easier matter than the conversion of the Gentiles: for the *Gentiles*are altogether ignorant of the very first principles of religion: they have everything to learn: they do not so much as know that there is one supreme God; much less have they any idea how they are to find acceptance with him.

But the *Jews*have a perfect knowledge of the unity of God: they are instructed also in relation to his will, having in their very hands a transcript of his law. They possess also the prophecies relating to the Messiah, whom they confidently expect. *Nothing is lacking to them, but to have the veil taken from their hearts, so that they may see their prophecies accomplished in the Lord Jesus*. The very moment their eyes are opened to behold him as the true Messiah, they will possess all that the most favored of the Christian world possess; and in a moment, as on the day of Pentecost, will the work of grafting them into their primitive stock be effected.

This we are apt to overlook; but we are told it plainly in our text: "If they abide not still in unbelief, they shall be engrafted in: for God is able to engraft them in again. For if you, you Gentile, were cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and were engrafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree, how much more shall these, which are the natural branches, be engrafted into their own, olive-tree?" No one need be told this in relation to the engrafting of a natural scion: it carries its own evidence along with it. *If a scion will grow on a foreign stock, much more will it, if engrafted into its own parent stock.*

Such, then, is the advantage which the Jews possess over every other people upon earth. It is to their own stem that they are to be restored. The recollection, therefore, of what God has done in the conversion of the Gentiles would dispel all our fears in reference to the Jews, and encourage our efforts to restore them to God.

But, before we proceed to enforce this duty, it will be proper to bring the subject home to ourselves; and to urge on all a due improvement of the privileges which we ourselves enjoy.

We all profess to be branches of the good olive-tree: and we are entitled to regard ourselves in this light precisely as the Jews of old did, and as our blessed Lord has taught us to do, when he spoke of himself as the true vine. But he distinguished between *fruitful*branches which were approved by him, and *barren*branches which were to be broken off and burned. Consequently, our external privileges will be of little service to us, if they be not improved in a way of fruitfulness. Let us, therefore, examine our fruit from day to day, and see whether it be such as the goodness of our God entitles him to expect.

Let us inquire, whether in heart, as well as in profession, we are separated from the wild and worthless olive tree, on which we originally grew. We all acknowledge, in our Catechism, that we were, "by nature, children of wrath;" and that, at the time of entering into our baptismal engagements, we were "made the children of grace." Let us inquire, therefore, whether this engrafting has really taken place, not in profession only, but by an actual union of our souls with Christ? *Are we living on him, and receiving daily, out of his fullness, such communications of grace as are really productive of the fruit which he himself, during his sojourning on earth, brought forth?*

In him we find a perfect deadness to the world and all its vanities. Is there the same in us?

It was his food to do the will of his heavenly Father. Is there "the same mind" in us? Have we a resemblance to him in our whole spirit and conduct? and are we "walking in all things as he walked?"

I ask not whether we are perfect; for there is imperfection in the best of men: but, are we aiming at perfection, and panting after it, and laboring to be "pure, even as Christ was pure?" If we are living branches of the true olive tree, we must of necessity, in these matters, resemble Christ; and *to imagine ourselves vitally united to him, while in the general course of our lives we bear fruit altogether different from his, is fatally to deceive our own souls.*

We know assuredly, that, as Christ inspected the barren fig-tree, and denounced a curse against it on account of its barrenness, so will the heavenly Gardener inspect our fruit, and deal with us according to it. It is in vain, therefore, to deceive ourselves: for his judgment will stand, and it will be according to truth. We may "call darkness light, and evil good:" but he will not do so: and if, notwithstanding all his warnings, we will continue to expect his approbation in any other way than that of continued fruitfulness in the fruits of righteousness, then we have nothing to expect but a speedy and everlasting excision.

Let any one go to Shiloh, and see what the Lord did for the wickedness of his people there: or let him go to Palestine and the Seven Churches of Asia, and see what an unfruitful olive tree has reason to expect. Shall we say, 'But this was done to Churches only, and not to individuals?' What, I ask, are Churches, but congregated individuals? And who is authorized so to limit what God has not limited; or rather, I would say, Who will presume to deny what God has so frequently and so plainly affirmed? Woe be to that man who shall rest his soul on any such distinction as this! I declare, before Almighty God, and in his sacred name, that every soul among you who either continues barren, or, under any circumstances whatever, ceases to be fruitful after the example of his Lord and Savior, "shall be cut off," and cast into everlasting fire!

This warning is, in the first place, given by the Apostle to the Christian Church: and let every one of us receive it as addressed to his own soul in particular. And may God of his infinite mercy so impress it on our minds, that we may never cease to tremble at it; and seek that fruitfulness which will be our best evidence of union with Christ, and the surest pledge of our ultimate acceptance with him!

Having thus endeavored to enforce a due improvement of our own privileges, permit me now, in a respectful manner—yet with Christian fidelity, to ask, whether we are not called, by a sense of gratitude to God and of compassion for man, to make somewhat of an united effort for the restoration of the Jewish people to the privileges they have forfeited?

We have heard from God himself, that the obstacles to this are far less than those which have been already overcome in reference to the Gentiles; so that there is no just ground of discouragement on that head. He who has been able to engraft in the branches of the wild-olive tree, can easily re-instate the natural branches: and in the same way that he effected the one, he will effect the other. It was by the instrumentality of holy men of old that God wrought effectually on the Gentile world: and it is by exertions of a similar kind that he will restore the Jewish people, [Isaiah 62:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.10-12).

We know what self-denying efforts were made by the Apostles and the primitive Christians for our salvation: and such are the exertions which we would make in behalf of our Jewish brethren. Indeed, if it were possible, we are bound by tenfold greater obligations to labor for them, than ever their ancestors were for us: for we actually stand in their place, which has been vacated by them, in order that we might fill it.

Hear what is spoken in the chapter before us: "You will say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be engrafted in. Well:" 'it is true,' says the Apostle: 'and however mysterious the fact may appear, I cannot deny it.' What a view, then, is here opened to us! *The Jews were broken off, in order that we Gentiles might be grafted in.*What, I would ask, should be our feelings at the sight of a Jew? Should we not be filled with compassion towards him? and should not the contemplation of our own privileges cause our affections to yearn over him? Would not that truth be instantly brought to our minds, "You were broken off, that I might be engrafted in;" and I am occupying, as it were, the place which you have vacated for me? Who can entertain for a moment such a reflection as this, and not pant for an opportunity to bring him to a renewed enjoyment of his lost inheritance?

Methinks, every one of us, surveying the branches scattered over the face of the earth, and contemplating God's assured purpose to restore them to himself, would say, "God helping me, I will never cease to labor until I have been the happy means of reinstating one withered branch in its own olive-tree. For this I will labor: for this I will pray: for this I will combine my exertions with others, that, by united efforts, we may accomplish what cannot be attained by individual exertion."

Is not this reasonable? Is not this what God may well expect at our hands? Is it not a duty which we should have performed long ago? Is not the deplorable state of the Jewish people at this time in a great measure owing to the grievous neglect of Christians, who, for seventeen hundred years, have acquiesced in their rejection from God, without any serious efforts for their restoration to him?

As for the excuses which we make for this neglect, we know, and our own consciences tell us, that they are only a cloak for our own supineness. If we even believed the impracticability of human efforts, should we not, at least, implore for them the interposition of their God? But our prayers in secret have been as true an index of our minds towards them, as our efforts in public. Let us take shame to ourselves on account of our past neglect; and let us now address ourselves to our duty; determined, at least, to obtain this testimony both from God and from our own consciences, that, whether successful or not in our labors for them, "We have done what we could."

Our every effort will be pleasing to God: and, though he would refuse to confer on us the honor we affect, of raising up the tabernacle of David that is broken down, he will at least accept our pious inclinations, and, in the presence of the whole assembled universe, will say to each of us, "You have done well, in that it was in your heart!"

***~~#1899~~***

***~~THE FUTURE SALVATION OF ALL ISRAEL~~***

***~~[Romans 11:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.25-27).~~***

"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

IT is surprising how indifferent even pious Christians are on the subject of the future restoration of the Jews. Though the Scriptures speak so much of it, the generality are contended to be altogether ignorant of God's designs respecting them. Yet, in the midst of their ignorance, they are as decided in their sentiments on this subject as if they had made it their peculiar study, and were able to explain all the prophecies relating to it. Some will tell us, confidently, that the time for the conversion of Israel is not yet come; and that, when it shall be come, it shall be effected by miracle: and that, consequently, it is both unnecessary and presumptuous in us to attempt it. But, "brethren, I would not have you ignorant of this mystery;" more especially because it is in this chapter so plainly and so fully unfolded to our view. To aid you in contemplating the state of the Jews, I will endeavor to point out,

***~~I. The period allotted for their present blindness—~~***

***~~The blindness of the Jewish people is most awful—~~***

Their prophecies respecting the Messiah are most clear. And the accomplishment of them in the Lord Jesus Christ is most strongly marked in the New Testament: Yet is there "a veil upon their hearts;" so that they cannot see either what the prophecies imported, or how they are accomplished [2 Corinthians 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.15). This, indeed, is "happened to" that nation only "in part." "A remnant" there are, and ever have been, whose eyes have been opened to see the light which shines around them: but "the rest are and have been blinded," according to that prediction respecting them, "God has given them a spirit of slumber, eyes that they would not see, and ears that they would not hear, unto this day verse 8."

***~~This blindness will last "until the fullness of the Gentiles has comes in"—~~***

These words are much misunderstood. Some suppose "the fullness of the Gentiles" to mean the completion of the period allotted for the continuance of the Roman empire; while others think it refers rather to the period when all the Gentiles shall have been brought into the fold of Christ. I conceive that neither of these is the true import of the words; but that they speak of the time when the general conversion of the Gentiles shall commence. It cannot mean the completion of that great work; because the fullness of the Jews will precede that, verse 12. But when the Gentiles begin on a more extended scale to embrace the Gospel, then shall the veil be taken from the hearts of the Jews also; and they shall, if not universally—yet with few exceptions, be converted to the faith, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah, and worship him as their God.

Such is the change which, at the allotted period, shall take place; and such,

***~~II. The event that awaits them at the termination of it—~~***

Here let me call your attention to,

***~~1. The event itself—~~***

"All Israel shall be saved." Hitherto, even in the best ages, there have been but few that truly feared God: the great mass of the people have been ungodly; and the saints have been but as a remnant of them. But in that day "a spirit of grace and of supplication will be poured out upon them in a more abundant measure; and they will look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn, even as one mourns for his only son, [Zechariah 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 12.10);" and "they will all fear the Lord, from the least of them even unto the greatest of them:" yes, so universal shall be the prevalence of real piety among them, that "every vessel in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be *holiness to the Lord*; and there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord Almightym [Zechariah 14:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 14.20-21)."

***~~2. The certainty of it—~~***

It is here assured to them by a special promise; and that promise is ratified by an unchangeable covenant. The promise is recorded by the Prophet Isaiah, [Isaiah 59:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.20); and, with a slight but unimportant variation, cited by the Apostle. That this promise had not been fully accomplished in the apostolic age, is evident, from the way in which it is cited by the Apostle: for it is clearly considered by him as referring to a period yet future, a period when "all Israel shall be saved." What the Lord Jesus Christ has already effected among them, and what he has wrought also in the Gentile world, shows what he will do at the appointed season: he will, by the power of his word and the effectual operation of his Spirit, "turn away all ungodliness from Jacob;" and make them "a holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

This is confirmed to them by an everlasting covenant.*In the first covenant, the promises were all conditional; and being violated by them, it was altogether annulled*. But by the new and better covenant, of which Christ is the Surety, God engages to "write his laws in their hearts, and to put them in their inward parts:" and not only "not to depart from them himself, but to put his fear in their hearts, that they may not depart from him." Thus, at the same time that he takes away their former sins by forgiveness, he will prevent the recurrence of them by his grace, and secure to them the full blessings of his salvation. Compare [Jeremiah 31:31-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.31-34) with [Hebrews 8:8-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.8-12).

***~~Let me, in conclusion, call your attention to "this mystery." Consider,~~***

***~~1. Its aspect on the Jews—~~***

How melancholy are their present state of "blindness!"

And how glorious are the prospects held out to them!

***~~2. Its proper effect upon your own minds—~~***

It is lamentable to observe how "wise" the generality of Christians are "in their own conceits," in reference to this matter: how contemptuously they speak of the Jews, as if they were by nature worse than ourselves; and as if they were never again to be restored to the favor of their God. But, if we bear in mind what they once were, and what they are yet destined to become, we shall regard them with veneration for their fathers' sakes, and seek their welfare with earnestness for their own sakes.

***~~#1900~~***

***~~THE JEWS STILL BELOVED OF GOD, FOR THEIR FATHERS' SAKE~~***

***~~[Romans 11:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.28-29).~~***

"As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers, for God's gifts and his calling are irrevocable."

IT is strange, that, when so much is spoken in the Holy Scriptures respecting the Jews, they would occupy so little the attention of the Christian world. We see them as monuments of God's indignation; but never inquire, or but superficially inquire, either into the reasons of his conduct towards them, or into his ulterior designs respecting them. Were we to say that they were enemies to God for our sakes, we would be told that it was impossible: and were we to speak of them as yet objects of God's love, we would so astonish our hearers, as to make them cry out in the language of Ezekiel's auditors, "Ah, Lord God, does he not speak parables, [Ezekiel 20:49](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 20.49)." But the whole of their present state is a "mystery, verse 25," a great and stupendous mystery verse 33, into which we shall do well to search. For the assisting of you in this inquiry, I have selected the words which we have just read; wherein are declared,

***~~I. The mystery of God in relation to his ancient people—~~***

***~~1. "As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for our sakes"—~~***

That they are enemies to God and his Christ, has been abundantly manifested, by their conduct towards all who prophesied of Christ; by their crucifying of the Lord of Glory, when he had put himself in their power; and by their determined rejection of his Gospel, when, with such abundant evidence of its divine origin, it was preached unto them. Unhappily, we have still but too plain proofs that this enmity continues unabated. They hate the Gospel precisely as they did in the apostolic age, and reject its gracious overtures with disdain.

Now, whence is it that God has allowed their enmity to rise to such an height, and to rankle in their bosoms with such inveterate malignity? The Apostle tells us, He has allowed it "for our sakes." But how "for our sakes?" What interest can we have in it? This we will endeavor to explain.

God originally chose the Jews for his peculiar people, and revealed himself exclusively to them. When, by their abuse of his blessings, they had "provoked him to become their enemy, [Isaiah 63:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.10)," he determined to make himself known to the Gentiles, and to transfer to them the blessings which had been so wantonly despised. Therefore he cast off the Jews, and adopted the Gentiles in their place.

But it may he asked, Why would he cast off the Jews, in order to make room for the Gentiles? Was not the heart of the infinitely gracious Jehovah capable of embracing both? And might not the blessings of salvation, like the light and warmth of the sun, be enjoyed by both at once, without any loss or injury to either?

I answer, God, no doubt, could have admitted both to enjoy his favor at the same time: but, *for reasons best known to himself, he did not see fit to do so. He had displayed his sovereignty in the choice of the Jews: and now he would glorify the same perfection in the choice of the Gentiles also.*

*God's grace is Sovereign; and he will dispense it to whom he will, and at what time he will, and in what measure he will; "nor will he give account to us of any of his matters."*It is not for us to question him, saying, "What are you doing?" It is our part to acquiesce, with all humility and gratitude, in his sovereign dispensations; and, in reference to them all, to say, with our blessed Lord, "I thank you, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight [Matthew 11:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25-26)."

Having, then, determined to introduce us to the blessings of salvation, he allowed them to reject these blessings, so that a way might be made for us, to occupy their place, and to possess their inheritance.

This does, I confess, appear a strange and almost incredible statement: and, if it were founded on one particular expression of the Scriptures, we might well doubt the justness of it. But this truth is so often repeated, that we cannot possibly entertain a doubt respecting it. The Apostle tells us, that, "through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles:" that their fall was the riches of the world; that the diminishing of them was the riches of the Gentiles; and that the casting away of them was the reconciling of the world, verse 11, 12, 15. Thus is it unequivocally declared, that the communication of salvation to us was the effect and consequence of their rejection.

Shall I go farther than this, and say, that the communication of salvation to us was also the end of their rejection? Yes; mysterious as this is, it is unquestionably true, for the Apostle acquiesces in this very position as undeniable: "You will say, then, the branches were broken off, that I might be engrafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off verse 19, 20;" that is, I acknowledge the truth of your position; though, for the vindication of God's character, I must say, that *his breaking of them off from the stock was not a mere act of sovereignty on God's part: they deserved it richly; and brought it on themselves by their own obstinacy in unbelief*. Nevertheless, you are right in what you say respecting God's intentions towards you: he did break them off, that you may be engrafted in upon their stock: and the whole of this mysterious dispensation towards them has been permitted "for your sake."

But do not think that they are cast off forever: for,

***~~2. "As concerning the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes"—~~***

The Jews were chosen in Abraham their father; and all his posterity were comprehended in the promises made to him: not indeed in their individual capacity, for then no one of them, not even Judas himself, could have ever perished; but nationally, and in their collective capacity; and to them, sooner or later, shall all the promises be fulfilled. The rejection of the great body of the nation had taken place when the Apostle wrote this epistle: but yet he said, that "even at that present time there was among them a remnant according to the election of grace, verse 5." And so may we say at this time; "There is a remnant," whom God, from time to time, is gathering in from among them, and especially through the instrumentality of the Hebrew New Testament, which to a great extent, is now circulating among them in different quarters of the globe: and, as in the covenant made with Abraham, not all his descendants were comprehended, but only those who would proceed from Isaac and from Jacob; so in the loins of those who are yet alive are millions of millions comprehended; and of them also an elect remnant.

Who shall say how many of them "are ordained to eternal life?" Sure we are, that they will be numerous as the stars of Heaven; or rather, "as the sands upon the sea-shore, innumerable." At whatever period these shall come into the world, God will call them to the knowledge of himself; and give them, if not the possession of the land of Canaan—yet the possession of that better inheritance, which Canaan typified, and which was assured to them in the promises that were made to Abraham. Those promises were not made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for themselves only, but for their seed: and "not a jot or tittle of those promises shall ever fail;" all shall be fulfilled in their season: and from respect to the fathers to whom they were made, are the present generation of their descendants yet loved; and to the last generations shall the elect among them be loved, even as the fathers themselves were loved. Thus, "as touching the election, are that people," notwithstanding all their enmity, "yet beloved for their fathers' sakes;" as God has said: "I know the thoughts that I think towards you; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end, [Jeremiah 29:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 29.11)."

All this is secured by,

***~~II. The determined purpose of his mind towards them—~~***

Exceeding strong is the assertion with which the Apostle confirms the foregoing declarations. The general and unqualified manner in which the assertion is made, will lead us to notice it,

***~~I. As a general truth—~~***

Certain it is, that "God's gifts and calling are without repentance." Whatever God has given, of spiritual and eternal blessings, he has given in consequence of "his own eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began! [2 Timothy 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.9). *The favored persons were not originally chosen on account of any superior goodness that was, or would be, in them*, [Deuteronomy 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 9.6); but they were "predestined to the enjoyment of those blessings, according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of his own will, [Ephesians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.11)." These are strong expressions, I confess: but they are the declarations of God himself; and they reflect the strongest light on the subject we are now considering. For God is an unchangeable Being; as he has said: "I the Lord do not change! [Malachi 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.6)."

That there have been occasions on which he has been said to "repent," I acknowledge: for we are told that he "repented he had made man, [Genesis 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.6);" as also, "that he had raised Eli to the priestly office, [1 Samuel 2:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.30);" and, that he had made Saul king over Israel, [1 Samuel 15:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 15.11); [1 Samuel 15:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 15.28-29). On one occasion, God himself says to those whom, after having brought them out from Egypt, he had determined to exclude from the promised land, "You shall know my breach of promise, [Numbers 14:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 14.34)."

But we must distinguish between his *purposes*and his *dispensations*. *His dispensations he may, and does, change: but he changes them agreeably to his eternal purpose, which was, to continue his favor to his people, while they would walk worthy of it; and to withdraw it from them, when they would have so abused it, as to render any longer forbearance on his part injurious to the honor of his moral government*.

But in himself "there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning [James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.17);" "nor will he ever forsake his people, for his great name's sake; because it has pleased him to make them his people, [1 Samuel 12:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 12.22)." "Whom he loves, he will love unto the end! [John 13:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 13.1);" and of those whom he has given to his Son, he will allow "not so much as one to be lost, or ever to be plucked out of his hand! [John 17:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.11-12); [John 10:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28-29)."

But let us more particularly mark this truth,

***~~2. As bearing upon the point immediately before us—~~***

The Prophet Micah marks with very peculiar accuracy the distinction between God's favor as promised to Abraham, and as conferred on Jacob. To *Abraham*it was altogether "mercy;" because it was promised by God to him and his seed freely: but to Jacob it was "truth;" because it was an accomplishment of the promise previously made: "You will perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which you have sworn unto our fathers from the days of old, [Micah 7:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 7.20)."

Now the promises made to Abraham, and his *believing*seed, were all ratified with an oath, and confirmed with an everlasting covenant, [Hebrews 6:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.13-14); and God gave this double assurance for the more abundant consolation of his people; as the Apostle informs us: "God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us [Hebrews 6:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.17-18).

On this, then, we rely, even on the immutability of God's covenant; and from this we infer the certainty that God's ancient people will be restored to him in due season. Notwithstanding their present disconsolate condition, God's "eye is yet over them for good;" and, notwithstanding their inveterate hostility to the very name of Christ, he still "loves them;" and never will repent of the gifts he has bestowed upon them, or of the calling with which he has called them: for "He is not a man, that he would lie; nor the son of man, that he would repent, [Numbers 23:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 23.19)." We may say therefore with the Apostle, in the preceding context, "All Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion, the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is God's covenant with them, when he shall take away their sins verse 26, 27."

***~~I now confidently make my appeal to you, and ask,~~***

***~~1. Do we not find here a just occasion for gratitude?~~***

We admire, as well we may, the blessedness of God's chosen people in the days of David and Solomon, especially when compared with the blindness and ignorance of the heathen nations around them. But far more elevated is our state at this day, inasmuch as the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon us is more abundant, [John 7:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.39). [Titus 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.6), and our advantages for fruitfulness are proportionably increased. Do but reflect on your situation as engrafted on the good olive-tree; and look upon the stock, the wretched, worthless stock, from which you have been taken—shall not this mercy fill you with unutterable joy? Truly, if you do not bless, and magnify, and adore the goodness of your God, "the very stones will cry out against you."

***~~2. Have we not here, also, a loud call for our compassion?~~***

Come, and survey the ground on which the olive-tree is growing: see how it is strewed with branches, with dead and withered branches, that have been broken off from the stem: and then consider that they have been reduced to this state "for your sakes," and "broken off on purpose that you might be engrafted in, verse 19, 20." Look on them, I say, and tell me whether your affections would not yearn over them; and whether you ought not to exert yourselves to the utmost in their behalf? Did we but bear in mind this mysterious truth, methinks it would be impossible for us to view a Jew and not weep over him, and pour out our souls in fervent intercession for him, and labor to the uttermost to effect his restoration to the Divine favor.

***~~3. Is there not also abundant encouragement for our exertions?~~***

That "God is able to engraft in again" the natural branches, we can have no doubt. And is he not engaged to do so, by promise and by oath? Why, then, do we not seek to be instrumental in this blessed work? If we believe that they are yet "beloved of God," would we not make them objects of our love? Come, let us do this: let us say with ourselves, 'God helping me, I will never cease to work, until I have been instrumental in engrafting in again some branch. I see that there is nothing but unbelief that separates them from God; and I will, by every means in my power, endeavor to convince one, that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world.'

Would we but all adopt this resolution, and implore help from God to carry it into effect, what might we not hope for in the space of a few years? Surely God would hear the united prayers of his people, and favor their united efforts with success. If only we would "give him no rest," and "take no rest ourselves," until we had succeeded in our efforts—we would soon prevail, and behold Jerusalem once more a praise in the earth, [Isaiah 62:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.1); [Isaiah 62:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.6-7)."

***~~#1901~~***

***~~THE GOSPEL GIVEN TO US AS A DEPOSIT FOR THE JEWS~~***

***~~[Romans 11:30-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.30-31).~~***

"Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you."

ONE can scarcely conceive how such a chapter as that before us would be in the hands of Christians, and be read by them from time to time, and yet the great subject of the restoration of the Jews, and of their union with the Christian Church, be as little known as if no information whatever had been given respecting it in the Bible. Until of late, it would seem as if there had been as thick a veil upon the hearts of Christians, in relation to it, as there has been upon the hearts of the Jewish people in relation to Christianity itself. Methinks the words which I have just read to you, if there had been no other, were sufficient to unfold to us the whole plan of Divine Providence in relation to this matter. For in them we see,

**I.** The mysterious way in which God has dispensed his blessings to mankind—

Mark the plan, as it is here developed—

The whole world having departed from God, they were, with the exception of one family, overwhelmed by an universal deluge. The surviving family soon followed the footsteps of their ancestors; and the whole world, in the space of less than five hundred years, was again involved in darkness and idolatry. It pleased God then to give a new revelation of himself to one single individual, and to confine the knowledge of himself, not to his descendants generally, but to his descendants in the line of one particular son. But that revelation being merely oral, it was preserved only by tradition. Then, after about four hundred and thirty years more, God, for the first time, given to man a written revelation. Yet was this written word confined to that single people. The rest of the world, for the space of four thousand years, were left without any written instruction from on high, and were given up to the delusions of their own hearts. Our Lord himself said he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and he forbad his disciples to enter into any city of the Samaritans, to instruct them. But at last, when this nation had so abused the light afforded them, as to reject and crucify their Messiah, God took it away from them, and imparted it to the Gentile world, who hitherto had lain in darkness and the shadow of death. Yet, alas! it is to but a small part of the Gentile world that this light is come, notwithstanding it has shined these eighteen hundred years. But it is God's purpose that, in due season, it shall spread over the face of the whole globe; and that they, to whom the knowledge of his will has been now committed, shall be his instruments for communicating it to all the rest of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles.

Now I call the whole of this mysterious—

Paul calls it so, in the chapter before us verse 25; and so great a mystery did he consider it, that, in the contemplation of it, he exclaimed, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out verse 33."

But consider these four things: the long delay; the partial bestowment; the subsequent transfer; the final restoration: and every part of it will appear an inscrutable mystery.

That God would leave the world in ignorance for two thousand years—that he would then make himself known to one man only, and confine the knowledge of himself for two thousand more years in one particular branch of that man's family—that then he would cause the candlestick to be removed from that people; and be set up among the idolatrous Gentiles, who had been left to themselves for four thousand years—that eighteen hundred years more would elapse, and the light be not yet spread among the Gentiles generally, or restored to the Jews—who does not see, in this whole dispensation, the sovereignty, the uncontrollable sovereignty, of the Most High, who imparts to every one so much only as he himself sees fit, and that too in the time and manner which seems best to his unerring wisdom? The Apostle illustrates this by an olive-tree, the branches of which were broken off, that others might be engrafted on it, and that, at a future period, they might be engrafted again on their own olive-tree verse 17-24. And, truly, in the whole of this mysterious appointment we must acquiesce, saying, "Even so, Father; for so it has seemed good in your sight [Matthew 11:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.26)."

But, though we cannot comprehend this mystery, we know, for certain,

**II.** The design of God in it—

This is two-fold;

**1.** To provoke the Jews to jealousy—

Moses himself, who gave to the Jews God's written word, told them, that they would, by their obstinate unbelief, provoke God to withdraw his mercy from them, and to transfer it to the Gentile world: "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God: they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation [Deuteronomy 32:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.21)." This passage Paul expressly cites in the preceding context [Romans 10:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.19); and informs the Jews, that God, having in vain dealt with them in the way of mercy and of judgment, was now anxious to try another way, and to influence them through the operation of another principle, the principle of envy; if by any means he might prevail upon them to turn unto him. And, doubtless, this was well calculated to impress their minds with penitential sorrow for their past sins, and with an ardent desire to be restored to his favor. They saw all that their most favored saints had ever enjoyed now transferred to the Gentile world, whom they had been accustomed to despise as dogs; and pardon, and peace, and holiness, and glory, now imparted to a people whom they had deemed incapable of such blessings; while they themselves were given up to judicial blindness and obduracy. True, indeed, this operated rather to increase their anger, than to produce humility: but God's end was mercy; though they, through their incorrigible perverseness, made it only an occasion of bringing down upon themselves yet heavier judgments. This is a point which we are too apt to overlook. God never intended finally to cast them off, but only to reject them for a season; until, by beholding his mercy given to the idolatrous Gentiles, they shall be prevailed upon to humble themselves before him, and to implore a restoration of their forfeited inheritance:—"I say, then, have they stumbled, that they would fall (for ever)? God forbid: but rather, through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy verse 11."

**2.** To provoke the Christian world to love—

Mark with care the expression in my text: "They, the Jews, have now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy Some, on account of the construction of the Greek, and the position of the word íá, have translated the passage differently. But that position of the word íá is common in Paul's writings (see [1 Corinthians 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.15). [2 Corinthians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.4). [Galatians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.10). [Ephesians 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.17).): and, beyond a doubt, our translators have given the true import of the passage. The other translation would destroy the parallelism altogether, and, in fact, the sense also." God might, if he had seen fit, have admitted the Gentiles to a participation of his blessings in conjunction with the Jews. But this was not the plan which he, in his unerring wisdom, had ordained. He determined to manifest his displeasure towards the Jews, on account of their rejection of the Messiah; but at the same time to show mercy to them through the instrumentality of the despised Gentiles. To the Gentiles he gave a yet clearer and fuller revelation than that which he had given to the Jews: and he gave it, not for their benefit only, but as a sacred deposit for the Jews, and as a talent to be improved for their especial use. In bestowing the Gospel on the Gentiles, he said, in fact, 'Here is salvation for you: but, remember, you must not confine it to yourselves. You must make use of it for the instruction and salvation of the Jews. From you I withheld the light which I bestowed on the Jews: but I do not intend that the light which I am now bestowing upon you would be withheld from them: on the contrary, I purpose that it shall be imparted to them: and I intend to make you my channel of communication to them. See to it, therefore, that you improve this mercy aright, and that you labor incessantly for their good; for I grant this mercy to you, not for your own benefit only, (though, doubtless, it is for yourselves in the first instance,) but for them also, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.'

Thus, in the whole of this dispensation, God has acted in a sovereign way—yet also in a way of mercy; of mercy to the Jews, whom he would provoke to jealousy; and of mercy to the Gentiles, whom he would provoke to love.

Permit me now to ASK,

**1.** What use have you made of this Gospel for yourselves?—

Have you "believed it?" Have you, by faith in it, been brought to God? Have you been led to admire and adore the goodness of God, in that, when he withheld his blessings from his own highly-favored and peculiar people, he conferred them upon you, who were alike unworthy of them, and might well have been left to perish, on account of your abuse of the light with which he had favored you, and which, small as it was, was sufficient to acquit or to condemn you, according as you conducted yourselves in reference to it? In a word, have you seen the "mercy" of God, as revealed in the Gospel? and are you transported with it, as offering "mercy" to your souls? Does that "mercy," as bought for you by the precious blood of Christ, form the one ground of all your hopes, and the one spring of all your joys? Remember, if the feebler light given to Abraham, and Moses, and David, wrought so powerfully on them, as to guide their feet into the paths they trod, much more would your superior light elevate your souls, and transform you into the very image of your God.

**2.** What use have you made of the Gospel for your Jewish brethren?—

Alas! how little have any of us answered the end for which the Gospel has been committed to us, or ever considered the design of God in bestowing it upon us! It is perfectly surprising, that for so many centuries we would have altogether overlooked our Jewish brethren: as if God himself had never given us any charge respecting them; or rather, as if his charge had been, "Into any city of the Jews enter you NOT:" when, in fact, the command has never been repealed, "Preach my Gospel, to the Jews first, and also to the Gentiles." Indeed, my brethren, great guilt attaches to us on this account. "What would you yourselves say to your steward, if, when you had committed to him a sum of money for the relief of your distressed neighbors, he had withheld from them your bounty, and had expended it altogether on himself? Yet that were no crime, in comparison with that of which you have been guilty; because the loss occasioned by his dishonesty could, at the worst, only outcome in the temporal death of those whom he defrauded; whereas the negligence of the Christian world has issued in the death of men's souls, yes, of millions of immortal souls, who, if the means which God has put into our hands for their good had been duly improved, might have been saved with an everlasting salvation. Let there be an end of this neglect, my beloved brethren; and now begin, with all assiduity and diligence, to redeem the time that you have lost. Truly, you owe much to your Jewish brethren: and I call upon you to pay your arrears; ("for their debtors you are "to a vast amount [Romans 15:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.27);) and now, by your personal efforts, or through the instrumentality of others, impart to them the mercy which you yourselves have received. Nor do I suggest this as a matter of advice merely, but as an absolute command from God himself. It is not a thing left to your option. You have a trust; and you must discharge it. I call upon you, then, if you have any sense of the mercy given to your own souls, to act as faithful stewards to your God, in dispensing mercy to his "beloved," though suffering and out-cast people.

***~~#1902~~***

***~~THE UNSEARCHABLENESS OF GOD'S WAYS~~***

***~~[Romans 11:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.33).~~***

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

ON whatever side we look, we are surrounded with mysteries; yes, we are a mystery to ourselves. The works of creation, and providence, and redemption, are all mysterious; and the more we know of them, the more we shall be disposed to exclaim, "O the depths!" Perhaps no one of the children of men ever had so deep an insight into the great mysteries of the Gospel as the Apostle Paul: yet, when he had unraveled them in a way that no other man ever did, he was constrained to acknowledge, that there were in the Gospel, treasures unexplored, and mines unsearchable, and riches of wisdom that far surpassed the conceptions of any finite intelligence. This is a truth which we ought to be well acquainted with: for, until we are made sensible of it, we shall never regard the Gospel with that reverence and admiration which ought ever to exist in our minds towards it. Let us then contemplate the unsearchableness of God's "judgments," that is, of the means he has appointed for our salvation, and the incomprehensibility of his "ways," by which he dispenses that salvation to fallen man.

He is altogether incomprehensible,

**I.** In the way he has provided for the salvation of men—

Consider,

**1.** His sending his only dear Son tobe the surety and substitute of fallen man—

From having been early instructed in that great mystery, the incarnation of the Son of God, we hear of it without emotion: but when we contemplate, that the Creator of Heaven and earth became a creature, in the likeness of sinful flesh; that in order to his being formed immaculate, he was born of a pure Virgin through the operation of the Holy Spirit; and that, being so born, he did actually become a curse for us, and "bear our iniquities in his own body on the tree;" we are lost in wonder. We are not only at a loss to comprehend it, but seem as if we could not believe it; so strange, so almost impossible, does it appear: and if it were not confirmed in such a way that it is impossible to withhold our belief, we would be ready to account it blasphemy to assert such a fact, and madness to believe it. But the fact is so: and as, at the first revelation of it, it filled all Heaven with wonder, so will it do to all eternity: "the height and depth and length and breadth of the love" displayed in it, will never be explored.

**2.** His saving men by a righteousness not their own—

This seems no less unsearchable than the former. Supposing that God had sent his Son to expiate our guilt, we would at least expect that he would require man to work out a righteousness for himself, and to obtain salvation by his obedience to the law. But, blessed be his name! he has not required any such thing. He requires men indeed to be righteous, and to obey his law: nor will he save any man who does not in these respects endeavor to fulfill his will. But he does not require man to fulfill his law, in order to work out a righteousness whereby he may be justified: on the contrary, he requires men to renounce all dependence on their own righteousness, and to seek for acceptance solely through the righteousness of Christ. A perfect righteousness of our own we could not have: and therefore God sent his own Son to obey the precepts of the law, as well as to suffer its penalties, and by his own obedience unto death, to "bring in an everlasting righteousness," "which would be unto all, and upon all, them that believe." Thus the vilest sinner in the universe, the very instant he truly believes in Christ, becomes possessed of a righteousness commensurate with the utmost demands of God's perfect law, a righteousness in which he stands before God without spot or blemish. How wonderful is this! how inconceivable to any finite capacity, that God would, I had almost said that God could, appoint such a way for the restoration and salvation of fallen man!

**3.** His bringing out of man's fall more glory to himself, and more good to man, than if man had never fallen—

The dishonor done to God by the fall of man was beyond all conception great: yet is the honor done to him by man's recovery infinitely greater. True it is, God would have been equally glorious in himself, if man had never been restored: but his perfections would never have been so displayed in the sight of his creatures. It would never have been known that mercy constituted any part of his character; while it is, in reality, that perfection in which he most delights. Nor would his justice have appeared so awful in the destruction of the whole human race, as it appears in inflicting death upon his only dear Son, when standing in the place of sinners. But suppose that mercy might have been exercised towards sinners in some other way; how could justice have borne any part in their salvation? But now justice is as much engaged on the side of a believing penitent as mercy itself; and the penitent, while he entreats God to be merciful to himself, may entreat him also to be just to his Beloved Son, who paid the full price for his redemption: yes, he may hope in the very justice of God, who is "a just God and a Savior," and can be "just, and yet the justifier of all them that believe." What an inscrutable mystery is here!

But we must notice also the good that accrues to man. Suppose man had never fallen, he would have had but a creature's righteousness, and consequently a reward only proportioned to it: but now the believer has the righteousness of the Creator himself, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "made righteousness unto us," and is therefore "called, The Lord our Righteousness." I may add too, that the believer is actually more safe than Adam was in Paradise. Adam had his own safety, and that of all his posterity, committed into his hands: and what the event was, we know by bitter experience. But God has now committed his chosen people to the hands of his own Son, that he may redeem them by his blood, sanctify them by his Spirit, and "preserve them blameless unto his heavenly kingdom." Now Jesus himself tells us, that "of those who were given him, he lost none," nor ever would lose one; for that "none ever could, or ever would, pluck them out of his hands." The Father has no longer trusted us, so to speak, with our own destinies: he has treasured up our life and strength in Christ Jesus: "our life is hid with Christ in God:" and because Christ himself is our life, we, at his appearing, shall appear with him in glory."

Say, now, brethren, whether "these judgments be not indeed unsearchable, and these ways past finding out?".

Glorious as that part of our subject is, we leave it, in order to mark the mysteriousness of God's dealings with men,

**II.** In the way in which he imparts that salvation to them—

And here we would notice his conduct,

**1.** Towards the world at large—

This is the point to which Paul in our text more especially refers: he has throughout the whole chapter expatiated upon the rejection of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, and the final restoration of the Jews themselves: and from the view of those mysterious dispensations he is led to make the exclamation before us. Consider then these points. Consider his first separating to himself a people in the person of Abraham, who was an idolater, like all the rest of the world. Yet he took not all of his seed; but only the seed of Isaac, excluding Ishmael from all participation of the promised blessings. Yet neither did he take all of Isaac's seed; but rejected Esau, the elder, and took Jacob, the younger; and that too by a special order, "while they were yet in their mother's womb, and consequently could have done neither good nor evil." Is there nothing wonderful in this? Who could have conceived that God would grant such mercy to any; or that, vouchsafing it, he would dispense it in so sovereign a way? Yet so he did; and the fact is undeniable. In due time he multiplied the posterity of Jacob, and brought them out of Egypt, and led them through the wilderness, and put them into possession of the promised land, and communicated to that family exclusively the means of salvation for the space of two thousand years. Here we might ask, If God was not merciful, why did he choose any? and if he was merciful, why for so long a period did he exclude any? But "God's ways are in the great deep." "He gives not account to us of any of his matters."

At last, for their iniquities he cast off his chosen people; and made the rejection of them the occasion and the means of calling in the Gentiles. Who shall explain this mystery? Who shall tell us the reasons why God acted thus? Who shall tell us why the Gentiles were not called before; or why they were called then; and especially why God made the fall of the Jews to be the riches of the Gentiles, and the salvation of the world? Will any one undertake to account for these things?

But the deepest part of this mystery yet remains to be noticed. God has still purposes of love towards his rejected people, though he has cast them off almost eighteen hundred years; and intends to make the more general awakening of the Gentiles the means of bringing back again to him the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and of engrafting them again upon their own stock, from which they have been so long broken off, and on which the Gentiles have been so long engrafted in their stead: and then he will make that very restoration of the Jews the means of converting the whole world; so that it shall be as if there were a general resurrection of all the saints to live again upon the earth, all mankind being united under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and all constituting one fold under one Shepherd. What shall we say to these things? Was there not reason for Paul, in the prospect of them, to exclaim, "O the depths!" Truly "God's judgments are a great deep [Psalm 36:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.6);" "He does great things and unsearchable, and marvelous things without number [Job 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 5.9)."

**2.** Towards individual believers—

In reference to these also we must say, that "God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts; but as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are his ways high above our ways and his thoughts above our thoughts." Observe the objects of his choice: Who are they? Are they such as human reason would select? He takes a Manasseh, who had filled Jerusalem with the blood of innocents; a Mary Magdalen, who had been possessed by seven devils; a Saul, that was a proud, blaspheming, cruel, blood-thirsty persecutor; and he leaves the young man, who, in his own opinion at least, had kept all God's commandments from his youth up: yes, tax collectors and harlots were admitted into his kingdom freely and in vast multitudes, while the Scribes and Pharisees were given over to final obduracy. What shall we say to this? The fact is unquestionable; and we can only say, as our Lord did in the contemplation of this great mystery, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight."

Mark farther the manner in which he calls them to himself. Some he calls with terror, as the jailor; and others with the gentle drawings of his love, as Nathanael: some by the instrumentality of his ministers; and others by the secret operations of his Spirit, without the intervention of any outward means: some suddenly, as Matthew; others gradually, as Apollos: some in early life, at the third or fourth hour; and others on a dying bed, at the eleventh hour.

His mode of completing in them the good work must also be noticed. Some he leads through deep waters, as David; while others have comparatively a smooth and easy passage: some, like Peter, are allowed to fall into grievous sins; while others, like Paul, persevere in an unblemished course even to the end.

In all these things the sovereignty of God is most conspicuously displayed: and Paul has a peculiar reference to that in the exclamation before us. He asks, "Who has first given to the Lord?" Who has laid him under any obligation to confer his blessings upon him? If any such person can be found, let him come and prefer his claim; and I pledge myself, says he, that "it shall be recompensed unto him again." And then he goes on to declare, that God, as a mighty Sovereign, does everything purely of his own will, and for his own glory: for that "of him, (as the Author,) and through him, (as the Disposer,) and to him, (as the End,) are all things: and that to him must all the glory be given for ever and ever verse 35, 36."

Such are God's judgments, and such his ways: but "how little a portion of him is known [Job 26:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 26.14)." This however we must say, that though "clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne."

See then from hence,

**1.** What is the proper posture of a sinner's mind—

We would not presume to sit in judgment upon God, arraigning either the declarations of his word, or the dispensations of his providence. What do we know either of the one or of the other? "We were but of yesterday and know nothing:" and "if any man think that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know [1 Corinthians 8:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.2)." We are not to imagine, that, because there are many things in God's word above our ability to comprehend, they are therefore not true; or that, because in his providence there are many things which we cannot account for, they are therefore not good. We would remember, that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God: and that "though vain man would be wise, he is born like a wild ass's colt [Job 11:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 11.14)." Let a sense of our extreme ignorance then lead us to a meek submission to our God; and let us, whenever difficulties occur, satisfy ourselves with this reflection, that, "what we know not now, we shall know hereafter."

**2.** What is the truest felicity, both of saints and angels—

To search into the great mystery of godliness is right, provided we do it with humility and godly fear. And, if we look to God to teach us, "he will by his Spirit show us, what no unassisted eye ever saw, or ear heard, or heart conceived." Yes, He will teach us "the deep things of God:" he will exhibit to our view "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and give us an insight into that mystery of a crucified Savior, "in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." What do we suppose were the feelings of the Apostle, when, from a view of the unsearchableness of God's judgments, he cried out "O the depths!" Can we conceive a sublimer joy than he at that time experienced? The angels are constantly employed just as he was at that time. We are expressly told, that they are "always desiring to look into" the great mysteries of redemption; and, no doubt, from every discovery they make, their joy is exceedingly enhanced. We cannot doubt but that the felicity of the saints in glory will very principally consist in this, in admiring and adoring those dispensations of grace and mercy, which here they so superficially beheld, but which then will he more fully unfolded to their view. Let this then, brethren, be your employment now: it will be a Heaven upon earth: and the more enlarged are your discoveries of your Redeemer's glory here, the more will you be prepared and fitted for the enjoyment of it in the eternal world.

***~~#1903~~***

***~~GOD ALL IN ALL~~***

**[Romans 11:34-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.34-36).**

Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

GOD is represented in the Scriptures as "a jealous God." And well he may be so: for it is not fit that any portion of "his glory would be given to another." But man is ready, on all occasions, to arrogate something to himself. Hence it befits the servants of God to exercise extreme vigilance in relation to this matter; and to claim for God the honor due unto his name.

In the chapter before us, the Apostle has been setting forth the mysterious designs of God in relation both to Jews and Gentiles. It had pleased God, for two thousand years, to confine the knowledge of himself to Abraham and his descendants: but at length he saw fit to cast them off, and to transfer his blessings to the Gentiles. In due season, however, it is his purpose to restore to his favor his ancient people, and, through their instrumentality, to diffuse the knowledge of himself over the face of the whole earth.

Now, in the whole of this work, it is obvious that God has acted "according to the counsel of his own will;" and that to no creature in the universe is there left any room to boast. Hence Paul, in the words which we have read, ascribes all the glory to God alone.

Let me call your attention to the component parts of this sublime passage:

***~~I. His unrestricted challenge—~~***

***~~Who will venture to claim any merit to himself in reference to redemption at large?—~~***

Of whom did God take counsel, when he determined to save a ruined world?

Who suggested to him a hint respecting the substitution of his own Son, in the place of sinful man?

Who proposed to him so strange a way of reconciling all his own glorious perfections, and of making all the rights of justice, and truth, and holiness—to consist with the exercise of mercy?

Or who ever did anything to merit at his hands, such an interposition in his favor?

If there is anyone so vain as to arrogate anything to himself in this respect, let him bring forward his claim, and substantiate it before God, "that he may be recompensed" according to it. But we have no fear that this challenge will be accepted by any upon earth, or any one in Heaven itself. The whole work of salvation is God's, and God's alone! Salvation is the result of his wisdom, and the gift of his grace.

***~~Who will venture to claim any merit to himself, in reference to the application of this redemption to his own soul?—~~***

Who can ascribe anything to his own wisdom? Or who can ascribe to his own goodness? Who will venture to reverse the saying of our Lord; and, in direct opposition to him, to assert, that "he first chose the Lord, and not the Lord him! [John 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.16)." What disposition or ability had any one of you to turn unto the Lord, until "He, of his own good pleasure, gave you both to will and to do, [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.13)." Or what had you done for him, that merited this favor at his hands? The salvation itself, and the faith by which you have embraced it—have been both, and equally, the gift of God, [Ephesians 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.8); and, whatever you may have attained, "by the grace of God you are what you are! [1 Corinthians 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.10)."

In connection with this, let us consider,

***~~II. His unqualified assertion—~~***

Every good thing the Apostle refers to God, distinctly asserting him to be,

***~~1. The Source of all—~~***

God is the one fountain of all good. The fallen angels could as easily have devised a way of salvation as we. We must, of necessity, go back to the period when God proposed to his Son to become our substitute and surety, and promised to him a seed, who would, if I may so speak, remunerate all the sufferings he would endure for us, [Isaiah 53:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.10); from that covenant must all our blessings be traced; and in accordance with it shall they all be given.

***~~2. The Author of all—~~***

Not only did everything spring from God, as the fruit of his sovereign love; but everything was wrought in us by his power and grace. *We could as easily form a new world, as we could form the new creature in our own bosoms!*"He who must work us to this self-same thing, is God, [2 Corinthians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.5)." In its rise, its progress, and its consummation, no other hand can be seen in salvation, but His.

Nor is good alone to be traced to him; for he is, so far as *permission*goes, the author of evil also. *Moral*evil indeed cannot be ascribed to him, any further than as permitting it for wise and gracious ends. But *penal*evil, in whatever way it comes, and from whatever hand it proceeds, may be referred to him, as its proper author. *The Sabeans and Chaldeans destroyed the property of Job; yet Job regarded them only as instruments in God's hands, and received the visitation precisely as if it had proceeded from God himself, without the intervention of any secondary cause*[Job 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 1.21). Thus must we also do: for "there is not either good or evil in the city, but the Lord has done it! [Amos 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 3.6)."

***~~3. The End of all—~~***

God in everything seeks his own glory, and from everything will assuredly bring glory to himself. From the fall of man, from the very crucifixion of Christ himself, has his glory been educed: but never has he designed that man would glory, [1 Corinthians 1:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.29). Be it so, then, that you are enjoying salvation in all its fullness: you must, to the last hour of your life, say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto your name be the praise, [Psalm 115:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 115.1)."

A just view of the two former points will prepare us for,

***~~III. His appropriate acknowledgment—~~***

To God he gives the glory. And who among us will not cordially add his "Amen!"

***~~We must do it upon earth—~~***

*Our hearts should be duly sensible of our obligations to him, whether for temporal or spiritual blessings.* To whom can we ascribe it, that we were brought into the world in a Christian land, where the light of revelation shines; and not in the midst of heathen darkness? To whom do we owe it, that we were made to hear the glad tidings of salvation, which are so faintly proclaimed even by the established messengers of Christ; and that we were enabled to receive them into our hearts, when so many pour contempt upon them, as of no value? Surely, "it is God who has made you to differ!" and to him must you ascribe all the praise.

***~~You will do it in Heaven—~~***

Do you hear among the heavenly hosts one who is taking honor to himself? No! there is but one sound among all the celestial choir: all are singing praises to God and to the Lamb. And doubtless the saints in glory now see how much they are indebted to God "for events which once they deemed calamitous and adverse." Anticipate, then, that time; and now begin to acknowledge, in everything, whether painful or pleasing, the wisdom, and goodness, and power, and faithfulness, of your God! And remember, that the more you have been enabled to do for God, the more you are indebted to God, by whose grace alone you have been empowered even to think a good thought! [1 Chronicles 29:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Chron 29.13-14).

***~~Now, from this subject you may surely learn,~~***

***~~1. Submission—~~***

"The ways of God are a great deep," and "his paths past finding out." But when you reflect that neither men nor devils can exceed the commission they have received from him, surely you should say in all things, "It is the Lord: let him do what seems good to him! [1 Samuel 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 3.18)."

***~~2. Gratitude—~~***

View your mercies, which are more in number than the sands upon the sea-shore; and see if you can trace them to any source but God. And are they all the fruits of his love, and the effects of his power—and do they not call for gratitude at your hands? Methinks your every word would be thanksgiving, and your every breath be praise.

***~~3. Trust—~~***

Doubtless there will be many circumstances that will be dark, and at present inexplicable: but you must never forget, that "though clouds and darkness be round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne! [Psalm 97:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 97.2)." You have seen already, that, in numberless instances, he has brought good out of evil; and that you have had reason to bless him as much for things which have been contrary to your desires, as for things which have been gratifying to flesh and blood. Learn, then, to trust him for the future; and, under the darkest dispensations, learn to say with Job, "Though he slays me—yet will I trust in him."

***~~#1904~~***

***~~DEVOTEDNESS TO GOD RECOMMENDED~~***

**[Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1).**

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

*THE end of all true religion is to bring men to God*. From him they have fallen, and to him must they be restored. Whatever instructions have not this object in view, are of small value. The Gospel itself would be an empty speculation, if it did not teach us to hope for some practical effects. There are some who would separate principle from practice: but not so the Apostle Paul: he expected not *fruit*indeed without a *root*; nor hoped to raise an edifice, without laying a foundation: but, when his foundation was firmly laid, he deferred not to build upon it.

In all the preceding part of this epistle he has shown how sinners are to find acceptance with God; and has proved *the sovereignty of God in the disposal of his blessings*. But, having finished his argument, he does not leave us there; he goes on to show the practical effects of his principles; and *urges us, from the consideration of all God's mercies, to devote ourselves unreservedly to his service.*

That we may enter fully into the exhortation before us, we shall consider,

***~~I. The duty to which we are exhorted—~~***

There is in the words before us an evident allusion to the sacrifices that were offered under the law. The victims were brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and were there slain; and their bodies were disposed of according to the particular directions given in the law, as suited to the occasions on which the offerings were made; some being wholly burnt upon the altar, and others partly burnt, and partly eaten by those who ministered before the Lord. In reference to these, *we are required to "present our bodies (which is here put for our whole selves) a living sacrifice unto the Lord;" that is, we would, with the full concurrence of our inmost souls, devote ourselves to God,*

***~~1. To fulfill his will—~~***

We must not strain a metaphor too far. The sacrifices under the law were intended to make atonement for sin: but this is no part of our office; Christ, our great sacrifice, having, by his own body once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the world. It is only as far as the victim was surrendered entirely to God, that the metaphor is applicable to us: and in this view it is frequently used; the whole body of believers being themselves an offering to the Lord, [Romans 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.16), and "a spiritual priesthood also, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 2:5."

Hear then to what an extent we are to be given up to God. May "the very God of peace," says the Apostle, "sanctify you wholly: and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, [1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.23)." No part of us would be under the dominion of any other lord: but "as we have formerly yielded both the members of our bodies and the faculties of our souls, as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin—so we must henceforth yield them wholly unto God, as those that are alive unto God, [Romans 6:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.12-13); [Romans 6:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.19)."

Every *sin*, of whatever kind, must be mortified.

Every *grace*, however difficult and self-denying, must be brought into habitual exercise.

***~~2. To be disposed of for his glory—~~***

If God calls for our whole persons, as it were, to be consumed by fire upon his altar, we must not draw back; but must say with the Apostle, "I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die, for the Lord's sake!" So far from regarding such an event with dread, we would rather consider it as our highest honor. Thus it was that Paul viewed it: "If," says he, "I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all: so you also joy and rejoice with me, [Philippians 2:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.17-18);" for, so far am I from regarding such an event as a matter of condolence, that I look upon it as a fit subject for mutual congratulations. I mean not that such an end is to be sought for by us; but it is cheerfully to be submitted to, if God in his providence would call us to it. We should regard sufferings for Christ's sake with a holy indifference, "desiring only that Christ would be magnified in our bodies, whether by life or death! [Philippians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.20)." Of course, all minor sacrifices of property, or reputation, or liberty, are to be welcomed by us, and gloried in, as means of honoring and glorifying our incarnate God, [1 Peter 4:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.12-14). In a word, "we would neither live unto ourselves, nor die unto ourselves; but live and die unto God alone; so that, both living and dying, we may be the Lord's! [Romans 14:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.7-8)."

But let us mark more particularly the beauty and emphasis of,

***~~II. The exhortation itself—~~***

Paul presses upon us the performance of this duty,

***~~1. From the obligations we owe to God—~~***

In all the preceding part of this epistle, Paul has been unfolding the great mystery of redemption as wrought out for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, and as applied to us by the Spirit, according to the eternal counsels of the Father. By the consideration of these "mercies" he urges us to give up ourselves to God. It was for this very end that these mercies were given to us.

Why did our blessed Savior "give himself for us?" Was it not "to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous for good works?"

And to what did the Father predestine us, but to be conformed to the image of his Son?"

Let these ends then be answered in us: and let us remember, that, "having been bought with a price, we are not our own; but are bound to glorify God with our bodies and our spirits, which are his, [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20)."

***~~2. From the nature of the service itself—~~***

It is good in itself.—

"God calls us not unto impurity, but to holiness." He says, "Be holy; for I am holy." The sacrifices under the law were to be without spot or blemish: and such also are we to be: "We would present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy." True it is, that until we are renewed by the Holy Spirit we cannot be holy: but it is equally true, that, when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ aright, he will give us his Holy Spirit, by whom we shall be "created after God in righteousness and true holiness," and "be changed into Christ's image, from glory to glory."

It is also "acceptable to God."—

*Nothing in the universe is so pleasing to him as a broken and contrite heart.* As for all the legal sacrifices, he had no delight in them, any farther than they typified the Lord Jesus, and were offered with a reference to him. They were even odious to him, when presented by ungodly worshipers, who relied on them for acceptance, while they lived in willful sin, [Isaiah 1:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.11-14). A heart filled with gratitude to him, and devoted to his service, was "more than thousands of rams or ten thousands of rivers of oil! [Micah 6:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 6.6-8); and every act of obedience proceeding from faith and love, is in his sight the most acceptable tribute that can possibly be offered, [Psalm 50:9-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 50.9-14). [Hebrews 13:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.15-16)."

It is also most worthy of a rational being. *Any service short of an entire surrender of the soul to God is irrational and absurd. How can it possibly be, that the heart-searching God would approve of formal and hypocritical services!*If he had no delight in the blood of bulls and of goats, how can we suppose that he would have pleasure in lying words, and hypocritical professions? But in the surrender of the soul to him, there is something that commends itself to the judgment of every considerate mind. True, we cannot add to his glory or happiness by anything that we can do: but still we may employ for him the bodies he has created, and the souls he has redeemed: and in so doing, we render him the best service of which our nature is capable; and shall assuredly receive from him at last that token of his approbation, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

Let me now, brethren, after the Apostle's example, address you in the language of *entreaty*. We might, as standing in the place of Almighty God, *command*you: but for love sake we rather "*beseech*you." O consider what mercies you have received at God's hand, and are yet hoping to receive, through the sacrifice of his only dear Son. Think too how reasonable is the service to which we call you; how profitable to you, and how pleasing to God. We entreat you not to withhold it—we entreat you not to defer it another hour.

If indeed you can prove it unreasonable, or unprofitable, or unacceptable to God, we are content that you shall reject it as folly, and decry it as enthusiasm: but if you cannot find one substantial objection against it, or one reasonable excuse for declining it, then, we beseech you, act as befits persons already on the brink and precipice of eternity, and speedily to stand at the judgment-seat of Christ.

Give yourselves up to Him who bought you with his blood. Give yourselves to him, to be saved in his appointed way, and to glorify him in every situation which you may be called to fill. If he calls you to act for him, "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might!" And if he calls you to suffer for him, "rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer for his sake!" Thus shall the end of all God's mercies to you be duly answered, and his glory be advanced in your everlasting salvation.

***~~#1905~~***

***~~AGAINST CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD~~***

**[Romans 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.2).**

"Be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

THE *morality*of the Gospel, no less than the *doctrines*of the Gospel, far excels the boasted inventions of philosophy.

There is not one principle in the human heart, or one action of our lives, which is not depraved by sin. The whole system of man's conduct is deranged: and to rectify it in all its parts, is the scope of that revelation which God has given us. The inspired writers are not satisfied with lopping off a few branches; they strike at the root of all sin; and labor to bring us back to that state of allegiance to our Maker from which we are fallen. This is peculiarly observable in the exhortation before us, in explaining which we shall show,

***~~I. What is that conformity to the world which we are to avoid—~~***

Doubtless there is a degree of conformity to the world which is necessary, if we would not render ourselves perfectly ridiculous and absurd: but there are limits, beyond which we ought not to go. To mark out those limits we may observe that,

***~~1. We must not be conformed to the company and conduct of the world—~~***

We cannot wholly avoid worldly company; for "then we must needs go out of the world:" but we surely should not choose such for our companions; and much less form an indissoluble alliance with them, [1 Corinthians 7:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 7.39)

"Only in the Lord." If we ourselves are spiritual, it is not possible that we would enjoy the society of a carnal person, because his views, desires, and pursuits must of necessity be as opposite to ours, as darkness is to light, 2 Corinthians 6:14-17. By forming a connection with such persons, what can be expected but that we would be enticed to imitate their conduct? And though we commit no flagrant evil, we are assured that while we are walking according to the course of this world, we walk after the will of Satan and not of God, [Ephesians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.2).

***~~2. We must not be conformed to the maxims and principles of the world—~~***

According to the established maxims of the world, we would seek above all things the favor and esteem of men; we would avoid everything that may make us appear singular; and on no account testify our disapprobation of any practice that is sanctioned by general custom.

But how do such principles accord with the Holy Scriptures? In them we are told that, if we make it our grand aim to please men, we cannot be the servants of Jesus Christ, [Galatians 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.10); and, if we have attained that object, instead of congratulating ourselves upon our success, we have reason to tremble on account of the woe denounced against us, [Luke 6:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 6.26). Instead of dreading a necessary singularity, we are required to shine as lights in a dark world, [Philippians 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15), and not only to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but faithfully to reprove them, [Ephesians 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.11). We are to be armed with a steady determination to live the rest of our time, not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God, [1 Peter 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.2).

**3.** **We must not be conformed to the *spirit*and *temper*of the world—**

In what does the spirit of the world consist? It consists altogether in self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-confidence, and self-delight.

Now can anything be more abhorrent from a Christian state than such a disposition as this? We are not to be resting satisfied with present attainments, or studying how much we can please the flesh without forfeiting the favor of God; but are rather to be pressing forwards towards holiness, without at all regarding the loss or pain we may be called to undergo in the prosecution of our duty, [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24); [Acts 21:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 21.13).

How hateful a lack of such a holy resolution is, may be seen in the reply which our Lord made to Peter, who would have dissuaded him from exposing himself to the trials he had predicted: "Get behind me Satan; for you savor not the things that be of God, but those that be of men! [Matthew 16:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.23)."

Further light will be reflected on this subject by considering,

***~~II. Wherein consists that transformation of soul that is opposed to it—~~***

The Christian is "a new creature; old things are passed away; and all things are become new:" according to the proficiency he has made,

***~~1. The Christian conforms himself to other principles—~~***

The worldly man knows no higher principle than self-love: whatever be his subordinate motive of action, all may be traced up to this. But those who are partakers of the Gospel salvation, are under the influence of a far nobler principle, the love of Christ. The thought of Christ having died for them, fills their hearts with admiration and gratitude: it inspires them with an ardent desire to testify their sense of his kindness: and forms a powerful incentive to holy actions. This is attested by Paul in [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14-15); and it constitutes a most essential part of that transformation of soul, which characterizes the true Christian. Subordinate motives indeed a believer may feel; but a desire of pleasing and honoring God, and a fear of dishonoring or displeasing him, will operate with the greatest force; and that too, in opposition to carnal considerations, no less than in aid of them.

***~~2. The Christian conforms himself to other rules—~~***

The fashion of the world is the standard by which men in general regulate their conduct. But the Christian takes *the word of God for his guide*, and *the example of Christ for his pattern*. Instead of reducing the rule to his practice, he endeavors to elevate his practice to the rule. He brings everything "to the law and to the testimony:" and a plain declaration, or command, of God will be more to him than any precepts of men, or than the example of the whole universe. It is his ambition to "walk as Christ walked:" and though he knows that he can never attain the measure of his perfection—yet he strives incessantly to follow the pattern of it, so that he may be perfect even as his Father in Heaven is perfect, [Matthew 5:48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.48).

***~~3. The Christian conforms himself to other ends—~~***

A Christian would not be content with ordering his actions aright, even if he could arrive at the highest degrees of holiness, unless he had also the testimony of his conscience that he sought, not his own glory, but the glory of God. Having been "bought with a price," he is conscious that he is "not his own," and that consequently he "ought not to live unto himself, but unto him who died for him." He feels that, if in anything he consults merely his own honor or interest, he so far withholds from God the honor due unto his name; and therefore he labors to comply with that divine injunction, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God! [1 Corinthians 10:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.31)."

Thus is the Christian transformed, not in respect of his *life*only, but also in his *mind* and *affections*; and therefore can declare from experience,

***~~III. What effects this progressive renovation will produce—~~***

There are many objections raised by the world against the sanctity that has been before described; and there is much opposition to it in the heart of every unrenewed person: but the experience of it will most effectually manifest it to be,

***~~1. Good in itself—~~***

Piety is too generally considered as needless preciseness: nor need we have anything more than a separation from the world, and a transformation of soul after the Divine image, in order to become objects of reproach and contempt. Even the more sober and discreet part of mankind regard the precepts before us as "hard sayings," unsuitable to modern times, and unfit for general practice. But as our Lord said of his doctrines, that whoever would do his will, would know whether they were of God, [John 7:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.17), so we may say of his precepts.

While we are blinded by carnal desires, the commands of God will appear rigorous; and we shall labor more to explain them away, than to obey them: but if once we adopt them as the rule of our conduct, their beauty and excellence will manifestly appear; and we shall be convinced that, to obey them is to be truly happy, [Isaiah 32:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.17).

***~~2. Acceptable to God—~~***

While religion is accounted as superstition, it is no wonder that the sublimer duties of Christianity are declined as unnecessary, and that those who practice them are deemed "righteous over-much." But a renovation of soul will soon dispel this error, and show us that the more entire our devotedness to God is, the more highly shall we be raised in God's esteem. If only we make *the word of God the standard of our actions*, we cannot possibly be too earnest in improving the talents committed to us: nor can we doubt but that the tokens of God's approbation that we shall receive, shall be proportioned to the sacrifices we have made, and the exertions we have used in his service, [Matthew 25:20-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.20-23).

***~~3. Beneficial to man—~~***

It is usually supposed that a compliance with the directions in the text would weaken our faculties, and so distract our minds as to render us unfit for the common offices of life. But the very reverse of this is known to be true by all those who make the experiment. Heavenly-mindedness tends to "perfect" the man of God in all his faculties, and "thoroughly to furnish him unto all good works." Until this takes possession of the soul, a man is the sport of every temptation, and liable to be led captive by every lust. But saving grace will establish his heart; it will bring a consistency into his whole conduct; it will change him into the very image of God; and will render him "fit for the inheritance of the saints in light."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are yet conformed to the world—~~***

If you are free from gross vices, you do not apprehend your conformity to the world to be any reason for questioning the safety of your eternal state. But it is scarcely possible for God to declare in more express terms your guilt and danger, than he has done in various parts of Holy Writ, [John 17:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.16). [Galatians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.4). [1 John 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.15-16). [James 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.4). *You are therefore reduced to this alternative: You must either to come out of Sodom—or to perish in it. You must either to enter in at the strait gate and walk in the narrow way—or to fall into that destruction that awaits you at the end of the broad and frequented path.*O that God may enable you to choose the good part; and to adhere to it in spite of all the odium your singularity may bring upon you!

***~~2. Those who profess to have experienced a transformation of soul—~~***

You need to be much upon your guard lest "after you have escaped the pollutions of the world, you would be again entangled therein and overcome, 2 Peter 2:20." It is your wisdom to avoid temptation, and to guard against the snares that are laid for your feet. However circumspectly you may walk, you will find reason enough to lament your manifold defects. Lay not then any stumbling-blocks in your own way; but seek rather to experience the transforming efficacy of the Gospel: let the world be crucified unto you, and be crucified unto the world! [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14). As obedient children, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do! [1 Peter 1:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.13-15)"

***~~#1906~~***

***~~SOBRIETY OF MIND ENJOINED~~***

***~~[Romans 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.3).~~***

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith."

IN order to obtain just views of any passage of Scripture, we must pay the strictest attention to the *context*. It is by the context that the precise import of the words before us must be determined. It sometimes happens, however, that the misconstruction of a single word—by which I mean, the taking of a word in its more common acceptance, when it is used by the inspired writer in a more peculiar sense—will involve the whole passage in the greatest obscurity.

Having recommended, in the two preceding verses, the cultivation of general piety, as the proper improvement to he made of all the doctrines which he had before established; Paul descends to some particulars, which, in the state of the Roman Church at that time, he deemed of peculiar importance. There were at Rome, as well as at Corinth, many who were possessed of miraculous gifts: and some were ready to value themselves too highly on account of those gifts; forgetting that they had received them from God, and that, not for their own aggrandizement, but for the benefit of the Church to which they belonged. It would seem that these gifts were put forth by a special exercise of faith; and that persons were enabled to exercise them at those seasons, and in those degrees to which they were prompted by a special communication of faith to their souls. Compare [1 Corinthians 13:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.2). [James 5:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.15). [Matthew 17:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 17.20).

The meaning therefore of our text is, 'Pride not yourselves on any gifts which you possess; but thankfully acknowledge God as the author of them, and improve them humbly for his glory.' In this view, the words before us are precisely similar to that more enlarged statement which the Apostle gives in his First Epistle to the Corinthians verse 6, with [1 Corinthians 12:4-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.4-11); and the word 'faith,' in our text, is equivalent to that expression in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "To every one of us is grace given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, [Ephesians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.7)."

But, as miraculous gifts have long since ceased, and as the caution in my text is equally applicable to gifts of every kind, I shall take this more enlarged view of the words, and consider,

***~~I. The caution here given—~~***

***~~It is well known that gifts, of whatever kind they be, are too commonly made an occasion of pride—~~***

It is difficult for any one to possess any particular quality, whether of mind or body, and not feel a measure of self-admiration and self-preference on account of it. How great a snare to a person's own mind superior *beauty*is, is well known: and so is every other bodily endowment, in proportion as it is admired by the world at large. *Talent*, too, will puff up the possessor of it with a conceit of his importance, and cause him to arrogate to himself a more than ordinary homage from those around him. And glad would we be if the same kind of conceit were never founded on attainments of a moral or religious nature: but it is a fact, that *morality*itself is made, by almost all who possess it, a ground for self-preference, and that, too, even before God himself; insomuch, that persons who have been preserved from great and flagrant transgressions, treat almost with contempt the provisions of the Gospel, from a conceit that they need not to humble themselves like a poor tax collector, but that they may justly expect from God some peculiar favor on account of their own inherent righteousness. This was the habit of the Apostle's mind, previous to his conversion; and it is that which is at this day the greatest obstacle to the conversion of thousands.

Even spiritual gifts, too, are often, through the suggestions of our great adversary, made occasions of self-preference and self-delight; when every sentiment which the Gospel contains has a direct tendency to humble us in the dust.

***~~But modesty and sobriety should, under all circumstances, regulate our self-esteem—~~***

We are all members of one body: and, whatever gifts we possess, they are bestowed by God for the good of the whole. The kind and measure of them are determined by the Donor himself; and the person possessing them has no more right to pride himself upon them, than the eye or ear has to arrogate to itself any merit above the hand or foot. All that any man has to do, is to improve his talents for the good of the whole, precisely as the various members of our body do. The eye sees not for itself; nor does the ear hear for itself; nor does the hand or foot consult its own exclusive welfare in its motions and acts.

So we, "having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us," must employ them all for the ends for which they have been bestowed. Whether our gift be of a higher or lower order, we are not to concern ourselves about that, either in a way of self-elevation or of self-depression; but we must diligently, according to our ability, improve it, to the glory of God, and the edification of his Church and people.

***~~To every one of you, therefore, I address the caution in our text—~~***

There is no one who does not need it—there is no one who has not occasion for it—there is no one who has not, in his own conceit at least, something whereof to boast, and something which gives him an ideal superiority over others of his own rank, and age, and circumstances.

But, in all, pride is alike hateful, and alike unreasonable. For, granting that we do differ from others, "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? [1 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.7)."

But that this caution may be laid to heart, I will proceed to point out,

***~~II. The importance of the caution—~~***

This is marked with very peculiar force in the passage before us. In the preceding verses, where the Apostle had exhorted the Roman converts to piety in a general view, he had addressed them as "Brethren," and used the language of entreaty. But in the text, where he particularizes the duty of humility, he assumes the authority of an Apostle, and in a most solemn way lays the strictest injunctions upon every individual among them When he says, "Through the grace that is given unto me," he refers to his apostolic office, [Romans 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.5). And the very terms he uses are so strong, so marked, so peculiar, as scarcely to be capable of being translated into any other language, and such as were admirably calculated to make the deepest impression on their minds.

Attend, then, carefully to this injunction,

***~~1. For your own honor—~~***

Nothing renders a man more contemptible than pride and vanity: it invariably defeats its own ends, and sinks us in the estimation of all whose applause we covet. But, independent of that, the more we arrogate to ourselves, the less will people be disposed to concede to us: and, if they cannot refuse us some degree of credit on those points wherein we excel, they will be sure to search out some faults to put into the balance against it; so that, on the whole, we shall be gainers to as small an amount as possible.

On the other hand, humility and modesty give effect to all our other excellencies: and the more meekly we bear our honors, the more liberal will even the most envious of our rivals be in the bestowment of them. To "prefer others in honor before ourselves, verse 10 and [Philippians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.3)," is the way to disarm their hostility, to allay their jealousies, to conciliate their regard; so that, even if we had no better object in view than the advancement of ourselves in the estimation of man, we should seek it, not by self-conceit and self-preference, but by sobriety in self-estimation, and by modesty in our whole deportment. To this effect, the wisest of men has taught us, "It is not honorable to seek our own honor, [Proverbs 25:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 25.27)." On the contrary, "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom."

***~~2. For the honor of God—~~***

*It is an insult to God to make his gifts a pedestal for the exaltation of self.*You will remember, that he complains of his people of old, because they appropriated his grain, and his wine, and his oil," to the honoring of others who were his rivals in their esteem, [Hosea 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 2.5); [Hosea 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 2.8-9). And this is the very thing which every man does, who takes to himself the honor of those gifts which have been conferred upon him by God.

How indignant Jehovah is at such treatment, we may see in his expostulations with *Sennacherib*: "When the Lord has finished all his work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will say, "I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes. For Sennacherib says: "'By the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, because I have understanding. I removed the boundaries of nations, I plundered their treasures; like a mighty one I subdued their kings. As one reaches into a nest, so my hand reached for the wealth of the nations; as men gather abandoned eggs, so I gathered all the countries; not one flapped a wing, or opened its mouth to chirp.'"

Now, hear *Jehovah's reply*to this soliloquy: "Does the ax raise itself above him who swings it, or the saw boast against him who uses it? As if a rod were to wield him who lifts it up, or a club brandish him who is not wood! [Isaiah 10:12-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.12-15)."

"For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? [1 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.7)" Tell me, I ask you, how would you have been above the beasts, if God had not endowed you with reason? Or, how had you differed from the basest of the human race, if God had not made you to differ? Your distinctive powers afford you ground enough for gratitude; but none for self-applause.

If, like Herod, you take to yourselves the credit which your ignorant or partial friends may accord to you, like Herod you shall become monuments of God's just and fiery indignation! You may not be eaten up with worms in this life: but you shall surely bear his displeasure in the world to come. "God is a jealous God. His glory will he not give to another! [Exodus 20:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 20.5). [Isaiah 42:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.8)." "From him does every good and perfect gift proceed, [James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.17);" and to him must all the glory of it be ascribed: "He who glories, must glory only in the Lord! [Jeremiah 9:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 9.23) and [1 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.7)."

***~~3. For the benefit of your own souls—~~***

"Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him! [Proverbs 26:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 26.12)." *To what purpose will you possess gifts, if they prove only a curse unto you?*But such they really are, to all who pride themselves in them: for "God scorns the scorners; but gives grace unto the lowly, [Proverbs 3:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 3.34) with [1 Peter 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.5)." If your talents be improved for God, they will bring from him a recompense proportioned to the increase, [Matthew 25:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.20-21). Thus, both here and in the eternal world, will you be gainers, if with meekness and modesty you employ for God the blessings he has imparted to you.

***~~To every one, then, I say,~~***

***~~1. Consider your gifts as conferred on you by God—~~***

Never, for a moment, lose sight of this truth. Let Him be acknowledged, in every bounty of his providence, and in every blessing of his grace. There is no need that you would be blind to what God has done for you, or wrought in you: but, if at any time you are constrained to say, "I labored more abundantly than they all," be sure to add immediately, "Yet not I; but the grace of God that was with me! [1 Corinthians 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.10)."

***~~2. Improve them diligently, for the glory of his name—~~***

Forget yourselves altogether. Moses saw not his own glory, when it shone; though it was so resplendent, that none of his brethren could sustain the sight. O that you also might be so intent on the work assigned you, as to have your attention wholly taken from yourselves! Consider only what talent you possess, and what improvement can be made of it: and if you find that God has given you a capacity for great and arduous services, be willing to undertake them, whatever difficulties they may be attended with, and whatever self-denial may be required for the performance of them.

On the contrary, if you have but one talent, "do not wrap it up in a napkin," but improve it for your God. Let it be said of every one among you, "He has done what he could! [Mark 14:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 14.8)." Then, whether your powers be great or small, you shall be approved of your God, and hear him at last say unto you, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord!"

***~~#1907~~***

***~~CHRISTIANS ARE ALL MEMBERS OF ONE BODY~~***

***~~[Romans 12:4-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.4-8).~~***

"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."

*TO have the mind well instructed in religious principles is good: but we must never forget that the end of principle is practice; and that all the knowledge, whether of men or angels, will be of no service, if it does not operate to the renovation of our souls after the Divine image*. Hence Paul, having established with irresistible force all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, proceeds to urge upon the Church at Rome a practical improvement of them.

The first improvement of them is, to surrender up ourselves sincerely and unreservedly to God in a way of devout affection.

The next improvement is, to employ ourselves diligently for him in every office whereby we can benefit his Church and people.

To the former of these the Apostle calls us in the first verse of this chapter: and to the latter, in the words which we have just read. But to this latter we are yet further called by the relation which we bear to the Church of God, whereof we are members: and in this view it is inculcated by the Apostle in our text.

Let us then consider,

***~~I. The relation which we bear to one another—~~***

As descendants of *Adam*—we are all members of one family, of which God is the universal Parent. But as the *redeemed*of the Lord—we are brought into the nearest union with Christ, so as to be members of his body, and consequently to be "members also one of another." To elucidate more fully this important truth, we will distinctly notice,

***~~1. Our general connection—~~***

All true Christians are parts of one great whole, even as the different members of our corporeal body are. All have their appropriate sphere of action, and ought to fulfill the peculiar duties for which they are fitted. Those who have a higher office in this mystical body have no ground for pride, seeing that "they have nothing which they have not received:" their place in the body, and their faculties, having been foreordained and given by Him "who gives to each one, just as he determines, [1 Corinthians 12:4-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.4-11)."

On the other hand, those who have the lowest office have no reason for discontent: for they, in their place, are as necessary to the perfection of the whole, as any other member whatever. If they have a lower office than others, they have comparatively less responsibility: and, if they discharge their office conscientiously for the good of the whole and the glory of God, their improvement of their one talent will as certainly be acknowledged and rewarded by God, as the improvement which others may make of their ten talents.

***~~2. Our mutual dependence—~~***

No man is independent: no man is sufficient for his own welfare: no man can say to any other, I have no need of you, [1 Corinthians 12:14-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.14-23). Every one is in need of many things that must be sub-plied by others: the eye needs the foot, as much as the foot needs the eye. No member possesses anything for itself alone: the eye sees not for itself, nor does the ear hear for itself: it is for the whole that every member's faculties are given; and for the whole must they be employed. If any member be afflicted, all the rest must sympathize with it, and administer to it. If any member be particularly benefitted, all the others must be partakers of its joy.

Every one must consider the concerns of others as its own, [1 Corinthians 12:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.25-26) with [Philippians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.4); nor must any one draw back from the most self-denying offices for the good of others. Is a hand bruised? Then the feet, the eye, the tongue, the ear, must all exert their respective talents to procure relief. No one must refuse to do what in him lies for the good of the others.

The same members that now put forth their powers for the relief of one that is afflicted, may soon need from it a return of the same kind offices: and if any would say, I will give myself no trouble about this afflicted member, he will soon be made to see, that, by producing a schism in the body, he does the greatest injury to himself; it being impossible either to impart, or to withhold, the required assistance, without participating in the effects of its own conduct.

***~~3. Our individual interest—~~***

The interest of every individual member is to get its own powers invigorated and enlarged. The more penetrating the eye, or the more expert the hand—the more it will be able to advance the good of the whole.

Now every member of the Church being united unto Christ as his living Head, he would seek from Christ such gracious communications as may fit him more for the discharge of every office to which he is called. Whatever situation the member may hold in the body, its duty, and its interest also, is the same. It will not be advanced by intruding into the offices of another, but by fulfilling its own office, and getting a greater measure of activity and vigor in the discharge of them.

In truth, *each is advanced only in proportion as it contributes to the welfare of others*. The *feet*, while keeping the whole body in health, enjoy health themselves. The *hands*, while they procure sustenance for the whole body, are themselves strengthened: and in seeking the good of the whole, each advances most the glory of that blessed Savior, whose members they are, 1 Corinthians 10:24. *The Savior's glory and the welfare of the Church are so identified, that they cannot be separated from each other*,1 Corinthians 10:27 with [Ephesians 4:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.15-16).

Thus we see the truth and propriety of the comparison in our text: for as all the members of our body are united to the head, and to each other by the head; as they also receive life and nourishment from the head, and act in subserviency to it and by its direction; and finally, as they all have precisely the same interests, and have a perfect communion with each other in all that relates to their welfare; so it is with the Church of God:

all are united to Christ by faith;

all, by virtue of their union with him, are united to each other in him;

all have their separate endowments for the good of the whole;

all should look upon each other as members of their own body, as much as his hands or feet are;

and all should feel with, and act for, every other member, precisely as for himself.

O that this our relation to Christ and to each other were felt and realized among the saints of every church under Heaven!

But our view of this relation will answer no good end, unless we attend to,

***~~II. The duties arising from it—~~***

The offices mentioned in our text, were, if not wholly—yet in a measure distinct, in the apostolic age. There were two great leading offices:

the "prophesying," or preaching of the word of God. So the word frequently means; and does not necessarily include miraculous gifts. [1 Thessalonians 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.20); (teaching gifts)

and "ministering" to the temporal necessities of the Church, as the deacons did. (serving gifts)

Under these two classes all the remainder may be arranged. Connected with those who prophesied were those also who "taught" and "exhorted:" and connected with the deacon's office were those who "ruled," or superintended the temporal concerns of the Church, "giving," and dispensing its alms, and "showing mercy" to those whose afflictions called for more than ordinary tenderness and compassion. But it is obvious that these various offices, even admitting that some of them were in the first instance associated with miraculous powers, are, in substance, of perpetual use and authority in the Church of Christ: there must still be persons to administer both *spiritual*instruction and *temporal*relief; and in many instances, the offices are most advantageously united.

Without entering into any minute distinctions of this kind, we will content ourselves with saying in general, that, whatever station any of us hold in the Church of Christ, or whatever office we be called to execute, we would execute it,

***~~1. With care and diligence—~~***

Certainly "prophesying," or preaching the word of God, ought to be prosecuted with all imaginable care and diligence.

We should, as "stewards of the mysteries of God," administer to every one his portion in due season.

We should "give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," "so that we may save both ourselves and them that hear us."

We should "take heed to our ministry that we fulfill it." In like manner, if we perform any other office, visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, relieving the necessitous, we should bestow much attention on the work, to execute it most for the benefit of the Church and the glory of God.

It requires great care to act so as most to counteract the effect of prejudice, and to render our efforts most beneficial to those for whom they are used. We must take care "not to let our good be evil spoken of," and not to defeat by imprudence what, by a due attention to times and circumstances, might have been advantageously accomplished, [Matthew 7:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.6).

***~~2. With patience and perseverance—~~***

We must expect to meet with difficulties in every service which we are called to perform. But we must not be discouraged by them. We must go forward, like Paul, "not moved by any trials," "nor counting our lives dear to us," if we are called to sacrifice them in the way of duty. Whatever we may meet with, we must "not faint or be weary in well doing," but, "by patient continuance in it," approve ourselves faithful unto death.

Sometimes the difficulties will arise from one quarter, and sometimes from another. Sometimes they will assume the garb of humility, and make us pretend unfitness for the work we have undertaken. But we must guard against this delusion: it may be true enough, that we are unfit; but *that unfitness may proceed from our own sloth and lack of spirituality*; in which case it is not an excuse for us, but an aggravation of our guilt. We should rise to the occasion: "If the axe be blunt, we should put to the more strength, [Ecclesiastes 10:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 10.10);" and if we feel ourselves beginning to faint, we must entreat of God to "strengthen us with might in our inward man," and to "give us always all-sufficiency in all things."

We do not mean by this to encourage any to undertake offices for which they are altogether unfit; but to guard you against "putting your hand to the plough, and looking back again:" for "if any man draws back—my soul, says God, shall have no pleasure in him."

Possibly a lack of success may be pleaded by us as an excuse: but that is no excuse. If, like Hosea, we were to labor for seventy years with little apparent benefit, it would be no reason for abandoning the Lord's work. "To plant and water," is our part; "to give the increase," is God's. Whether we have any success or not, our duty is the same, both to Christ our Head, and to all the members of his body. It should be sufficient for us to know, that we have labored to do the will of God. If we see the fruit of our labors, well; we have reason to be thankful for it: but, if not, then we must be satisfied with the assurance, that, "though Israel be not gathered—yet shall God be glorious," yes, and our reward also shall be equally great: for "every man shall receive," not according to his success, but "according to his own labor, [1 Corinthians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.8)."

***~~3. With love and cheerfulness—~~***

We must do "nothing grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves in all things a cheerful giver." It may be that the conduct of those whose benefit we seek, may be less amiable than might be wished. In every department, whether the more public one of preachers, or the more private one of visiting the sick—we may find much perverseness and ingratitude. But our delight must be in our work: we must enter upon it readily, and perform it cheerfully; and heap coals of fire on the heads of those who render evil for good. *By kindness we may remove prejudice and conciliate regard; and by a lack of it we may defeat our own most benevolent purposes*. Study then a suavity of manner. If called to "speak the truth," speak it "in love;" and, as the Apostle says, "Let everything be done with love."

If it he said, that to practice this is difficult; true, it is so; yes, and impossible to those who know not their relation to Christ, and to one another: but to those who look to Christ as their living Head, and who receive out of his fullness, nothing is impossible. "Through Christ strengthening us we can do all things." Nor, if we regard our brother as a member of our own body, shall we find this so difficult: for who ever was backward to assuage his own pains, or relieve his own necessities?

*If, moreover, we consider the Lord Jesus Christ himself as relieved in the relief conferred on his distressed members, shall we then need any stimulus to exertion?*No! it will be our joy to perform towards him every office of love. Thus do you think then, and thus act; and know, that "not even a cup of cold water shall lose its reward."

***~~#1908~~***

***~~CHRISTIAN DUTIES TO GOD AND MAN EXPLAINED~~***

***~~[Romans 12:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.9-12).~~***

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."

THAT men who wallow in all manner of impurity, would not like to hear the precepts of religion, is easy to be accounted for: but that persons professing godliness would be averse to them, is surprising. Yet it is a fact, that many, whose lives, as far as we can see, are moral, pour contempt upon moral instructions, as having no part in evangelical religion. But these persons are directly at issue with that Apostle, whom they most exalt, and whom, in other respects, they affect to follow. Who is more diffuse, who more minute, than the Apostle Paul, in the instructions which he gives respecting Christian duties?

Let us attend to those duties which are here inculcated. If we took them singly, every one of them would furnish matter for a separate topic; but, as the Apostle has united them so closely together, we prefer taking them in their accumulated state; because, if by means of it we lose somewhat in point of distinctness, that loss will be more than supplied by the light which they will mutually reflect on each other, and the force that will be derived from a combination of them all.

The Apostle here states the Christian's duties,

***~~I. In general—~~***

We must "abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good." The strength of these expressions deserves particular attention. Had we been told to avoid what was evil, and to practice what was good, it would have been sufficient for the regulation of our outward conduct. But *religion is to engage the heart; and is to rectify, not merely our acts, but our habits, our dispositions, our taste*, [Romans 8:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.5). *Sin must be hateful to us: and not gross sin only, but all sin without exception*. *It is not merely to be dismaying to us on account of its penal consequences, but hateful on account of its odious qualities*.

As "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," so are we to be of purer hearts than to regard it with any other feeling than that of utter "abhorrence." God calls sin "that abominable thing which his soul hates:" and in precisely the same light should we view it. The circumstance of its being common, or fashionable, or profitable, or pleasant—should make no difference in our feelings towards it; nor should we be at all more reconciled to it, because the world choose to call it trivial. Every deviation from God's holy law, every opposition to his revealed will, we should consider as debasing, defiling, damning; and every temptation to depart so much as an hair's breadth from the perfect line of rectitude, "We should resist even unto blood, striving against sin, [Hebrews 12:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.4)."

In like manner, and to a like extent, we must "cleave unto that which is good," or, as the word imports, be *glued*unto it. The effect of glue is to unite things together with such a degree of tenacity, that they cannot afterwards be separated. Now in this way would our souls, when once brought into contact with good, adhere to it, and form with it an indissoluble union. Whether it be good principles or good practice that we are called to embrace, we must never afterwards let them go: "We must buy the truth and sell it not." Whatever force is used to separate us from the thing which is really good, we must be firm and unmoved. If, like the Hebrew Youths, we are menaced with a fiery furnace, we must be steadfast to our purpose, "not counting our lives dear to us, so that we may but fulfill the will of God, and finish our course with joy! [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24)."

To every one who would draw us from the path of duty, we must make this reply, "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, you judge; for we cannot but do what we know to be his will, [Acts 4:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.19-20)."

The Apostle, having thus briefly declared our duty in general terms, proceeds to speak of it,

***~~II. In a more specific manner—~~***

Of those which he particularizes we shall be called to notice three; namely, the duties,

***~~1. Of kindness—~~***

Here again the language is such as God alone could inspire. Such a sentiment as is here expressed, we are well persuaded, never entered into the mind of an uninspired man: nor do we conceive that it can be expressed with equal brevity and elegance in any other language under Heaven.

Parents instinctively feel a most tender affection for their offspring. Even the brute creation are penetrated with it perhaps as strongly as the human kind. It arises out of the relation in which they stand to the object of their regards. Now such an attachment we should feel towards all the members of Christ's mystical body: yes, we should not merely feel it, as from instinct, but cultivate it from principle.

But, inasmuch as this may be only, as it were, an physical feeling, we must have it tempered and refined "with brotherly love." In brotherly love there is a union proceeding from a correspondence of mind, and a reciprocation of good offices and kind returns: and this feeling united with the former, knits together the hearts of men in a way that cannot be expressed, nor indeed conceived by any who are not themselves the subjects of it. It exists not in nature—it is produced only by grace: but wherever it does exist, it raises the object so high in our estimation, that we seem to ourselves low in comparison with him; and, consequently, it makes us "prefer him in honor before ourselves."

This sentiment is always mutual—*each party casts a veil over the defects of the other, and views only his excellencies; while, on the other hand, he is slow to admire his own virtues, and intent rather on humbling himself for his faults.*This disposition, I say, believers cultivate towards all who are of the household of faith; and all of them thus meeting together upon the same ground, "each esteems the other better than himself, [Philippians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.3)."

Now then we call upon you, brethren, to show forth this fruit of the grace you have received. This is the kind of love, and this is the measure, which you are to manifest towards all the children of God: and in proportion only as you manifest it, have you any evidence that you belong to Christ, [John 13:34-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 13.34-35) and [1 John 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.14). "If you love him who begat, you cannot but love those who are begotten of him."

***~~2. Of diligence—~~***

*Religion is not a sentimental feeling only, but a practical and influential power.*It produces energy and activity in every soul in which it resides. It regards *sloth*as one of its most destructive adversaries; and maintains against it an incessant warfare. Believer, hear your duty in relation to this important matter: you must "not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Whatever be the office which you have to perform, it is assigned you by the Lord Jesus Christ, whose servant you are: and you must address yourself to it with an energy of mind, putting forth all your vigor, to execute it as speedily and as completely as you can. You must shake off sloth and listlessness; ever remembering, that "he who is slothful in his work is brother to him who is a great waster."

It is wisely ordained of God that "the idle soul shall suffer hunger, but that the diligent hand shall make rich." "Whatever therefore your hand finds to do—do it with all your might." The consideration that in all that you are called to do, you serve the Lord Christ, should be a constant stimulus to your mind. This is particularly and strongly set forth by the Apostle in relation to servants, [Colossians 3:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.22-24); and it applies equally to every person under Heaven.

O, contemplate that passage in reference to yourselves, and to all the duties of your place and station: and, whether you have received more or less to trade with, labor to improve it to the utmost before the day of reckoning shall arrive. But bear in mind, that your diligence will then only be regarded as a service done to Christ, when you act from an immediate regard to his authority, and with a special view to his glory.

***~~3. Of constancy—~~***

In your endeavors to serve the Lord, you will doubtless have to encounter many difficulties. There will be "fightings without, and fears within." But whatever tribulation you may be called to suffer for the Lord's sake, you must look to the end for a sure and ample recompense of all your labors, and patiently endure whatever God may see fit to lay upon you, calling upon him continually for mercy, and for grace to help you in the time of need.

This is the direction given you in our text; you are to be "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer." You are "never to faint or be weary in well-doing;" but to take the promises of God as your support; and in humble confidence that not one jot or tittle of them shall ever fail; you are to "hold fast the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end." The gardener plows in hope and sows in hope, and waits patiently for the harvest—and thus must you do. There may be many a storm, and many a blighting wind; but you must commit your every care to God, and expect from him a full, a rich, a sure reward: for his unchanging promise is, that "in due season you shall reap, if you faint not."

At times you will find prayer a most arduous task—*there is in the heart of man a continual proneness to draw back from God, and to restrain prayer before him*. But you must not yield to this sad propensity: you must "continue instant in prayer;" knowing that, "if you ask not, you cannot have;" but if you persevere in earnest and importunate supplications, you must, you cannot but, prevail; yes, you shall be "more than conqueror over all" that can oppose your spiritual progress.

***~~See then from hence what true religion is:~~***

***~~1. How extensive in its offices!~~***

It comprehends the whole circle of good and evil. It prescribes a line of conduct for us in everything that relates either to God or man. It occupies, and calls forth into action, every faculty of the soul. Its energies are universal, and without intermission. As *reason*sits at the helm, and directs the course of the natural man, being so incorporated with him, as it were, as to regulate him unsolicited and unperceived—so does religion preside in the soul of the spiritual man, and directs him in whatever relates either to time or eternity. There is nothing, either great or small, on which it does not exert an influence. O brethren, seek to have religion enthroned in your hearts, and performing in your minds the same offices as reason executes in the minds of unconverted men. *Let it be a living principle within you, regulating your every action, word, and thought*.

***~~2. How lovely in its operations!~~***

See religion putting Christ's yoke upon rebellious man, and "bringing his every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, [2 Corinthians 10:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.5)."

See it giving to man the very mind of Christ; making him love what Christ loves, and hate what Christ hates, and walking in all things as Christ walked.

See it uniting in the bonds of tenderest love the whole family of Christ.

See it stirring up every member of that family to activity in all the duties of his place and station, that none shall have any fault to find against him, or any negligence to lay to his charge.

Lastly, see it bringing him into a state of habitual fellowship with his God, and a blessed foretaste of the glory that shall be revealed.

Is not this good? Is not this lovely? Yes, inexpressibly lovely is it: and if men "see not a beauty and a loveliness in it for which it is to be desired," it is because "they are blinded by the god of this world, [2 Corinthians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.4)."

O beloved, seek to recommend the Gospel, by thus imbibing its spirit, and exhibiting its efficacy in your lives. *Let not your hatred of sin, or your love of holiness, be questioned for one moment: but press forward in the habitual exercise of humble love, of unremitting diligence, and of unshaken constancy*; "that men, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in Heaven."

***~~#1909~~***

***~~SYMPATHY RECOMMENDED~~***

***~~[Romans 12:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.15).~~***

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."

AS creatures, we have many duties to perform towards our Creator: and, as members of one universal family, we have duties also towards each other. We all participate in one common lot. The present state is subject to great varieties of good and evil; and all in their own experience occasional alternations of joy and sorrow, of elevation and depression.

In these successive changes, we naturally look for some to sympathize with us. We expect, that those who are partakers of humanity, would feel some interest in our affairs: and, if we find no one that has a heart in unison with our own, we seem to ourselves as outcasts from the human race.

Now the dispositions which we expect to find exercised towards us, we are called to exercise towards others. The joys and sorrows of others would, as it were by sympathy, be made our own: we would "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

That this grace may be more cultivated among us, we will endeavor to show,

***~~I. The nature and extent of Christian sympathy—~~***

Sympathy is that feeling of the mind whereby we enter into the concerns of others as if they were our own. Not that we are to interfere with others as "busy-bodies in other men's matters;" but we should have such a friendly disposition towards them, as to participate in both in their joys and sorrows, and to have corresponding emotions excited by them in our own minds. This is a duty incumbent on every child of man: "Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others, [1 Corinthians 10:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.24);" And again, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others, [Philippians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.4). See also [Hebrews 13:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.3)."

Now,

***~~1. There is scope for the exercise of sympathy in reference to men's TEMPORAL concerns—~~***

Are any afflicted in mind, or body, or estate? We should be ready to act towards them as Job's friends did under his afflictions: "they met by appointment, to mourn with him and to comfort him; and they were so overwhelmed with his sorrows, that they were incapacitated for any active exertions in his behalf for the space of seven days and seven nights, [Job 2:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 2.11-13)." This silence of theirs has been misconstrued by many, as if the time so spent had been occupied in uncharitable reflections, to which they dared not give vent. But those who have been conversant with scenes of woe, and have been suitably impressed by them, will be at no loss to account for the effect produced: lighter sorrows would soon have called forth observations of some kind, either from the sufferer or his friends: but such overwhelming griefs as his, astonished, stupefied, and silenced all: and in proportion as our sympathy is deep, will be the reverential awe with which we shall approach the sufferer, and the tender caution with which we shall address him.

It may be said, that such feelings well befit them, as friends of the afflicted saint; but that it is unreasonable to look for any such emotions towards a stranger, and still more towards an enemy. To this we answer, that, though friendship will of course heighten our feelings, and more exquisite sensations will be excited in us by the sight of a suffering saint, who is as a member of Christ's body, [1 Corinthians 12:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.25-26), than would be called forth towards one who stood in no such relation to Christ—yet our compassion would be deep and tender towards all.

The good Samaritan has shown us how we should act towards any one, even though he would be of a nation that is hostile to us, [Luke 10:30-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 10.30-37); and David has shown us how we would conduct ourselves towards him, even though he were our bitterest enemy: "When they were sick," says he, "my clothing was sackcloth; and I humbled my soul with fasting. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother. I bowed down heavily, as one that mourns for his mother, [Psalm 35:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 35.13-14)."

In like manner we would be prepared to rejoice with those who are brought into circumstances of a more pleasing nature. We see an example of this in the friends of Elizabeth. It was reckoned a great affliction to a woman to be barren; and such had Elizabeth been, until she was arrived at an age when she had no reasonable expectation of ever seeing her shame removed. But it pleased God in his mercy to visit her, and to give her a son in her old age; and when she had birthed the child, her friends and relations came from every quarter to congratulate her on the happy event, [Luke 1:57-58](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.57-58).

This was a fruit and evidence of their love: and wherever love is, it will be sure to operate in this manner: we shall not be indifferent to the happiness of others, but shall find our own augmented by every accession of happiness to our neighbor: and, if "a man who has recovered his straying sheep," or "a woman who has found her lost piece of money," calls upon us for our congratulations, [Luke 15:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.4-6); [Luke 15:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.8-9), we shall feel real delight in the exercise and expression of our most benevolent affections.

Such is the disposition which we should cultivate towards all the sons and daughters of affliction; for in the exercise of it we perform a most important duty towards them, as members of one common family; and at the same time we resemble our common Parent, of whom it is said, that "his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel," and, that "he delights also in the prosperity of his servants."

***~~2. But the most urgent calls for sympathy are in reference to men's SPIRITUAL concerns—~~***

The joys or sorrows which arise from the things of time and sense are comparatively of little consequence: but those that are connected with the eternal world are of infinite importance.

Are any of our fellow-creatures mourning by reason of their sins, which have grown up unto Heaven, and are a load upon their conscience too heavy for them to bear? How should we pant after an opportunity to make known to them the glad tidings of salvation through a crucified Redeemer; so that we may "give unto them the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness!"

Are any in danger of being "turned away from their steadfastness?" How should we burn with holy impatience to ascertain their state, and to "establish their hearts, [1 Thessalonians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 3.5)."

In a word, we should so feel with all the members of Christ's mystical body, as to be able to say with the Apostle, "Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? [2 Corinthians 11:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.29)."

Nor would our compassion be withheld from those who are insensible of their guilt and danger: on the contrary, they on this very account require it so much the more. Like Paul, we should "have continual heaviness and sorrow in our hearts for our brethren's sake, [Romans 9:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.2);" and, like our blessed Lord, we should weep over them, though we knew that they were just ready to imbrue their hands in our blood, [Luke 19:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.41).

If, on the other hand, any return to their Father's house, how should we rejoice over them, and join in the pious festivities of prayer and praise, [Luke 15:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.24); [Luke 15:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.32). If afterwards they advance in the divine life, our joy and exultation should be proportionably increased, [1 Thessalonians 3:6-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 3.6-10). The angels in Heaven are not indifferent spectators of such events, [Luke 15:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.7); [Luke 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.10); and should we? No! next to the salvation of our own souls, we should pant after, and delight in, the spiritual welfare of all around us.

Such is the nature, and such the extent, of Christian sympathy: the value of which, however, will be better seen, if we consider,

***~~II. The benefits resulting from it—~~***

It is of incalculable use,

***~~1. To him by whom it is exercised—~~***

*The heart of man by nature is selfish, but grace expands it*; and, by interesting it in the behalf of others, gives scope for the exercise of better feelings. *The man whose cares and pleasures center all in self, has his happiness extremely contracted, at the same time that it is also of a low and sordid character*. But the man who has learned to sympathize with others, derives pleasure from all around him, and makes all the happiness he beholds his own.

The smiles of universal nature, the shining of the sun, the verdure of the fields, the cheerful aspect of the different tribes and orders of the animal creation—all diffuse a peace and serenity through his mind, and draw forth into exercise the principles of benevolence within him.

The comforts also with which the various classes of his fellow-creatures are favored, inspire him with a sense of gratitude to the great Source of all.

The accounts which from time to time he hears of the wider spread of religion, and the consequent augmentation of happiness in the world, fill him with joy, and stir him up to the delightful employment of prayer and praise. Thus his sources of happiness are greatly multiplied, while the sensations of it are purified and refined.

If it is said, that by sympathy with the afflicted his pains are also multiplied; we answer, that in appearance they are so, but that in reality they are not. True it is, that many things which others behold without emotion, create within him a sensation of grief: but it must be remembered, that the grief of sympathy does not corrode, like other grief: on the contrary, it induces what, if it did not sound too paradoxical, we would call, a *pleasurable pain*.

The sigh of pity and the tear of love may, in this respect, be compared with the sighs and tears of penitential sorrow: they diffuse a sweetness over the mind, as being evidences of the operation of a gracious principle, which God approves: while at the same time they reconcile a man to all his own personal trials, which always appear the lighter, in proportion as he is conversant with the trials of those around him.

Thus the very exercise of sympathy has its own reward.

***~~2. To those towards whom it is exercised—~~***

The sympathy of a friend does not at all affect the causes of sorrow; but it most materially affects its pressure upon the mind. It is as if a person took hold of a load which almost crushed us with its weight, and bore a part of it together with us. The very opening of our griefs is itself somewhat of a relief to a burdened soul: and the beholding of another, under the influence of love, participating with us our sorrows, and making them his own, wonderfully assuages the pain we feel. The sense we have of his kindness operates as a balm to heal our wounds. By the love we experience, our thoughts are diverted from the troubles we endure; and are turned for a season into the more pleasing channel of reciprocal affection, and of gratitude to a gracious God. Thus, by means of sympathy, the sorrows of the afflicted are greatly lightened.

On the other hand, the joys of any person are by the same means greatly increased. By every fresh congratulation, they are revived in the mind from time to time: the fire, which, for lack of such stirrings, would have languished, is resuscitated; and oil is poured, as it were, upon the flame.

But these things are rather matters of *experience*than of abstract discussion: to be known and understood, they must be felt.

***~~3. To the Church at large—~~***

Where these amiable feelings are displayed in full force and activity, the cause of Christ is greatly promoted. The beauty and excellence of Christianity is seen. Men cannot, or will not, judge of it from its principles; but they cannot help judging of it from the effects which they behold. The persons who beheld our blessed Lord at the tomb of *Lazarus*, were struck with his sympathy in this particular view: "When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in his spirit, and was troubled: and, on his coming to the grave, Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold, how he loved him! [John 11:33-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.33-36)."

Just so, when persons behold Christians participating with others freely in their joys and sorrows, they are constrained to say, Behold how these Christians love one another; yes, and not one another only, but all around them, strangers and enemies, as well as friends! The prevalence of such dispositions goes further to silence gainsayers, and to win souls, than all the most labored arguments of learned theories: *religion speaks to them here in a language which they cannot but understand and feel*.

***~~Here, in conclusion, we are constrained to observe,~~***

***~~1. How poor and inefficacious is the religion of the world!~~***

The world's religion consists almost entirely of forms, of forms without either life or power. Certainly merely notional Christianity, even as professed by the world, has advanced the cause of general benevolence: but that benevolence extends not to the concerns of the soul. A merely notional Christian can see thousands perishing in their sins, and not stretch out a hand to their relief, nor utter one sigh on their account: and, as for all experimental religion, whether of joy or sorrow, he derides it as the fruit of a weak or distempered imagination.

The character of such persons may be seen in the elder brother in the parable, who, when solicited to join in the festivities occasioned by his brother's return, vented his spleen in unkind reflections, both on the prodigal who had returned, and on his father who had received him to his arms. The most benevolent of worldly men has not a string in his heart that is in unison with one who is cast down with *penitential sorrow*, or that is exalted with the *joys of faith*. No! his principles rise not so high: his convictions are only intellectual; and they can never be productive of what is spiritual. Even in their moral effects they operate to but a small extent: but, in respect of *spiritual sympathy*, they bear no fruit at all.

O, brethren, see from hence how poor and defective that religion is which generally passes under the name of Christianity. It is Christianity without Christ, in its principles. It is Christianity without love, in its effects. It boasts itself to have proceeded from the Sun of Righteousness; but it has neither the light nor heat that proceed from his glorious rays: it is a *shadow*without a substance; a *name*without a reality. If it proceeded really from Christ, it would make us to resemble him in our spirit and our conduct.

***~~2. How lovely and operative is the religion of Christ!~~***

Sympathy is of the very essence of Christ's religion: "Bear one another's burdens," says the Apostle, "and so fulfill the law of Christ, [Galatians 6:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.2)." Yes, he has taught us this both by precept and example: he bids us to "love one another, as he has loved us, [John 15:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.12)." And how has he loved us? He pitied us in our fallen state, and came down from the bosom of his Father to seek and save us. And during the whole of his abode upon earth, but more especially in his last hours, "he bore our infirmities, and carried our sorrows! [Isaiah 53:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.4). [Matthew 8:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 8.17)."

And at this present moment we are authorized to say, that "he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, [Hebrews 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.15)," and that there is neither a benefit nor an injury that we receive, but he feels it as done immediately to himself, [Matthew 25:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.4). [Acts 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.4). [Zechariah 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 2.8).

Such is the effect which the Gospel produces upon all who receive it in spirit and in truth. *Let a sense of Christ's love to us be duly impressed on our hearts; and it will immediately excite in us a love to all mankind, though in a more especial manner to the household of faith*.

See, with your own eyes, brethren, what is it that has given birth to Bible Societies, and Mission Societies, and to numberless other institutions that respect the welfare of men's souls? It is the Gospel—the Gospel, faithfully administered, and affectionately received. Such ever was, and ever will be, the fruit of faith; for "faith works by love." Seek then to become possessed of a true and living faith: and know, that the more entirely you live by faith in the Son of God, as having loved you, and given himself for you—the more you will drink into his spirit, and be transformed into his blessed image. Nor will you fix any other bounds to your sympathies, than he has affixed to his.

***~~#1910~~***

***~~OVERCOMING EVIL WITH GOOD~~***

***~~[Romans 12:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.21).~~***

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

THE writings of the Old Testament exhibit a system of morals incomparably superior to any that was ever promulgated by the wisest philosophers. In extent it equals the New Testament. It is quite a mistake to say that our Lord inculcated sublimer morals than ever had been revealed before: he only removed the false glosses by which the commands of God had been obscured, and enforced the observance of those commands by motives of a higher nature.

Still however it must be confessed, that the New Testament brings the sublimer precepts more clearly into view, and expatiates upon them in a more authoritative and convincing manner. This appears in the injunction before us, which is as concise, as comprehensive, as forcible, as words could express it.

In discoursing upon this precept we shall endeavor to mark,

***~~I. Its import—~~***

The "evil" here spoken of does not relate to sin, but to suffering; and comprehends all those injuries, whether real or imaginary, which we are called to endure. In reference to this, two questions arise:

***~~1. When may we be said to be overcome by it?~~***

We are not overcome by evil merely because we are crushed by it; for Paul, when "pressed out of measure by his troubles in Asia," "thanks God for enabling him always to triumph in Christ, [2 Corinthians 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.8); [2 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.14);" and declares that while "we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter, we may be more than conquerors, [Romans 8:36-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.36-37)." But we are then vanquished by it, when we are diverted by it from the path of duty.

Suppose on account of the trial being exceeding heavy, we are tempted to doubt whether it can, or will, be overruled for our good: then we are vanquished; because we question the truth of God, who has said, that "all things would work together for his people's good:" our faith has failed, and we are overcome.

Suppose the injury done to us has irritated and inflamed our minds, so that we give way to anger and impatience: then also we are overcome; because we ought to "possess out souls in patience, [Luke 21:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 21.19)," and to "let patience have its perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing, [James 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.4)."

Suppose, though no particular vehemence shows itself at the time, we yet are induced to harbor secret resentment in our minds against our enemy: then we are overcome; because *we should love our enemies, [Luke 6:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 6.35), and be more concerned for the evil which they do to their own souls, than for anything which they do, or can do, to us.*

Suppose, either through the fear of evil, or through actual distress, we are induced to relax our zeal in the Lord's service, or to make any sinful concessions, then also we are vanquished: for we submit to sin rather than to suffering; we have failed in our integrity; we are overcome. We should value a good conscience more than life itself, [John 12:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.25); and when we make shipwreck of it, we show that our enemy has gained the victory over us.

If we hold fast our faith, our patience, our love, our integrity, then we are conquerors, even though we die in the conflict: but if in any of these respects we fail, then we are overcome, even though we crush our adversary, and defeat his more immediate projects.

***~~2. How are we to overcome it—~~***

We gain a victory over it in part, when we do not allow it to injure our souls. But we must not be contented with such a negative triumph; we would endeavor to overcome the hostility of our enemy; and this can be effected only by returns of good. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous, [Matthew 5:43-45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.43-45)." "If he is hungry, we must feed him; if he is thirsty, we must give him drink;" with all the tenderness and compassion that we would to a helpless infant, 'Feed him as an infant.' [Romans 12:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.20). We shall in this way "heap coals of fire upon his head," to melt him into love, [Romans 12:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.20).

It is true, many are so obdurate, that no returns of good can ever dissolve their hearts: yet the effect of such persevering kindness is inconceivably great, and will sometimes extort confessions of our innocence, even from the most infuriated enemies. We can scarcely find in the annals of the world a more cruel or inveterate enemy than *Saul*; yet David's repeated exercises of forbearance and kindness towards him constrained him to confess his own wickedness, and the distinguished excellence of the person whom he persecuted, 1 Samuel 24:10-11; [1 Samuel 24:16-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 24.16-18); [1 Samuel 26:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 26.21). Such a victory as that is greater than the most successful warrior could ever boast: and we should aim at similar conquests: we should strive, not to crush our enemy by force, but to overcome his enmity by love.

We cannot dismiss such an important precept as this without endeavoring more distinctly to set before you,

***~~II. Its excellence—~~***

The moment that the precept is presented to the mind we cannot fail of admiring its simplicity, and, at the same time, its depth. But that our views of it may be more distinct, we observe,

***~~1. It counteracts all our evil propensities—~~***

When we are injured or insulted, what a tumult of passion is apt to arise in our bosom; and how ready are we to render evil for evil! If we forbear avenging ourselves at the time either by word or deed, we still feel a disposition to retaliate, and are ready to wreak our vengeance upon our adversary by private complaints of his conduct, though from prudence or timidity we do not maintain a contest with him to his face.

Long and bitter are the resentments of many, even while they appear to be reconciled, and perhaps delude themselves with the confidence that they have forgiven their enemy. But *this precept lays the axe to the root of all secret animosity as well as open hostility. It goes not to the act merely, but to the principle*; it requires that all the enmity that is in our hearts should be slain; and that love alone would reign there. Were this once effected, there is not an evil in the soul which would not have received its death wound: for "love is the fulfilling of the law."

***~~2. It assimilates us to Jesus Christ—~~***

To what an extent has our blessed Lord carried this principle! When we were his enemies, yes, when the whole universe was up in arms against him, he did not execute upon us the vengeance we deserved, but came down from Heaven to convert and save us! And by what means did he propose to save us? Was it by a mere act of power? No! it was by bearing our sins, and dying in our stead. What astonishing love was this!

But further, when he had come into the world, and his people with one voice had put him to death, still, so far from bearing resentment against them in his heart, he, after he had risen from the dead, commanded that his Gospel would he preached first of all in that city where he had been crucified, and that the offers of salvation would be first made to the very people who had imbrued their hands in his blood! [Luke 24:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.47).

And how glorious were the triumphs of his love! By the very first sermon that was preached in his name, three thousand of his enemies were convinced of their wickedness, and brought to repentance. Similar to this was the mercy he given to the persecuting, blaspheming Saul: he appeared to him in the midst of his mad career, and, by this transcendent act of love, changed a bitter and cruel enemy into a holy and active Apostle.

Thus he overcame evil with good; and in proportion as we imitate his conduct we shall be transformed into his likeness.

***~~3. It would make a very Heaven upon earth—~~***

What a very Hell is this world, where the passions are let loose, and men are left to perpetrate all that is in their hearts! Even under the restraint of wholesome laws there are so many quarrels generated, and so many resentments harbored, that there is scarcely a society or a family in which real harmony prevails.

But if this precept were universally obeyed, how different a world would this appear? From the combating of evil with love, there would soon be no evil to contend with: for certainly those who rendered nothing but good unto their enemies, would never render evil to their friends. Or if any unintentional evil were done, the very remembrance of it would be quickly lost in returns of love. O blessed state! When shall the happy time arrive, when "the wolf and the lamb shall thus dwell together, and the child shall have no ill to fear when playing on the hole of the asp, or of the cockatrice den?" Surely this may well be called, "The reign of Christ upon earth;" for it will be the brightest image of Heaven, or rather Heaven itself come down on earth!

***~~As a further improvement of this precept, we shall.~~***

***~~1. Guard it—~~***

We are not to imagine that this precept requires us to renounce our *civil*rights; for Paul, on proper occasions, asserted his rights as a Roman citizen, [Acts 16:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.37); [Acts 22:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 22.25); [Acts 25:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 25.10-11); nor does an obedience to it preclude the exercise of legitimate authority; for the magistrate would have been invested with power to no purpose, if he were not allowed to exercise it in the support of virtue and the punishment of vice, [Romans 13:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.4).*Parents, masters, ministers, must exercise the authority committed to them.*

***~~It is the vindictive disposition that is forbidden, and the unwearied exercise of love that is inculcated.~~***

***~~2. Enforce it—~~***

Many arguments will arise in our corrupt minds against the discharge of this sublime and self-denying duty. Some will reason that the persons who have abused us do not *deserve*kind treatment; and the exercise of continued kindness to them will only encourage them to proceed in their injurious conduct; whereas a proper display of spirit on our part will tend to intimidate and restrain them.

This may appear to be reasoning for justice; but it is directly contrary to God's command. We are not to consider what others deserve to suffer, but what we are required to do. *As to the use that others will make of our kindness, that is no concern of ours; we have only to obey God, and leave all outcomes to him.* To yield, to turn the left cheek to him who smites us on the right, and to return good for evil, may sound to us as "hard sayings;" but they are the path of duty, of honor, and of happiness.

***~~3. Give directions for the performance of it—~~***

*Get a deep sense of your own vileness.* When you are thoroughly sensible of the great sum which you owe to your Heavenly Master, you will not very readily take your fellow servant by the throat for the few pennies that he may owe to you.

*Contemplate frequently the mercy which Christ has given, and is daily giving, to you.*How will this put you to shame, when you feel the risings of anger or revenge against even your bitterest enemy! Surely you will fall upon your knees before God, and pray for grace to "forgive others even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you:" and that not thrice, or "seven times, but seventy times seven."

*Be much in prayer to God for the assistance of his Holy Spirit.* Without his aid you can do nothing: but there is nothing so great, which you shall not be able to do through Christ strengthening you, [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13).

***~~#1911~~***

***~~DUTY TO CIVIL GOVERNORS~~***

**[Romans 13:1-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.1-7).**

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor."

THE office of ministers is to preach the Gospel of Christ. But while they preach the doctrines of the Gospel, they must not overlook its duties; nor, in stating its duties, must they pass by those which pertain to us as members of a civil community, any more than those which concern us in any other station or relation of life. On the contrary, Paul gave to Titus, and in him to all other ministers, this express injunction: "Put them (the professors of Christianity) in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates, [Titus 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.1).

In this also Paul himself has set us an example; and that too with a fullness and minuteness far beyond what he had resorted to on any other branch of Christian morals. There was perhaps a reason for his doing this in his Epistle to the Romans, rather than in any other of his epistles. Rome was the seat of the imperial government; and there, for a very long period, the Jews had been in bad repute, as a rebellious people. Nor was this without reason: for the Jews had an idea that they ought not to submit to any other governor than one raised up from among their own brethren: and from hence they were frequently led to resist the civil magistrates; especially at those seasons when the revenue was collected, [Acts 5:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.37) and [Luke 13:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.1).

In these sentiments the Christians also were supposed to participate. It was desirable therefore that the Apostle would put them on their guard; because, if they would indeed be found enemies to the government under which they lived, they would furnish the heathen with an unanswerable argument against them, and would, in fact, arm all the civil powers for their destruction. On the other hand, if the Christians at Rome would show themselves peaceable and obedient subjects, they would conciliate the regard of their governors, and recommend a similar conduct in all other places.

In the passage before us, the Apostle shows us,

***~~I. In what light civil magistrates would be viewed—~~***

By whatever name the ruling powers are designated among men, they are to be regarded as,

***~~1. Governors for God—~~***

*God is the Governor of all the earth: and, as all power is derived from him, so all power is delegated by him; the possessor of it being his representative and viceregent.* Even in Heaven he has established different ranks and orders among the angels, [Ephesians 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.21). Jude, verse 9; and on earth also he has seen fit that a similar order would be maintained. Nay, when there were yet but two people upon the earth, he ordained that one would rule the other, [Genesis 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.16). From that time the parents were the natural governors of their children: and, as successive families were formed, the rising generations continued under the same head, as branches from the same root. When these families became a tribe, the original parent was still the head of that tribe. Thus as mankind were multiplied upon the face of the earth, the different nations, too numerous and widely spread to be governed by one man, had their respective governors, some in one way, and some in another.

Whatever shape the different governments assumed, monarchical, aristocratical, or democratical, still the power was God's, in whoever it was vested: and, as his representatives, they possessed and exercised a portion of his authority: "There is no power, but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God:" "the pillars of the earth are the Lord's; and he has set the world upon them, [1 Samuel 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.8)."

***~~2. Benefactors from God—~~***

The office of **magistrates is to do all in their power for the suppression of iniquity, and for the promotion of universal happiness**. It is for these ends alone that power is put into their hands. They are to be "a terror to the workers of iniquity," and "not to bear the sword in vain:" but to all others they are "ministers for good," protecting them in the peaceful enjoyment of every earthly blessing. Would we conceive aright of the benefits we derive from our government, let us imagine such a state of things existing among us as occasionally existed in the land of Israel, when "there was no king in Israel, and every one did what was right in his own eyes, [Judges 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 17.6); [Judges 21:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 21.25);" what enormities would be committed in every quarter of the land!

If for the space of three days only all the functions of government were suspended, and all were left at liberty to perpetrate whatever came into their hearts, we would soon see how much we have been *indebted to the legislature for enacting wholesome laws, and to the magistracy for enforcing them*. To the government we owe it, that our persons are safe from injury, and our property from the depredation of lawless violence: and while "we sit, each under his own vine and fig-tree, none making us afraid," we would feel our obligations to those, who, by God's ordinance, have been, and continue day by day to be, the means and instruments of all our comfort. What Tertullus said in a way of flattery to Felix, we may, with the strictest truth, say respecting our governors, that "by them we enjoy great quietness, and by their providence very worthy deeds are done to our whole nation, [Acts 24:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 24.2)."

From this view of their character, we are prepared to hear,

***~~II. What regard would be paid to them—~~***

The relation of ruler and subject necessarily brings with it corresponding duties. While they are caring and laboring for us, it is our duty,

***~~1. To honor their persons—~~***

God says, respecting himself, "If I am a Father, where is my honor? if I am a master, where is my fear?" A portion of the same regard is due to magistrates also, as his representatives and viceregents upon earth. Hence, in reference to them, it is said in our text, "Render unto all their dues; fear, to whom fear is due; and honor to whom honor." *To speak harshly or contemptuously of them is highly unfitting*. To "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities," are among the leading features of many who are a scandal to the Christian name, Jude, verse 8.

We should consider:

that they are necessitated to see with other eyes, and to hear with other ears, than their own:

that, for what they do they may have many reasons, which we are not acquainted with:

that, if in anything they err, it may be with the best intentions.

In a word, we would form the most favorable judgment of all that they do, and give them credit for their motives, where we cannot altogether approve their actions. *If we cannot praise them, we would at least abstain from uttering against them any complaints and murmurs, or from speaking of them in disrespectful terms*. What shame did Paul take to himself for uttering a reproachful word against his unjust and persecuting judge! He confesses that in so doing he had violated an express command, which says, "You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people, [Acts 23:2-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 23.2-5)."

We should guard against an acrimonious sentiment arising in our hearts, [Ecclesiastes 10:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 10.20); and even when we are constrained to disapprove their conduct, instead of reviling them, we should cast a veil over their faults, as a duteous child would do over the faults of his parent.

***~~2. To submit to their authority—~~***

If a ruler enjoins anything that is manifestly contrary to an express command of God, or forbids anything which God has clearly enjoined, we are then to "obey God rather than man." The Hebrew Youths did right in refusing to fall down before the golden idol; as did Daniel also in continuing to offer supplications before his God. The commands of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, though the greatest potentates on earth, were of no weight against the paramount authority of God. But *where the laws that are enacted by human authority are not contrary to the revealed will of God, they must be obeyed*; and that too, whether the authority that enforces them be subordinate or supreme: for thus says the Apostle Peter; "Submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well: for so is the will of God, [1 Peter 2:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.13-15)."

This allegiance is due from all persons, whatever he their rank, or age, or occupation; "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers:" and, if any take upon themselves to "resist the power, they shall receive to themselves damnation;" they shall be condemned before an earthly tribunal for violating the established laws; and they shall be yet further visited with God's indignation in another world, for having set at nothing "his ordinances," and opposed themselves to his authority. See [2 Peter 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.10); [2 Peter 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.13) and Jude, verse 8, 13. We must therefore "be subject to the magistrate, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

***~~3. To support his office—~~***

Where power is vested for the public good, there must also expense be, to defray the charges of the dignity attached to it. All the functions of government also must of necessity be attended with expense, which the public of course must support. Hence there must be taxes of different kinds, some stated, as "tribute," and some occasional, as "custom," upon articles of commerce. These are "due" to the civil magistrate, and must be paid with cheerfulness and punctuality. *There must be no endeavor, no wish, to evade any tax whatever.*To defraud the revenue, is to defraud not the government only, but every person that contributes to the support of government; since, if the imposts that are laid on, prove inadequate to the necessities of the state, other taxes must be levied to supply the deficiency; and thus the honest must be burdened to pay what has been withheld by the dishonest. This is thought by many to be a light matter: and persons who are well able to pay their quota to the public purse, are not ashamed to defraud the revenue; yes, they will even boast of it, when they might with as much propriety boast of the most disgraceful actions they could possibly commit.

Our blessed Lord, when, strictly speaking, he was not bound to pay a tax that was levied, chose to pay it, and even wrought a miracle in order to pay it; because he would not offend the collectors, who would have been unable to appreciate the grounds whereon he might have claimed an exemption, [Matthew 17:24-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 17.24-27).

Thus would we do: we would rather exceed on the side of liberality, than fall short through a lack of integrity, or of zeal for the public service. To grudge such payments is most unreasonable and wicked. What would be thought of a man who would employ a watchman to protect his property, and then rob the watchman of his hire? Yet this is what we do, when by any means whatever we defraud the revenue: for rulers and magistrates are "ministers of God, attending continually upon this very thing:" their time is occupied in the discharge of their high office; and they have a claim upon us for whatever is necessary for the maintenance of their dignity, and the execution of their trust. We must therefore "render to all their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; and custom, to whom custom;" and, if in any respect or degree we withhold it from them, we differ but little from him who plunders their house, or robs them on the highway!

***~~We conclude with adding such advice as the occasion requires—~~***

***~~1. Be thankful for the constitution under which you live—~~***

It is generally agreed by those who have studied the constitution of Britain, that it is the most perfect of any upon earth. *In no other state under Heaven is there a greater measure of liberty combined with the same measure of security and strength.*The extent of our civil and religious liberties is justly the boast of all who have the happiness to live in our favored land. How different is our condition from that of the Roman empire in the time of Nero, the time when Paul wrote this epistle! How different also we may add, from the situation of our own country in the days of Mary, when so many of the excellent of the earth were burnt to death, for worshiping God according to their conscience!

In our happy land, the poorest man among us is as much protected in his person and property as the richest; nor can the king himself oppress him contrary to law. Let us then be thankful for these mercies; and let us rally round the Constitution, to support it against all the devices of the disaffected, and the conspiracies of wicked men.

If Christians under such a government as that of Nero were so strictly enjoined to approve themselves loyal and faithful, much more it is our duty to be so under such a government as ours.

***~~2. Walk worthy of that better kingdom of which you profess to be subjects—~~***

This improvement of our subject is suggested by our Lord himself; who, on a question being put to him respecting the payment of tribute to the Roman governor, answered, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's [Matthew 22:17-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.17-21)."

God, as we have before said, is the great Governor of all the earth; and he has established a kingdom, even the kingdom of his dear Son, who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Now, as Christians, you profess to be the subjects of Christ; and you owe an unreserved obedience to all his commands. Under him you enjoy the most perfect liberty and protection, from sin and Satan, death and Hell. For every act of fidelity towards him, you shall have an appropriate measure of "praise;" nor have you the smallest reason to fear his wrath, if you yield a prompt obedience to his commands.

The approbation of earthly princes, and the rewards conferred by them, pertain to this life only; but those which our blessed Lord will confer, extend also to the life to come. "Be strong, therefore, and very courageous to observe and do all that he commands, [Joshua 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 1.7)." Honor him in your hearts: labor to advance also his interests in the world: account no sacrifice painful that he requires at your hands: but "be ready, if need be, to lay down your lives for his sake." "Be faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life."

***~~#1912~~***

***~~THE NEARNESS OF SALVATION A MOTIVE TO DILIGENCE~~***

**[Romans 13:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.11).**

"And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

SO contracted are the views which many have of the Gospel, that they account nothing worthy of that name, except what relates primarily and expressly to the great subject of redemption. But *the Gospel comprehends duties as well as privileges*: nor can any minister preach it aright, if he does not guard his audience against every species of sin, and inculcate the performance of every kind of duty. Nor are any persons to be excepted from such pastoral charges. The Apostles themselves needed to be warned against hypocrisy, [Luke 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.1); and a recurrence to corrupt habits, [Luke 21:34-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 21.34-36); and they also in their turn have transmitted similar warnings to the Christian world in all ages. It was to "believers" that Paul addressed the words before us: and I conceive myself to be discharging a most solemn duty while I call your attention to,

***~~I. His injunction—~~***

***~~Every believer is prone to relapse into a state of stupor—~~***

The "wise virgins slumbered and slept," no less than the foolish ones, [Matthew 25:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.5). The Church of Ephesus, too, amidst their many exalted virtues, needed to be reproved for having "left their first love, [Revelation 2:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.3-4)." And who does not feel that the caution given to "the children of light" in the Thessalonian Church, is applicable to himself, [1 Thessalonians 5:2-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.2-7). In truth, *there are seasons, even with the best of men, when the divine life comparatively languishes within them*, and when "the things which remain in them are in appearance at least ready to die, [Revelation 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.2).

This may arise from different causes: sometimes from "the cares of this world" pressing upon the mind; sometimes from "the deceitfulness of riches," or the gratifications of sense beguiling the soul, [Matthew 13:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.22); and sometimes from "the abounding of iniquity in those around us, [Matthew 24:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 24.12)." But from whatever it proceeds,

***~~"It is high time that we awake out of sleep"—~~***

With all of us much time has been lost: and how little remains, who can tell? At all events we have a great work to do; and no man would relax his labors, until he can say, "Father, I have glorified you on earth; I have finished the work which you have given me to do, [John 17:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.4)."

I call you then, my brethren, to arise, and "do your first works," lest God abandon you to the power of your great adversary, and to the evils of your own hearts. If Paul felt the need of "keeping his body under and bringing it into subjection, lest by any means, after having preached to others he himself would become a cast-away, [1 Corinthians 9:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.26-27)," then do not think that such care and such fear are unsuitable to you. To the most stable among you I would say, "Beware, lest being led away with the error of the wicked, you fall from your own steadfastness! [2 Peter 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.17); and to the most confident among you all, "Be not high-minded, but fear, [Romans 11:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.20)." Let every one of you look to himself, that he lose not the things which he has wrought, but that he receive a full reward, 2 John verse 8."

To impress on your minds this admonition, let me call your attention to,

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

"Salvation" is the prize held forth to all who believe in Christ: and who shall adequately express or conceive what is comprehended under this term? Yet this, with all the blessedness attached to it, is daily hastening towards you.

You are daily "nearer" to,

***~~1. The termination of all your conflicts—~~***

While you are in this life, you must of necessity have trials of some kind to sustain. A corruptible crown is not gained without much exertion, much less is a heavenly crown: "the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence; and the violent take it by force! [Matthew 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.12)." But "there is a rest remaining for you [Hebrews 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.9);" and that rest is now very near at hand.

Look then at the racer in his course: does not the thought of his having nearly finished his labors animate him to increased exertions? So then would you "forget the things that are behind, and press on to the goal for the prize of your high calling, [Philippians 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.13-14);" and *never think that you have attained anything as long as anything remains to be attained*.

***~~2. The completion of all your hopes—~~***

Soon will God's work of grace be perfected within you, and "a crown of glory be awarded to you as having been faithful unto death, [Revelation 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.10)." And will you by listlessness and indifference endanger the loss of all the glory and felicity of Heaven? Awake, I say, and "run with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of your faith, [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)."

Make more use of the great principles of the Gospel than ever you have yet done. "Look more to Christ, [Isaiah 45:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.22);" "live more entirely by faith upon him, [Galatians 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.20)." Get his image more formed upon your hearts. Live only for him, and "to him, [Romans 14:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.7-8);" and speedily shall you be "seated with him upon his throne [Revelation 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.21)," and be a joint-heir with him of his inheritance [Romans 8:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.17).

***~~But let me not close without a few words to unbelievers—~~***

If believers need such an admonition as this, what, do you think, do you need? What words can ever be too strong for you, who have never fled to Christ for refuge, or believed in him for the saving of your souls? Truly your end also is near: but "who can tell what that end shall be, [1 Peter 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.17)." Alas! an inspired Apostle declares to you, that "your judgment now of a long time lingers not, and your damnation slumbers not, [2 Peter 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.3)." Surely then "it is high time for you to awake out of sleep;" for, if death find you unprepared to meet your God, your condition will be such, that it would be "better for you that you had never been born!"

***~~#1913~~***

***~~VIGILANCE PRESCRIBED~~***

***~~[Romans 13:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.12).~~***

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light."

***~~IT is the distinguished privilege of man that he is able to bring to his recollection things that are past, and to anticipate future events, so as to give them a kind of present existence in his mind. This power is of infinite use to him in the concerns of his soul. By means of it he can ascertain his state before God: he has only to compare the records of conscience with the declarations of God's word, and he can foresee the outcome of the final judgment; and derive to himself the strongest arguments for vigilance and zeal.~~***

In this view the exhortation before us deserves our deepest attention: and to impress it on our minds, we shall,

***~~I. Confirm the truth of the Apostle's assertion—~~***

Our Lord, in reference to the season afforded him for accomplishing his Father's work, calls this present life, day; and the future, night, [John 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 9.4). The Apostle here uses the same metaphors, only reversing the application of them: the present life he designates by the name of "night;" and the future, by the appellation of "day".

The present life is called "night," because it is a state of intellectual and moral darkness. The ungodly "world are altogether lying in wickedness," and ignorant of all that it concerns them most to know. The regenerate themselves "see but as in a looking-glass darkly;" and, though they are light as day in comparison with carnal men—yet have they but, as it were, the twinkling of the stars, just sufficient to direct their course, or at most but as the early dawn, in comparison with the meridian light which they will hereafter enjoy.

Much of sin also yet remains within them: much they do, which they would not do; and leave undone, which they would do: by means of which they too often walk in darkness, instead of enjoying the light of God's countenance.

Our future state of existence is called "day," because all, whether godly or ungodly, will behold everything in its true light; and because the empire of sin will be eternally destroyed.

Now this "night is far spent, and the day is at hand." Considering how short the time is that is allotted us on earth, this may be spoken in reference to those who are even in the bloom of life. Twenty or thirty years cut off from the short span of life, may well be thought a great portion of it: and if those years are doubled, we must say indeed, "The night is far spent." But whatever is our age, we are equally liable to be called away, and to have our time of probation cut short by death. We ourselves may recollect many, who but a year or two ago, appeared as strong and healthy as ourselves, who are now no more. And though we know not whose summons may arrive next, we are sure that, in a year or two more, many (perhaps one in twenty) of us will be fixed in our eternal state.

But this truth being so clear, we may proceed to,

***~~II. Enforce the exhortation grounded upon it—~~***

The idea which the Apostle's language first suggests to the mind, is, that we are attacked in our camp, and summoned instantly to arise and fight.

The generality are at ease, involved in "works of darkness;" in works that proceed from the prince of darkness; in works that affect concealment; in works that lead to everlasting darkness and despair. From this state they have no desire to come forth. Even the godly have their "sins which most easily beset them," and in which they are but too apt to indulge security. The wise virgins, as well as the foolish virgins, were defective in vigilance. But, whatever be the works of darkness with which we are encompassed, we should "cast them off," with a determination never more to sleep upon the post of danger.

In opposition to these, we are required to clothe ourselves with righteousness, which, as "light," is heaven-born, and approves its own excellence to all who behold it. This, as "armor" to the soul, protects it from the fiery darts of Satan, and aids it in all its conquests. In this we are to be ever clad, that we may be ready for the battle, and not have to look for our armor, when the enemy is at the door! [Ephesians 6:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.13). Thus only shall we be "good soldiers of Jesus Christ;" but thus armed, we shall be "more than conquerors through him who loved us."

Now the urgency of this duty appears strongly as it is connected with the foregoing assertion. For what is the work we have to do? It is no less than "putting off the works of darkness, and putting on the armor of light;" a work which none can perform, except he be strengthened by almighty power. Besides, *much of the time allotted for the performing of it, is spent already; and that which remains must be short, and may be terminated in an hour*. Is it not "high time then that we would awake out of sleep verse 11." Would we not begin without an hour's delay, and "work with all our might?" Yes, let us all "gird on our armor, and fight the good fight of faith."

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

Have we neglected our spiritual concerns? *What have we gained that can compensate for the loss of our precious time?*And who is there among us that, if his day were now come, would not wish that he had watched and labored for the good of his soul? Ah! *remember that present things, however pleasing, will soon have passed away "as a dream when one awakes," and nothing remain to you but the painful recollection, that you have lost the time which you should have improved for eternity*.

Are we, on the contrary, attending to our spiritual concerns? Let us expect the present state to be a "night" of trial and affliction: but let us remember that the longest night has an end; and that "if sorrow endures for a night—then joy comes in the morning!"

***~~#1914~~***

***~~PUTTING ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST~~***

***~~[Romans 13:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.14).~~***

"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ; and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."

IF too many reduce the whole of Christianity to a mere system of morals, it must be confessed, on the other hand, that there are not lacking many who almost exclude morals from the Christian requirements. That faith, provided it be pure and genuine, will have a sanctifying effect, is true: but it is not therefore true, that we would be satisfied with merely inculcating the necessity of faith, or encouraging its exercise. Its operations need to be strengthened by direct and vigorous calls to duty: and, if we imagine that there is any duty which we need not to enforce, or any iniquity against which we need not to guard the most exalted Christian, we greatly err.

Our blessed Lord, when surrounded by an immense multitude of people who pressed upon him for instruction, began his discourse with a solemn warning to his more immediate disciples, to "beware of hypocrisy! [Luke 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.1)." And on another occasion he said to them, "Be on your guard, so that your minds are not dulled from carousing, drunkenness, and worries of life, or that day will come on you unexpectedly! [Luke 21:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 21.34)."

Such an exhortation, now addressed to a believer, would be deemed by many to be superfluous and legalistic: but experience too sadly proves, that such warnings are yet necessary in the Church of Christ: and, if the teachers of religion, from an idea of taking a sublimer course, omit to warn their people against intemperance, impurity, or any other sin, they must consider themselves as accountable to God for those enormities in the Church, which they have neglected to hold up to public reprobation.

If it is thought that this, though suited to the infant state of the Church, was needless when Christianity was more fully revealed, and more completely established; What, I would ask, shall we say to that address of Paul to the Colossian Church? "Therefore, put to death what belongs to your worldly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, God’s wrath comes on the disobedient! [Colossians 3:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.5-6)" If, indeed no such things as these ever occurred among the professors of Christianity, we might, in our addresses to them at least, wave all notice of them: but, as this is not the case, we must still say to all without exception, "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy, [Romans 13:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.13)" And, as the only sure preventive of such excesses, we must add, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof."

***~~In these words we have a most important admonition conveyed,~~***

***~~I. In a way of plain direction—~~***

Some have understood the Apostle's expression as inculcating faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; whose righteousness we ought to put on daily, as that robe wherein alone a sinner can stand in the presence of his God. But, though this is our duty—yet it is not the duty that is here inculcated. The meaning of the Apostle is, that we should *put on the graces of the Lord Jesus Christ, so as in all respects to attain his character, and resemble him*. His words are of the same import with what he elsewhere says, "Put off the old man with his deeds; and put on the new man, [Colossians 3:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.9-10)."

***~~I. Put on then, beloved,~~***

***~~1. His humility and self-denial—~~***

In these respects he is particularly proposed as an example to us: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God—yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, [Philippians 2:5-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.5-8)." Having assumed our nature, he submitted to all the privations of which our nature is capable; being more destitute than even the beasts of the field or the birds of the air, and "not having so much as a place where he might lay his head, [Matthew 8:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 8.20)." When the people would have taken him to make him a king, he withdrew himself from them; and chose rather the office of the basest servant; condescending even to gird himself with a towel, and to wash his disciples' feet [John 13:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 13.4-5). And this he did on purpose to show us, that no office of love, however humiliating or self-denying, should be neglected by us! [John 13:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 13.14-15).

Let us, then, address ourselves to our duty in this respect. Let us abound in every possible exercise of love; accounting nothing too great either to do or suffer, if by any means we may promote the spiritual welfare of man, and the honor of our God.

***~~2. His meekness and patience—~~***

Paul, exhorting the Corinthians to an obediential respect for him, says, "I beseech you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, [2 Corinthians 10:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.1)." And Peter informs us, that, in all that our blessed Lord endured, "he suffered for us; leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him who judges righteously, [1 Peter 2:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.21-23)."

Beloved brethren, set the Lord Jesus Christ before you in these respects. See what lamentable evils prevail, both in the Church and in the world, through the lack of these heavenly dispositions. Truly, the different Churches of Christendom, yes, and almost every individual Church in Christendom, present us rather with one continued scene of "strife and envying," whereby infidels are hardened in their prejudices against the Gospel, and the very name of God is blasphemed in the world. Surely the contentions of Christians are a scandal to Christianity itself! "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you! [Colossians 3:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.12-13)."

***~~3. His entire devotedness to the service of his God—~~***

"His ear was bored;" and from his engagement he never receded, no, not for a moment. It was at all times "his food and his drink to do the will of him who sent him, [John 4:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.34);" and never did he relax his exertions, until he could say, "It is finished!" Thus let your hearts "be steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord," and never cease to prosecute your heavenly calling, until you can say, with him, "Father, I have glorified you on earth; I have finished the work which you have given me to do, [John 17:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.4)." Account nothing done, while anything remains to be done: but "forget what is behind, and reach forward to that which is before; and press on for the prize of your high calling, [Philippians 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.13-14)," until you are acknowledged by God himself as having gained the victory, and are called to sit down with your victorious Lord upon his throne of glory! [Revelation 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.21).

The Apostle yet further urges his admonition,

***~~II. In a way of beneficial caution—~~***

***~~We must guard against everything which may impede our progress—~~***

Every man has some "besetting sin," which he ought most carefully to put away, [Hebrews 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.1). He should mark what his constitutional or acquired sinful propensities are, and exert himself to the uttermost to mortify and subdue them. Instead of providing for the gratification of them, he should abstain from everything which tends to foster his corruption, or to give scope for its exercise.

When the priests went into the tabernacle of the congregation to minister before the Lord, they were to "drink no wine nor strong drink," lest they would be in any respect unfitted for the holy service in which they were engaged, [Leviticus 10:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 10.8-10).

In like manner, we, who are "a holy priesthood," should abstain even from lawful things, if by an unrestrained indulgence we are likely to be ensnared. Our blessed Lord has taught us to "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation;" and this he has done, because in an hour of temptation it is so difficult to stand.

We should be on our guard, not only against evil itself, but against every occasion of evil: the places and the company that are ensnaring to our souls, we should avoid; as Solomon has well admonished us: "Enter not into the path of the wicked; and go not in the path of evil men. Avoid it; pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away! [Proverbs 4:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 4.14-15)." Joseph found his safety in flight, [Genesis 39:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 39.12); and we, in like manner, must "keep our heart with all diligence, [Proverbs 4:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 4.23);" and "make a covenant with all our senses, [Job 31:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 31.1)," which may by any means prove *inlets to temptation, and instruments for our destruction*.

***~~It is in this way only that we can hope to be kept from the foulest sins—~~***

What is said of contention, may be said of sin in general, that "the beginnings of it are like the letting out of water." In the first instance, the danger seems small: but soon the breach is widened, and defies all the efforts that may be made to stop it. Of this we have a solemn instance in David, who little thought, when first his eye glanced upon Bathsheba, what evils would ensue.

The Apostle's primary object in our text was, to guard the Church against gross evils. But how does he teach us to avoid them? He bids us to aspire after the highest possible attainments, even the *"putting on of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and to be on our guard against the very smallest occasions of sin, and in no respect to make provision for the indulgence of it.*And these two things must occupy our attention from day to day.

O! "let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he falls!" Let him "keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, after having preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away, [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.27).

If, for the obtaining of a prize in earthly contests, a long habit of laborious and self-denying discipline is necessary, much more is it in order to the ensuring of final success in our heavenly conflicts. To all, then, would I say, If you would not fall and perish by your indwelling corruptions, you must "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, [Galatians 5:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.24)," and must "perfect holiness in the fear of God, [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.1)."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are satisfied with their attainments—~~***

What! Have you, then, attained the perfection that was in Christ? Are you so "clothed with humility," and all other graces, that the world may see in you the very image of Christ? Are you such "lights in a dark world," that all who behold you may "know how they are to walk and to please God?" Never be satisfied with anything short of this: but press forward to your dying hour, that you may, through the mighty working of the power of God upon your souls, "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, [Colossians 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 4.12)."

***~~2. Those who are striving after a more perfect conformity to their Lord and Savior—~~***

It is well that you are endeavoring to "walk even as Christ walked, [1 John 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.6)." But attempt it not in your own strength. You must be "strengthened with all might in your inward man, by the Spirit of the living God." To your last hour, as well as in the commencement of the Divine life, "your sufficiency must be of God" alone. "He is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you, having always all-sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work." "Faithful is He who has called you, who also will do it."

"Now, to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen".

***~~#1915~~***

***~~THE EXTENT AND GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE~~***

***~~[Romans 14:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.7-9).~~***

"For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living."

TO exercise Christian forbearance is no small attainment. There is continual need of it in the Christian world: there are many things of an indifferent nature, which we are at liberty either to do or forbear; but *all do not see their Christian liberty with equal clearness: hence the weak are apt to judge the strong, and the strong to despise the weak*. Thus the Jews and Gentiles at Rome disputed respecting the use of certain foods, and the observance of certain days. The Apostle shows, that, though the two parties differed in their conduct, they were equally accepted of God. He grounds his assertion on the idea that both of them acted from a conscientious desire to please and honor God.

***~~I. The extent of Christian obedience—~~***

If we were to judge from the practice of mankind, we would think that very little was required of us; but *we must judge by the unerring standard of God's word*. Both the Law and the Gospel require the obedience of the heart, and in this the Christian labors to approve himself to God—

***~~1. He renounces SELF—~~***

Self is the idol of the unregenerate world; they study only to please and exalt self in every part of their life; they have no higher view in courting or shunning death. But *the Christian sees the sinfulness of thus idolizing self. He therefore endeavors to suppress its workings, and mortify its desires; he determines never to make the indulgence of self his chief aim.*

***~~2. He devotes himself to the Lord—~~***

He studies to do his will, and gain his approbation.

He seeks to glorify his name in every action of life.

He considers that he is the Lord's property, both by creation and redemption.

He strives therefore to honor him with every faculty of body and soul.

This is not a mere theory, but a living picture of Christianity—

The Apostle lays down an universal rule to this effect, [1 Corinthians 10:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.31). He himself conformed to it in an eminent degree [Philippians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.20); every true Christian, according to his measure, conforms to it, "For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord."

Such obedience, however, will not spring from any but evangelical principles—

***~~II. The grounds of it—~~***

All possible obedience is due from us to God by *creation*; but God has acquired a new right over us by *redemption*.

***~~Christ has died and risen—~~***

He died to make atonement for our guilt.

He rose for our justification before God.

He revived, and lives to carry on the work.

***~~He has done this with an express view to reduce us to willing allegiance—~~***

He undertook to save men *from*their sins, and not *in*them. Paul repeatedly declares this to have been the end of our Lord's death, [2 Corinthians 5:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.15). [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14). Peter speaks to the same effect, [1 Peter 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.24), and our Lord himself also confirms this truth. [John 17:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.19). The same was also the end of his resurrection and ascension [Philippians 2:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.9-11); and in all that he is now doing, he keeps the same object in view.

***~~What he has done for us, is therefore the proper ground of our obedience—~~***

We are still as much as ever bound by the laws of our *creation*; but we would be particularly affected with *redeeming love*: this would stir us up to the most unreserved obedience. The Apostle requires such obedience, on this very ground, [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.19-20). We shall surely render it, if we have any saving interest in redemption, [2 Corinthians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14).

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How few real Christians are there in the world!~~***

*If living to ourselves were Christianity, there would be Christians without number; but nothing less than an entire devotedness to God can entitle us to the name.*How few then are there to be found! The text might be *reversed*in almost every assembly of professing Christians, [Philippians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.21). Let us judge ourselves by this criterion. Let us rest in no partial or hypocritical services. Let us cry to God for his Spirit to renew us in our inward man.

***~~2. How reasonable is the Christian life!~~***

Christian obedience is often ridiculed as needless preciseness and scrupulosity. It is deemed a mark of a weak and enthusiastic mind. But it is justly called a reasonable service, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1). Who can ever estimate the obligation arising from the death of Christ? Who can sufficiently praise him for what he is now doing for us in Heaven? Is it reasonable that we should defeat the ends of all his love? Ought we not rather to requite it to the utmost of our power? Should we account anything too much to do for him? Let all then confess the reasonableness of being devoted to Christ. Let every Christian exert himself more and more, disregarding ridicule and contempt, [1 Corinthians 15:58](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.58).

***~~#1916~~***

***~~THE FUTURE JUDGMENT~~***

***~~[Romans 14:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.10-12).~~***

"We must all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God."

THERE is in the morality of the Gospel a sublimity of which even the godly themselves have a very indistinct perception. We are apt to lay down broad principles of action, without taking into consideration other principles which should influence us in the application of them. For instance; where the calls of duty seem to interfere with each other, we are apt to lean to one side or the other with an exclusive preference, instead of studying how the two may be made to harmonize, in just order and mutual subordination. To most persons it would appear an unquestionable truth, that if one thing is right, its opposite must be wrong; whereas, if an action is in itself indifferent, the doing or forbearing of it may be equally right, and equally acceptable to God.

This was the case with regard to the eating of foods forbidden by the Jewish law, and the observance of particular days which had been held sacred under the Mosaic dispensation. There was nothing morally good or evil in these enactments: they depended on the will of Him who had imposed them: and, when they were abrogated, they remained as purely matters of indifference, as if nothing had ever been enjoined respecting them. But the contending parties in the Church at Rome could not see this: those who had been educated in Jewish habits, not only maintained their own forms, but judged and condemned the Gentiles who rejected them: those, on the contrary, who knew that those ordinances were abrogated by the Christian dispensation, not only asserted their own liberty, but held in contempt the persons who were yet in bondage to their forms.

Now, both of these parties acted right in complying with the dictates of their own conscience; but they acted wrong, in presuming to sit in judgment upon each other. To mark the true line of duty in this matter, was the Apostle's object in this part of his epistle. He shows that, provided a man endeavored in such matters to approve himself to God, doing only what he really judged to be right, God accepted him; and that, while we commend ourselves to the judgment of our God, we should also leave to his judgment those who differ from us; assured, that in the last day he will dispense to all, not according to our narrow views, but according to what he knew to be the real disposition of their minds.

Leaving, for the present, the primary subject of the chapter, namely, forbearance in judging one another, I shall draw your attention to that which is here incidentally introduced; namely, the certainty and dreadfulness of the future judgment.

***~~I. Its certainty—~~***

***~~There shall be a day of future retribution—~~***

Reason itself might tell us this: for how else are the inequalities of the present state of things ever to be rectified? At present, "all things come alike to all;" or rather, the ungodly triumph, and the godly are oppressed. But can we suppose that God will never recompense to his servants the troubles they sustain for his sake, or to their enemies the injuries they inflict? No! there shall be a time when God will deal with men in a way of perfect equity; and he has fixed a day for "the revelation of his righteous judgment."

To this the Scriptures bear ample testimony. They even declare, with great precision, the very mode in which the judgment shall be administered. They declare that Jesus Christ shall be the Judge; (for "the Father has committed all judgment to the Son [John 5:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.22);") that, at a period fixed in the Divine counsels, "he will come in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father, with myriads of his holy angels," and will sit upon the throne of his glory; and that "before him shall be gathered all nations! [Matthew 25:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.31-32);" that "the books," in which the transactions of the whole human race are recorded, "shall be opened," and "every one be judged according to his works, [Revelation 20:11-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 20.11-15);" that, for this end, "all who were in their graves shall come forth" in their own proper bodies; "some to a resurrection of life, others to a resurrection of damnation! [John 5:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.28-29)."

***~~Of this God has assured us, with a most solemn oath—~~***

The Apostle quotes a passage from the prophecies of Isaiah. This passage speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Apostle tells us, and as the whole context in the prophet clearly shows. The person spoken of in that passage is He to whom we are to "look for salvation;" He "in whom alone a sinner can have either righteousness or strength;" and "in whom all the seed of Israel must be justified, and shall glory, [Isaiah 45:22-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.22-25)." To him shall all submit, either voluntarily in this present life, or involuntarily at that great and solemn day.

His dominion shall extend over all. But many resist it now: and therefore there must be a day when they shall be able to resist it no longer; and when those who would not bow to the scepter of his grace "shall be broken in pieces by him, as a potter's vessel, with a rod of iron! [Revelation 2:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.27)." This has God declared with an oath.

And here I cannot but notice how clearly and indisputably this passage declares the Godhead of Christ. Again and again does the prophet proclaim the proper Deity of the person of whom he is speaking: "Look unto me, and be saved! for I am God; and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone forth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely shall one say, In the Lord (Jehovah) have I righteousness and strength; unto him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." Let these expressions be compared with the application made of them in my text, and it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that Christ is God; and no subordinate kind of Deity, but "God over all, blessed for evermore!"

Hear then Almighty God pledging his own life and immortal perfections, that such a day shall arrive, and that such shall be the outcome of it; every creature that has ever existed being summoned before the Lord Jesus; and being constrained, whether willing or not, to acknowledge Christ as his rightful Lord, and as the only Savior of the world.

Such is the *certainty*of that day. Let us next consider,

***~~II. Its dreadfulness—~~***

In that day, "every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Not one shall be absent; not one be able to resist, or elude, the summons. The most formidable monarchs will then be on a footing with the basest beggar: and every one shall, not merely be reminded of the things which he has done, but shall "give an account" of them,

***~~1. Generally, as to his demeanor on the whole—~~***

Then shall we give an account of our TIME. It ought to have been dedicated altogether to the Lord, and not consumed in sloth or vanity. The use we have made of it will form a subject of most serious inquiry: not a day or an hour passes, but it shall be then reviewed.

Our *talents*, too, our *property*, our *station*, our *abilities*, our *influence*of every kind—must then be accounted for. They were the Lord's; and ought neither to have been wasted, nor hid in a napkin, but to have been augmented by a diligent application of them.

And what shall I say of our *advantages*, particularly the unspeakable advantage of a preached Gospel? Must not those also be accounted for? Yes, truly, they are most signally noted by Almighty God, and will form a very important ground of approbation or displeasure, according as they have been neglected or improved.

Our *habits*altogether will then come under the strictest scrutiny; whether we have abounded in the exercises of prayer and praise; or whether we have passed over in a formal way the duties of the closet, finding no delight in communion with God; whether we have put away all our besetting sins; or have "retained iniquity in our hearts" unmortified and unsubdued.

Everything, even every idle word, will come under review, to receive its appropriate recompense, [Matthew 12:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.36). Nor shall so much as a *secret thought*escape the sentence of our God, [Ecclesiastes 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 12.14); for "he will bring every secret thing into judgment, and make manifest the counsels of the heart, 1 Corinthians 4:5," as subjects of praise or condemnation, according to their intrinsic quality.

***~~2. Particularly, as to his conduct towards the Lord Jesus Christ—~~***

It will be remembered, that the passage cited by the Apostle refers, in the first instance, to the dominion of Christ, which shall be established over every man: but, forasmuch as that is not accomplished now, it shall be accomplished hereafter, when all "his enemies shall become his footstool." Hence the Apostle justly quotes them, as declarative of a future judgment: and hence we conclude that *our submission to him will be a subject of special inquiry*. Then shall it be clearly seen whether we have "looked unto Christ for salvation;" whether we have sought "in him our righteousness and strength;" and whether we have "gloried in him" as "all our salvation and all our desire."

These things are disregarded by us now, as of small consequence; and we make little account of anything, except of our conduct towards our fellow-men. But we may be perfectly assured that our conduct towards the Lord Jesus Christ will not be found a point of secondary importance then. It is not so light a matter to "trample under foot the Son of God, and to do despite to the Spirit of his grace," that it would be overlooked in that day.

Let me therefore most affectionately remind you all, that every one of us, without one single exception, shall give account of himself to God, and especially respecting his treatment of the Savior, whom to disregard is death, and "whom to know is life eternal."

Paul, speaking of the day of judgment, says, "Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men."

***~~Permit me then to improve the subject, and to persuade you,~~***

***~~1. In reference to the main subject of the context—~~***

We have before observed, that the Apostle is speaking respecting forbearance in judging; and, of moral subjects, there is scarcely any that is of greater importance than that. Our blessed Lord enjoins us strictly in relation to it: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Think for yourselves, and act for yourselves; and regard not the uncharitable judgment of others, when you are "fully persuaded in your own mind." But concede to others the liberty which you claim for yourselves. Leave others to exercise their own discretion: and, instead of sitting in judgment upon them, leave them to the infallible judgment of their God. Believe that they may be right, as well as you; and that they may be right, though they differ from you. You yourselves, as well as those whom you judge, will shortly appear before the judgment-seat of Christ: there will every man receive according to his works. On the side of charity you may safely err: but if you indulge uncharitableness towards others, you can expect nothing but what God has expressly declared; that they "who have showed no mercy shall themselves have judgment without mercy, [James 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.13)."

***~~2. In reference to the passage we have been insisting on—~~***

You have seen that Christ will surely triumph at the last. Respecting those who pertinaciously reject him, he will say, "Bring hither those my enemies who would not that I would reign over them, and slay them before me!" Lay down, then, the weapons of your rebellion, and humble yourselves before him. Do not think that he will forget his oath: for he will surely fulfill it. He is able so to do; and he "will not repent" of any word that he has spoken. "Has he said, and shall he not do it? Has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Seek then, without delay, to have his whole work accomplished in you; and be assured, that, if you serve him faithfully, according to his word, the time is not far distant when he will address you from his throne of glory, "Well done, good and faithful servants; enter into the joy of your Lord!"

***~~#1917~~***

***~~PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY ILLUSTRATED~~***

**[Romans 14:17-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.17-19)**

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."

***~~TO have a clear view of Christian doctrines is necessary; but to have a just apprehension of the Christian spirit and disposition is no less necessary. It is much to be regretted, that where the doctrines are well understood, the Christian disposition is often grievously overlooked: nay, the very importance of the doctrines is often made a pretext for exercising tempers most repugnant to vital Christianity.~~***

People are not willing to distinguish between the essentials, and the non-essentials, of religion. There is in every man a disposition to exalt some favorite sentiment of his own, and to press it upon others beyond what its relative importance requires; whereas *the spirit of Christianity calls rather for mutual forbearance in relation to things indifferent, and mutual concessions, in order to the preservation of peace and harmony*.

The scope of the chapter before us is to mark out a line of conduct for Christians in relation to this matter: and in this view it deserves the most attentive consideration. To present the subject before you in all its most important bearings, we shall,

***~~I. Show wherein practical Christianity consists—~~***

The *Jewish religion*consisted much in the observance of rites and ceremonies, which were marked with great precision, and enjoined under the severest penalties. The forbearing the use of certain kinds of food, the keeping as sacred certain times and seasons, and the complying with certain ordinances, were commanded with all the same authority as the decalogue itself. But those things were to cease with that dispensation [Hebrews 9:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.10); they were appointed only "until the times of refreshing:" and now they are to be observed no longer, [Colossians 2:16-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.16-22).

"The kingdom of God," that is, the kingdom of Christ established in the heart, does not consist in them; "it is not in food and drink," but in something more substantial, more excellent, more spiritual; namely, "in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Many interpret these words as importing faith in the "righteousness" of the Lord Jesus Christ, and "peace" through the blood of his cross, and "joy in the Holy Spirit" as the fruit of our acceptance with God. But we apprehend that *these words relate rather to holy and heavenly dispositions, as contrasted with the spirit that is generated by an undue attachment to rites and ceremonies*. We understand by them an universal love of righteousness, as opposed to a zeal for forms; a peaceful state of mind, as opposed to the irritation that is cherished and the dissensions that are occasioned, by a contentious spirit; and a joy in God, as opposed to the self-delight which is fostered by a self-righteous compliance with prescribed forms.

The scope of the whole context seems to point to this interpretation, and to direct our thoughts into the channel marked out for us by the words of Balaam to Balak, [Micah 6:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 6.6-8); or by those of our Lord to the self-righteous Pharisees, "who paid tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin—but neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, [Matthew 23:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 23.23)."

In these things vital Christianity consists. The turning of the whole heart to the observance of God's laws, is the great promise of the Gospel, and the certain effect of it, wherever it is received in truth: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments to do them, [Ezekiel 36:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.26-27)." And again, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, [Jeremiah 31:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.33)."

Nor is a *peaceful disposition*less certainly imparted by the Gospel: for love is the necessary fruit of faith, [Galatians 5:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.6), and forms the most striking feature in the character of every true believer, [1 John 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.14).

*Joy*also in the Holy Spirit will invariably accompany these holy dispositions: for the Holy Spirit delights to dwell where God is honored, and man is loved for God's sake. In the hearts of such believers "he will glorify the Lord Jesus, and will shed abroad the Father's love: he will fill them with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Such righteousness, such peace, and such joy, are the fruits and evidences of the reign of Christ in the soul: and in them, rather than in *religious forms*of any kind, does his kingdom consist.

Having thus marked the nature of practical Christianity, we shall,

***~~II. Point out its peculiar excellence—~~***

The ordinances relative to foods and drinks were mere "beggarly elements:" they had no value at all, except as "shadows of good things to come." But these holy dispositions are truly valuable: and every man who cultivates them,

***~~1. Is accepted by God—~~***

The observers of forms and ceremonies were not at all accepted, unless their services were accompanied with a suitable and corresponding frame of mind, [Isaiah 1:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.11-14); yes rather, they were hateful, even as the offering of swine's blood, or as murder itself, [Isaiah 66:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.3). But not so the services of which we have been speaking: they are truly pleasing in the sight of God; and the dispositions exercised are in his sight "an ornament of great price." Yes, "the righteous Lord loves righteousness," and "will meet him who rejoices in working it, [Isaiah 64:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.5)." There is no token of his love which he will not grant to those who cultivate a loving spirit, and seek all their happiness in him. "He will set his love upon them; and will hear and answer all their petitions: he will be with them in trouble: he will deliver them and honor them: with long life also will he satisfy them, and will show them his full and complete salvation! [Psalm 91:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 91.14-16),"

***~~2. Is approved of men—~~***

Those who spend their zeal on the externals of religion may be commended by partisans, but they will never be respected by those who differ from them, nor indeed by their own party. The dispositions exercised by such persons are unamiable, and therefore they can never generate love in the bosoms of any. But the holy man of God, who labors to fulfill all righteousness, and to promote the happiness of all around him, and to live in the constant enjoyment of his God—he, I say, has a testimony in the bosoms of all, even of those who differ from him in things of less importance: and though from circumstances they may keep at a distance from him, they honor him in their hearts, and have an inward persuasion "that God is with him of a truth."

The ungodly world indeed may hate him, just as they hated the Apostles and our Lord himself: but yet even they will feel an awe in his presence, and, at the very time that they revile and persecute him, have oftentimes the secret thought in their hearts, "If I were dying, I would be glad to be found in your state."

We must not however overlook that which gives to these services their chief excellence—

It is supposed that the person who performs these services is already Christ's subject, and servant, having through Divine grace been converted to God, and "translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son:" and that, in performing them, he is not attempting to establish a righteousness of his own, but to "serve and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ." It is necessary that he keeps this end in view; and that all that he does be done for Christ, that is, from a regard to his authority, and with a view to his glory.

Indeed *faith in Christ, and love to him, are the only principles that will operate to the production of the dispositions before mentioned*. A man may have the semblance of them without faith in Christ; but the reality he cannot have. In the mind of the unbeliever, the *circumstantials*of religion will have an undue weight: in the believer only, will the *essentials*have their full scope and paramount ascendency. When therefore we speak of these dispositions as accepted of God and approved of men, it is supposed that in them "we serve Christ," by whose grace alone we can do them, and through whom alone they can ever be accepted.

Having now shown the nature and excellence of practical Christianity, we shall, in conclusion,

***~~III. Give some directions for the exercise of it—~~***

The general direction in our text is, to "follow after the things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another." But that the whole scope of the chapter may be brought more fully into view, we will descend somewhat more to particulars.

***~~1. Lay not an undue stress on things indifferent—~~***

As among the Jews there were many who laid more stress on the washing of pots and cups than on obedience to God's commandments, [Mark 7:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 7.8-9)—so now *there are many whose zeal has respect to little else than the circumstantials of religion*. The Papists are ready to confine salvation to those who are within the pale of their Church: and almost every distinct sect of Protestants is ready to arrogate to itself the same exclusive privilege. It is grievous to think what mutual aversion has been created among Christians, by the circumstance of worshiping with, or without, a form of prayer; or by differences still less important. But things ought not so to be.

*We should lay no more stress on anything than we find laid on it in the Scriptures of truth*. The fundamental doctrines of religion must be held fast, and sacrificed to none. The *plain duties*also of religion must be executed with a firmness that is immoveable: but whatever does not interfere with these, should be left to the judgment and the conscience of every individual; neither being imposed on him as of necessity, nor exacted of him with rigor, nor made a ground of alienation from him. *We should concede to others the liberty we claim for ourselves*; and be more anxious to preserve a union of heart, than by dictation to produce an uniformity of sentiment.

"One man esteems one day above another: another esteems every day alike." And what says Paul to this? Let the more powerful of the two compel the other to adopt his views? No! but, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, verse 5."

***~~2. Be tender in judging those who differ from you—~~***

Those who saw their Christian liberty, despised their weaker brethren, for scrupling to eat what had been offered to an idol; while, on the other hand, those who doubted the lawfulness of eating such things, condemned their stronger brethren, as presumptuously disregarding the commands of God.

*A similar disposition to despise or condemn each other exists among the advocates for certain doctrines which have for ages divided the Church of God.*Those who think they have a deeper insight into the Divine decrees, look down with contempt on their less enlightened brethren; while these, on the other hand, feel embittered against the others, and load them with all manner of obloquy.

Alas! alas! when shall the professed members of Christ's body cease to exercise such dispositions towards each other, and agree to cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance? *When shall men cease to dogmatize, as if they were infallible?*The probability is, that the truth lies not exclusively with either of these parties, but is found rather with those who receive with meekness, and interpret with diffidence, the apparently opposite declarations of God, and wait his time for the fuller explication of them. *No man is in the exclusive possession of all truth*; nay, persons may in some things pursue an opposite conduct, and yet both be right, because the things wherein they disagree may be matters of pure indifference, verse 6; therefore, while every man should seek to acquire the most correct sentiments, every man should leave others to "stand or fall to their own master, verse 4."

***~~3. Be cautious in the exercise of your liberty—~~***

An action may be good in itself—yet it may become bad by being done in the presence of another who doubts its lawfulness, and may by means of it be induced to violate the dictates of his own conscience in following the example. This is a point well worthy of our attention. We should have respect to the consciences of others, and be careful "not to lay a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in our brother's way." As we should not presume to force him to act contrary to his conscience, so neither should we tempt him to do so, lest we lead him into sin, and thereby destroy his soul.

Our blessed Lord laid down his life to save such persons; and shall we not forego a trifling gratification for their welfare? Yes, *shall we, for the sake of some small indulgence, risk the plunging them into everlasting ruin?*Shocking impiety! In so acting, we sin against Christ, and greatly endanger the salvation of our own souls. And rather than be guilty of such wickedness, we should deny ourselves the most innocent gratification in the world: "If food makes our brother to offend, we would eat no flesh while the world stands, lest we make our brother to offend, verse 21 with [1 Corinthians 8:9-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.9-13)."

***~~4. Be anxious, not to proselyte to a party, but to edify your brother in love—~~***

Here almost all classes of the Christian world are greatly to blame. If a brother begins to have his conscience awakened, the first object of the generality is to bring him over to their own particular party. For this end they set before him those particular points which may lead his mind into the particular channel which they wish. But Paul expressly forbids such hateful conduct: "him who is weak in the faith, receive—but not to doubtful disputations, verse 1." *How many hopeful blossoms have come to nothing in consequence of their being thus blighted by the breath of vain dispute!*How many, instead of coming fully to Christ, and devoting themselves entirely to him, have been led to rest in the adoption of some particular creed, a union with some particular party, or a submission to one particular rite! Truly, those who, by such an use of their influence, keep back an inquiring soul, have much to answer for.

To build up a brother in faith and love should be our only object; and, whether he belongs to our particular party or not, it would satisfy us to see that he "grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Instead of laboring to proselyte him to our party, we should forget that we ourselves are of any party, [1 Corinthians 9:9-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.9-22); or, if of a party we must be, let it be of that which Moses approved, and which comprehends the universal Church—"the Lord's side, [Exodus 32:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 32.26)." *To unite each other unto him, and build up each other in his faith and fear, is the only proper exercise of Christian love, and Christian influence.*

***~~#1918~~***

***~~REGARD TO CONSCIENCE RECOMMENDED~~***

***~~[Romans 14:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.22-23)~~***

"So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin."

IT is well known that there is a great diversity of opinion among good men respecting the principles of religion. Nor are they altogether agreed upon the subject of moral duty. Some have a clearer insight into the nature and extent of Christian liberty, while others are in bondage to superstitious rites; and some are ready to plead for a degree of latitudinarian indulgence, which others feel themselves by no means authorized to admit.

There is, however, one point in which all are agreed; and that is, *the necessity of following the dictates of our own conscience*. The man who violates his own principles, whether he is right or wrong in his judgment, stands condemned in his own mind: while, on the other hand, as the Apostle tells us in our text, "Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves."

The subject of *conscience*needs to be treated with extreme delicacy and care; lest we wound a weak brother, and make the heart of the righteous sad. It is however a subject of such vital importance, that we must of necessity enter upon it, and prosecute it, with all fidelity. Let me, then, state to you,

***~~I. The office of conscience—~~***

The proper office of conscience is admonition. It is not given to instruct us in anything new, but to regulate us according to some fixed principles in the mind. It is given us,

***~~1. As a secret monitor—~~***

In every man there is something which has within him the force of a law. Those who possess not the knowledge of God's revealed will, have yet some principles of action, which they regard as binding, and in accordance with which the voice of conscience speaks. Having no other law, "they are a law unto themselves, [Romans 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.14);" and the office of conscience is, to testify, when they fulfill, and when they violate, this law.

Nor does this testimony refer to their *actions*merely, but to their *motives*also: respecting which, none but themselves can form any correct judgment. This is the view which the Scripture gives of conscience: "The lamp of the LORD searches the spirit of a man; it searches out his inmost being, [Proverbs 20:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 20.27)." Not that it waits for the execution of an act: it testifies beforehand respecting the quality of the act proposed; and operates as a stimulus, if the act be good; or as a check, if it is evil. Its influence indeed is, for the most part, proportioned to the desire which a man feels to be governed by it: if a man disregards its motions, it may be reduced to utter silence: but if he desires to act agreeably to its dictates, it will be a most kind and faithful monitor on all occasions. It will say to us what no fellow-creature could venture to say; and it will take the same freedom in the bosom of a king, as in the basest of his subjects. It is rarely very clamorous, except after some enormous transgression: its testimony is, for the most part, delivered in a still small voice, which none but the person himself can hear.

Yet, on some occasions, it will betray its operation in the mind, especially when it reproves for something amiss, and for something which the man himself would be ashamed to have known: it will then suffuse his cheek with a blush, or perhaps cast over his countenance a pallid hue, which a wise observer cannot easily misinterpret.

***~~2. As an authoritative judge—~~***

But it is not as a monitor only that conscience acts, but as a judge also: and in this respect *it is God's viceregent in the soul*. It erects a tribunal there! and summons a man to appear before it, and to give an account of his conduct: and then it passes judgment, "either excusing or accusing him, [Romans 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.15)," as the occasion warrants; and acquitting or condemning him, as God himself will do at the future judgment.

Sometimes it exercises its authority immediately; as when it declared to Adam, in Paradise, that he was despoiled of the divine image in which he had been created, [Genesis 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.10); or, as when it caused David's heart to smite him for numbering the people, [2 Samuel 24:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 24.10); or, as when it caused the accusers of an adulteress to go out from the presence of our Lord, [John 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.9).

At other times, it delays until some occasion arises to draw forth its judgment: thus it did in the case of Joseph's brethren, whom it made to feel the injustice and the cruelty which, some years before, they had exercised towards him, [Genesis 42:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 42.21).

Sometimes it delivers its sentence in a way to produce befitting humiliation, as in the case of Peter; and sometimes in a way to drive to utter despondency, as in the case of Judas; whom it impelled to suicide, as the only refuge from its poignant reproaches.

Let us now contemplate,

***~~II. Our duty in reference to it—~~***

Men have a duty towards their minds generally, to cultivate them and improve them in knowledge, and to fit them for the better discharge of all the functions of life. But towards their conscience they have obligations of the highest order, on account of the pre-eminent authority with which it is invested, and the influence which it exercises over our whole man. We ought, then,

***~~1. To get it well informed—~~***

We have before observed, that *conscience prescribes no rule to us, but only gives its testimony according to a rule which has previously existed in the mind*. Nor does any man ever commit sin by following its dictates. Paul, when he persecuted the saints, supposed that in so doing he was discharging a duty to God; for "he thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." Doubtless in this he sinned: but his sin consisted, not in following the dictates of his own conscience, but in having his conscience so ill-informed. Had he studied the Scriptures with more humility of mind, and sought instruction from God—he would have been kept from the fatal errors into which he fell. Indeed, he himself assigns as an extenuation of his guilt, that he had contracted it "ignorantly, and in unbelief, [1 Timothy 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.13);" for had he known what evil he was committing, and yet persisted in it, there was reason to fear he would never have obtained mercy at the Lord's hands.

*If we would have conscience perform its office aright, we must take the law of God for the standard whereby it shall judge.* We must not go to men to instruct us in the principles of the world, which are altogether founded in error; but must look to God, to "guide us into all truth," according to his unerring word, and through the influences of his Spirit.

Nor must we hastily imagine that our views are correct: for there is a film upon our eyes, and we are far from seeing things so distinctly as we ought. We would maintain a godly jealousy over ourselves, lest "Satan beguile us," or our own heart deceive us. We would take care that "the light which is in us be not darkness:" for if it be, how great must that darkness be! But, "if our eye be single, then will our whole body be full of light, [Matthew 6:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 6.22-23)," and the testimony of conscience be in perfect accordance with the mind of God.

***~~2. To consult it on all occasions—~~***

We should not go on blindfold, but would endeavor to see our way clear before we enter upon any course of action. To act first, and afterwards make inquiries, is almost a certain way to involve ourselves in guilt! [Proverbs 20:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 20.25). To make conscience a pretext for doing a thing to which we are previously inclined, is indeed a horrible delusion; and not less common than it is hateful.

But, on the other hand, to do anything without a careful inquiry into the quality of the action proposed, is presumptuous in the extreme, and shows that we have not really the fear of God before our eyes.

Nor is the testimony of conscience easily obtained. Sometimes, indeed, it speaks instantly, and without much previous consultation: and in that case its testimony is almost always according to truth; and a man will do well in paying especial respect to such spontaneous motions of the monitor within him. But, for the most part, it requires time to make a fair statement of the circumstances of which the conscience is to judge.

In such cases, if they have respect to *God*only, we should consider attentively the conduct of our blessed Lord and his Apostles on similar occasions.

Or, if they have respect to *man*, then would we in all cases change places, as it were, with the person concerned; so that we may judge with more candor than we are likely to exercise, if we stand altogether on our own ground; because our judgment is but too likely to be warped by self-love and sinful partiality.

We should never forget, that, "if we doubt of the lawfulness of anything, we are self-condemned if we do it; since whatever is not of faith, is sin verse 23." We should pause therefore, and deliberate, until we see our way clear; and determine, if possible, not to do anything until "we are fully persuaded in our own minds, verse 5."

***~~3. To keep it upright and tender—~~***

Conscience may easily be warped, yes, and silenced too; so that it shall give no testimony whatever, until it is awakened by some flagrant enormity, or by some peculiar occurrence. If we go and consult worldly advisers, they will of course justify the ways which they wish us to follow: and if we listen to the voice of self-interest or self-inclination within us, we may soon be furnished with reasons enough for prosecuting the line which they would prescribe. They will tell us, that the object for which they plead is commonly approved by all in our circumstances: that we need not give way, except on this or that particular occasion: that to hold out against the wishes and solicitations of our friends can be ascribed to nothing but spiritual pride, and will give just offense to those whom we are bound to please; and that, in fact, our preciseness will only offend those whom we ought rather to conciliate, and make religion hateful to those whose eternal welfare we wish rather to promote.

A thousand arguments of this kind will be presented to our minds, either by our worldly friends, or by our own carnal hearts; and by them we may persuade conscience to alter its sentence, and to sanction our ways: and, after a time, we may so blind and sear our conscience, that it shall no longer perform its proper office. But to effect this, is to inflict an irreparable injury on our own souls, and to seal, I had almost said, our eternal condemnation.

The utmost possible caution, therefore, should be used on this head. No standard would be referred to, but that which God himself will approve; and according to his written word would every sentiment and every act be tried. "Whoever speaks not according to this word, there is no light in him, [Isaiah 8:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.20);" and his advice, if followed, will only cause our feet to stumble to our ruin. Taking that for our guide on all occasions, and under all circumstances, we would say with holy Job, "My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live! [Job 27:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 27.6)."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who consult not their conscience, nor are troubled by it—~~***

Though there is no man without a conscience—yet the greater part of the world live as if they had no such faculty to control them. Whatever be the life which they have chosen for themselves, they walk in it without much thought, or any remorse. The lovers of pleasure, the votaries of gain, the formal religionist—all conceive their respective lines to be, on the whole, such as they are at liberty to follow, and such as shall outcome well in the end.

As for trying themselves by the test of Scripture, they do not think of it: they stand self-approved; and they conceive that God will confirm the testimony of their own minds. But I must remind all such persons, that there is a future judgment; and that God will judge, not by the laws which men establish for themselves, but by the law which he himself has given in his written word. By that shall the whole universe be judged, and according to that shall every man's eternal doom be fixed! [1 Corinthians 4:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.4-5).

***~~2. Those whose consciences are weak and troubled—~~***

If your minds are troubled, see whether there be not just occasion for them so to be: and when you have found out the accursed thing, put it away from you with abhorrence, and implore mercy at the hands of God for your sin in having ever indulged it! If it is but a mote in the eye, let conscience never cease to weep, until it has wept it out.

There are, it is true, circumstances which may well admit of doubt: and, under such circumstances, you will do well to consult someone of known piety and deep experience; and at the same time to seek direction from God, through the influence of his Holy Spirit. While your doubts remain, it will be well to pause: for, "if a man esteems anything unclean, to him it is unclean, verse 14."

Yet it is by no means advisable to rest without obtaining satisfaction to your mind. It is a painful state in which to be; and you should use all proper means to obtain deliverance from it [Galatians 6:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.4); but, until that deliverance comes, take my text for your guide: "Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves." "If once you make sacrifice of a good conscience, you are in the way to make an utter shipwreck of your faith! [1 Timothy 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.19)."

Yet I must say, *Do not judge those who see not with your eyes, and walk not in your path*. Another person may have a fuller insight into the nature of Christian liberty than you: and "to his own Master must every man stand or fall." *Be contented with approving your own selves to God; and leave to others the latitude which you claim for yourselves*, verse 4, 5.

***~~3. Those who enjoy the testimony of a good conscience—~~***

This is a most exalted privilege, and, whether in life, [2 Corinthians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.12); or death [2 Kings 20:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 20.3), a source of unutterable joy. Be thankful for it: and, at the same time, be washing your very best actions, no less than those which are more faulty, in the fountain of your Redeemer's blood: for, if He "bears not the iniquity of your holy things, [Exodus 28:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 28.38)," your most righteous acts will condemn you.

Take care, at the same time, that your liberty be never so used as to become a stumbling-block to your weaker brethren. It were better to forbear any gratification whatever, than, by indulging yourselves in it, to make it an occasion of offense to any, [1 Corinthians 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.9); [1 Corinthians 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.13). Let your whole conduct show the excellence of the principles by which you are governed: and let it be "the one labor of your lives to maintain a good conscience both towards God and towards man! [Acts 24:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 24.16)."

***~~#1919~~***

***~~SELF-DENYING LOVE INCULCATED~~***

**[Romans 15:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.1-3)**

"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

WHILE many scarcely ever dwell upon the atonement of Christ, and on that righteousness which he has wrought out for the redemption of a ruined world, others insist on these, almost to the utter exclusion of all other topics. But the Apostle Paul, who certainly was inferior to none in his regard for that fundamental doctrine of the Gospel—salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus, was yet *delighted to exhibit his Divine Master as a pattern and example of universal holiness*. In respect to love in particular, he constantly urges us "to love one another, as Christ loved us."

In the words before us, he seems almost to go out of his way (if we may so speak) to introduce Christ to our notice in this view. He brings forward, as illustrative of it, a passage of Scripture, in which a person less conversant with the spiritual import of Scripture, or less alive to this important point, would scarcely have found anything bearing upon his subject. Indeed he almost appears to apologize for this particular quotation, by observing, that "Whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;" and that, consequently, this prophecy, even though it would not be thought to bear so directly and obviously upon his subject as some others, may properly be adduced in illustration of it. But this very circumstance tends so much the more to show the importance of the subject in the precise view in which he has placed it. Let us consider then,

***~~I. The example here propounded to us—~~***

Two things are said of our blessed Lord,

***~~1. He pleased not himself—~~***

And how true is this! View him in his incarnation.

Was it to please himself that he left "the bosom of the Father," and divested himself of all "the glory that he had with the Father from all eternity?"

Was it to please himself, that, "when he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant?"

Was it to please himself that he was "made in the likeness of sinful flesh," partaking of all our infirmities, and being "made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted?"

View him in his life. Was it to please himself that until the age of thirty he worked as a common carpenter: and that, from the time he took upon him his ministerial office, he was subjected to evils and distresses of every kind; being from first to last "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," as his daily and hourly companion? So poor was he, that he had not a place where to lay his head: and so hated, that he was "a sign spoken against," a butt of contradiction to all the people of Israel. There was not anything he either said or did, that did not subject him to fresh reproaches, and prove an occasion of offense to all around him. Incessantly was he represented as a deceiver, a blasphemer, and a devil, yes, as one who should not be allowed to live. His very first sermon would have been his last, if he had not miraculously withdrawn himself from his persecutors. Was all this undertaken and submitted to, to please himself?

View him in his death. Was it to please himself that he consented to drink the cup of bitterness which his Father put into his hands; or that he was bathed in a bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane; or that he endured the hidings of his Father's face, and expired under all the shame and agonies of crucifixion? No! at no one moment of his life do we find him consulting his own pleasure. His only object, his very food and drink, was to do the will of him who sent him.

***~~2. He submitted to all manner of indignities purely for our sake—~~***

It had been foretold by David that he would do so. The passage cited by the Apostle undoubtedly refers to Christ. Whatever reference in a subordinate way it had to David, its main import is that affixed to it in our text, [Psalm 69:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 69.9); [Psalm 69:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 69.20). The other passages connected with these in verse 9 and 21, show infallibly that the Apostle cites the text in its true, and not in an accommodated, sense.

Every one that was an enemy to God the Father, was an enemy to him: and every shaft directed against the Majesty of Heaven, pierced his bosom. Nor did he withdraw himself from this inconceivably distressing situation, until he had accomplished all that his sufferings were intended to effect. Such was his stupendous love to God, whose glory he sought; and to men, whose souls he had undertaken to redeem! This was the end which he proposed to himself in all: and "this was the joy that was set before him, as his only inducement to endure the cross, and to despise the shame."

Consult all the sacred records, the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, or the uniform declarations of the New Testament, and *the salvation of man will be found to have been the one end of all that he either did or suffered*. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him".

Let us now proceed to consider,

***~~II. The instruction founded upon it—~~***

This is two-fold:

***~~1. That we also should not please ourselves—~~***

There is a proneness in men to follow their own inclinations, without considering what may be the effect of their conduct on the minds of others. But in no case whatever should we be guilty of this: it is directly contrary to love, the invariable character of which is, that it "seeks not her own."

We have perhaps a clearer insight into the nature and extent of Christian liberty than others: but shall we therefore use that liberty in a way that may ensnare them, or wound their feelings? No! "the strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves." The sacrifice must be made on the part of the strong; and the stronger any profess themselves to be, the more should this self-denial be exercised by them.

This is a subject peculiarly worthy of the attention of all who "profess godliness." It is much to be lamented, that many carry their zeal for religious liberty to a very undue extent: the mere circumstance of a thing being required by law or custom, is sufficient to make them violent against it: and they would rend the Church into a thousand parties, rather than comply with a prescribed rite or ceremony, even of the most innocent kind.

We mean not by this observation to justify the imposing of anything which is wrong, or that admits of any serious doubt: but *there must be, and there are in every Church under Heaven, some rules and orders of human appointment*; and, where there is no moral evil in them, they should be observed "for the Lord's sake." To be rigid and fierce in our opposition to them, merely because they are established by law, while we conform to others that are established only by this or that particular society of Christians, is unreasonable, inconsistent, and highly unfitting.

Such was not the conduct of our blessed *Lord*, who, though he had no sin to wash away, submitted to John's baptism, notwithstanding it had never been enjoined by the Mosaic law; and wrought a miracle to pay a tax, from which he might have justly pleaded his right of exemption.

*Paul*also has in this respect set us a beautiful example, "making himself the servant of all," and "becoming all things to all men, for the Gospel's sake, [1 Corinthians 9:19-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.19-23)." This was a truly Christian spirit, which we should ever study to imitate; *submitting cheerfully to an abridgment of our liberty in matters of indifference*, instead of acrimoniously vindicating our rights, and "using our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness."

***~~2. That we should seek rather the edification of others—~~***

To "please our neighbor" is an object well worthy our pursuit: for it is by pleasing him that we shall gain the more easy access to him, for the benefit of his soul. Not that we would attempt to please him by any sinful compliance: for "if in that sense we please men, we cannot be the servants of Jesus Christ." The proper limit to our compliance is here assigned: we must go so far only as will be "for his good to edification."

Do we think him too much leaning to the side of needless scrupulosity or superstitious fear? Let us not despise his weakness, but act towards him with all imaginable tenderness and forbearance.

Do we behold in him a readiness to be offended or grieved at any liberty in which we indulge ourselves? Let us cheerfully condescend to his infirmity in a way of conciliation and concession. To "win his soul" should be in our estimation a rich recompense for all the kindness we can manifest, and all the self-denial we can exercise.

This was the line of conduct which Paul both enjoined to us, and himself practiced: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's good: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved, [1 Corinthians 10:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.24); [1 Corinthians 10:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.33)."

But to recur to the example of our blessed Lord, to which our attention is more especially directed. We see to what an extent he carried these virtues, even to *a relinquishment of all the glory of Heaven, and to a suffering of all the pains of of Hell,*for the welfare, not of his friends and brethren, but of his most inveterate enemies. Yes, "even Christ" (whose pleasure the whole universe ought incessantly to consult) "pleased not himself." Shall we then be backward to deny ourselves? We, whose only hope is founded on the self-denial that Christ has exercised for us; and who are bound even to "lay down our lives for the brethren?" No! "Let the same mind be in us as was in Christ Jesus; and let us look, not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others, [Philippians 2:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.4-5)."

***~~The subject thus viewed may well suggest to us the following reflections:~~***

***~~1. How extensive and amiable is true religion!~~***

*Religion consists not in notions, nor even in outward actions—but in the habits and dispositions of the mind. It consists in a subjugation of self in all its bearings, and in a conformity of heart to the mind that was in Christ Jesus.* And O! what a world would this be, if true religion universally prevailed! Some have thought that piety thus exercised would excite admiration in all who beheld it: but unhappily we know the contrary: for our blessed Lord exhibited it in its utmost possible perfection; and was the more hated on account of the brightness of his example. But still there is something in this conduct that carries its own evidence along with it; and we cannot but feel, that the more it prevails, the more happiness must be diffused all around us.

Only conceive, for a moment, every professor of Christianity "walking precisely as Christ walked," "not pleasing himself" in anything, but studying in all things to please, and benefit, mankind! Conceive him to be so intent on this blessed work, as readily to bear all manner of reproaches and distresses for the furtherance of it! Could this fail of diffusing happiness wherever he went? Let it then be our endeavor to foster, both in ourselves and others, this heavenly disposition: and "whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, let us think of these things," and practice these things, [Philippians 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.8); so that all men may "see that we are Christ's, by the Spirit which he has given us."

***~~2. How little of true religion there is in the world!~~***

In polished society we behold some semblance of this: the very essence of good breeding is, so to demean ourselves as to give no offense to any, but pleasure and satisfaction to all. And it is happy for the world, that, where higher principles are lacking, there is a substitute for piety in the established usages of mankind. But however this substitute may answer many valuable purposes in society, it is of no value in the sight of God, since it is almost always laid aside in the domestic circle, and never exercised from any principle of love to God.

In truth, we cannot conceive anything more contrary to the deportment of the Lord Jesus Christ, than the insincere professions which pass for politeness among men: so that it is in vain to look for any conformity to Christ in the world. Nor shall we find much even in the Church itself. *There is a deplorable lack of a Christian spirit among the generality of those who profess the Gospel*. Every party, instead of endeavoring by kindness and concessions to conciliate others, is ready to erect a barrier against others, on purpose to prevent that harmony which should exist among all the members of Christ's mystical body. "Brethren, these things ought not so to be!" They are most offensive to God, and most injurious to yourselves: and yet persons who live in the indulgence of these hateful tempers, will call themselves followers of Christ; as if "a fountain could at the same place send forth sweet and bitter water, [James 3:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 3.9-12)."

But woe be to those in whom "this earthly, sensual, devilish, wisdom" is found [James 3:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 3.14-15); they cannot on earth, nor will they in Heaven, be found acceptable worshipers before God. Pray then, brethren, to our common Father, that your souls may be filled with more holy dispositions; and that, "being made like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, verse 5, 6."

***~~3. How conducive to piety is an intimate acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures!~~***

In reading the Holy Scriptures, we should aim particularly at our own spiritual improvement: and, in that view, we should notice with peculiar care the spirit that is inculcated in the precepts, and the disposition that is exercised by the saints of God. If we are not principally attentive to this object, we shall lose more than half the benefit that should result to us from the perusal of them. It is probable, that, in the many hundred times that we may have read the 69th Psalm, we never noticed the very point mentioned by Paul, notwithstanding he has taken such care to direct our attention to it!

*Alas! it is to little purpose to read the Scriptures, if we do not read them with a practical application of them to our own souls.*But if we read them in this way, behold, what unspeakable benefit we may derive from them! Brethren, let not a day pass without treasuring up in your minds some passage that shall lead you into a fuller knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a more entire conformity to his image.

We are told, that "whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning verse 4;" and we see in the application of the prophecy before us, what valuable instruction is to be drawn from that sacred source. Treat every passage then in this way. Treasure it up in your minds: consider all that it either expresses or implies: and apply it to your souls for your more abundant edification in faith and love. So shall you grow up into Christ as your living Head, and progressively "be changed into his image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."

***~~#1920~~***

***~~PREFERRING THE GOOD OF OTHERS~~***

**[Romans 15:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.5-6)**

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

[A sketch extemporaneously given to a young friend.]

IN order to glorify God, we should deny ourselves for the benefit of others.

In the apostolical Churches there were many evils to be corrected. These arose, partly from the vast diversity of states from which the converts were brought to unite with each other in one Church; but they arose also, more particularly, from the corruptions of the human heart. *Selfishness is not peculiar to any age or place, but extends itself through the whole race of mankind; and to correct this is one of the great objects of the Gospel of Christ.*For the correction of it the Scriptures supply the richest instruction: for the correction of it they exhibit also the brightest example. To both of these we are directed in the passage before us.

We will consider,

***~~I. The example of Christ here proposed to us—~~***

To enter into this we must consider the state in which our blessed Lord was from all eternity; his glory and felicity in the bosom of his Father. What would he have done had he considered only his own happiness? He would have left the world in the same way as he did the fallen angels. But how did he act? He assumed our nature in its fallen state; submitted to all the evils incident to that state; endured the contradiction of sinners throughout his life; bore the very wrath of God himself even unto death; and by this has redeemed our souls from death, and restored us to the favor of our offended God. Thus, *instead of pleasing himself and disregarding us—he disregarded himself to benefit us.*

***~~II. The obligation that lies upon us to follow it—~~***

Our blessed Lord is set forth as an example to us: in the above respects we need more especially to follow him. Man as fallen, and thinks of nothing but his own personal gratification. Man, as redeemed, continues also but a selfish creature. Self-denial is a grace which we are very averse to exercise: we press even duty to the side of self-indulgence, and enlist conscience in the service of our own lusts.

But love should be seated on the throne of our hearts; its dictates alone should be followed in all things. The waving the felicity of Heaven for a season, and incurring for a season the pains of Hell, would scarcely be too high a standard to aim at for the good of others. This was our Lord's example; and in this we should endeavor to follow his steps, [Philippians 2:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.4-5).

***~~III. The high attainments to which we would aspire in the prosecution of it—~~***

The lack of this spirit produces much disunion in the Church, and brings much dishonor to God; the exercise of this spirit renders the Church a prelude to Heaven. To glorify God should be the one object of all; and in this there should be one heart, one mind, one faith, throughout the whole. To the attainment of this should every one aspire, and to contribute towards it should be the one labor of his life.

But it may be asked, How can all this ever be attained? How can creatures, who have so little natural forbearance, in whose minds there is such a proneness to irritation and disquietude, ever be brought to such a state as this? Truly, if we looked into ourselves, our state would be hopeless; but in God there is all that we stand in need of.

Need we patience? He is a God of patience; possessed of it in all its fullness. Does such a fullness of comfort appear beyond the reach of mortal man? God is a God of comfort also; ready to bestow it out of his own inexhaustible, immeasurable fullness; and to him we are here directed to lift up our eyes, in earnest and assured expectation. *There is nothing which he cannot work in the mind of man. He who wrote his law on tablets of stone, can write it on the fleshy tables of our hearts*. He who upheld his own law in all that he did and suffered, can effect the same blessed work in us also; and this he has promised to his Church and people; he has promised it by covenant and by oath. Look to him then as your covenant God and Father; plead with him the glory that will result to himself from the exercise of these graces; and, *in dependence on his strength, go forth to the fulfillment of this duty*: "Seek not your own things;" "prefer others in honor before yourselves;" "seek not even your own profit," as abstracted from that of others, but "seek the profit of many, that they may be saved;" and know that the more you deny yourselves for the benefit of others, the more you will resemble Christ, and glorify your God.

***~~#1921~~***

***~~THE UNIVERSALITY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM~~***

**[Romans 15:8-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.8-12)**

"For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples." And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him."

*THERE is in man by nature such an inordinate portion of self-love, that his regards are almost exclusively confined to those who coincide with him in sentiment and contribute to his comfort.* The smallest difference of opinion in things either political or religious shall be sufficient to produce not only indifference, but in many instances alienation and aversion.

We do not much wonder at a lack of mutual affection between the Jews and Gentiles, because they imbibed from their very infancy the most inveterate prejudices against each other, and had all their principles and habits as opposite as can be conceived. But, unhappily for the Christian Church, the same disposition to despise or condemn each other remained among them, after they were incorporated in one body, and united under one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

To counteract this unhallowed disposition, and to promote a cordial union among all the members of Christ's mystical body, was the incessant labor of Paul. In the whole of the preceding context he insists on this subject, recommending mutual forbearance and affection from the example of Christ, who showed the same regard both to Jews and Gentiles, both to strong and weak, compare verse 1-3, 5-7 with the text.

In the words before us we see,

***~~I. The extent of Christ's Church—~~***

The ministry of our blessed Lord had respect,

***~~1. Primarily, to the Jews—~~***

Jesus was himself born a Jew; and he submitted to circumcision, which was the initiatory rite whereby the Jews were received into covenant with God. When he entered upon his ministerial office, he addressed himself exclusively to those of the circumcision: when solicited to confer his blessings on a Syro-Phoenician woman, he refused; saying, that he was "sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and that "he could not take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs, [Matthew 15:23-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 15.23-26);" though, for the encouragement of all future supplicants, of whatever nation or character, he afterwards granted her request, [Matthew 15:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 15.28). When he sent forth his disciples into all the cities, towns, and villages, he expressly forbade them to enter into any city of the Gentiles or Samaritans, [Matthew 10:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.5). Even after his resurrection, he enjoined his disciples to make the first overtures of mercy to the Jews, notwithstanding they had so recently imbrued their hands in his blood [Luke 24:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.47). And though he gave them a commission to carry his Gospel into all the world [Mark 16:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.15), they still retained their prejudice respecting the exclusive privileges of the Jews: the people who were scattered abroad on the persecution of Stephen, went everywhere speaking the word to none but Jews only, [Acts 11:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 11.19); and when, after the space of six years, this prejudice was opposed by the miraculous interposition, and incontrovertible attestation, of God himself, the Apostles with difficulty acquiesced, saying, "Then has God granted repentance unto life unto the Gentiles also! [Acts 11:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 11.18)."

Even Paul himself, who from his first conversion was constituted more especially the minister of the uncircumcision, labored first to convince the Jews, and turned not to the Gentiles, until the invincible obstinacy of the Jews rendered his further attempts to instruct them altogether hopeless, [Acts 13:46-47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.46-47).

In all this the Lord Jesus consulted "the truth of God, and confirmed the promises made to the fathers;" which, though they comprehended all the spiritual seed of Abraham, had doubtless respect to those in the first place who should also be found among his lineal descendants, [Genesis 17:1-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 17.1-8).

***~~2. Ultimately, to the Gentiles also—~~***

In the very promises made to Abraham, the Gentile nations were expressly included, [Romans 4:16-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.16-18). [Galatians 3:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.7-9); [Galatians 3:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.28-29). But, to confirm this truth, Paul brings passages out of all the different parts of the Old Testament, "the *law*of Moses, the *prophets*, and the *Psalms*—our Lord thus divides the Old Testament, [Luke 24:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.44)," to prove his point. It is needless to enter into a minute examination of all the passages adduced, since the authority of an inspired Apostle is proof sufficient that they all relate to the point in hand.

In the first passage, David speaks in the person of the Messiah; and declares, that, in consequence of the subjugation of his enemies, he will promote the Father's glory among all the nations of the world, [Psalm 18:49](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 18.49).

In the next passage, Moses exhorts the Gentiles, when made partakers of all the blessings of redemption, to unite with the Jews in celebrating the event with holy joy, [Deuteronomy 32:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.43).

The third passage, which is selected from the Psalm, is of similar import with the foregoing, [Psalm 117:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 117.1).

And the last passage, which is more express and pertinent than any of the former, is a prophecy that the Gentiles shall trust in and obey Him, who was, as *God*, "the root;" and, as *man*, "the offspring," of David and of Jesse, [Isaiah 11:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.10) with [Revelation 22:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.16).

These testimonies unequivocally prove, that, however Jesus, for the accomplishing of the promises, ministered to the circumcision chiefly—yet he did not confine his regards to them, but ordained that all, of whatever nation, should equally be admitted to his covenant, and be made partakers of his salvation.

The Apostle's main point respecting the extent of the Church being proved, we should call your attention to what he incidentally mentions; namely,

***~~II. The duty of all its members—~~***

To whoever our Lord communicated his salvation, it was his invariable purpose that those who partook of it should "glorify God for his mercy." The manner in which this is to be done, may be gathered from the passages that are cited. The duty of every member of Christ's Church is,

***~~1. To submit to him—~~***

Christ is "risen to reign over the Gentiles." Now where there is government, there must be subjection: and consequently all who should belong to Christ must "take his yoke upon them." Their submission too must be willing and unreserved: they must say, like Paul at his conversion, "Lord, what will you have me to do? [Acts 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.6)." If we retain in anything a will contrary to his will, and a practice contrary to his commands, then we are rebels and enemies: and if we say respecting him, "I will not have this man to reign over me, [Luke 19:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.14);" he will before long say respecting us, "Bring hither those that were my enemies, who should not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me, [Luke 19:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.27)."

***~~2. To trust in him—~~***

Christ comes, not only as a Lord, but as a Savior; through whom we are to find deliverance from the wrath to come. Now it is said, that "in him shall the Gentiles trust." Our duty towards him is, to believe that he is equal to the task which he has undertaken; that in him there is a fullness of wisdom to instruct the ignorant, of righteousness to justify the guilty, and of grace to sanctify the polluted. We should entertain no conceit of our own sufficiency, nor any doubts of his. We should renounce every kind and degree of self-confidence, and repose all our trust in him alone. Whatever be our character, this is our duty:

the *learned*must look to him for guidance, as much as the most illiterate;

the *moral*must look for acceptance through his righteousness, as much as the most immoral;

the *strong*must depend entirely on his arm, as much as the weakest person in the universe.

There is one mode in which all recline upon their bed for the rest of their bodies; and this is the mode which all must adopt in reference to Christ, in order that they may find rest unto their souls, [1 Peter 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.7). [Isaiah 50:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.10).

***~~3. Rejoice in him—~~***

To "rejoice in the Lord always [Philippians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.4)." is not merely permitted, as a privilege, but commanded, as a duty. We dishonor him when we do not rejoice in him: we evidently show that we have a low apprehension of his excellency, and of the benefits which he confers. What they are doing in the Church above, that we should be doing in the Church below. Our obligations are the same, and so should also our occupations be.

Are the glorified saints incessantly admiring and adoring him who is the Author of all their happiness, [Revelation 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 4.8); [Revelation 5:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.12). We also should ever be contemplating the incomprehensible wonders of his love, [Ephesians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18-19), and "rejoicing in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory, [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.8)." Let not religion be viewed as a system of restraints, but as a fountain of joys; for "all her ways are ways of pleasantness and peace." The effect of it on all who embraced it in the first ages was, to fill the soul with joy, [Acts 2:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.41); [Acts 2:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.46); [Acts 8:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.8); [Acts 8:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.39); and such will be its effect on us, if we do not by sin and unbelief provoke the Savior to hide his face from us.

***~~4. Walk in his steps—~~***

This is the particular scope of the text; the intent for which all these quotations are introduced. Our blessed Savior has shown a gracious and merciful regard for all the human race: nor has he permitted any diversity in their habits or conduct to exclude them from his kingdom, provided they repent and obey his Gospel. Now our hearts should be enlarged after his example. We should not suffer little circumstantial differences to alienate us from each other. While we claim a right to follow our own judgment, we should cheerfully concede the same liberty to others. *A difference of conduct may be proper for different persons, or for the same persons under different circumstances*. This is evident from Paul refusing to suffer Titus to receive circumcision, when he had already administered that rite to Timothy; as also from his performing at Jerusalem the vows of a Nazarite, after he had for twenty years renounced the authority of the ceremonial law.*It is therefore by no means necessary that we all conform precisely to the same rule in indifferent matters*: but it is necessary that we cultivate charity, and maintain "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

If we are not perfectly agreed in sentiment respecting things that are non-essential, we must at least agree in this—to leave every one to the exercise of his own judgment: the weak must not judge the strong, nor the strong despise the weak, [Romans 14:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.3), but all follow after "the things which make for peace, and things with which one may edify another, [Romans 14:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.19)."

***~~#1922~~***

***~~THE HOLY SPIRIT THE AUTHOR OF HOPE~~***

***~~[Romans 15:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.13).~~***

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit."

CHRISTIANS, even in the purest ages of the Church, have been too ready to indulge a spirit of bigotry and contention. The Jewish and Gentile converts in every place were much addicted to it. Paul, studious to counteract it in those at Rome, shows that Christ, though a minister of the circumcision, intended to incorporate the Gentiles into his Church; and prays for both parties, that, as the means of restoring union among themselves, they might be endued with more grace. His words show us,

***~~I. The privileges of true Christians—~~***

*The world forms a very false estimate of the Christian's portion; and Christians themselves too often live below their privileges.* It is their privilege to be filled,

***~~1. With lively joy—~~***

No one in the world has so much cause for joy as they. The man healed by Peter and John fitly, though imperfectly, represents their state. Nor is their joy like that of lost sinners, which soon expires in spleen and melancholy, [Ecclesiastes 7:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 7.6) and [Proverbs 14:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 14.13). They may "rejoice evermore," and without ceasing.

***~~2. With abiding peace—~~***

It should be thought by many that "peace" should have preceded "joy"; but the experience of God's people accords exactly with the Scriptures. Compare [Isaiah 55:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.12) with the text. Being freed from the torment of a guilty conscience, they have peace with God, [Romans 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.1). Christ has both purchased for them, and bequeathed to them, his peace, which passes all understanding, [John 14:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.27) and [Philippians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.7). Their "peace may well be as a river, since their righteousness is as the waves of the sea, [Isaiah 48:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 48.18)."

***~~3. With assured hope—~~***

This is the fruit, rather than the root, of peace and joy. They have the promise and oath of God on their side, [Hebrews 6:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.17-18), and have already received in their souls a pledge of their inheritance, [Ephesians 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.14). Well therefore may they enjoy a confident expectation of the promised land. All indeed are not sufficiently studious to "walk thus in the light:" but, what the Apostle prayed for on the behalf of all, it is the privilege of all to possess.

The Apostle further directs us,

***~~II. How we may attain the enjoyment of them—~~***

In this short and comprehensive prayer we are taught to seek them,

***~~1. From God as the fountain—~~***

God in himself is "a consuming fire!" but in Christ he is the "God of hope" and the source of all good, [James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.17). It is he who provided for us the Savior, and accepted him in our behalf; and has promised to cast out none who come to him in his Son's name. In vain will be the use of other means, if we apply not to him in prayer. But nothing is too great for God to give to the believing suppliant.

***~~2. By faith as the means—~~***

God has "treasured up a fullness for us in Christ Jesus;" and out of it we receive by faith according to the full extent of our necessities. By faith we resemble an infant at the mother's bosom. However favored we are, we can receive nothing but by the exercise of faith, [James 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.6-7); but "in believing we shall be filled with joy and peace." *It is faith that enables us to realize invisible things, and, by revealing Christ to the soul*, "to rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" and, by experiencing this joy of faith, our hope is augmented and confirmed, [Romans 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.5).

***~~3. Through the Holy Spirit as the agent—~~***

There is no power less than his that will produce these things. The whole work of grace is, not by might nor by power, but by God's Spirit! [Zechariah 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.6). He will afford us clear discoveries of the heavenly glory. He will witness to us our adoption, and seal us with God's image, [2 Corinthians 1:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.22). And thus while he forms us to a *fitness*for Heaven, he gives us also a *foretaste*of it in our hearts.

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

**1.** How much happier is the Christian than others even in this world! [Deuteronomy 33:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.29).

**2.** How happy will the Christian be when he shall receive these communications from the Deity, not through the narrow and obstructed channel of faith, but immediately at the fountain-head, [1 Corinthians 13:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.12).

**3.** How deservedly will they be left destitute of this happiness hereafter, who now give the pleasures of sin their decided preference, [Proverbs 1:22-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 1.22-31).

***~~#1923~~***

***~~MINISTERING TO THE GENTILES, A GOOD WORK~~***

***~~[Romans 15:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.15-16).~~***

"I have written to you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the *Gentiles*with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

THE calling of the Gentiles was, with the Apostle Paul, a very favorite subject of contemplation: and no wonder: for he had been appointed of God to be the minister of the Gentiles: and, in proportion as the prejudices of the Jews were hostile to their conversion, there was need of more abundant zeal in him who was ordained to promote it.

In the chapter before us he speaks very strongly on this subject. He affirms, indeed, that Jesus Christ was, in the first instance, "For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples." And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him. verse 8-12."

On this subject the Apostle wrote most explicitly to the Church at Rome, which consisted chiefly of Gentile converts. With the Jews he was more reserved upon it, because of the inveteracy of their prejudices, which he did not wish unnecessarily to excite; though, when occasion required, he was as firm in maintaining it with them, as with the Gentiles themselves. But to the Church at Rome, which consisted chiefly of Gentiles, he wrote more boldly, "because of the grace given to him from God, to be in a more especial manner the minister of Christ to them."

In discoursing on the Apostle's words, we shall open to you,

***~~I. The office committed to him—~~***

He was appointed in a more peculiar manner "the minister of the Gentiles, [Romans 11:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.13)." To this he was ordained at his first conversion, [Acts 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.15); [Acts 22:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 22.21); and he accounted this as a very singular honor, for which he was most highly indebted to the grace of God, [Ephesians 3:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.1-2); [Ephesians 3:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.7-8). In the execution of this office he acted,

***~~1. As a Preacher to them—~~***

"He ministered to them the Gospel of God;" and preached to them a free and full salvation, through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews in general, indeed, had no idea that such a mercy was designed for the Gentiles: but to the Apostle Paul it was "made known by a special revelation, that the Gentiles were to be fellow-heirs with the Jews, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel, [Ephesians 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.3); [Ephesians 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.6)." This, therefore, he proclaimed to them in a most fearless manner; and with such indefatigable industry, that "from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, he fully preached the Gospel of Christ, verse 19."

***~~2. As a Priest to God—~~***

It was for priests alone to present any offerings to God. To this office among the Jews Paul had no right; because he was of the tribe of Benjamin, and not of the tribe of Levi. But among the Gentiles he was at full liberty to perform it. They were his offering—even as many as he was instrumental in converting to the faith of Christ. In this light they had been represented by the Prophet Isaiah; who, speaking of the preachers in the latter day, says, "They shall declare my glory among the Gentiles; and they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, even to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord." Now the offerings under the law were sanctified unto the Lord, [Numbers 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 8.7); [Numbers 8:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 8.11); [Numbers 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 8.15); [Numbers 8:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 8.21); some with water, as the Levites, when they were dedicated to him; and others with oil, as the first-fruits, which were to be presented to the Lord as his exclusive property, [Leviticus 23:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 23.13); [Leviticus 23:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 23.17). In both these views were converts to be consecrated to the Lord; for, under the Gospel, the whole body of believers are a "holy priesthood, [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9);" and all of them "are begotten of God by the word of truth, that they may be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures [James 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.18)." But it is "by the Holy Spirit that they are sanctified," even by his Almighty operation on their souls: "He sanctifies them wholly, in body, soul, and spirit, [1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.23);" and thus renders them altogether "acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ, [1 Peter 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.5) with the text."

But though this office was assigned to Paul in the first instance—yet we hesitate not to affirm,

***~~II. The acceptableness of it, by whoever executed—~~***

We do not mean to say, that any one at this day is to arrogate to himself the apostolic office: that has long since passed away; nor can be revived, without a special revelation from Heaven. But preachers to men, and priests to God, we may all be; though some in a more subordinate sense than others.

***~~We may all labor for the conversion of the Gentile world—~~***

Some of us may engage in that holy work in our own persons: and a nobler or more honorable vocation cannot be exercised on earth. Christians, in general, have by no means such exalted notions of the missionary office as they ought to have. Even those who look up with reverence to stated ministers who superintend one particular church, are apt to regard a missionary as a sort of vagrant, that occupies a very subordinate office in the Church of God. But the very reverse of this is true. The missionary approximates far more to the apostolic office; and is elevated in honor above the stationary minister, in proportion as his self-denial is greater and his work is more arduous. And I cannot but earnestly recommend to those who are educating for the ministry, to consider whether they may not render to God and to the world a more acceptable service, by devoting themselves to that high employment of preaching the Gospel to some portion of the Gentile world.

But all of us may labor in this good work, through the instrumentality of others. Persons of either gender, and of every quality, contributed towards the constructing and furnishing of the Tabernacle, [Exodus 35:21-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 35.21-29); the same also concurred in the rebuilding of Jerusalem, [Nehemiah 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 3.12). And, in raising the spiritual Jerusalem, too, all may co-operate with effect.

Paul speaks of "women who labored with him in the Gospel, [Philippians 4:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.3);" and frequently are they of most extensive service to the Church of God; assisting in a great variety of ways the cause of God, and advancing, in their own line, as much as ministers do in theirs, his kingdom in the world, [Romans 16:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.1-4); [Romans 16:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.6); [Romans 16:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.12). The contributing, or raising of contributions for the support of missionaries, is an office which they can perform with very superior effect: and if in no other respect they can be useful, there is not one who may not contribute to the success of missions by offering up their prayers to God in their behalf.

This is the duty of all, without exception: for our Lord has commanded all to pray, "May Your kingdom come:" and if the people of God were more united and more earnest in presenting this petition to the Lord, there can be no doubt but that God should hasten forward that glorious day, in answer to their prayers, [Isaiah 62:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.1-2); [Isaiah 62:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.6-7).

***~~This will be truly "acceptable" to the Lord—~~***

God smelled a sweet savor, when offerings were presented to him in the days of old. And will he not, when we present to him such offerings as these?

Yes, God the *Father*will accept them: for it is "his Gospel that is preached," even "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God! [1 Thessalonians 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.9) and [1 Timothy 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.2); [1 Timothy 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.11)." It was He who devised this way of salvation for fallen man, and sent his own Son to effect it, and accepted the sacrifice of his Son in our behalf: and therefore we can have no doubt but that he will be well pleased with having that Gospel ministered to, and embraced by, the Gentile world.

And God the *Son*, too, will be pleased: for it is "His servants that we are," and it is his kingdom which we labor to establish in the world.

And God the *Holy Spirit*also will most joyfully accept the offering, because it is He who sanctifies it, in every case. It is he who renders our word effectual, and seals it on the souls of men. It is he who makes use of that word to purify them throughout, and to transform them into the Divine image. In a word, it is his work that we perform; or rather, we are mere instruments in his hands: for neither is Paul anything, nor Apollos anything; but God is "all in all."

Shall we not then all, according to our ability, engage in such a work as this? Methinks it is a work which the first archangel in Heaven might account it his highest honor to perform. Nor shall any who engage in this work lose his reward: for God has said, that "every man shall receive according to his own labor, [1 Corinthians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.8);" and, that "those who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever! [Daniel 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 12.3)."

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~1. Remember, in the first place, to offer up yourselves to God—~~***

This must precede everything else. Nothing that you can do will be of any value, until this is done. Paul, when commending the Macedonians for their unparalleled liberality, mentions it to their honor, that "they first gave their own selves to the Lord, [2 Corinthians 8:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.5)." Thus must all of you "present yourselves as living sacrifices to God," sanctified throughout by an unction from above, and by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. This is "your reasonable service;" and most "acceptable will it be to God, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1)."

If you do not do this, it is in vain that the Gospel is ministered unto you. To effect this, is the scope of all our labors, and the great end also of God's tender "mercies, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1)." It is for this end that you have been bought with a price; that you should no longer consider yourselves as at your own disposal; but that you should be His who bought you, and "glorify him with your bodies and your spirits, which are his, [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.19-20)."

***~~2. Contribute to the utmost to the offering up of others—~~***

It is a blessed work wherein to be engaged. If we are successful in one single instance only, it will well repay the labors of a whole life. *Who that knows the value of his own soul, must not pant after the salvation of the souls of others?*And who that knows his obligations to God, must not long to serve God in a way so acceptable to his mind, and so conducive to his glory? Let me not, then, call you to this work in vain. If there are any who are by education and by grace fitted for personal exertion in that field of labor, let him, like the Prophet, stand forth, and say, "Here am I, send me! [Isaiah 6:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.8)." If it is only in a subordinate manner that you are able to assist in this good cause, still let it be seen that your heart is in it, and your labor according to the full extent of your ability.

In your contributions, be liberal after your ability: and in whatever way you can be useful, "give yourselves to the work" with cheerfulness, and persevere in it with diligence. Certainly, if ever united exertions were called for, it is now, when God is so evidently prospering the work, and putting honor on those who are engaged in it. "Come then, all of you, to the help of the Lord:" and "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might!"

***~~#1924~~***

***~~CHRISTIANS DEBTORS TO THE JEWS~~***

***~~[Romans 15:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.26-27)~~***

"For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings."

AMONG all the subjects which occupy the minds of men, there is one, which, though it has as great a claim to our attention as any other, is, as it were by the general consent of the Christian world, kept entirely upon the back ground, and is scarcely ever so much as named; I mean, our obligations to the Jews. Our blessed Lord has said, that "salvation is of the Jews;" and yet notwithstanding we have received salvation from them, we scarcely ever think of making any return to them, or of bringing them to a participation of the blessings which they have transmitted to us.

True indeed, in theory, we trace up all the great truths of Christianity to the writings of the Old Testament, where they were primarily revealed and shadowed forth: but beyond the consideration of *Judaism as the foundation of Christianity, and of Christianity as the completion of Judaism*, we have in general scarcely a thought upon the subject.

We hope that no apology will be deemed necessary for bringing to your view a point, which confessedly is of great importance; and which, if regarded as it ought to be, by those whom I have the honor to address, would soon engage the attention of Christians throughout the land.

In the apostolic age, the converts, whether from among Jews or Gentiles, all considered themselves as one great family, of which Christ was the Head. Accordingly, when those of Judea were brought into circumstances of peculiar distress, partly through persecutions, and partly through the famine that prevailed in the days of Claudius Caesar, the Christians of other countries, especially of Macedonia and Achaia, gladly contributed for their relief. The pleasure with which they exerted themselves in this labor of love, is twice noticed by the Apostle: "It pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia; it pleased them truly;" that is, they took great delight in this act of kindness. But, while the Apostle thus records their benevolence, he acknowledges that it was no more than the occasion justly demanded: for many of the Jewish Christians had shown a very ardent zeal in extending to the Gentiles the knowledge of salvation through a crucified Redeemer; and therefore it was but right that the Gentiles, who had been made partakers of their spiritual things, should impart liberally to their benefactors such a portion of their physical things as the pressure of the times required: "It pleased them truly; and their debtors they are."

Now this idea, that the Gentile Christians are debtors to the Jews, is that which we propose more largely to consider: and in the prosecution of it, we shall state,

***~~I. Our obligations to the Jews—~~***

To the whole nation of the Jews, from the earliest period of their existence, we are greatly indebted. Let us first notice our obligations to the *patriarchs*. And here we will begin with Abraham, the father of the faithful. With him was made the covenant of grace, that covenant which is at this very moment the one ground of all our hopes. We, especially we Christians, know nothing of uncovenanted mercies. It is in Christ only that we can obtain salvation; in Christ, as our Surety, who has undertaken to discharge our debt, and to make reconciliation for us through the blood of his cross.

The covenant of which we speak, was made with *Abraham*and his seed, particularly with that promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, [Galatians 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.16); and it is only as children of Abraham that we have any part in it, [Romans 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.11); [Romans 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.16). [Galatians 3:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.7-9); [Galatians 3:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.29). Here then at once the obligations of the whole Christian world to Abraham are manifest to an unknown extent, inasmuch as every individual among them is indebted to him, for that covenant, which is the fountain and foundation of all their hopes.

To *Isaac*and *Jacob*also are we very greatly indebted: for they, in conjunction with Abraham, have shown to us, in a way that has never been surpassed, the nature and operation of saving faith. God promised to Abraham a Seed in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. According to all human appearances, the accomplishment of that promise was impossible: but Abraham "hoped against hope," and "staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." "Go out from your house and kindred," says God to him, "and sojourn in a land which I will give you." He went instantly, in dependence upon God's word, "not knowing where he was going." Go "take your son Isaac, the promised seed whom I have given you, and offer him up for a burnt-offering on a mount that I will tell you of." He instantly goes to execute the divine command, not doubting but that God will restore his son to life again, even after he would have been offered on the altar, and reduced to ashes.

In like manner *Isaac*and *Jacob*, the heirs with him of the same promise, sojourned in the land of Canaan, in full expectation, that it should be inherited by their posterity, though as yet they had not a foot of ground in it. They had opportunities enough to return to their own country, if they had chosen it; but they determined rather to be as strangers and pilgrims on the earth all their days; thereby "declaring plainly, that they sought a better country, that is, a heavenly one, and looked for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Compare [Romans 4:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.19-21) with [Hebrews 11:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.8-10); [Hebrews 11:13-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.13-19)."

Now here we see what *faith*is: it is such a practical dependence upon the word of God, as leads us to trust in it without doubting, and to obey it without reserve. It is true, we are not required to go forth from our native country, and to live in a foreign land, as they did; but the same mind must be in us as was in them: like them we must consider ourselves altogether "as pilgrims and sojourners" here, having our hearts fixed entirely on things above, and our lives conformed to the precepts and injunctions of our God. If we had not such bright patterns of holiness before our eyes, we would be ready to think, that lower attainments should suffice; and that some limit might be assigned to the exercise of faith, or to the efforts of obedience: but here we see in men of like passions with ourselves, what a *life of faith*really is, and what is required of all those who profess themselves to be the people of the Lord. What an advantage is it to have such *patterns*before our eyes, and to behold before us the footsteps which will infallibly lead us to everlasting happiness and glory!

From the patriarchs we will proceed to notice the *prophets*, and our obligations to them. Of these, the first whom we will mention is *Moses*, that great prophet, like unto whom the Savior himself was to arise, [Deuteronomy 18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 18), [Acts 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 3.22). To him we owe the moral law, even that law which reveals to us the extent of God's requirements, and consequently the depth of our depravity, and the impossibility of ever being saved by any obedience of our own. It is the knowledge of this law that alone can convince the soul of its lost and undone state without Christ; and it is intended by God as *a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith*.

Now we all consider ourselves indebted to those who have instructed us in our youth, especially if they have taught us important things which none other was able to communicate. How then are we all indebted to Moses for this infinitely important knowledge, which we never could have derived from any other source, and without which even the gift of God's only dear Son to die for us should never have been effectual for its desired ends! Besides, from this law every believer is instructed how to please and serve his God. It is a compendium of all that God requires of us: and, if only we follow that in all things, we are as infallibly sure of pleasing God, and of being rewarded by him at the last, as we are sure that there is a God in Heaven. Are we not then greatly indebted to the man who has given us this directory?

But there is another law which we have received from Moses, even the ceremoniallaw; which though, as given to the Jews, it was an insupportable yoke of bondage, yet, as handed down to us, it is scarcely less profitable than the moral law itself. To the Jews it was a dark and shadowy representation of good things to come: those shadows now are all explained by the Gospel; so that, through the light of the Gospel, all the mysterious rites and ceremonies of the law are presented in a clear, definite, and instructive view, as typifying Christ in all his work and offices: and, while it thus derives light from the Gospel, it reflects light back again upon the Gospel itself, and renders that incomparably more clear than it would otherwise be.

To illustrate this a little: A drawing that would represent all the constituent parts of a complicated engine, should not be intelligible without a distinct explanation of them: but with the help of the explanation, it should be clear enough. On the other hand, the explanation itself would not be clear, if it had not the drawing to illustrate it. So it is with the Law as explained by the Gospel: it does indeed receive in the first instance all its light from the Gospel; but afterwards it presents such an elucidation of Gospel truths, as conveys them with astonishing beauty and force to the mind.

Take, for instance, the *scape-goat*. You are told in the Gospel, that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin;" and that "all who believe are justified from all things:" but behold the high-priest slaying one goat, and sprinkling its blood upon the mercy-seat within the veil; and then laying both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confessing over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and then sending him away into the wilderness never more to be seen by man, [Leviticus 16:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 16.15); [Leviticus 16:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 16.21-22). Who that contemplates this, and realizes in his mind the transaction, does not see *the actual transfer of his sins to Christ, and the everlasting removal of them from his own soul?*I say then, that for the ceremonial, no less than the moral law, we are greatly indebted to this faithful servant of our God.

Let us turn from him to the prophets at large, comprehending the whole collective body of them: what a chain of prophecy have they given us! what an accumulation of particulars, so as to render it impossible for anyone who candidly compares the predictions with the events, to entertain a doubt, but that Jesus is the Christ! And let it be remembered, that they all suffered much at the hands of their fellow-creatures for their fidelity to God: and, at the time that they were delivering their prophecies, they knew that it was not for their own benefit, or the benefit of the existing generation, that they were testifying of these things, but for the instruction and benefit of generations yet unborn, even of us, to whom the Gospel is now fully revealed, [1 Peter 1:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.11-12). Do we owe them no gratitude for these self-denying labors?

But in order to appreciate more justly our obligations to them, let us suppose for a moment, that none of them had recorded the things revealed unto them, and that all their predictions had been forgotten: what would now have been the state of our minds in relation to the Savior? With what doubts and fears would we have been agitated, and how uncertain should we have been at this hour, whether Christianity were not altogether "a cunningly-devised fable!"

Do not let us forget, that the assurance which we enjoy respecting the truth of our holy religion, is altogether derived from them: for though the miracles of our Lord were a convincing evidence of his Messiahship to those who saw them—yet to us at this remote period the completion of prophecy is a far surer and firmer ground of confidence: and therefore to those who gave us such a minute and connected series of prophecies, we ought to feel the greatest obligations.

There is however one prophet in particular whose name we cannot possibly pass over in silence; I mean, the Prophet *David*. *He has committed to writing all the secret workings of his heart, under all the diversified conditions into which he was brought*, and has given to the Church this invaluable record, that all future saints, into whatever situation they might be brought, might be comforted and edified by his example. Where is there a child of God in the whole universe that does not account the Psalms of David his richest treasure? Who does not read them, and meditate upon them, and find them as marrow and fatness to his soul? Who that has any true religion in his soul, does not find the Psalms the means of his communication with Heaven; the ladder, by which he daily, and as it were hourly, ascends to God? Is this no benefit? Or is the conferring of it no ground of obligation? Truly the man to whom the name of David is not dear, evinces, that he has no taste for heavenly things, no just discernment of what is truly excellent.

It will of course be expected that we should not overlook the *Apostles*, those faithful instructors in the whole counsel of God, and those bright examples of all holy obedience. What hardships did they endure, that they might carry the Gospel to the Gentiles? How did they go throughout all the known world, in labors most abundant, and in deaths often, "not counting their lives dear unto them, so that they might but fulfill the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, and testify the Gospel of the grace of God!" How many millions are now blessing God for them in Heaven! How many too are daily adoring God for them on earth, for all the light of their instructions, and all the benefit of their examples! If those who have extended the blessings of civilization, of liberty, and of science, are called benefactors, then what name shall we find whereby to testify our gratitude to the Apostles, for all the light, and peace, and joy, and holiness, which through their instrumentality we possess.

We will content ourselves however with this brief mention of them, that we may fix our attention on Him to whom infinitely above all we are indebted—the *Lord Jesus Christ*. He also was a Jew, "of the seed of David as pertaining to the flesh," though in his divine nature he was "over all, God blessed for ever." Where shall we begin to speak of the obligations which we owe to him? or, having begun, where shall we make an end?

He did not merely engage in the covenant of grace as a party, like Abraham, but was the very Mediator and Surety of the covenant, who confirmed and ratified it with his own blood, and undertook, both on the part of God and man, that all the conditions of it should be fulfilled. He did not, like the prophets, merely utter predictions that would be afterwards accomplished, but actually accomplished in his own person all that had been predicted, and fulfilled every iota of what they had said would come to pass. Nor did he, like the Apostles, merely *preach*salvation to us, though at the expense of his own life; but he actually *wrought out*salvation for us, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree; and "becoming a curse for us," that we might be delivered from the curse of the broken law, and the wrath of an offended God.

Nay more; after having wrought out an everlasting righteousness for us by his own obedience unto death, he has for nearly eighteen hundred years been incessantly occupied in securing to us the blessings of redemption by the efficacy of his all-prevailing *intercession*, and by the all-sufficient operations of his grace. He is at this very moment the Head of the whole mystical body, the Church; and is *the source of life and strength to all his members. There is not among all the saints upon earth one holy desire, one good counsel, or one just thought, which does not proceed from him as its true and proper source*. Whatever any man possesses, he has received it out of the inexhaustible fullness of Jesus Christ: so that neither on earth nor in Heaven is there one who can arrogate any glory to himself: it all belongs to that blessed Savior, "who lives in us:" and to all eternity our song must be, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto your name be the praise!" "To him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and our Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever!" Say now, brethren, whether, or not, you are indebted to our ever adorable Emmanuel; and whether, if you neglect to praise him, the very stones will not cry out against you?

We hope by this time that the body of evidence which has been adduced has sufficiently established our obligations to the Jews, and has prepared us with some measure of sincerity to inquire into,

***~~II. The returns we should make to them—~~***

It is something more than mere acknowledgments that we are called to make: our duty towards them may be comprised under two particulars:

First, We should endeavor to secure for ourselves that salvation which the Jews of former ages have handed down to us.

Next, We should endeavor by all possible means to make the Jews of this and future ages partakers of the same.

***~~1. We should endeavor to secure for ourselves that salvation which the Jews of former ages have handed down to us—~~***

I should ask: Can it be conceived, that we are at liberty to neglect a salvation, which has been purchased for us at so great a price, and has been proclaimed to us in such a variety of ways? Have not all those who in successive ages have labored for us, a right to expect from us some fruit of their labors? Hear the appeal which God himself makes to us respecting this matter: "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? [Isaiah 5:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.3-4)."

Here is the very case in point. There is not anything which we could possibly have desired, either for our conviction or encouragement, which God has not done; yes, he has far exceeded anything we could have desired, or even thought. And is all this kindness to be requited with neglect? No! the Apostle justly says, "How shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him [Hebrews 2:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.3-4)." "If so many things had not been done for us, we had not, comparatively, had sin: but now we have no cloak for our sin:" and all who have sought our welfare, whether patriarchs, or prophets, or Apostles, yes and our Lord Jesus Christ himself, will be swift witnesses against us, if we suffer all their labor to be in vain. All that they have done for us, "If it is not unto us a savor of life unto life, will be a savor of death unto death." The first return then which we are bound to make to God, and to all who, as his instruments, have sought our welfare, is, to give up ourselves wholly and sincerely to the Lord. It is remarkable that the Apostle Paul, expressly referring to the collection made at Corinth on the very occasion mentioned in our text, says, "To their power, (I bear record,) yes and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves; begging us with much entreaty, that we should receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, [2 Corinthians 8:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.3-5)."

This then must have the precedence of all. Whatever returns we may make either to God or man for the benefits we have received from the Jews, they are all nothing without this: we must "first give our own selves to the Lord." "I beseech you then, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies and souls a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1)."

I would, in the name of the Most High God, lay claim to every soul here present, and say, "You are not your own; you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God with your bodies and your spirits, which are his, [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.19-20)." We call upon you to pay a debt: for God's debtors you are; and this debt must be paid to him at the peril of your souls.

***~~2. In the next place, having secured this salvation for ourselves, we should endeavor to make the Jews of this and future ages partakers of the same—~~***

It may be thought, perhaps, that though we are debtors to the Jews of former ages, we owe nothing to those of this generation. But we would beg permission to state a case, which we apprehend will place this matter in its true point of view.

Let us suppose, that a man of vast opulence had disinherited his own children on account of their misconduct towards him, and had bequeathed his whole possessions to us. Let us further suppose, that, after his descendants to the third or fourth generation had suffered all the most lamentable effects of his displeasure, it were in our power to benefit them, without at all injuring ourselves; yes, and perhaps to elevate them to their former rank and happiness, without the smallest diminution of our own property; should we not think that it was our duty to help them? Should not the very consideration of our having, without any merit or service on our part, come to the possession of their inheritance, give them some claim upon our compassion; so far at least as to benefit them, if we could do it without any loss to ourselves?

Here then is the very case: "They were broken off from their own olive-tree, that we might be engrafted in, [Romans 11:17-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.17-19);" and it is "of the root and fatness of their olive-tree that we are partaking" from day to day, [Romans 11:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.24); and, as we may by God's help be instrumental to the "engrafting them again upon their own olive-tree," it is our bounden duty to do it, more especially as it is God's avowed purpose, that "they shall be engrafted in," as soon as ever they repent of their former sins, and look with sorrow on the Messiah, whom they have pierced.

In this respect we may regard the Jews of this generation as the representatives of those of former ages, and discharge to them the debt which can no otherwise be paid to our original benefactors. If, notwithstanding their present degraded state, they are still "beloved by God for their fathers' sakes," much more should a regard for their fathers cause them to be beloved by us.

But if this illustration be not sufficient to convince us, then we will come to an express command of God, which cannot fail to carry conviction to every heart. It will be recollected by all, that, in the 11th chapter to the Romans, it is said, that "through the fall of the Jews salvation has come unto the Gentiles verse 11;"—that "the fall of the Jews is the riches of the world, and the diminishing of the Jews the riches of the Gentiles verse 12;"—and, finally, that "the casting away of the Jews is the reconciling of the world verse 15."

But is this blessing which we inherit through them, to be engrossed by us, and no endeavor to be made on our part for their restoration to the Divine favor? No! it is committed to us as a sacred deposit, to be improved for their good. I repeat these words; It is a sacred deposit, to be improved for their good. It is delivered to us, not as proprietors, to use it as we please, but as stewards, to use it for the express purpose that our Lord and Master has enjoined: and this avowed purpose is, that by every means in our power we should bring the poor outcast Jews to the renewed enjoyment of their paternal inheritance: nor should we ever see a Jew without saying in our hearts: There is a man whose inheritance I possess, and to whom I am very deeply in debt.

Let us hear the express declaration of God respecting it: "As you in times past have not believed God—yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy, verse 30, 31." Here let it be clearly seen, that the very end for which this mercy is committed unto us is, "that through our mercy they also may obtain mercy:" and if we do not improve, for the restoration of God's ancient people, the light and knowledge, the means and privileges, which we enjoy—then we are unfaithful stewards.

Were we speaking of a steward, who had alienated to his own use the property which we had entrusted to him for the benefit of others, we would find no terms too severe, not even those of thief and robber, whereby to characterize his conduct. We are unwilling to use such terms in reference to the Christian world, who have so long neglected their Jewish brethren; for we are persuaded that this neglect has proceeded from ignorance and inattention to the subject, rather than from any willful dereliction of the trust committed to them: but we must say, that, if the Jews continue to be neglected by us as they have been, we shall contract a fearful responsibility before God.

There is an idea, which is often suggested in order to excuse our supineness, namely, that they are so blind and hardened, that it is in vain to attempt their conversion. But whose fault is it that they are so blind and hardened? Is it not ours? If Christians had universally displayed in their life and conduct the superior excellence of their religion, is there not reason to think, that the Jews might by this time have been led to view it in a more favorable light? Is there not also reason to apprehend, that they have been confirmed in their prejudices against Christianity by the misconduct of its professors? What wonder is it that they are ignorant of Christianity, when the professors of it now for so many hundred years have made no efforts to enlighten them with respect to it? I say again, The fault is ours.

If Christians had universally labored for their salvation, as their forefathers did for ours, would there have been no converts from among them? Would none of them have been stirred up to make inquiry into the evidences of our religion, and to seek its blessings?

But be it so, They are blind and obdurate. And what were we, when in our Gentile state? yes, what would we at this very instant have been, if their fathers had done no more for us, than we have for them? But the same grace that has wrought in us, can work in them; and the same divine power that converted myriads of their forefathers, can work effectually in the hearts of men in the present day. The power that first "commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into the hearts of the very darkest among them; to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

By some it will be said, The time has not come. But who is authorized to say that the time has not come? We have rather reason to hope, that the time has come, or at least is near at hand: for there is confessedly at this present moment a greater zeal among Christians for the conversion of the Gentile world, and for the dissemination of God's word throughout the habitable globe, than has been at any other period since the apostolic age: and this gives reason to hope, not only that God is about to do great things among the Gentiles, but that he is about to visit the Jews also: for as, on the one hand, "blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles hascome in," that is, until the period for the fuller diffusion of divine light among the Gentiles be arrived; so, on the other hand, it is the fullness of the Jews, or the general conversion of them to Christianity, that is to be the riches of the Gentile world: according as it is written, "If the fall of the Jews be the riches of the world, and the fall of them the riches of the Gentiles, then how much more will their fullness be, [Romans 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.12); [Romans 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.25)."

Here is a fullness of the Jews, as well as a fullness of the Gentiles: and each is to be subservient to the completion of the other. In neither case is it to be understood as the completion of the work of divine grace among them; but in both cases it relates to the commencement of that period when the work shall be completed. The diminution of the Jews was progressive; and so we trust will be the bringing in of the complement both of Jews and Gentiles. Indeed so far is it from being true that the whole Gentile world must be converted before the work of conversion shall begin among the Jews; that, as appears from the passage just referred to, the Jews in their converted state will be eminently instrumental in converting the Gentile world: and the circumstance of their dispersion through the world, and their knowledge of the languages of the countries where they dwell, peculiarly fits them for communicating to the Gentiles the light of divine truth, the very moment that they themselves receive it.

We trust therefore that the very exertions which are now making for the Gentiles, have a favorable aspect on the Jews also. But there is at this time among the Jews themselves, and especially on the continent, a considerable expectation of their Messiah. In Britain also this now (1832) obtains to a considerable extent; nor is it an ill omen, that the Christian world have begun to pay some attention to them, and to use means for their restoration to the Divine favor. We lay not any great stress upon the success of past endeavors; though that is by no means contemptible, considering what difficulties there have been to contend with; but we say, that, whether the time for their full conversion has come, or not, the time for exertion on our part is always come: the time for us to pay our debts is always at hand: and therefore, without presuming to judge of secrets which God has reserved in his own bosom, we call on all to discharge to that benighted people their debt of love.

Is it asked, *What shall we do?* we feel that we are their debtors; but we know not how to discharge our debts? I answer, What their fathers did for us, that is the thing which we should do for them. Paul said, "I am a debtor both to the Jews and to the Greeks:" and how did he discharge his debt? He gave himself up altogether to the work of his ministry among the Gentiles; and counted not his life dear unto him, so that he might but fulfill it to their greatest advantage. He indeed had a particular call to the ministry, which does not extend to us: but *we in our private capacity should be as strenuous for the welfare of our fellow-creatures, as he was in this official character as an Apostle*. Our modes of manifesting our regard for them will of course differ from his: but as far as our respective situations and characters will admit, we should exert ourselves to make known to them that Savior, whom they have rejected and despised.

It was not every Jew that preached to the Gentiles; nor is it every Christian that is to preach to the Jews: but in conversation with them we may do much good, and in putting into their hands the New Testament, or other useful books; and particularly in earnestly praying to God for them, we may bring down his blessing upon them. Besides, many united together for that end may effect incomparably more than the same number could in their separate and individual state.

By encouraging therefore the Society that has been formed for the advancement of their welfare, we, though but small contributors ourselves, may be instrumental to the accomplishing of much good among them. The translating of the New Testament into pure Biblical Hebrew, and circulating that throughout all the world, is a work which we in particular, as patrons of learning and religion, shall do well to encourage. Were nothing more than the assisting of the Jews under some temporal calamity, the object of this discourse, we would feel that we were warranted in calling upon you, not to be liberal, but to be just; not to present gifts, but to pay your debts, to that much neglected people: for "if we have been made partakers of their spiritual things, our duty is to minister unto them in carnal things."

But we stand on far higher ground than the Apostle, and prefer a higher claim. It is the *souls*of the Jews which we would commend to your care, and their eternal welfare which we would urge you to promote: and in this view all our claims upon you as debtors come with ten-fold weight. Alas! we are greatly and shamefully in arrears; but in proportion to our past neglect should be our future exertions: and, as we know not how little time may be allotted us for fulfilling our duties to them, "whatever our hand finds to do, we should do it with our might."

***~~#1925~~***

***~~THE GOSPEL A SOURCE OF BLESSINGS~~***

***~~[Romans 15:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.29).~~***

"I am sure, that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ."

OF all the Apostles, Paul was by far the most abundant in labors. In this chapter he mentions the almost incredible pains he had taken in preaching throughout all that extensive region, "from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, the Gospel of Christ." He was now going to Jerusalem, to carry thither the alms he had collected for the relief of the poor saints in Judea: but as soon as he would have accomplished that object, it was his intention to proceed immediately for Spain, and to visit Rome in his way thither.

Of this intention he apprises the Church at Rome. He tells them, in this epistle, that, though he had not been the means of planting a Church among them, he considered himself "a debtor unto them, as well as unto other Gentiles;" and that "he longed exceedingly to see them, that he might impart to them some spiritual gift for the increase and establishment" of their faith and love, [Romans 1:11-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.11-15); and that "he was sure, that, when he should come to them, he should come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ."

That we may understand what it was that he thus taught them to expect, we shall show,

***~~I. The blessings which the Gospel is intended to impart—~~***

There is a fullness of blessings treasured up for men in Christ Jesus, and communicated to them by the preaching of the Gospel: and, in order to form any just conception of them, we must speak of them, not in the minuteness of detail, but in a large and comprehensive view.

***~~1. The Gospel imparts a fullness of light and liberty—~~***

It comes to men while they are "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death," and fast bound in the iron yoke of sin. And to them it proclaims "a Savior, and a great One, who is able and willing to deliver them, [Isaiah 19:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 19.20);" yes, it bids them shake off their chains, and "come forth out of their prison house, and out of darkness! [Isaiah 42:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.7)."

The operation of the Gospel upon the souls of men may be illustrated by the deliverance of Peter from his prison. There he was lying bound with two chains, and sleeping, though on the very eve of his expected execution. But God sent an angel to deliver him; and suddenly a light shined into the prison; and Peter was awakened from his sleep: and the chains fell off from his hands; and all the gates that seemed to oppose an insurmountable obstacle to his escape, opened to him of their own accord; so that, to the utter surprise of all his friends, he was brought forth at once to light and liberty, [Acts 12:6-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 12.6-16).

We do not mean to say, that the effect of the Gospel is always thus sudden; but, whether the operation be more or less gradual, this is invariably the outcome of it, wherever "it comes in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:" the persons wrought upon by it, "have their eyes opened, and are turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, [Acts 26:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.18)."

But there is an expression of Peter's that deserves particular attention. He represents men as "called by the Gospel out of darkness into marvelous light, 1 Peter 2:9." And marvelous indeed it is. It is such light as not all other books in the universe can impart; a light proceeding immediately from "the Sun of Righteousness;" *a light that exhibits everything in its true colors:*

sin, in all its malignity;

human nature, in all its corruption;

the world, in all its vanity; yes, and

God, as a reconciled God, in all his glory!

"It shines into the heart, and gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "The darkness being passed, and the true light shining into the heart," the soul is "delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God! [Romans 8:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.21)."

***~~2. The Gospel imparts a fullness of peace and joy—~~***

The first effect of the Gospel, or rather, of the law as preparing men for the Gospel, is, to alarm the conscience, and to make men sensible of their just desert: but the moment they embrace the promises of the Gospel, their fears are dissipated, and the whole soul is filled "with peace and joy in believing." This effect cannot be better seen than in the converts on the day of Pentecost. When they assembled in the morning, they were under the influence of every hateful and malignant passion: and, on their first conviction of their guilt, they cried out with great distress of mind, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" But, as soon as they received the Gospel into their hearts, behold, what an astonishing change was wrought; they were all penetrated with love, and peace and joy, "and ate their food with gladness, blessing and praising God" with one heart and one soul.

What was intimated before respecting the *light*imparted by the Gospel, may be said also of the *peace*and *joy*which it communicates: they are truly "marvelous;" the *peace*is a peace that passes all understanding," and the "*joy*is unspeakable and full of glory." The natural man has no conception either of the one or of the other: they are such as never were, nor ever can be, derived from any other source. Some little idea of them may be formed from the exalted language in which they are depicted by the prophets. The heavens and the earth, even universal nature, are called upon to sing and shout for joy on account of that glorious redemption revealed in the Gospel, [Psalm 96:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 96.11-13). [Isaiah 44:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.23); and this is but a faint expression of that felicity which is the assured portion of all that believe, [Psalm 72:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.6-7). [Isaiah 55:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.12); [Isaiah 35:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.1-2); [Isaiah 35:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.5-6); [Isaiah 35:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.10).

**3.** **The Gospel imparts a fullness of *growth*and *stability*—**

The Gospel does not merely beget souls to God, but fosters and nourishes them to their last hour; so that they progressively advance, from "babes to young men, and fathers," in the Christian Church. Under its influence they "proceed from strength to strength, until in due time they appear before their God in Zion." Wonderful beyond all conception are the truths which the gospel reveals to their minds; reveals, I mean, as far as they have a capacity to comprehend them.

What astonishing views does it exhibit of the fullness, the excellency, the glory of Christ, and the sufficiency of the work wrought out by him!

What discoveries does it give of the *Divine perfections*, as harmonizing and glorified in the work of redemption; of the Divine *counsels*also, as planning everything respecting it, and as infallibly accomplished in the salvation of God's elect!

What views does it afford them of the Lord Jesus Christ, as having undertaken to justify his people by his blood, to sanctify them by his Spirit, and to "keep them by his own power through faith unto everlasting salvation!" These truths, brought home with power to the soul, tend to "establish, strengthen, settle it;" and to create a holy confidence in "Christ, as the Finisher, no less than the Author, of his people's faith."

It is from such deep and enlarged discoveries as these that they are enabled to say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Not that they expect the *end*without the *means*: they know that *they can never attain "salvation but through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:"*they know that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" but they know also that the grace of Christ shall be sufficient for them, and that he will "carry on and perfect in them the good work he has begun," allowing "none to pluck them out of his hands," nor any to bring them into condemnation.

From this view of the blessings which the Gospel is intended to impart, we pass on to mark,

***~~II. The subserviency of the ministry to the communication of them—~~***

The Apostle felt assured that he should be an instrument to convey these blessings wherever he should go.

***~~God had originally instituted the ministry for this very end—~~***

Under the law, the priest's lips were "to keep knowledge," and to impart it to all who would come to inquire of them: but under the Gospel dispensation there was an order of men appointed to go forth into all the world, and, by themselves or their successors in the ministerial office, to "preach the Gospel to every creature." This also was the end for which the Holy Spirit, in his miraculous and gracious influences, was given unto men, even to fit them for the discharge of their ministerial functions; or, in other words, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; until we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ! [Ephesians 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.8); [Ephesians 4:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.12-13)."

Paul too knew, by his own blessed experience, that the word, as delivered by him, had in many thousand instances produced this effect. Many Churches had been established by him: yes, in no place whatever had he been left to "run in vain, or labor in vain;" he was assured, therefore, that if ever he should have the happiness of going to Rome, he should see fruits of his labors there, as well as he had done among other nations. The Church of Rome too was already well prepared to receive all his instructions, seeing that already both their faith and their obedience were so eminent as to have attracted the notice and admiration of the whole Christian world, [Romans 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.8); [Romans 16:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.19). See particularly his high commendation of them, chapter 15:14. He could have no doubt, therefore, but that in such a soil, the seed which he would sow should spring up abundantly.

***~~The same assurance also every faithful minister may have—~~***

God has said, that "if we stand in his counsel, and cause his people to hear his words, we shall be the means of turning them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings [Jeremiah 23:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.22)." True it is, we are not authorized to expect such success as was given to the Apostle Paul: but we are assured, that, if "faithful in the discharge of our office," we shall "not run in vain, or labor in vain." God has said, "As the rain and the snow come down from Heaven, and give bread to the eater and seed to the sower, so shall my word be, which goes forth out of your mouth: it shall not return to me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please; it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." The word is still "the rod of God's strength," the wonder-working rod, which, in whose hand soever it may be, shall alike effect the object for which it is sent, whether to the dividing of the Red Sea, or the bringing forth of water from the flinty rock. Still "it is as fire, or as the hammer that breaks the rock in pieces:" still is it "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds:" "it is sharper than any two-edged sword, and shall pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow." What If we are but babes in the delivery of it? God will "ordain strength in the mouth of babes and sucklings," and will show, that the Gospel still is, no less than in the apostolic age, "the power of God unto salvation, to every one who believes."

And here we will venture to make our appeal to those who hear us, Whether "the handful of grain which we have cast upon the top of these mountains has not grown up?" and, though we cannot say that "the fruit thereof shakes like the woods of Lebanon," or that converts among us "flourish as numerous and as beautiful as the grass of the earth, [Psalm 72:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.16)," yet some we have had as "seals to our ministry;" and, "though poor" in ourselves, we have been the happy instruments of "making some rich;" even richer far, than if we had imparted to them all the wealth of the whole world, [2 Corinthians 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.10). We quite mistake, if we suppose that any faithful minister shall be allowed to labor altogether in vain: the success of some may be small in comparison with that of others: but none shall be left wholly without witness; for our blessed Lord has expressly said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world! [Matthew 28:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 28.20)."

***~~May we not observe from hence—~~***

***~~1. What a glorious work is that of the ministry—~~***

A pious minister, who devotes himself wholly to his blessed work, is like a cloud, pouring down "showers of blessings" wherever he goes, [Ezekiel 34:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.26). God by his exertions "makes manifest the savor of the knowledge of Christ in every place, [2 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.14)," and scatters with a liberal hand "the unsearchable riches of Christ." O blessed work! what employment in the universe can be compared with it? See it described in the passage cited from Isaiah by the Savior himself, [Luke 4:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 4.18-19); and though that passage primarily relates to him, we may apply it with perfect propriety to all who go forth in his name: and, like him, we may justly say, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears! [Luke 4:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 4.21)." O that all who bear this sacred character, or look forward to the assumption of it, might have a befitting sense of the dignity of their office, and live only for the profitable discharge of it! and that each in his place and station might be "a tree of life," from which multitudes may gather fruit unto life eternal, [Proverbs 11:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 11.30).

***~~2. What enemies to themselves are those who will not attend the ordinances of the Gospel!—~~***

If Paul himself should "come hither in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ," what would they be benefitted, who would not come within the sound of his voice? The pool of Bethesda was endued with all its healing virtues in vain, to those who should not come and wait for the moving of the waters: nor can they be nourished by all the rich provisions of the Gospel, who will not accept the invitation to the feast.

O brethren, do not be making foolish excuses: for God, who knows the state of your hearts, will put the right interpretation on your refusal; and consider your answer, not according to the mere letter of it, "I *can*not come," but according to the spirit of it, "I *will*not come." To such despisers of God's mercy the Gospel will prove a curse, rather than a blessing: "to those to whom it is not a savor of life unto life, it will be a savor of death unto death:" and they who, "like Capernaum, have been lifted up to Heaven" by the privileges they have enjoyed, "will be cast down the deeper into Hell" for their abuse of them. May the Lord grant that you may know the day of your visitation, and, "while you have the light, may walk in the light, that you may be the children of light!"

***~~3. What a solemn responsibility attaches to those who hear the Gospel!—~~***

Surely every one of us should inquire, What blessings have I received from the ministration of the word? What do I know of this fullness of light and liberty, of peace and joy, of growth and stability, which the Gospel is sent on purpose to communicate? Brethren, has it "come to you as yet in word only, and not in power and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance?" Unhappy people, if this be the case! Have you never read those words of the Apostle, "The earth which drinks in the rain that comes oft upon it, and brings forth herbs fit for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God: but that which bears briers and thorns, is rejected, and is near unto cursing; whose end is to be burned, [Hebrews 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.7-8)." O fearful curse! O, "who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Be persuaded, beloved brethren, to pray mightily to God for his blessing on the word. It should be to no purpose that even "Paul should plant, or Apollos water, unless God himself give the increase." Look up to God, then, to make the word effectual for your good; and, when you are hearing it, pray to him to apply it with power to your hearts. Before you come up to the ordinances, go to the God of ordinances, and entreat of him to visit you with his salvation: and then say with yourselves, 'Now I am going to meet my God, who is coming to "bless me with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus:" Lord, "I am not straitened in you; let me not be straitened in my own affections:" come to me "in all the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ," and let me this day be "filled with all the fullness of God, [Ephesians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.19).' " To this prayer, in reference to every one of you, we most cordially add, "Amen and Amen."

***~~#1926~~***

***~~PRAYER FOR MINISTERS~~***

***~~[Romans 15:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.30).~~***

I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."

LITTLE do men imagine how great is the efficacy of intercession. They seem to think it presumptuous for one man to hope that he shall prevail with God in behalf of another. And doubtless it would be presumptuous, on a supposition that the intercessor conceived that he would prevail by any power or goodness of his own. But, when God has enjoined intercession as a duty, and appointed it as a means of bestowing his blessing upon men, it is highly befitting in us to obey his mandate, and to seek his blessing in his appointed way. There is no man who may not he benefitted by another in this way. A beggar may bring down blessings on the greatest monarch; and a very child in grace, upon the most eminent saint. Paul, conscious of this, frequently requested his brethren to pray for him, [Ephesians 6:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.19-20). [2 Corinthians 1:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.10-11).

In the passage before us, he seems to speak as if his whole welfare depended on the prayers of others; so urgent is he in his request that they should plead in his behalf at the throne of grace. In my remarks upon this request of his, I shall notice,

***~~I. Its extreme urgency—~~***

Language can scarcely express greater urgency than is here manifested in the Apostle's request. Observe,

***~~1. The object of his request—~~***

"Brethren, pray for me." He was now in peculiar circumstances. He was going up to Jerusalem, to carry to the saints there that relief which he had collected for their necessities. But the Jews there were exceedingly enraged against him, on account of his going to the Gentiles. The very saints themselves also were greatly prejudiced against him on this account: for they could not yet see that the Mosaic law was abolished; and, consequently, could not understand how he would so neglect, and discourage, the observance of it.

From this extreme irritation of all parties against him, he could not but apprehend that his life was in danger, and that his labors for the welfare of mankind should be brought to a close before he had accomplished the projects which he had formed. He therefore says, "Pray for me, that I may be delivered from those who do not believe in Judea; and that my service, which I have for Jerusalem, may be accepted of the saints, that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." In a word, he desired them to pray for the preservation of his life, the success of his labors, and the extension of his usefulness in the world. Now these are objects for which every minister needs a remembrance in the prayers of his brethren, and which justly call for their most earnest importunity in his behalf.

***~~2. The manner in which he urged it—~~***

He "besought" them: and to give the greater weight to his entreaty, he enforced it with the most powerful motives that he could possibly suggest. "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit." Now what was there which they did not owe to the Lord Jesus Christ, who had come down from Heaven for them, and redeemed them to God by his blood? And what concern were they not bound to manifest for his interests, which are so essentially connected with the labors of his servants, and the prosperity of his Church? For his sake, therefore, he entreated them to intercede for them, that his work might be carried forward, and his name be glorified.

"For the love of the Spirit," also, he desired their prayers. By this expression, I do not understand either their love towards the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit's love towards them. I understand him, rather, as urging them by the consideration of that love which they professed to feel towards all the members of Christ's mystical body, which was the common bond of union between them, and which was infused by the Holy Spirit into every soul wherein he dwelt. 'I understand it as though the Apostle had said, I entreat you by that "fellowship of the Spirit, [Philippians 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.1)" which you profess, and which of necessity will manifest itself by love, show me this greatest possible act of kindness, by interceding for me at the throne of grace.'

But the manner in which he desires them to pray is yet further remarkable, in that it breathes the very same ardor of mind as is expressed in his importunity. He intimates that he himself was extremely urgent in prayer with God for himself: and then he desires their concurrence with him in these his supplications. The term which he makes use of is taken from the contests that were maintained in the Grecian games, where every one put forth his utmost strength in order to obtain the victory. "I beseech you, strive together with me in your prayer to God for me:" be not content with offering a few lukewarm petitions; but wrestle with Almighty God, even as Jacob did, and rest not until you have obtained for me the desired blessings.

To justify the Apostle in making this request, I will proceed to point out,

***~~II. Its reasonableness—~~***

***~~The Apostle, from the first moment of his conversion, had lived only for God and for the souls of men—~~***

This appears from the history of the Church, and from all the epistles which he wrote: "He counted not his life dear to him, so that he might but finish his course with joy, and fulfill the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

Now, though we are far from comparing any minister of the present day with him—yet we must say, that every faithful minister, according to the grace given to him, is like-minded with the Apostle in this particular. Ministers, who feel in any measure the obligations of their ordination vows, give themselves up wholly to their ministry, and wait on it as their one employment through life. They direct all their studies, and all their labors, to this one object. Allured by no hopes, deterred by no fears, discouraged by no difficulties or disappointments, onward they go, accounting the conversion of one soul an ample recompense for all that they can either do, or suffer, for the attainment of it.

***~~He might well, therefore, claim from them an interest in their prayers—~~***

Certainly the Apostle's request was reasonable in this view: and certainly every faithful minister has a right to expect the same favor at the hands of his people. It is the least that they can do for him; and, I may add, *prayer is the greatest thing which one human being can do for another*. The minister, in his exertions for his people, exposes himself to all the hostility of an ungodly world: but the people, in praying for him, transact with God alone the business in which they are engaged. For them he can only embrace such opportunities as may be afforded him after much labor, and travail, and danger: whereas they have access to God at all times, and in all places, without any other difficulty than what arises from the deadness and carnality of their own hearts. To refuse him, therefore, this mark of their love, would be base in the extreme.

But, to enter more fully into it, I must proceed to mark,

***~~III. Its importance—~~***

The welfare of the Church, humanly speaking, depended on the preservation of the Apostle's life: and in like manner does it depend on the continuance and efficiency of every minister's labors. We would not magnify ourselves, brethren; for it should ill befit us to do so: but we may, and must, "magnify our office;" and, in this view, we may be permitted to say, that you yourselves are interested in the welfare of your ministers. If they be truly faithful and laborious, as they ought to be, your welfare is deeply interested in,

***~~1. The continuance of their lives—~~***

Doubtless God can raise up others in the place of those whom he removes. But, *humanly speaking, the spiritual prosperity of any people is intimately connected with the continuance of a pious minister among them*. Who that sees places, where religion once flourished, now left in darkness, and immersed in all the vanities of an ungodly world, must not take up a lamentation over them, and bewail the removal of the candlestick from among them! We need only look to the seven Churches of Asia, in confirmation of this melancholy truth.

Or perhaps we may come nearer home, and survey it in towns and villages within the sphere of our own observation. In truth, as if the labors of pious ministers were no better than a noxious pestilence, it is the aim of many to place in their room such pastors as shall defeat to the uttermost all the efforts of their lives, and bring back the people to a state of ignorance, carelessness, and indifference. I must say, therefore, that *those who have profited by the labors of any minister are deeply interested in his continuance among them*.

***~~2. The prosperity of their souls—~~***

*A pious minister, if he relapses into a carnal and worldly state, will soon show it in his ministrations. A neglect of his duties will ensue; and a lukewarmness will pervade all his labors.* The people will catch his spirit, and languish together with him, and soon relapse into formality. On the other hand, if his soul flourishes, there will be an unction upon his word; and it will go forth with power, and will reach the hearts of multitudes. He will be crying to God in secret, and will bring with him a blessing wherever he goes. *Being blessed in his own soul, he will be a blessing to all around him*.

I say, then, that the people are interested, deeply interested, in the prosperity of his soul. He is a vessel in which the golden oil is treasured up; and from which it passes, in the golden pipes of ordinances, to every lamp. If he is destitute, their light will decay: if he is full, they will burn the brighter, and God will be the more glorified in them.

***~~If, then, the people should enjoy much of God themselves, they should pray for their minister; who, under God, is the medium of communication between God and them.~~***

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~And now, methinks, I might well address to you the words of the Apostle in my own behalf—~~***

For surely, if not circumstanced as he was in relation to bodily dangers, we are all exposed to dangers from our great adversary, who, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour; and consequently we need, as much as ever the Apostle did, your intercessions with God, that we may be delivered from all the assaults of Satan, and be preserved blameless to the end.

Nor can our efforts, however multiplied they may be, produce any good effect without God's special blessing. If ever we are "mutually refreshed" by our fellowship with each other, either in public or private, it must be through the out-pouring of his Spirit upon our souls. I hope, too, that I may say, I have some claim to your good offices in this respect.

But, waving that part of my subject, **I will remind you of your obligations to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit—**

Where would you have been, if the Lord Jesus Christ had not come down from Heaven to expiate your guilt, and to work out a righteousness for you by his own obedience unto death? Or what would still have been your state, if the Holy Spirit had not opened your eyes, and sealed instruction upon your souls? You would, all, without exception, have been in darkness and the shadow of death, under the guilt of all your sins, and obnoxious to the wrath of an offended God.

What spark of love would you have had in your *hearts*to the Savior and to the members of his mystical body, if it had not been kindled there by the Holy Spirit? And if your *ears*had not been opened by that Divine Agent, you should have been as deaf to the motives here urged, as if the Lord Jesus Christ and his Church had no claim upon you whatever.

Then I say to you, Be sensible of your obligations to every person in the ever-blessed Trinity; and *be ready to show your gratitude and love, by every exertion in your power for the honor of your God, and for the benefit of his Church and people*.

***~~Above all, I would call upon you to engage in prayer, with all possible earnestness, for your own souls—~~***

If you ought to "strive," as if you were wrestling for your life, in behalf of others, what exertions should you not make for yourselves? Be assured, it is not a few lukewarm petitions that God expects from you; nor are such addresses to the Deity at all suited to your state. You are sinners before God: you are exposed to his everlasting displeasure: you have all the powers of darkness leagued together for your destruction. It is but a little time that is allotted to you for the obtaining of mercy, and for working out your salvation: and *it is by prayer alone that you can obtain deliverance from your enemies, or strength to fulfill the will of God*. You must ask, if you would have; and seek, if you would find; and knock, if you would have the door of mercy opened to you.

I entreat you, then, to be in earnest: yes, I beseech you, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for your own soul's sake, to strive with God in prayer: and never to let him go, until you have obtained from him the desired blessing. Plead with him for mercy through the Redeemer's blood; plead with him for a more abundant effusion of his Spirit upon your souls; plead with him, if he has begun the good work within you, to carry it on, and perfect it to the end. Then shall all these blessings descend upon you, and God be glorified in your everlasting salvation!

***~~#1927~~***

***~~PRACTICAL WISDOM RECOMMENDED~~***

***~~[Romans 16:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.19-20).~~***

"I want you to be wise about what is good, and simple (innocent) about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."

*WHOEVER knows the perverseness of the human mind, must see that it is in vain to hope that any Church under Heaven should be long free from the influence of error and contention*. What Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, when he parted with them at Miletus, must sooner or later be addressed to all who have been long favored with the ministry of the Gospel, that "grievous wolves will enter in among them, not sparing the flock; and that even from their own selves will men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them, [Acts 20:29-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.29-30)."

The Church at Rome was as free from this spirit as any in the apostolic age. Their faith, [Romans 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.8), and love, [Romans 15:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.14), and obedience, verse 19, were such as to render them famous through the whole Christian world, insomuch that Paul rejoiced greatly on their account, verse 19. Yet he judged it necessary to caution them against "those who wished to cause divisions and offenses among them, verse 17." In prosecution of his purpose he tells them what he wished for in their behalf, namely, that they should be wise unto that which is good, and innocent concerning evil.

In discoursing on these words, we shall point out—

***~~I. The state of mind we should cultivate—~~***

Nothing is more desirable than to have our minds well regulated in reference to the concerns of religion; since by error in judgment, and indiscretion in conduct, we may do incalculable injury to others, and subject ourselves also to many calamities. We should make it our daily study to be,

***~~1. "Wise unto that which is good"—~~***

It requires no little wisdom to discern in some cases what is good; for good and evil, though totally opposed to each other in matters that are clear and obvious, are sometimes so diversified in their shapes, and so doubtful in their appearances, that they may easily be mistaken for each other. Peter's concern for the welfare of his Master, had the appearance of friendship, while in reality it was a preferring of his Master's present welfare to the eternal welfare of the whole world; and in that view was reproved by our Lord as a demoniacal suggestion, [Matthew 16:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.22-23). *There is not any error, either in doctrine or in practice, which may not assume the semblance of truth: and to divest it of all its false colorings, requires much calm and dispassionate investigation.*

In addition to the close affinity which there may be between points that are essentially different, and the consequent danger of mistaking their true qualities, *there is within ourselves a propensity to lean rather to the side of error by reason of the corruption of our own hearts. There is in our fallen nature a bias towards evil*, so that, however fair we may promise in the outset, *we cannot go far without feeling a drawing on one side or other from the straight line of perfect rectitude*. Either passion or self-interest is apt to creep in, and to give an false inclination to our judgment: under their influence we take but a *partial*view of things, or see them in a *distorted*shape: in a word, we need "a single eye, which alone can cause the body to be full of light."

But a still further source of error is, that our fellow-creatures are almost universally on the side of error, and, by the countenance which they afford it, render it extremely difficult to be discovered. The spirit of the world is altogether contrary to the Spirit of God, so that our minds are blinded by it, and we cannot discern clearly what is of God, and what is not, [1 Corinthians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.12). Besides, "there are many vain-talkers and deceivers, [Titus 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 1.10)," who "lie in wait on purpose to deceive [Ephesians 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.14)," and who actually do "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple, verse 18," even so far as to "subvert whole houses, [Titus 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 1.11)."

Against such persons it is extremely difficult to guard: and in order to withstand their influence, we need to have from God himself "the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD, [Isaiah 11:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.2-3)."

***~~2. "Simple (innocent) concerning evil"—~~***

The word "simple (innocent)" may be understood either as opposed to a mixture in our principles, or to an offensiveness in our conduct; both of which we should with great diligence avoid.

We must indulge then no evil in ourselves: we should have no sinister ends in view, no selfish dispositions to gratify, no personal interests to promote: there should be no allowed deceit within us: we should guard to the uttermost against any mixture of principle: we should hate sin as sin, irrespective of its consequences; and determine through grace to mortify it, whatever carnal advantages such conduct may deprive us of, or whatever pains it may entail upon us.

We must be careful also to give no encouragement to evil in others. In no respect whatever should we encourage sin. We should not only "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but should rather reprove them:" for if we countenance sinners in any of their ways, we "make ourselves partakers of their evil deeds, [2 John 11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 John 11)."

This is particularly inculcated in the words before our text. We should "mark those who cause divisions and offenses, and should avoid them." In another place the Apostle says, we should "withdraw ourselves from them, and have no company with them, that they may be ashamed, [2 Thessalonians 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 3.6); [2 Thessalonians 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 3.14)." In truth, if we would "mark" the spirit of such persons, we should soon see how erroneous their ways must be: for they show by their pride and conceit, their boldness and forwardness, and the constant tendency of their exertions to advance either their own interests or the interests of their party, that "such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people, [Romans 16:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.18)." Thus the uniform endeavor of our lives should be, as our Lord has taught us, to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves [Matthew 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.16)."

That we may the more earnestly cultivate this spirit, let us consider,

***~~II. Our encouragement to live in the exercise of it—~~***

***~~The evils against which we should guard you arise in great measure from the agency of Satan—~~***

It was Satan who "beguiled Eve" in Paradise: and from that time has he been incessantly occupied in deceiving men. The unsaved are wholly under his influence: he inspired the four hundred prophets of Baal to deceive Ahab to his ruin, [1 Kings 22:19-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 22.19-23); and both Judas and Ananias were actuated by him to perpetrate the crimes which they respectively committed.

But even saved men are also wrought upon by him on some occasions, as has already appeared in the case of Peter, and as is intimated in the cautions given by Paul both to the Corinthian and Thessalonian Churches, [2 Corinthians 11:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.3). 2 Thessalonians 3:5. Satan can easily assume the appearance of an angel of light, and can enable "his ministers to appear as ministers of righteousness, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15." *Hence arises a necessity to be always on our guard against his devices*.

***~~But his influence shall soon be destroyed—~~***

It was foretold in the very first promise, that the "Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head." And this has been fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ, who, even while he was yet alive, declared, that, "the prince of this world was judged," and "cast out;" and who "by death overcame him utterly," and while yet upon the cross "spoiled all the principalities and powers of darkness." Afterwards, in his resurrection, he completed his triumph over Satan, "leading captivity itself captive." And as he has thus vanquished him for us, so will he also overcome him in us, enabling us to "resist him until he flees from us," and finally to "bruise him under our feet."

Soon shall he cease to harass us. We have but a little time more to conflict with him. The victory is assured to us; and his doom is sealed. The time is near at hand, when all the judgments which he seeks to bring on us shall fall upon his own head; and we whom he now labors to devour, shall sit in judgment upon him, and, as judges with the Lord Jesus Christ, shall declare and confirm the sentence that shall be executed upon him to all eternity, [1 Corinthians 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.3).

***~~And this is a great encouragement to us to maintain the conflict in the way before prescribed—~~***

Were the contest to be of any long duration, we might be discouraged, just as the Israelites in the wilderness were, at the length of the journey, [Numbers 21:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 21.4). But "it is but a little time, and He who shall come, will come, and will not tarry, [Hebrews 10:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.37)." Methinks, already has Satan received his death wound, so that we have but to follow up the victory already gained. Already is he, like the five kings of the Amorites when shut up in the cave, doomed to certain death: and soon, like them, shall he be brought forth for execution, and the feet of all the children of Israel be put upon his neck. Yes, he is already a vanquished enemy; and in a little time shall our conflicts be followed with, complete success. Like the redeemed Israelites, we shall see all the enemies that affrighted us, dead upon the sea-shore!

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~Are any of you unconscious of the difficulty of stemming the torrent?~~***

It only shows that you are carried down with the stream. The generality are "wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge, [Jeremiah 4:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 4.22)." To become the very reverse of this is no easy matter: and if ever you be brought to a truly Christian state, you shall know the difference between floating with the stream, and swimming against it.

***~~Are any of you discouraged by reason of the difficulties which you have to contend with?~~***

"Encourage yourselves in the Lord your God." Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. He has pledged himself, that "neither angels nor principalities nor powers shall ever separate you from his love;" and "what he has promised he is able also to perform." Millions who were once as weak as you, have already triumphed over Satan and all his hosts, having "overcome him by the blood of the Lamb." That same blood shall prevail for you: and before long shall you also bear the palm of victory, and sing for ever the triumphs of redeeming love!

***~~#1928~~***

***~~VICTORY OVER SATAN~~***

***~~[Romans 16:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.20).~~***

"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."

*IN order to get forward in our Christian course, we must unite a strenuous exertion of our own powers, with a humble dependence on the Divine aid. We cannot work without God; and God will not work without us.* But if we look to him for assistance, and yet labor in a diligent and prudent way, he will support us with his almighty power, and "perfect that which concerns us." Paul, cautioning the Christians at Rome against those who caused divisions and offenses, exhorts them to cultivate that *wisdom of the serpent*and that *harmlessness of the dove*, which should serve to counteract their efforts: yet for their final success he directs their eyes to God, through whose strength alone they could maintain their integrity, and in whose strength they should eventually overcome. In discoursing on his words, we shall consider,

***~~I. The promise which God has here given to the Church—~~***

***~~Satan is an active and powerful adversary to God's people—~~***

His exertions are directed against the Church at large, and against every individual member of it.*Indefatigable are his exertions in causing dissensions and divisions*among the various societies of Christians, embittering them one against another, or sowing discord among themselves. And though these feuds may be considered as arising from the turbulence and pride of men—yet must they also be referred to Satan as their original author; since it is he who instigates the professors of religion, as well as others, to the commission of sin. This is intimated in the context. Compare verse 17, 20.

Much of carnal contention prevailed in the Church of Corinth; and that the Apostle repeatedly ascribes to Satan: he calls the authors of it "his ministers," and puts the members of that Church on their guard, "lest the serpent, who beguiled Eve through his subtlety, should corrupt them from the simplicity of Christ, [2 Corinthians 11:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.3); [2 Corinthians 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.15)." He tells them how ready Satan was to take advantage of them in the matter of the incestuous man, [2 Corinthians 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.11); and in general, whatever evils occur in the Church, he traces them up to Satan's temptations as their proper source, [1 Thessalonians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 3.5).

Nor is there any individual among the Lord's people, whom that wicked one does not endeavor to harass and destroy. It was he who stirred up David to number the people, [1 Chronicles 21:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Chron 21.1); it was he who influenced Peter to deny his Lord with oaths and curses, [Luke 22:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.31); and, who can tell to what straits he would have reduced the Apostle Paul by his buffetings, if that holy man had not obtained timely support from his Lord, [2 Corinthians 12:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.7-9). Indeed, if he had the effrontery and the malice to assault even our Lord himself, and if he repeatedly reduced even him to such a state as that he needed to be strengthened by an angel from Heaven, [Matthew 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 4.11) and [Luke 22:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.43), well may we suppose that he will not allow *us*to pass unmolested and unassailed.

***~~But God has promised to "bruise him under our feet"—~~***

God is "the God of peace" primarily as being reconciled to us through the death of his Son: but he has this name assigned to him in our text chiefly as delighting in the social order and the personal happiness of his people. In this view he enters the lists against our great adversary, and undertakes to subdue him for us. Already has he given us a pledge of our triumph in enabling his Son to "bruise that serpent's head" upon the cross, [Genesis 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.15) and [Colossians 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.15); and it is a very short time that that wicked one shall retain the present remnant of his power. Though permitted to fight against us, his rage is overruled for the benefit of the saints and the glory of God: and, as when he possessed the bodies of men, his malice always terminated in his own confusion; so, in every instance, shall he be foiled in his endeavors to destroy the souls that belong to Christ. He is even now a vanquished enemy, [John 12:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.31); and soon shall the very weakest believer trample on him, as Joshua trampled on the necks of the kings of Canaan, [Joshua 10:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 10.24).

If we desire this mercy at the hands of God, we shall be glad to know,

***~~II. The way in which we may expect God to accomplish it—~~***

However various God's dealings may be with different persons in some minute particulars, there are general rules which he will observe towards all:

***~~1. God will increase the triumphs of his people over Satan in this world—~~***

Satan gains great advantage over young Christians by means of their unsubdued corruptions, and their inexperience in the spiritual warfare. *To defeat his malignant efforts, God increases the strength of his people, and gives them a deeper insight into the devices of their enemy.*He clothes them with divine armor, and teaches them how to use the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith, [Ephesians 6:13-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.13-17). By exercise he renders them expert soldiers, and enables them to "war a good warfare." Instead of exposing themselves needlessly to danger, they are now taught to "watch and be sober" Instead of indulging a vain conceit of their own purity and strength, they are led to suspect the treachery of their own hearts, and to depend more simply on the grace of Christ. Thus they learn to fight a good fight; and, though sometimes wounded by his fiery darts, they "resist their enemy until he flees from them, [James 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.7)."

***~~2. God will give them a complete and everlasting victory over him in the world to come—~~***

While they are in the flesh, Satan will renew his assaults upon them. *There is no place so sacred, but he will intrude into it; nor any person so holy, but he will seek to destroy him.* When the sons of God were assembled before the Lord, Satan came also in the midst of them [Job 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 2.1); and when Joshua stood in the Divine presence, the same wicked fiend stood at his right hand to resist him [Zechariah 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 3.1). Nor will he suspend his attacks even when we are bowing our knees at the throne of grace, or assembled around the table of the Lord. But into Heaven he can never enter: there we shall be lodged in perfect safety: thence we may deride his impotent attempts, and rejoice over him as a captive foe.

But it may be said, That we rather escape from him, than triumph over him: for that he still continues master of the field. We answer, No! for he shall in due time be dragged in chains of darkness into our very presence; and, as judges with Christ in judgment, we shall judge him and all his angels, [1 Corinthians 6:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.2-3). We shall confirm the sentence passed upon him; and add our hearty *Amen*to the curse that dooms him to eternal fire.

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How great and precious are the promises of God!—~~***

To those who know nothing of the Christian warfare, this promise will afford but little satisfaction: but to those who have been long conflicting with the powers of darkness, it will be a ground of inexpressible joy and thankfulness. Such an assurance of victory will revive their drooping spirits, and reanimate them for the combat: nor will they be averse to maintain the contest as long as God shall see fit to try their faith and patience: having this word, they want no more: "they know in whom they have believed;" and that, though now their hands hang down and their hearts are faint, they shall soon make Heaven itself to echo with their shouts of victory. O that all might have a saving interest in this promise, and experience its completion in the realms of bliss!

***~~2. How much are we concerned to obtain peace with God!—~~***

It is to those only who are reconciled to God that the promise in the text is made. If we have never yet obtained mercy at his hands through the blood of Jesus, we shall in vain hope to conquer this cruel adversary. God, so far from interposing for us, will give us into his hands; and, instead of fighting for us as a friend, will himself be our enemy. Miserable indeed shall we then be; for, if we cannot contend with Satan, then how shall we be able to withstand Jehovah? "Will our hands be strong in the day that he shall deal with us, or can we thunder with a voice like his?" Let us then seek reconciliation with him; so shall he be a "God of peace" to us, and secure us victory in the day of battle!

***~~The Book of 1 CORINTHIANS~~***

***~~#1929~~***

***~~THE BLESSINGS IMPARTED BY THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 1:4-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.4-9).~~***

"I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge—because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."

WE cannot but admire the introductory salutations which are manifest in all the Epistles of Paul. He of course has frequent occasion to mention truths which are far from palatable to those to whom they are spoken: but he always introduces them in so kind a manner, and accompanies them with such expressions of the most sincere love, that it is almost impossible for any to be offended with him. He never shrinks from a faithful discharge of his duty: but he exerts himself always, to the utmost of his power, to heal the wounds which his fidelity inflicts.

The Corinthian Church was in a far worse state than any other that he had occasion to address: indeed the manners of the Corinthians, previous to their conversion, were dissolute even to a proverb; and therefore it is the less to be wondered at, that, after their conversion, many of them would still need admonition on points which they had hitherto been accustomed to regard as trivial at least, if not altogether indifferent. On everything necessary for their welfare, the Apostle here communicates his sentiments freely: but in the commencement of his epistle he makes no difference between the Corinthians and the purest of all the Churches. He knew that if many among them were corrupt, the great majority of them were sincere; and therefore he comprehends them all in the first expressions of his regard, that he may afterwards have the more influence over those, whose errors he designed to rectify. We notice in this introductory acknowledgment of the Apostle,

***~~I. The blessings which the Gospel imparts—~~***

The Gospel is no other than "a testimony" of Jesus. This was "the spirit of prophecy" under the Old Testament, [Revelation 19:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.11); and it is the spirit of all the writings in the New Testament. What the testimony was, is declared with great precision by John: "This is the record, that God has given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son; he who has the Son, has life; and he who has not the Son of God, has not life, [1 John 5:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.11-12)."

The believer has this testimony "confirmed in him." There are two ways in which this testimony is confirmed: the one is *externally*, by signs and miracles; the other is *internally*, by the operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul. The Corinthians had had it confirmed to them in both ways: for no Church exceeded them in miraculous gifts, 1 Corinthians 12:10; and in the change wrought upon their own souls, they had an evidence of the truth and power of the Gospel: they had an evidence of it in "the grace which had been given them by Jesus Christ."

Two things in particular they had received, which served to mark the saving efficacy of the Gospel; namely,

***~~1. An enlightened mind—~~***

They had been "enriched by Christ with all utterance and all knowledge." Distinct from miraculous gifts, *there is in believers a knowledge of an experimental kind*, and an ability also to declare that knowledge with ease and precision. *It is a knowledge derived from the heart, rather than from the understanding*; even such as Solomon refers to, when he says, "The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips [Proverbs 16:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 16.23)." John speaks of this when he says, "He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself, [1 John 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.10)."

There is a perfect correspondence between the divine record concerning Christ, and the feelings of the believer's soul: he feels that he needs such a salvation as Christ offers, and that there is in Christ a sufficiency for all his wants. And in speaking of these things every believer throughout the universe is agreed. As in all human beings, notwithstanding some minute differences, there are the same general features belonging to the body; so in the minds of all believers there is, notwithstanding a diversity in smaller matters, a correspondence in their general views and sentiments; they all confess themselves to be sinners saved by grace through the Redeemer's blood.

Others, who are not true believers, may have the same creed; but they have not these truths written in their *hearts*; nor can they speak of them from their own *experience*: this is the portion of the true believer only; and it is a portion, in comparison with which all the knowledge in the universe and all the wealth of the Indies are but dross and dung, [Philippians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.8).

***~~2. A waiting spirit—~~***

The Corinthians "came behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The saints under the Mosaic dispensation waited for the first advent of our Lord: those under the Christian dispensation wait for his second advent, when he will come again from Heaven in power and great glory, to gather together his elect, and to put them into full possession of their destined inheritance. The first Christians thought this period very near at hand: we who live almost 1800 years after them, believe that it is yet distant; because there are many prophecies not yet fulfilled, which must receive an accomplishment before the arrival of that time. But, as far as respects us individually, the time is near to every one of us, even at the door; for, on the instant of our departure from the body, we are borne into the presence of our Judge, and have our portion for ever fixed. Hence the believer waits for his dissolution, as the promised commencement of everlasting joys.

Others may wait, and even long, for death, as a termination of their sorrows; but it is the believer alone who "looks for and hastens unto the coming of the day of Christ," as the completion and consummation of all his joys.

Others may affect Heaven as "a rest" from trouble; but the believer alone pants for it as a rest in God. In the view of that day, "he is sober, and hopes to the end for the grace that shall be brought unto him at the revelation of Jesus Chris,t [1 Peter 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.13)."

But from our text we are led to notice farther,

***~~II. The blessings which the Gospel secures—~~***

God in calling us to the knowledge of his Son, calls us also to a fellowship with his Son, in all the blessings both of *grace*and *glory*: and where he gives the former of these blessings, there he engages to impart the latter also. On this ground, the promise of a faithful God, the Apostle assured the Corinthians of,

***~~1. Their continued preservation—~~***

"He shall confirm you unto the end," says he.*If believers were left to themselves, they would have no prospect of ever enduring to the end. So many and so great are the difficulties which they have to contend with, that they could have no hope at all.*But God undertakes for them, to "keep them by his own power through faith unto salvation." He engages both for himself and for them: for himself, that "he will not depart from them to do them good:" and for them, that "he will put his fear into their hearts, so that they shall not depart from him, [Jeremiah 32:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.40)." If they offend him by any violation or neglect of duty, "he will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes: but his loving-kindness will he not utterly take from them, nor allow his faithfulness to fail, [Psalm 89:30-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.30-35)."

So fully assured of this truth was Paul in relation to the Philippian Church, that he declared himself "confident of this very thing, that He who had begun a good work in them would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, [Philippians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.6);" and the same confidence we may feel in relation to every true believer, that "none shall ever separate him from the love of Christ, [Romans 8:38-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.38-39)." God pledges his own word, that "he will not allow them to be tempted above what they are able, [1 Corinthians 10:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.13)," but that "he will perfect that which concerns them." When therefore we "pray to God that our whole spirit, soul, and body may be preserved blameless unto his heavenly kingdom," we are authorized to add, "Faithful is he who has called us; who also will do it, [1 Thessalonians 5:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.23-24)."

***~~2. Their ultimate acceptance—~~***

"He will preserve us, that we may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Blameless" in some respect his people already are, inasmuch as the Lord Jesus Christ has washed them in his blood, and pronounced them "clean, [John 15:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.3)." But in the last day we shall be blameless in ourselves, as well as in him; being not only justified, as we now are, by his blood, but sanctified also by his Spirit, and transformed into the perfect image of our God. Then "will Christ present us to himself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; yes, holy, and without blemish, [Ephesians 5:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.27);" and in the meantime he will, by his almighty and all-sufficient grace, "strengthen, and establish, and settle us even to the end! [1 Peter 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.10)."

Thus does God assure to his people their continued preservation, and their ultimate acceptance with him: and he pledges his own faithfulness for the performance of his word.

But let no man imagine that these truths supersede the necessity of care and watchfulness on our part; for *God will never fulfill his promise to us but through the instrumentality of our exertions*. Hence he requires every exertion on our part, precisely as if he had left the final outcome solely dependent on our own efforts and suspends his promised mercies altogether on the performance of our duties. To obtain his final acceptance of us as blameless, we must hold fast our faith: "He will present us holy and unblamably, and unreproveable in his sight, if we continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, [Colossians 1:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.22-23)." We must also abound in love; we must "increase and abound in love one towards another, to the end that he may establish our hearts unblamably in holiness before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints, [1 Thessalonians 3:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 3.12-13)."

We must also use all diligence in every duty; for it is by diligence that we are to "make our calling and election sure," and that we are to be "found of him at last in peace, without spot and blameless, 2 Peter 1:10; [2 Peter 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.14)."

Here we see that *the very things which God has promised to us, are to be obtained through the medium of our own faith and love and diligence*. Without these, the end shall never be obtained (for God has connected the end with the means,) but through the continued exercise of these, the end is secured beyond a possibility of failure. "God cannot deny himself, [2 Timothy 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.13);" and his word, confirmed as it is by covenant and by oath, can never fail [Hebrews 6:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.18). "Heaven and earth may pass away: but his word shall never pass away! [Matthew 24:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 24.35)."

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~1. Be thankful if you are partakers of this grace—~~***

Paul "thanked God always on the behalf" of the Corinthians on this account: how much more therefore should those be thankful, who have received the saving grace of God! *To possess this experimental knowledge of the Gospel salvation, and to enjoy these blessed prospects of immortality and glory, is the highest felicity of man*. Having these "things which accompany salvation," we need not covet any other good, or regret any attendant evil: we have the richest blessings that God himself can bestow!

***~~2. Be careful to walk worthy of it—~~***

The mercies of God to us call for a suitable requital: and the requital which he desires is, a total surrender of ourselves to him, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1). The thing which God designs, in the communication of his mercy to us, is, to "keep us blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus." Let that then be our end in the improvement of them, even to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shining among them as lights in a dark world! [Philippians 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15)."

***~~3. Remember in whom all your strength is—~~***

Of yourselves you can do nothing. It is God, and God alone, who can "confirm you unto the end." He who has been "the Author, must also be the Finisher," of your salvation. It is "He who must work all your works in you:" "all your fresh springs must be in him." Know then, that "he is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy! Jude verse 24;" and he will do it, if you rely upon him; for Paul expressly says, "The Lord is faithful, who will establish you, and keep you from evil, [2 Thessalonians 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 3.3)." To him therefore, even "to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and for ever. Amen! Jude verse 25."

***~~#1930~~***

***~~THE TRUE LIGHT IN WHICH THE GOSPEL IS TO BE REGARDED~~***

**[1 Corinthians 1:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.23-24).**

"We preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

*THERE is a disposition in man to dictate to God, rather than to receive from him what he is pleased to give.*Though this is not right, nor should ministers gratify it—yet they should consult men's biases, and "seek to please them for their good." The Jews and Greeks sought what from their education they had been accustomed to admire: but Paul, notwithstanding his *readiness to yield in all things that were less important*, was compelled to make the strain of his preaching directly opposite to their corrupt desires. "The Jews require, etc; but we preach, etc."

***~~I. The great subject of the Christian ministry—~~***

The Apostle designates this by "preaching the Gospel," "preaching the cross," "preaching Christ and him crucified." But in "preaching Christ crucified" he did not confine himself to a historical relation of the fact, or a emotional description of it. To fulfill the true end of the Christian ministry, we must,

***~~1. Declare the nature of Christ's death—~~***

This in appearance was only like that of the malefactors that suffered with him; but it was a true and proper sacrifice to God. In this light it was characterized by the whole Mosaic ritual. The sacrifices were types of the atonement; in this light it was foretold by the prophets, [Isaiah 53:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.5-6); [Isaiah 53:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.10); in this light it is plainly represented throughout the New Testament, [Matthew 26:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.28). [1 Corinthians 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 5.7). [Hebrews 9:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.26). [Ephesians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.2); and unless it is preached in this view, we do not, in the Apostle's sense, preach Christ crucified.

***~~2. Set forth the benefits resulting from it—~~***

There is not any one spiritual benefit which must not be traced to this source; pardon, peace, holiness, glory, are its proper fruits. Without the atonement we could have received nothing; but by and through it we may receive everything. This also must be distinctly inculcated, if we would approve ourselves faithful stewards of the mysteries of Christ.

***~~3. Persuade men to seek a saving interest in it—~~***

We find men filled with self-righteous conceits, and with great difficulty brought to renounce them: we must therefore argue with them, and urge upon them all the most powerful considerations: we must address ourselves to their passions as well as their understanding; and gain their affections on the side of truth. It was thus that Paul preached Christ; and it is thus only that Christ crucified can be preached aright.

***~~II. The manner in which it was, and is still, received—~~***

As there were differences of opinion respecting our Lord himself, some accounting him a good man, and others a deceiver, so are there respecting his Gospel—

***~~1. Some reject it with contemptuous abhorrence—~~***

Jews and Greeks were equally averse to it, though on different grounds.

The *Jews*did not understand the true nature and scope of their law: hence they supposed that the Gospel was opposed to it, and that Christ was an enemy to Moses: and notwithstanding all the evidence they had of Christ's Messiahship, they rejected him from a pretended lack of proof of his divine mission.

The *Greeks*had been habituated to philosophical researches, and rejected the Gospel because there was nothing in it to flatter the pride of human reason.

Both of these kinds of characters yet exist, and oppose the Gospel with equal acrimony; to some it is "a stumbling-block," as appearing to set aside good works; to others it is "foolishness," as militating against their preconceived notions of rational religion. And if it is not so dispensed by us as to call forth such treatment from such characters, we have reason to believe that we do not preach the Gospel as Paul preached it.

***~~2. Others receive it with the deepest reverence—~~***

There are some "called," not by the outward word only, but by the internal and effectual operations of the Spirit. These, whatever have been their disposition in times past, have their eyes open to behold the Gospel in a far different light.

To them the doctrine of "Christ crucified" is "the *power*of God:" they see that it is that by which God has converted myriads to himself: they feel also that it is that to which alone they can ascribe their own conversion; and they know that nothing can ultimately withstand its power.

To them it is also "the *wisdom*of God." They behold in it every perfection of the Deity united and glorified, while on any other plan of salvation some of his perfections must be exalted at the expense of others. They see it also to be suited to the state of every individual in the universe, while *every other plan of salvation is suited to those only who have been moral, or who have a long time before them to amend their lives*. Above all, they view it as *bringing the greatest good that ever was given, out of the greatest evil that ever was committed*. No wonder that they "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of it."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who, like the Greeks, have a high opinion of their reasoning powers—~~***

You have just cause to be thankful for strength of intellect; but the province of reason is, to submit itself to God. God has not opened to your reason any one thing perfectly, either in creation or providence: be not surprised then if you cannot fathom all the mysteries of his revealed will: your wisdom is to become as little children; and if you will not condescend to be taught by Him, he will take you in your own craftiness, verse 19, 25.

***~~2. Those who, like the Jews, are concerned about the interests of morality—~~***

Did morality suffer in the life of Paul, or of the first Christians? Does it suffer in the lives of many who now profess the Gospel? Are they not now condemned as much for *the strictness of their lives* as for *the strangeness of their principles*? Yes, does not morality suffer through the neglect of this preaching? Let not Christ then be a stumbling-block to you, but rather a sanctuary. If you reject Christ, however good your motive may appear to be, your misery will be sure! verse 18 with [2 Corinthians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.4).

***~~3. Those who embrace, and glory in, a crucified Savior—~~***

Contemplate more and more the wisdom and power of God as displayed in this mystery, and endeavor more and more to adorn this doctrine in your lives. Let it never become a stumbling-block or foolishness through any misconduct of yours: let it be seen by your *prudence*, that it is true wisdom; and by your *piety*, that it is the parent of every good work.

***~~#1931~~***

***~~THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S CALL~~***

**[1 Corinthians 1:26-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.26-29)**

"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him."

IT is manifest to the most superficial observer, that the Gospel, wherever it comes, meets with a very different reception from different people; some accounting it foolishness, while others regard it as the wisdom of God and the power of God, verse 23, 24. That we must trace this to the dispositions of men, is certain; because the guilt of rejecting the Gospel must lie upon the sinner himself: yet, inasmuch as a love of the truth is not attainable by mere human efforts, we must acknowledge God as the true and only source of that difference which appears. If he did not interpose, all would equally despise the Gospel: it is his grace which makes the distinction, and causes some to overcome the corruptions of their nature, and to accept his offered salvation.

To unravel this mystery, or at least to throw light upon it, we shall show,

***~~I. Who are the objects of his choice—~~***

God's thoughts and ways are not only far above ours, but often directly contrary to ours.

***~~He has not chosen "the wise, the noble, and the mighty"—~~***

He has not indeed excluded these; for he invites them all; and no more wills the death of them, than he does the death of any others: but he has not chosen them either in preference to the poor, or even in comparison with them. Some there have been in every age, who were possessed of much human wisdom, and power, and wealth. God would not pass by them altogether, lest it should appear as if the possession of earthly wisdom and power were an insurmountable obstacle to the reception of the truth; or lest the embracing of his salvation should be thought incompatible with natural abilities, or intellectual attainments.

Among the Corinthians there were Crispus and Sosthenes, chief rulers of the synagogue, [Acts 18:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 18.8); [Acts 18:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 18.17): and Gaius, a man of wealth and of an enlarged heart; and Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, [Romans 16:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.23). Some few others were numbered with the disciples: there was Joseph of Arimathea, a rich and honorable counselor, [Matthew 27:57](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 27.57). [Mark 15:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 15.43); and Sergius Paulus, a Roman deputy, famed no less for his wisdom than his power, [Acts 13:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.7). But if we were to collect the names of all, they would bear no proportion to the numbers of those who composed the Church of Christ. Though therefore there were *some*, there were "not many" of this description called.

***~~The objects of his choice generally are, the weak, the ignoble, the illiterate—~~***

As we do not say that these are chosen exclusively, so neither do we say that they are chosen universally; for, alas! there are myriads of poor who are as ignorant and depraved as it is possible for any of the rich to be. But the great majority of the Lord's people are of this description. They have not rank, or learning, or wealth, or great abilities, or any of those things which would recommend them to earthly preferments.

This was the case with the first teachers of Christianity: they were, for the most part, poor illiterate fishermen and mechanics. And those who have been their followers have been almost entirely of the middle and lower classes of society.

Who are the persons in every town and village who most welcome the preaching of the Gospel? Who are the people that are glad to avail themselves of all the spiritual instruction they can get? Who are those who will be thankful to you for speaking closely to their consciences, and for warning them of their danger? Who are those who will go miles every Sabbath to a place where the Gospel is faithfully preached, notwithstanding, when they come thither, they can scarcely be accommodated with a seat whereon to rest? Who are those who love social meetings for reading the word of God and prayer; and that make it their food and their drink to do the will of God? In short, Who are those who prove their effectual "calling," by turning "from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, [Acts 26:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.18)."

Are these the rich, the great, the learned? Or are they the poor and unlearned? Let observation and experience decide the point. "You see your calling, brethren:" look at it, and judge. It is just as in the days of old: [Matthew 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.5). [John 7:47-48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.47-48). [Mark 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 12.3). We are not afraid to make our appeal to yourselves; for God himself appeals to you; and thereby makes you judges in your own cause, [James 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.5). We know that these facts give umbrage to many: but however the proud may find in these things an occasion of offense, our blessed Lord saw nothing in them but ground for praise and thanksgiving, [Matthew 11:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25-26).

Our subject leads us to notice,

***~~II. The immediate effect of that choice—~~***

We are told that Noah, in building the ark, "condemned the world, [Hebrews 11:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.7)." A similar effect is produced by the peculiar mercy given to the poor. The great and learned, though "they shame the counsel of the poor, [Psalm 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 14.6)," yet are ashamed and confounded when they see,

***~~1. Their superior discernment—~~***

Many of the wise, like the Scribes and Pharisees of old, are conversant with the Holy Scriptures, and extremely well instructed as to the letter of them. From hence they suppose that they must necessarily enter into the spirit of them, and be as superior to others in a comprehension of divine truth, as they are in wealth or talents. But when they come to converse with one who has been "called out of darkness into God's marvelous light, [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9)," they begin to feel their own ignorance, and to wonder at the depth and clearness of the person's knowledge. They cannot conceive how an unlettered person should attain such just and comprehensive views, which they with all their application have not been able to acquire, [Proverbs 28:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 28.11).

They do not reflect on what God has told them, that "the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God;" and that the knowledge of them must be obtained by means of a spiritual discernment, 1 Corinthians 2:14. They, through the pride of their hearts, presume to bring divine truths to the bar of their own reason; and thus are led to account them foolishness: but the humble disciple of Jesus willingly receives all that God speaks; and to him "every word is both plain and right, [Proverbs 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 8.9)." But all this is a mystery to those who are "wise after the flesh"—a mystery which mortifies their pride, and inflames their anger! [John 9:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 9.34).

***~~2. Their indifference to the world—~~***

*The men of letters and of wealth, instead of rising above the world, are really its greatest slaves. To enjoy its pleasures, its riches, and its honors, is the summit of their ambition.*They, on the contrary, who are "chosen of God and called, [Revelation 17:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 17.14)," are enabled to renounce the world, and to regard it no more than they would a crucified object, with whom they have no further connection, [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14). Now when these persons show, by their heavenly conduct, that they consider themselves as mere pilgrims and sojourners here, and that "they are looking for a better country, that is, a heavenly one, [Hebrews 11:13-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.13-16)," the poor slaves of this world cannot comprehend it.

They wonder how any could be so indifferent to the things of time and sense, so bold to encounter the frowns and contempt of all around them, and so immoveable in their adherence to such exploded sentiments and conduct. They know that they themselves could not act in such a manner; and they are unable to account for it in others.

But if they understood these words, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith, [1 John 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.4)," they should cease to wonder; yes, they should rather wonder that the operations of faith were not yet more uniform and extensive.

***~~3. Their delight in holy exercises—~~***

The wise, and mighty, and noble will often perform religious duties with a commendable regularity: but they comply with them rather as the institutions and customs of their country, than as exercises in which they find any pleasure, or from which they expect to derive any present benefit. It is far otherwise with the poor, weak, despised followers of Christ: they engage in these employments with delight: they look forward to the returning seasons of devotion with sincere joy: and, though they cannot always maintain a spiritual frame in them—yet there is no other employment so pleasing to them, or so productive of permanent satisfaction.

Now this also appears strange and unaccountable to those who are yet in their unconverted state: they cannot conceive how it should be, that persons should multiply their seasons of worship, and put themselves to much expense and trouble in attending on them, without any apparent necessity. They can ascribe it to nothing but enthusiasm or hypocrisy. They are constrained however to confess, that, if religion so abstracts the mind from earthly things, and so inclines us to set our affections on things above, their hopes and prospects are "brought to nothing."

Thus as the Gentiles, who were scarcely regarded as having any existence, were made use of by God to bring to nothing the Jewish polity, in which all that was valuable was supposed to be contained. This is the meaning of those expressions, "things which are not;" and "things which are." So the spirituality of real Christians is yet daily made use of by God to bring to nothing the pride of wisdom, the power of greatness, and the fond conceits of pharisaic morality.

But let us examine yet further—

***~~III. Its ultimate design—~~***

God, as it befits him, consults in all things his own glory. In this dispensation more especially,

***~~He has provided, "that no flesh should glory in his presence"—~~***

It would not become his Majesty to suffer any of his creatures to assume honor to themselves: it is fit and right that all should acknowledge him to be the one source of all their happiness. As he is the Author of their being, they cannot but be indebted to him for all their powers; and as he is the one Restorer of those powers, both by the blood of his Son and the agency of his Spirit, he must have the glory of all which may be wrought by them; none must stand in competition with him; nor must any presume to claim the smallest share of that honor which is due to him alone.

***~~The dispensation is admirably calculated to insure this end—~~***

If the wise and noble were called in preference to others, they would arrogate to themselves, in part at least, the honor of that distinction: they would either think that they had effected the change in themselves by their own power, or that God had had respect to them on account of their super-eminent worth. But by the preference given to the poor, all occasion for such boasting is cut off.

The *rich*cannot boast, because they have nothing to boast of.

The *poor*cannot boast, as if God had respected their superior talents; for they feel and know assuredly that they had no such superiority, but directly the reverse.

The *few rich and wise* that are among them cannot boast, because they find that they are few in number, and that the great majority of those who are as wise and great as themselves, have made use of their talents, only to harden themselves in infidelity, and to justify their rejection of the Gospel. Hence they are constrained to confess, that it is "God who has made them to differ, [1 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.7)," and that "by the grace of God they are what they are, [1 Corinthians 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.10)."

***~~Many and important are the LESSONS which we may learn from hence—~~***

***~~1. That God acts sovereignly in the disposal of his gifts—~~***

We should not hesitate, if anyone presumed to direct us in the disposal of our own favors, to put this question to him; "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? [Matthew 20:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 20.15)." Yet we are offended if God assert this liberty, and we think ourselves injured if any are chosen by him in preference to us. But how unreasonable and absurd is this! It is unreasonable, because we have no claim upon him for the smallest benefits.

Who imagines that the *fallen angels*have any ground of complaint against him for withholding a Savior from them, while he provided one for us? Yet they are a superior order of beings to us, and therefore might have been supposed more worthy of God's attention.

What right then can any of us have to murmur, if he be pleased to impart salvation itself to some and not to others, when none possess the smallest title above their brethren? But it is absurd also: for *God will not alter his dispensations because we choose to quarrel with him*. That he does act in this sovereign manner we cannot doubt; for he dispenses his temporal favors according to his own will; and sends his Gospel to us, while it is withheld from the greater part of the world: and he tells us no less than three times in the short compass of our text, that he has "chosen" some in preference to others.

Let us not then dare to "reply against God [Romans 9:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.20);" but, while we confess his right to confer his benefits on whoever he will, [Romans 9:15-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.15-18), let us humbly implore a saving interest in his favor, and lie as clay in his hands, that he may, for his own glory sake, fashion us as "vessels of honor fit for the Master's use! [Romans 9:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.21-23)."

***~~2. That there is not so much inequality in the Divine dispensations as we are apt to imagine—~~***

It is certainly God who causes some to be born to ease and affluence—while others are born to labor and poverty. In a time of health there may not be any great difference between them—but what a difference is there in a time of sickness! The one has all the comforts of medical aid, of numerous attendants, of delicacies suited to his appetite; whereas the other, in a cold and comfortless habitation, is without food, without fuel, without friends, his wife and children as well as himself almost perishing in poverty, destitute of everything proper for his disorder, and subsisting only by the scanty pittance hardly obtained, and grudgingly bestowed by an unfeeling dispenser of the public charity. Compare these; and there appears as wide a difference between them as can well be imagined.

But pause a moment: Is this the whole of God's dispensations towards them? Can we find nothing to counter-balance this inequality? Yes, look to the spiritual concerns of these two persons. Perhaps, like *Dives*and *Lazarus*, the one has his portion in this life, and the other in the next. Perhaps God has said to the one, "Enjoy all that the world can bestow;" to the other, "Enjoy my presence, and the light of my countenance." To the one, "Be rich in learning, wealth, and honor;" to the other, "Be rich in faith and good works." To the one, "Possess kingdoms for a time;" to the other, "Be an heir of my kingdom for evermore!"

Now, though this is not God's invariable mode of dealing with men, (for there are some who are poor in both worlds, and others rich,) yet it accords with the general tenor of his proceedings. It accords also with the text, and therefore is peculiarly proper for our present consideration.

Take then the whole of God's dispensations together, and it will be found that the spiritual advantages conferred upon the poor are more than an equivalent for any temporal disadvantages they may labor under. Let the rich then not pride themselves on their distinctions, [1 Timothy 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 6.17); for "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for them to enter into the kingdom of Heaven [Matthew 19:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 19.23-24). Nor let the poor, on the other hand, be dejected on account of their present troubles; for God has chosen them (if they do not despise their birthright) to be partakers of his richest blessings, even life for evermore [James 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.5); but let all, whether rich or poor, seek to have "God himself for the portion of their cup, and for the lot of their inheritance, [Psalm 16:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.5)."

***~~3. That they are the wisest people who covet the best gifts—~~***

It is generally accounted folly to "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, [Matthew 6:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 6.33);" but the time will come when it will appear to have been the truest wisdom. Indeed "the fear of the Lord is the very beginning of wisdom, [Psalm 111:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 111.10);" insomuch that all who are not possessed of that, whatever else they may possess, are no better than fools in God's estimation.

*Let us not then be deceived by the glare and glitter of the world! Let us view things as God himself views them.* Let us confess that it is better to be among "the foolish, the weak, the base, the despised, the poorest of this world," and attain eternal happiness at the last; than to be among "the wise, the mighty, and the noble," and to "have our good things in this life only! [Luke 16:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 16.25)."

We beg permission however to repeat, that the *rich*will not be excluded from God's kingdom, if they do not exclude themselves. Nor, on the other hand, will the *poor*be admitted into it, if they do not "strive to enter in at the strait gate! [Luke 13:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.24)." Whatever we are in respect of our worldly conditions, we shall be admitted by the Bridegroom, if we are found among the wise virgins, [Matthew 25:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.8-10); but "the foolish shall not stand in his sight; for he hates all the workers of iniquity [Psalm 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 5.5)."

***~~#1932~~***

***~~CHRIST IS ALL IN ALL~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30)~~***

"It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."

HABITUATED as we have been from our early childhood to read the Holy Scriptures, and to hear them read in public, it is surprising that we do not gain a more clear and accurate knowledge of their contents. But experience shows, that, however strongly the inspired writers have declared the revealed will of God, it is but very partially and imperfectly known among us. The fact is, that we do not sufficiently consider the import of what we read. We pass over the most plain and significant expressions, without considering what is contained in them. When we read of the Savior, we do not advert to the solemn truth comprehended in that word, namely, that in ourselves we are utterly and eternally lost. In other words, we are very little affected with what is expressed in Scripture, because we do not pause to inquire into what those expressions imply.

That we suffer great loss by this inadvertence is evident from what our blessed Lord taught respecting the resurrection of our bodies to eternal life. The Sadducees could not find that doctrine contained in the Holy Scriptures, or at all events not in the Pentateuch, which alone they regarded as of divine authority. Our Lord appealed to the name of Jehovah as proclaimed in the Pentateuch; namely, as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Now, says our Lord, consider what is implied in that name. *Jehovah*, as their God, is the God of their whole persons, their bodies as well as their souls; and, if their bodies are not to be raised again, that relation between God and them, so far as respects their bodies, is dissolved. But that relation never can be dissolved: therefore their bodies must be raised again, and be re-united to their souls, so that those departed saints may, in their whole and entire persons, for ever serve and enjoy their God [Matthew 22:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.32).

Now I would wish to commend to you the passage before us in this peculiar view. Paul is showing the Corinthians, that they neither have, nor ever can have, anything to boast of; since "God has chosen the poor, and the weak, and the foolish, in preference to the rich, the mighty, and the wise;" and since whatever any of them may have, they have it solely in Christ, who is made to them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; and that consequently, whoever glories, must glory, not in himself, but in the Lord alone.

In order that we may unfold these words to the greater advantage, we shall, in accordance with this hint, consider, first, What is implied in them; and then, What is expressed.

***~~I. What is IMPLIED in these words.~~***

Now if we will duly consider these words, we shall see this evidently implied in them:

first, that we are destitute of all good in ourselves, and,

secondly, that we are incapable of acquiring any goodness by any power of our own.

On a supposition that either of these positions were not true, what occasion should there be that all good should be treasured up for us in another, to be received from him? But they are true.

***~~It is a fact, that we are destitute of all good in ourselves; for in ourselves we are ignorant, guilty, polluted, and enslaved.~~***

We are IGNORANT. What do we by nature know of **ourselves**? What do we know of the corruption of the human heart? God himself has told us, that in the *heart*of man there are depths of iniquity altogether unfathomable, and workings that are utterly unsearchable. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked! Who can know it?"

And what do we know of **God**? of his holiness, which cannot behold iniquity without the utmost abhorrence of it? of his justice, which cannot but visit it with righteous indignation? and of his truth, which cannot but execute every threatening which he has denounced against it?

As to any mere notions which men may entertain in theory, I speak not of them; it is of practical knowledge that I speak: and I need only appeal to the lives of all around us, to prove that, so far from having any just knowledge of God, "there is not in the whole world an unconverted man, that understands, so as duly and habitually to seek after him, [Romans 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.11). [Psalm 53:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 53.2-3)."

On the contrary the conduct of all clearly shows, that "God is not in all their thoughts, [Psalm 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 10.4)."

And what do we know of **Christ**and of the incomprehensible extent of his love?

Or what of his **Holy Spirit**, and all his enlightening, sanctifying, and consoling operations?

What do we know of the evil and bitterness of **sin**?

What do we know of the beauty and blessedness of true **holiness**?

The testimony which our Lord himself has borne of us is undeniably true, that, however we may imagine ourselves "rich, and increased in goods, and in need of nothing; we are wretched, and miserable, even poor, and blind, and naked! [Revelation 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.17)."

We are GUILTY also, to an extent which no words can adequately describe. As to gross sins, I make no mention of them. Our whole life has been one continued scene of rebellion against God. Nor have we ceased to "trample under foot the blood of Christ; or to do despite to the Spirit of God, [Hebrews 10:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.29)," who has striven with us, warning us against the *evils*which we have been habituated to commit, and stimulating us to those *duties*which we have neglected to perform. Truly, on the most superficial view of our state we must be convinced, that "every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God! [Romans 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.19)."

How POLLUTED we are, in every member of our bodies and in every faculty of our souls—God alone knows or can conceive. Darkness is not more opposed to light, or Belial to Christ, than we, every one of us, are to the holy will of God, whether as proclaimed in his law, or as exhibited in his Gospel.

How blind we are in our *understanding*,

how perverse in our *will*,

how sensual in our *affections*

—who shall be able to declare?

Even "the Apostles themselves once had their conduct in the lusts of their flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others, [Ephesians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.3)." And such have we been also. Our very "mind and conscience have been defiled," so that there is not one among us who must not join in that humiliating acknowledgment, that "there is no health in us."

In fact, we are altogether ENSLAVED, or, as the Scripture expresses it, "taken in the snare of the devil, and led captive by him at his will! [2 Timothy 2:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.26)." Nor is this true merely in relation to more flagrant transgressors only; "for the prince of the power of the air works in all the children of disobedience, [Ephesians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.2);" and, however insensible we may be of his motions, does really instigate us to every evil we commit.

But I observed that there is yet further implied in my text, **not only that we are destitute of all good in ourselves, but that we are incapable of acquiring any good by any power of our own**. Were not this true, there should, as I have before observed, have been no need that all good should be treasured up in another for us.

Now not one of these fore-mentioned evils can we remove. Not our **ignorance**; for we are told that "God alone gives wisdom [Proverbs 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 2.6)." The Spirit of God must "open the eyes of our understanding, [Ephesians 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.18); nor can we without his gracious influence, "know the things which belong unto our peace." We must have "a spiritual discernment in order to discern the things of the Spirit [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14)."

Paul, notwithstanding he had made a greater proficiency in Jewish literature than most of his own age—yet could not comprehend the true import of the Mosaic writings, or see their accomplishment in Jesus Christ, until "the scales, by which his organs of vision had been obstructed, were made to fall from his eyes, [Acts 9:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.18);" nor could the immediate disciples of our Lord, who had heard all his instructions both in public and private for the space of three years, see the law of Moses fulfilled in him.

The end of his *death*as a sacrifice for sin, the necessity of his *resurrection*to carry on and perfect his work, and the spiritual nature of his *kingdom*, were still hidden from them—until "He opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures, [Luke 24:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.45)." So must "the Holy Spirit be given unto us also, that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God, [1 Corinthians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.12)."

*Earthly*knowledge we may acquire by the powers of intellect and by dint of application: but *heavenly*knowledge is the gift of God alone, who, while he "takes the wise in their own craftiness, 1 Corinthians 3:19," will reveal to babes "what is hidden from the wise and prudent, [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25)."

Nor can we by any means remove our **guilt**. Let us go and blot out of the book of God's remembrance all the sins we have ever committed. Vain attempt! We cannot cancel so much as one sin; *nor should rivers of tears suffice to wash away the slightest stain from our souls*.

Nor can we even abstain from contracting fresh guilt: for there is imperfection in our best deeds: *our very tears need to be washed, and our repentances to be repented of.*

Even Paul himself, eminent as he was, could do nothing on which he could rely for his justification before God; and therefore "he desired to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which was of God by faith in Christ, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9)." A justifying righteousness must be perfect: but we can do nothing perfect: we need one to "bear the iniquity even of our holiest actions, [Exodus 28:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 28.38);" and therefore we must for ever despair of establishing a righteousness of our own, and must submit simply and entirely to the righteousness provided for us in the Gospel, [Romans 10:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.3).

Nor can we cleanse ourselves from our **pollution**. "As well might an Ethiopian change his skin, or a leopard his spots, as we restore ourselves to the image of God in which we were at first created! [Jeremiah 13:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 13.23)." The renovation of the heart is on this very account called a new birth and a new creation, [John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.3). [2 Corinthians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.17); and it can be effected by none but God himself.

Let any man put this matter to a trial: let him see whether he can mortify all the desires of the flesh, and efface from his mind the love of this world, and transform himself into the Divine image in righteousness and true holiness—he may as well attempt to create a world!

As for deliverance from all spiritual **bondage**, that also is utterly unattainable by human efforts. Paul even to his dying hour was constrained to cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death! [Romans 7:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.24)." Hence in the truly scriptural Liturgy of our Church we are taught to acknowledge; that "we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins," and to cry, "But do you, O God, of the pitifulness of your great mercy, free us."

Now all this is clearly implied in the words of our text: and by a just view of this we are prepared to consider,

***~~II. What is EXPRESSED in these words.~~***

In perfect correspondence with the foregoing truths, we find in our text two things expressed, namely:

1. that God has treasured up for us in Christ all the good that we stand in need of;

2. that He will freely bestow it on every believing soul.

**1. Observe here how God has treasured up for us in Christ all the good that we stand in need of.** God "has laid help for us on One that is mighty, [Psalm 89:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.19)," even on his own dear and only-begotten Son. He has treasured up for us in Christ a fullness suited to the necessities of fallen man, [Colossians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.19), and has constituted him "Head over all things to the Church, [Ephesians 1:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.22)," that "out of his fullness every member of his mystical body may receive, [John 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.16)" such a measure of grace as his peculiar necessities require.

This is shadowed forth under the image of a *vine*, which supplies every one of its branches with the sap and nutriment which alone can enable it to bring forth fruit, [John 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.5). "Separate from him," every one of us would become dry and fit only for fuel for the fire.

The Apostle Paul knew no other source of life and strength; and therefore he said, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me! [Galatians 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.20)." So in like manner must every soul of man come to Christ for grace to help him in the time of need. "Our fresh springs must be altogether in him, [Psalm 87:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 87.7)." "Our life is hidden with Christ in God: yes, Christ is our very life," and it is from that circumstance alone that we are warranted to hope, that "when he shall appear we also shall appear with him in glory! [Colossians 3:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.3-4)." "He is ascended up on high on purpose that he may fill all things, [Ephesians 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.10);" and he does "fill all in all, [Ephesians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.23)."

The very light which is reflected by the whole planetary system of moon and stars, proceeds from the sun; and the life of all the vegetable creation is sustained by its reviving rays. Just so is "Christ the light and life of the whole world;" as it is written, "With you is the fountain of life; and in your light shall we see light, [Psalm 36:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.9)."

***~~2. Observe also how God has that Christ shall be made all unto us—even wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, to every soul who believes in him.~~***

Do we need WISDOM? He shall be made wisdom to us. Wonderful shall be the views which he will impart to the believing soul: yes, the believer shall have, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, "the very mind that was in Christ himself," and be made to view everything as God himself views it, [Philippians 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.5). [1 John 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.20).

What humiliating views will he have of himself as a guilty, corrupt creature, deserving of God's wrath and indignation!

What exalted views will he have of all the Divine perfections, and particularly of them as united and harmonizing in the person and work of Christ!

How will he be enabled to "comprehend the height and depth and length and breadth of Christ's unsearchable love, so as even to be filled by it with all the fullness of God! [Ephesians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18-19)."

What a perception will he have of "the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit, [Romans 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.5)," and of all his gracious influences, as "a spirit of adoption testifying to his soul, that God is his Father, and that he is God's beloved child, [Romans 8:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.15-16)."

In what hateful colors will he now behold the sins which he once loved; and how lovely in his estimation will be the paths of righteousness and true holiness! When once "God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness in the material world, shall shine into his heart to give him this knowledge, he will behold all the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6)."

Do we need RIGHTEOUSNESS? Christ shall be made righteousness to the believing soul. The very name by which we are privileged to call our blessed Lord, is, "Jehovah our righteousness! [Jeremiah 23:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.6)." In Christ we shall have a righteousness fully answering all the requirements of God's holy law, and satisfying the demands of his inflexible justice! Clothed in the robe of Christ's perfect righteousness, we shall be so pure that God will not behold in us a spot or blemish! [Ephesians 5:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.26-27). Not the angels before the throne of God shall shine more brightly than we: indeed they have only the righteousness of a creature, while the believing soul is clad in the righteousness of the Creator himself!

Nor let anyone imagine that this is the privilege of the Apostles only: no: the righteousness of Christ is "given unto" every believing soul, and "put upon" him as a garment, in which he shall stand accepted of God to all eternity, [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22). [Ephesians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.6).

Do we need SANCTIFICATION? This also shall Christ be made unto us. Yes, he will make us new creatures. He will enable us to "put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man, whereby we shall be assimilated to the Divine image, [Ephesians 4:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.22-24)." He has promised his Holy Spirit for this end, even to "sanctify us wholly, [1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.23)." By applying to our souls his promises, he will enable us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God! [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.1)." Yes, by enabling us to "behold his glory, he will change us into his own image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord, [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18)."

Finally, do we need REDEMPTION? He will be redemption to us, "delivering us from all the bondage of corruption, and bringing us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." "When once the Son thus makes us free, we become free indeed! [John 8:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.36)." With what delight do we then walk in the ways of God, and with what enlargement of heart do we run in the paths of his commandments! Truly under the influence of his grace we enjoy almost a Heaven upon earth. The exercises of prayer and praise are far different from what they were accustomed to be in our unregenerate state. Formerly we had no taste for them, no pleasure in them: now we are never so happy as when we get access to God in these duties: it is even "as marrow and fatness to our souls, when we can praise our God with joyful lips! [Psalm 63:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 63.5)."

True, "the flesh will yet lust against the spirit, as well as the spirit against the flesh:" but "sin shall no more have dominion over us [Romans 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.14);" we shall, in desire at least, be "holy as God himself is holy, and perfect as our Father who is in Heaven is perfect, [1 Peter 1:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.15-16)."

Before I come to my concluding remarks on this subject, I beg you to inquire with yourselves, *whether you have ever had a practical experience of these things in your own souls?*It is said in my text, "Of him are you in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Now is this true of you?

Have you, (I speak to every individual,) Have you ever been brought to such a sense of *your own destitution of all good, and of your utter incapacity to supply, by any efforts of your own, your manifold necessities?*

Have you also been led to see *what a fullness there is in Christ, exactly suited to your necessities?*And have you actually received out of his fullness a supply of all that you stand in need of, so that Christ is daily regarded by you as your entire Savior, your all in all?

I beg you, let not this matter be thought of small importance; No indeed. These things are not to be viewed as a mere theory, but as practical truths, upon the experience of which your everlasting salvation depends! If you die before they are realized by you in your daily experience, it will be better for you that you had never been born!

Here I might well close my subject. But, having taken hitherto only the more obvious and superficial view of it, I would, if it detain you not too long, briefly entreat your attention to some points which are more deep and profound, and which, I hope, will repay the trespass which I thus reluctantly make upon your time.

**1. Mark then, I beg you, how entirely salvation is of grace from first to last.** You have seen what provision God has made for us in our low estate. You have seen what he has laid up for us in Christ, and what Christ is made unto us—even all that we stand in need of. But you have not seen *how*it is that Christ is made all this to the believing soul.

It is by our being "in Christ Jesus." "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus." Now we must be engrafted into Christ as scions, before we can partake of any of these things. We must be cut off from the old stock whereon we grew in our natural state, and be made living branches of Him, the living Vine.

And who, I beg permission to ask, can do this for us? It can be done by none but God, the great gardener, who has himself ordained this as the only way of saving our ruined race. And this is twice marked in my text with very peculiar force and emphasis: "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."

Now I ask, who was it that *gave*the Savior to us, or us to him? Who was it that *accepted*him in our behalf? Who was it that, after accepting his sacrifice in our behalf, constituted him our living Head, and treasured up in him such a fullness of all that we stood in need of? And who was it that cut us off from our old stock and grafted us into him? And who was it that by this mysterious process actually made us partakers of all these benefits?

Hear it, and forget it not! "It is *because of him*that you are in Christ Jesus! *Because of God*that Christ is made unto you all that you stand in need of." Let God then have all the glory. This was the very end for which he did all this, as he tells us both in the words that precede my text, and in the words that follow it: "God, says the Apostle, has chosen things which are not, to bring to nothing things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. It is *because of him*that you are in Christ Jesus; who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that, according as it is written, he who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

Now I entreat your attention to this. Do not rob God of his glory. Do not ascribe anything to yourselves, but give him the glory of your salvation from first to last. If you could go up to Heaven, you would not find one soul there that arrogates anything to himself. All with one heart and one voice are singing, "Salvation to God and to the Lamb!" To *God*, as the alone Author of salvation! To the *Lamb*, as the only means of salvation! I call on every one of you to begin this song on earth, giving all praise to God the Father as the source and fountain of your happiness, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has both purchased it for you by his blood, and imparted it to you by his Spirit.

God is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another: and if you rob him of his glory here, you shall not be partakers of it in the world to come!

Having called your attention to this, I next say, Seek this salvation in the precise way that God has appointed:

Seek this salvation in its full extent.

Seek this salvation in its proper order.

Seek this salvation for its only just and legitimate end.

Seek this salvation with a confidence that you shall not seek in vain.

**Seek this salvation in its full extent.** Look to Christ for everything without exception!

Look to him for WISDOM. Even though you are the most learned man on earth in respect of human sciences, you must look to him alone to instruct you in that which is divine. You must come to him even as a little child, to be taught of him. You must in your own apprehension "be a fool, if you should become truly wise, [1 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.18)." If you "lean to your own understanding," instead of relying upon the teaching of his Spirit, you will never attain true saving knowledge. If you would be made wise unto salvation, "your eyes must be anointed with the eye-salve which he alone can bestow! [Revelation 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.18)."

Look to him also for RIGHTEOUSNESS. There must be no dependence whatever on anything of your own. There must be no attempt to blend your own righteousness with his. You must not even look to any attainments of your own, as your warrant to go to him, or to hope in him: your hope must be founded wholly on the sufficiency of his atonement, and the perfection of the righteousness which he wrought out for you.

I do not mean that you are to be remiss in your obedience; but you are not to *rely*upon it. *In point of dependence, your best deeds must be disclaimed as much as your worst sins*. The fixed and habitual sentiment of your heart must be, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! [Hebrews 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.14)."

For SANCTIFICATION also must you look to him, and that with as much earnestness, as if you were to be saved by your own works. While I warn you that your own good works must be renounced in point of *dependence*, I would not have you imagine that you can ever be saved without them. No! I declare to every living man, that antinomianism is a horrible delusion, and a damning sin. God has plainly warned us, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and that "every man who has a scriptural hope in Christ, must purify himself even as he is pure! [1 John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.3)."

Your complete REDEMPTION also must be received from Christ alone. You must "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 Timothy 2:1." It is in his strength alone that you are to maintain your contest with your great adversary, for it is he alone that can "bruise Satan under your feet, [Romans 16:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.20)."

Bear in mind, that no one of these things is to be separated from another. There must be no harboring of *philosophic pride*, or of *pharisaic self-righteousness*, or of *antinomian licentiousness*: but the whole of Christ's benefits must be sought by you, without partiality and without hypocrisy, [James 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 3.17)."

Next, I should observe, **these things must be sought in their proper order**, that is, in the very order in which they are here proposed.

Divine teaching must be sought in the first instance; for without that, you can know nothing either of your own need of Christ, or of his sufficiency.

Then you must, as a poor perishing sinner, look to Christ, to wash you in his blood, and to clothe you in the unspotted robe of his righteousness.

Then, having obtained a hope of acceptance through him, you must seek to be "sanctified throughout, in body, soul, and spirit."

And further, having obtained a measure of holiness, you must not be self-confident, but, like the Apostle Paul, must "keep your body under control, and bring it into subjection, lest after all your high professions, you prove a cast-away at last! [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.27)."

To the last hour of your life, you must retain the frame recommended by the Apostle, "Be not high-minded, but fear." "Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall, [Romans 11:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.20). [1 Corinthians 10:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.12)."

And, while you acknowledge Christ as "the *author*of your faith," you must look to him, and to him alone, as "the *finisher*of it, [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)."

**Further, seek all these blessings for the only just and legitimate end, the glory of God.**The mind of all the glorified saints must be your mind. They all "prostrate themselves before the throne of God, and cast their crowns at the Savior's feet! [Revelation 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 4.10)." *They*are nothing—and *He*is all. This is the true end of all religion, "that God in all things may be glorified through Christ Jesus, 1 Peter 4:11."

An adoring frame of mind is that which you should cultivate to your dying hour. While you are in that frame, God, if I may so speak, is in his place, and you in yours. Even the angels that never sinned, are all upon their faces before God! [Revelation 7:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.11). Much more should you, who have never done anything but sin, and yet have been redeemed from condemnation by the blood of your incarnate God! The higher you are exalted by God, the lower you must lie before him. The deeper your sense of your own unworthiness, the more devoutly will you join in the song of the redeemed, "To him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and the Father—to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen! [Revelation 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.5-6)."

Lastly, **seek these blessings with a due confidence that you shall not seek in vain**. Recollect, who were the persons of whom these things were spoken? They were sinners of no common stamp. Such were the enormities which many of them had committed, that they seemed to be almost beyond the reach of mercy! Yet of them was it said, "But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God! [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.9-11)."

Let none then entertain the doubt, 'Shall Christ be made all this to me?' for he shall be so made to every believing soul. Nor shall the vilest sinner in the universe be allowed to seek God's face in vain, [Isaiah 45:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.19). Only let the pursuit of these things be your great object in life (for, what is there that can for a moment be put in competition with them?) and there shall not be a soul among us, who shall not be able to say, 'I am the happy person in whom all this blessedness is realized!' 'Because of God am I in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto me wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; and in him do I glory, yes and will glory throughout all the ages of eternity!' May this be the happy experience of us all, for Christ's sake! Amen and Amen.

***~~AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOREGOING DISCOURSE~~***

We should consider in Sacred Scripture what is *implied*as well as what is *expressed*.

So did Christ ([Matthew 22:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.32),) and so will we.

***~~I. What is IMPLIED.~~***

***~~1. That we are destitute of all good in ourselves—~~***

We are ignorant, guilty, polluted, and enslaved.

***~~2. That we are incapable of attaining good by any power of our own—~~***

We cannot remove any one of these: ignorance, guilt, pollution, or bondage.

***~~II. What is EXPRESSED.~~***

***~~1. That God has treasured up for us in Christ all the good that we stand in need of—~~***

He is the Vine and we are the branches.

***~~2. That he will impart it to every soul who believes in him—~~***

Do we need wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? He will make Christ all this unto us.

Inquire whether He is made all this to *you*.

**APPLICATION**.

***~~1. See how entirely salvation is of grace from first to last.~~***

Who gave the Savior to us? God alone.

Who gave us to him? God alone.

Both these things are marked in the text, and must be marked by us.

**2. Seek** **salvation altogether in God's appointed way—**

In its full extent—omitting none, preferring none.

In its proper order—the precise order stated in the text.

For its only just and legitimate end—God's glory, twice mentioned.

***~~3. Seek salvation with full confidence that you shall not seek it in vain—~~***

None can be more unworthy of it than the persons addressed in the text, [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.9-11).

***~~#1933~~***

***~~CHRIST CRUCIFIED, OR EVANGELICAL RELIGION DESCRIBED~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.2)~~***

"I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

IN different ages of the world it has pleased God to reveal himself to men in different ways; sometimes by visions, sometimes by voices, sometimes by suggestions of his Spirit to their minds. But since the completion of the sacred canon, he has principally made use of his written word, explained and enforced by men, whom he has called and qualified to preach his Gospel; and though he has not precluded himself from conveying again the knowledge of his will in any of the former ways,*it is through the written word alone that we are now authorized to expect his gracious instructions*.

This, whether read by ourselves or published by his servants, he applies to the heart, and makes effectual for the illumination and salvation of men. It must be confessed, however, that he chiefly uses the ministry of his servants, whom he has sent as ambassadors to a guilty world.

It was thus that he conveyed the knowledge of salvation to the *Ethiopian Eunuch*, who was reading an interesting portion of Isaiah's prophecies. He might have opened the understanding of this man at once by the agency of his Spirit; but he chose rather to send his servant Philip, to join the chariot, and to explain the Scripture to him.

When Cornelius, a *gentile Centurion*also had sought with much diligence and prayer to know the way of salvation, God did not instruct him by his Word or Spirit, but informed him where to send for instruction; and by a vision removed the scruples of Peter about going to him; so that the established ministry might be honored, and the Church might look to their authorized instructors, as the instruments whom God would make use of for their edification and salvation.

Thus it is at this time: God is not confined to means, but he condescends to employ the stated ministry of his word for the diffusion of Divine knowledge: "The priests lips keep knowledge;" and by their diligent discharge of their ministry is knowledge transmitted and increased.

But this circumstance, so favorable to all classes of the community, imposes on them a duty of the utmost importance. If there is a *well*from which we are to receive our daily supplies, it befits us to ascertain that its waters are healthy. In like manner, if we are to receive instruction from men, who are weak and fallible as ourselves—it befits us to try their doctrines by the touchstone of the written word; and to receive from them those sentiments only which agree with that unerring standard. Or, to use the words of an inspired Apostle, we must "prove all things, and hold fast to that which is good."

To preachers also there arises a solemn responsibility; for, as the people are "to receive the word at their mouth," and their "word is to be a savor of life or of death to all that hear it," it concerns them to be well assured that they set before their people "the sincere unadulterated milk of the word;" that in no respect they "corrupt the word of God," or "handle it deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. See 2 Corinthians 2:15-17; [2 Corinthians 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.2)."

Hence it appears that we all are deeply interested in this one question, What is truth? What is that truth, which ministers are bound to preach, and which their people should be anxious to hear?

There will however be no difficulty in answering this question, if only we consult the passage before us; wherein Paul explicitly declares what was the great scope of his ministry, and the one subject which he labored to unfold. He regarded not the subtleties which had occupied the attention of philosophers; nor did he affect that species of knowledge which was in high repute among men. On the contrary, *he studiously avoided all that gratified the pride of human wisdom, and determined to adhere simply to one subject, the crucifixion of Christ for the sins of men*: "I came not unto you," says he, "with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

To explain and vindicate this determination of the Apostle is our intention in this discourse.

***~~I. To explain Paul's determination to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified—~~***

By preaching Christ crucified, we are not to understand that he dwelt continually on the fact or history of the crucifixion; for though he speaks of having "set forth Christ as it were crucified before the eyes" of the Galatians, and may therefore be supposed occasionally to have enlarged upon the sufferings of Christ as the means of exciting gratitude towards him in their hearts—yet we have no reason to think that he contented himself with exhibiting to their view a tragical scene, as though he hoped by that to convert their souls.

It was the *doctrine of the crucifixion*that he insisted on; and he opened it to them in all its bearings and connections. This he calls "the preaching of the cross:" and it consisted of such a representation of "Christ crucified, as was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to the true believer, the power of God and the wisdom of God, [1 Corinthians 1:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.23-24)."

There were two particular views in which he invariably spoke of the death of Christ; namely, as the ground of our hopes, and as the motive to our obedience.

***~~1. Paul spoke of the death of Christ as the ground of our hopes.~~***

In the former of these views, the Apostle not only asserts, that the death of Christ was the *appointed*means of effecting our reconciliation with God, but that it was the *only*means by which our reconciliation could be effected. He represents all, both Jews and Gentiles, as under sin, and in a state of guilt and condemnation. He states, that, inasmuch as we are all condemned by the law, we can never be justified by the law, but are shut up unto that way of justification which God has provided for us in the Gospel, [Galatians 3:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.22-23). He asserts, that "God has set forth his Son to be an atoning sacrifice through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins, that he may be just, and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus, [Romans 3:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.25-26)." He requires all, Jews as well as Gentiles, to believe in Jesus, in order to the obtaining of justification by faith in him, [Galatians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.15-16); and so jealous is he of everything that may interfere with this doctrine, or be supposed to serve as a joint ground of our acceptance with God, that he represents the smallest measure of affiance in anything else as actually making void the faith of Christ, and rendering his death of no avail, [Galatians 5:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2-4). Nay, more, if he himself, or even an angel from Heaven, should ever be found to propose any other ground of hope to sinful man, he denounces a curse against him; and, lest his denunciation should be overlooked, he repeats it with augmented energy; "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed! [Galatians 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.8-9)."

To the death of Christ he ascribes every blessing we possess.

We are "reconciled to God by the blood of his cross."

We are "brought near to him."

We "have boldness and access with confidence" even to his throne."

We "are cleansed by it from all sin."

Yes, "by his one offering of himself he has perfected for ever those who are sanctified."

But there is one passage in particular wherein a multitude of spiritual blessings are comprised, and all are referred to him as the true source from whom they flow. The passage we speak of, is in the first chapter to the Ephesians, where, within the space of eleven verses, the same truth is repeated at least eight or nine times. In order to enter fully into the force of that passage, we may conceive of Paul as maintaining the truth in opposition to all its most determined adversaries, and as laboring to the uttermost to exalt Christ in the eyes of those who trusted in him: we may conceive of him, I say, as contending thus:

"Have we been *chosen*before the foundation of the world? It is in Christ.

Have we been *predestined*unto the adoption of children? It is in and by Him.

Are we *accepted*by the Father? It is in the Beloved.

Have we *redemption*, even the *forgiveness*of sins? It is in Him, through his blood.

Are all, both in Heaven and earth, gathered together under one Head? It is in Christ, even in Him.

Have we obtained an eternal *inheritance*? It is in Him.

Are we sealed with the *Holy Spirit*of promise? It is in Him.

Are we blessed with *all spiritual blessings*? It is in Christ Jesus.

When the Apostle has labored thus to impress our minds with the idea that our whole salvation is in, and by, the Lord Jesus Christ, is it not surprising that any one should be ignorant of it? Yet we apprehend that many persons, who have even studied the Holy Scriptures, and read over this passage a multitude of times, have yet never seen the force of it, or been led by it to just views of *Christ as the Fountain "in whom all fullness dwells," and "from whose fullness we must all receive, even grace upon grace*."

**2. Paul spoke of the death of Christ as the motive to our obedience.**As strongly as he enforced the necessity of relying on Christ, and founding our hopes of salvation solely on his obedience unto death, he was no less earnest in promoting the interests of holiness. While he represented the believers as "dead to the law" and "without law," he still insisted that they were "under the law to Christ," and as much bound to obey every tittle of it as ever, [1 Corinthians 9:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.21). [Galatians 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.19); and he enforced obedience to it, in all its branches, and to the utmost possible extent.

Moreover, when the doctrines which he had inculcated were in danger of being abused to licentious purposes, he expressed his utter abhorrence of such a procedure, [Romans 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.1); [Romans 6:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.15); and declared, that "the grace of God, which brought salvation, taught them, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world, [Titus 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.11-12)." *A life of holy obedience is represented by him as the great object which Christ aimed to produce in all his people*. Indeed the very name, Jesus, proclaimed, that the object of his coming was "To save his people from their sins." The same was the scope and end of his death, even to "redeem them from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous for good works."

His resurrection and ascension to Heaven had also the same end in view; for "therefore he both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living."

Impressed with a sense of these things himself, Paul labored more abundantly than any of the Apostles in his holy vocation: he proceeded with a zeal which nothing could quench, and an ardor which nothing could damp: privations, labors, imprisonments, deaths, were of no account in his eyes; "none of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear unto him, so that he might but finish his course with joy, and fulfill the ministry that was committed to him."

But what was the principle by which he was actuated? He himself tells us, that he was impelled by a sense of obligation to Christ, for all that He had done and suffered for him: "the love of Christ constrains us," says he; "because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that those who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again, [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14-15)." This is that principle which he desired to be universally embraced, and endeavored to impress on the minds of all: "We beseech you, brethren," says he, "by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1)." What mercies he refers to, we are at no loss to determine; they are the great mercies given to us in the work of redemption: for so he says in another place; "You are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20."

Now this is the subject which the Apostle comprehends under the term "Christ crucified:" it consists of two parts:

first, of *trust*in Christ for salvation, and,

next, of *obedience*to Christ for His astonishing love for sinners.

Had either part of it been taken alone, his views would have been imperfect, and his ministry without success. Had he neglected to set forth Christ as the only Savior of the world, he would have betrayed his trust, and led his hearers to build their hopes on a foundation of sand. On the other hand, if he had neglected to inculcate holiness, and to set forth redeeming love as the great incentive to obedience, he would have been justly chargeable with that which has been often falsely imputed to him—an antinomian spirit; and his doctrines would have merited the odium which has most unjustly been cast upon them.

But on neither side did he err: he forgot neither the foundation nor the superstructure: he distinguished properly between them, and kept each in its place: and hence with great propriety adopted the determination in our text.

Having explained his determination, we shall now proceed,

***~~II. To vindicate Paul's determination to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified—~~***

It was not from an enthusiastic fondness for one particular point, but from the fullest conviction of his mind, that the Apostle adopted this resolution: and so the word in the original imports; "I determined, as the result of my deliberate judgment, to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I have made it, and will ever make it, my theme, my boast, and my song." The reasons why he insisted on this subject so exclusively, and with such delight, shall now be stated:—he did so,

***~~1. Because it contained all that he was commissioned to declare.~~***

"It pleased God to reveal his Son in the Apostle, that he might preach him among the heathen:" and accordingly Paul tells us, that "this grace was given to him to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ." This, I say, was his office; and this too is the ministry of reconciliation which is committed to ministers in every age; "namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, [2 Corinthians 5:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.18-19)." To the Apostles, indeed, the commission was to "go forth into all the world, and to preach the Gospel to every creature;" whereas to us is assigned, as it were, a more limited sphere: but the subject of our ministry is the same with theirs: we have the same commission committed unto us; and "woe will be unto us, if we preach not the Gospel."

But, as though men needed not to be evangelized now, the term evangelical is used as a term of reproach. We mean not to justify any persons whatever in using unnecessary terms of distinction, more especially If it is with a view to depreciate others, and to aggrandize themselves: but still the distinctions which are made in Scripture must be made by us; else for what end has God himself made them?

Now it cannot be denied, that the Apostle characterizes the great subject of his ministry as the Gospel; nor can it be denied that he complains of some teachers in the Galatian Church as introducing another Gospel, which was not the true Gospel, but a perversion of it, [Galatians 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.6-7). Here then he lays down the distinction between doctrines which are truly evangelical, and others which have no just title to that name. Of course, wherever the same difference exists between the doctrines maintained, the same terms must be proper to distinguish them; and a just view of those distinctions is necessary, in order to our being guarded against error, and established in the truth.

But we beg to be clearly understood in reference to this matter. It is not our design to enter into any dispute about the use of a term, or to vindicate any particular party; but merely to state, with all the clearness we can, a subject, about which everyone ought to have the most accurate and precise ideas.

We have seen what was the great subject of the Apostle's preaching, and which he emphatically and exclusively called *the Gospel*; and if only we attend to what he has spoken in the text, we shall see what really constitutes evangelical preaching.

The subject of it must be "Christ crucified;" that is, Christ must be set forth as the only foundation of a sinner's hope: and holiness in all its branches must be enforced; but *a sense of Christ's love in dying for us must be inculcated, as the main-spring and motive of all our obedience*.

The manner of setting forth this doctrine must also accord with that of the Apostle in the text: the importance of the doctrine must be so felt, as to make us determine never to know anything else, either for the salvation of our own souls, or for the subject of our public ministrations. Viewing its transcendent excellency, we must rejoice and glory in it ourselves, and show forth its fruits in a life of entire devotedness to God: we must call upon our hearers also to rejoice and glory in it, and to display its sanctifying effects in the whole of their life and conduct.

Thus to preach, and thus to live, should characterize a person, and his ministry, as evangelical, in the eyes of the Apostle. Whereas indifference to this doctrine, or a corruption of it, either by a self-righteous or antinomian mixture, would render both the person and his ministry obnoxious to Paul's censure, according to the degree in which such indifference, or such a mixture, prevailed.

We do not mean to say, that there are not different degrees of clearness in the views and ministry of different persons, or that none are accepted of God, or useful in the Church, unless they come up to such a precise standard; nor do we confine the term evangelical to those who lean to this or that particular system, as some are apt to imagine; but this we say, that, in proportion as any persons, in their spirit and in their preaching, accord with the example in the text, they are properly denominated evangelical; and that, in proportion as they recede from this pattern, their claim to this title is dubious or void.

Now when we ask, What is there in this which every Christian ought not to feel and preach? Is there anything in this enthusiastic? Is there anything sectarian? anything uncharitable? anything worthy of reproach? Is the Apostle's example in the text so absurd, as to make an imitation of him blame-worthy, and a conformity to him contemptible?

Or, if a scoffing and ungodly world will make the glorying in the cross of Christ a subject of reproach, ought any who are reproached by them to abandon the Gospel for fear of being called evangelical? Ought they not rather, like the Apostles, "to rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer shame, if shame it be, for Christ's sake?"

The fact is indisputable, that the Apostle's commission was to preach Christ crucified; to preach, I say, that *chiefly*, that *constantly*, that *exclusively*. And therefore he was justified in his determination to "know nothing else:" consequently, to adopt that same resolution is our wisdom also, whether it be in reference to our own salvation, or to the subject of our ministrations in the Church of God.

We now proceed to a second reason for the Apostle's determination. *He determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified, because it contained all that could conduce to the eternal happiness of man*. There are other things which may amuse us; but there is nothing else that can contribute to man's real happiness. Place him in a situation of great distress; let him be bowed down under a sense of sin; let him be oppressed with any great calamity; or let him be brought by sickness to the borders of the grave; there is nothing that will satisfy his mind, but a view of this glorious subject.

Tell him of his good works; and he feels a doubt, (a doubt which no human being can resolve,) what is that precise measure of good works which will ensure eternal happiness.

Tell him of repentance, and of Christ supplying his deficiencies; and he will still be at a loss to ascertain whether he has attained that measure of penitence or of goodness, which is necessary to answer the demands of God.

But speak to him of Christ as dying for the sins of men, as "casting out none who come unto him," as "purging us by his blood from all sin," and as clothing us with his own unspotted righteousness; yes, as making his own grace to abound, not only where sin has abounded, but infinitely beyond our most abounding iniquities, [Romans 5:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20-21). Set forth to him thus the freeness and sufficiency of the Gospel salvation, and he wants nothing else: he feels that Christ is "a Rock; a sure Foundation;" and on that he builds without fear, assured that "whoever believes in Christ shall not be confounded." He hears the Savior saying, "This is life eternal, to know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent;" and having attained that knowledge, he trusts that the word of Christ shall be fulfilled to him: he already exults in the language of the Apostle, "Who is he who condemns? it is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us! [Romans 8:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.34)."

But if a sense of guilt afflicts some, a lack of victory over their indwelling corruptions distresses others—and to them also the doctrine of Christ crucified administers the only effectual relief. The consideration of eternal *rewards*and *punishments*affords indeed a powerful incentive to exertion; but efforts springing from those motives only, will always savor of constraint; they will never be sincere, hearty, affectionate, unreserved.

But let a sense of redeeming love occupy the soul, and the heart becomes enlarged, and "the feet are set at liberty to run the way of God's commandments." We do not say that every person who professes to have experienced the love of Christ, will always walk consistently with that profession; for there were falls and offenses not only in the apostolic age, but even among the Apostles themselves. But this we do say, that there is no other principle in the universe so powerful as the love of Christ; that while that principle is in action, no commandment will ever be considered as grievous; the yoke of Christ in everything will be easy, and his burden light; yes, the service of God will be perfect freedom; and the labor of our souls will be to "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

This the Apostle found in his own experience; and this he found to be the effect of his ministry on the hearts of thousands. What then could he wish for in addition to this? Where this principle was inefficacious, nothing was effectual; and where this was effectual, nothing else was wanted. It is no wonder then that he determined to insist on this subject, and nothing else; since, whether in the removing of guilt from the conscience, or of corruption from the soul, nothing could bear any comparison with this.

Further, He determined to know nothing but this subject, because nothing could be added to it without weakening or destroying its efficacy. The subject of Christ crucified may, as we have before observed, be considered as consisting of two parts—a foundation, and a superstructure.

Now Paul declares, that if anything whatever be added to that *foundation*, it will make void the whole Gospel. If anything could have been found which might safely have been added to it, we might suppose that the rite of circumcision might have claimed that honor, because it was of God's special appointment, and had had so great a stress laid upon it by God himself: but Paul says in reference to that rite, that if any person should submit to it with a view to confirm his interest in the Gospel, "Christ would profit him nothing:" such a person should have "fallen from grace," as much as if he had renounced the Gospel altogether.

Again, if any person, who had the foundation rightly laid within him, should build upon it anything but the pure, the simple, the essential duties of religion, "his work should be burnt up as wood or stubble;" and though he would not entirely lose Heaven, hw would be saved only like one snatched out of the devouring flames. With such a view of the subject, what inducement could the Apostle have to add anything to it?

But the Apostle speaks yet more strongly respecting this. He tells us, not only that the adulterating of the subject by any base mixture will destroy its efficacy, but that even an artificial statement of the truth will make it of none effect. God is exceedingly jealous of the honor of his Gospel. If it is plainly and simply stated he will work by it, and make it effectual to the salvation of men; but if it is set forth with all the ornaments of human eloquence, and stated in "the words which man's wisdom teaches," he will not work by it; because he would have "our faith to stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Hence Paul, though eminently qualified to set it forth with all the charms of oratory, purposely laid aside "all excellency of speech or of wisdom in declaring the testimony of God," and "used all plainness of speech," lest by dressing up the truth "in the enticing words of man's wisdom, he should make the cross of Christ of none effect, 1 Corinthians 1:17; [1 Corinthians 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.1); [1 Corinthians 2:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.4-5)."

Further vindication than this is unnecessary: for, if this subject contained all that he was commissioned to declare; if it contained all that could conduce to the happiness of man; and if nothing could be added to it without weakening or destroying its efficacy—then he must have consented to defeat the ends of his ministry altogether, if he had not adopted and maintained the resolution in the text.

***~~If then these things be so, we may venture to found upon them the following advice—~~***

***~~First, Let us take care that we know Christ crucified—~~***

Many, because they are born and educated in a Christian land, are ready to take for granted that they are instructed in this glorious subject: but there is almost as much ignorance of it prevailing among Christians, as among the heathen themselves. The *name*of Christ indeed is known, and he is complimented by us with the name of Savior; but the nature of his *person*, the extent of his *work*, and the excellency of his *salvation*, are known to few. Let not this be considered as a rash assertion: for we will appeal to the consciences of all: Do we find that the Apostle's views of Christ are common? Do we find many so filled with admiring and adoring thoughts of this mystery, as to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of it; and to say, like him, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ?"

On the contrary, do we not find that there is an almost universal jealousy on the subject of the Gospel, that those who most labor to tread in the Apostle's steps, are often most branded with opprobrious names? Do we not find that his views of the Gospel are calumniated now, precisely as they were in the days of the Apostle himself? Truly, we would be glad to be found false witnesses in relation to these things; and would most joyfully retract our assertions, if it could be shown that they are not founded in truth.

We do hope however that there is an increasing love to the Gospel pervading the whole land; and I pray God it may prevail more and more, and be embraced by every one of us, not superficially, partially, theoretically, but clearly, fully, practically.

***~~Secondly, Let us adopt the Paul's determination for ourselves—~~***

Doubtless, as men and members of society, there are many other things which we are concerned to know. Whatever be our office in life, we ought to be well acquainted with it, in order that we may perform its duties to the advantage of ourselves and others; and we should most particularly be understood to say, that the time that is destined for the acquisition of useful knowledge, ought to be diligently and conscientiously employed. But, *as Christians, we have one object of pursuit, which deserves all our care and all our labor*. Yes, we may all with great propriety determine to know nothing but Christ and him crucified.

This is the subject which even "the angels in Heaven are ever desiring to look into," and which we may investigate for our whole lives, and yet leave depths and heights unfathomed and unknown. Paul, after preaching Christ for twenty years, did not conceive himself yet to have attained all that he might, and therefore still desired to know Christ more and more, "in the power of his resurrection, and in the fellowship of his sufferings." This therefore we may well desire, and count all things but loss in comparison with it.

***~~Lastly, Let us make manifest the wisdom of our determination, by the holiness of our lives.~~***

The doctrine of Christ crucified ever did, and ever will appear "foolishness" in the eyes of ungodly men; so that, if it is preached by an Apostle himself, he shall be accounted by them a babbler and deceiver. But there is one way of displaying its excellency open to us, a way in which we may effectually "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Namely, "by well-doing;" that is, by *showing the sanctifying and transforming efficacy of this doctrine*. Paul tells us, that "by the cross of Christ the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world, [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14);" and such is the effect that it should produce on us. We should show that we are men of another world, and men too of "a more excellent spirit." We should show the fruits of our faith in every relation of life: and, in so doing, we may hope to "win by our good conduct" many, who would never have submitted to the preached word.

But we must never forget where our strength is, or on whose aid we must entirely rely. The Prophet Isaiah reminds us of this; "Surely shall one say, In the Lord I have righteousness and strength:" and our Lord himself plainly tells us, that "without him we can do nothing." Since then "we have no sufficiency in ourselves to help ourselves," and God has "laid help for us upon One that is mighty," let us "live by faith in the Son of God," "receiving daily out of his fullness that grace" that shall be "sufficient for us." Let us bear in mind, that this is a very principal part of the knowledge of Christ crucified: for, as "all our fresh springs are in Christ," so must we look continually to him for "the supplies of his Spirit," and "have him for our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and redemption."

***~~#1934~~***

***~~THE FEELINGS OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.3)~~***

"I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."

THERE was one subject on which Paul delighted chiefly to expatiate, which was, "Christ crucified!"—a subject which to the Jews was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. The mode on which he insisted upon it, contributed to render it yet more distasteful to the philosophic reasoners of Greece and Rome: he laid aside all needless parade of wisdom, and all adventitious ornaments of rhetoric, and plainly declared the fact that Christ was crucified for the sins of men. This he did, not because he was not able to express himself agreeably to the taste of men of learning, but because he was anxious "that the faith" of all who received the Gospel "should stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," accompanying a simple statement of the truth.

It is probable, too, that something in his speech and external form contributed to render him base and contemptible in the eyes of many, [2 Corinthians 10:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.1); [2 Corinthians 10:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.10). [Galatians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.13). In addition to all this, the hostility of his enemies was most bitter, so that they sought by all possible means to destroy him.

These diversified trials he sustained for the most part with great fortitude: but it seems that at Corinth his courage was in some degree shaken; for our blessed Lord, in order to comfort and encourage him, appeared to him in a vision, and bade him not be afraid, for he would allow none in that place to hurt Paul, [Acts 18:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 18.9-10). To this state of mind he most probably alludes in the words before us, declaring, that, partly by his "fightings without and fears within," he had been "among them in weakness, and fear, and much trembling."

But we must not confine the words to this sense: there can be no doubt but that he had many other sources of inward trial, such as are common to all who execute the ministerial office. What these are, and what corresponding feelings they call for among a believing people, it is our present intention to inquire.

We will show,

***~~I. The feelings experienced by a faithful minister—~~***

However light many think of the ministerial office, it is a situation of great difficulty, insomuch that there is not any truly faithful minister who does not find the expressions in our text exactly descriptive of his own feelings.

To the frame of mind here spoken of, he will of necessity be led,

***~~1. From a view of the vast importance of his work—~~***

A minister is an ambassador from the court of Heaven, empowered to declare to men the terms on which a reconciliation may be effected between God and them, and on which those who are now objects of God's righteous indignation, may become monuments of his love and favor. A man who has the fate of an empire depending on him, sustains an arduous office: but *all the empires upon earth are not of equal value with one soul.*What a weight then has he upon him, who undertakes to negotiate a treaty between God and man—a treaty, on the acceptance or rejection of which the everlasting salvation of hundreds, and perhaps of thousands, depends! Methinks this should be an office for an angel, rather than a poor worm like ourselves: yet is it devolved on us: and every one who is able to estimate its importance, and desires to execute it with success, must needs execute it "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."

***~~2. From a sense of his own insufficiency to perform it—~~***

In one who would perform this office aright, there ought to be a combination of all that is good and great. There need not indeed be the same kind of knowledge, or the same species of talent as would be necessary for a person entrusted with the political interests of men: but there should be a deep insight into the great mystery of redemption; a comprehensive view of it, as founded in the necessities of our fallen nature, and adapted to all our needs. There should be an ability to bring forth out of the inexhaustible stores that are contained in the sacred volume, whatever is best fitted for the establishment of sound doctrine and the refutation of error, as also for the correction of everything that is wrong in practice, and the promotion of universal righteousness, [2 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.16). He should be "a scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of God," and able to meet every case with suitable instruction. He should also be endued with such *grace*, as to exemplify in his own spirit and conduct all that he teaches to others; being "an example to believers in word, in conduct, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity, [1 Timothy 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 4.12)."

But, as Paul himself says, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Who that has any consciousness of his own ignorance and sinfulness, does not tremble at the idea of his own utter inadequacy to the work assigned to him?

***~~3. From a consideration of his own solemn responsibility—~~***

We are constituted watchmen to the house of Israel; and are warned beforehand, that if any soul shall perish through our neglect, his "blood shall be required at our hand! [Ezekiel 33:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.6-8);" and on this account we are told to "watch for souls, as those who must give account! [Hebrews 13:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.17)."

But who can reflect on this, and not tremble? It is a solemn thought, that we must every one of us answer for ourselves: but how much more, that we must give an account of the hundreds and thousands that are committed to our charge! Truly, if there were not a God of infinite mercy to pity our weakness and to pardon our defects—I know not who would dare to undertake the office. Whenever we hear the bell announcing the death or funeral of one that was under our care, we are constrained to ask, What was the state of that soul? Did I do all that I could for him while he was alive? Can I say as before God, that "I am pure from his blood?"

Ah, brethren! this is sometimes a heavy load upon the mind; for, of all the people upon the face of the earth, the man who most stands in need of superabounding grace and mercy, is he who has the care of souls committed to him: and *the minister that does not tremble at this thought, has, above all men in the world, the most need to tremble.*

***~~4. From an apprehension lest his labor should after all be in vain—~~***

The labors of Jesus himself, and of all his Apostles, were, with respect to the great mass of their hearers, in vain. It is no wonder, therefore, that it is so with respect to us. And what a distressing thought is this, that we eventually increase the guilt and condemnation of vast multitudes, over whom we have wept, and for whose salvation we have labored! The word which we preach to them, If it is not "a savor of life unto life—becomes to them a savor of death unto death, [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.16)." If we had not labored among them, "they would not, comparatively, have had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin, [John 15:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.22)." The more they are, like Capernaum, exalted in their privileges, the more deeply will they be cast down into Hell for their abuse of them, [Matthew 11:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.22-24).

Who that has a spark of compassion in his soul, can look around him on the multitudes who have hitherto withstood his efforts for their good, and not weep over them? Who, when he reflects, that, with respect to many, his commission will prove only like that delegated to Isaiah, "Go and tell this people: 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed," [Isaiah 6:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.9-10). Who, I say, can reflect on this, and not be "in weakness, and fear, and much trembling;" more especially when he considers how much the failure may have been owing to his own deficiencies!

Such then are, and ought to be, the feelings of all who have learned to estimate aright *the difficulties and dangers of the ministerial office*.

Corresponding with these are,

***~~II. The feelings called for in a believing people—~~***

These, it is true, are not expressly mentioned in our text; but they are so closely connected with the foregoing subject, that we must on no account omit to notice them.

Two things are evidently called for on the part of those who are blessed with such a minister:

***~~1. A reciprocal concern for his welfare—~~***

While he is thus "travailing, as it were, in birth with them," they should be deeply concerned for him, and study by all possible means to strengthen his hands and to comfort his heart. They should co-operate with him in every labor of love. They should, as far as their influence extends, endeavor to confirm his word, and to advance his work. In their own families, especially, they should be laborers together with him. Above all, they should assist him daily with their prayers. How often does the Apostle say, "Brethren, pray for us! [1 Thessalonians 5:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.25). [Hebrews 13:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.18)." Yes, with what extreme earnestness did he entreat this support from the Church at Rome, "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, [Romans 15:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.30)." To this he confidently looked, as to an infallible source of blessings to his own soul, [Philippians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.19), and of success to his ministerial exertions, [2 Corinthians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.11). [Ephesians 6:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.18-19). This therefore is the duty of every Christian, in return for those efforts which his minister is using for his good.

Intercession is an ordinance of God; and is replete with benefit invariably to those who use it, and most generally to those in whose behalf it is used. Does your minister then stand in need of wisdom, of zeal, of patience, of love, of all manner of gracious communications? Be instant in prayer for him, that he may receive from the fullness that is in Christ all seasonable and necessary supplies. Without such cooperation on your part he can scarcely hope to bear up under the pressure of the load that is laid upon him. He is ready at times to complain, as Moses did under the weight that had been laid upon him: "Why have you afflicted your servant? and why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that you should say unto me: Carry them in your bosom, as a nursing father bears the nursing child, unto the land which you swore unto their fathers? I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me! [Numbers 11:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 11.11-12); [Numbers 11:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 11.14)." Learn then, brethren, to sympathize with him; and "labor fervently and without ceasing in prayer to God for him, that he may be enabled to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, [Colossians 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 4.12)."

***~~2. An anxious desire to answer the end of his exertions—~~***

Is a minister thus deeply exercised for his people's good—and should not they be anxious for their own? Is he harassed with unremitting solicitude—and should they be sitting in a state of indifference? Know, brethren, that the very circumstance of God's having set apart an order of men to labor for your souls, is a very abundant proof that your souls are of an inestimable value, and that all the concern you can feel is less than they call for at your hands.

Do but consider, that every moment you are ripening either for Heaven or for Hell; every action, every word, and every thought, is enhancing either your happiness or misery forever! More particularly, you are responsible for all the means of grace which you enjoy, and for all the efforts which are used for your salvation. Should not this thought fill you with fear and trembling, more especially when you look back upon the opportunities which you have neglected to improve? Have you no reason to fear, lest he who seeks your eternal welfare, and longs above all things to have you as his "joy and crown of rejoicing in the last day," should, after all, be a swift witness against you to your everlasting confusion?

Begin then, if you have not yet begun, to cherish this beneficial fear. Remember, what his object is; and then inquire, whether that object have been attained in you. It is not to an approbation of his ministry, or to a mere profession of the truth, that he wishes to convert you—but to a cordial acceptance of the Gospel salvation, and an entire surrender of your souls to God. Less than this will not answer the ends of his ministry, or bring any substantial blessing on your own souls. I beg you, examine well how far this good work has been wrought within you; and learn to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

We do not mean that you should be kept in a state of slavish fear: for the very scope and intent of the Gospel is to "cast out all such fear as has torment." It is a *filial fear*that we recommend to you; and it is a filial fear that we would cultivate ourselves: but the more that abounds in ministers and people, the more will the work of God flourish among them, and God himself be glorified in the midst of them.

***~~#1935~~***

***~~APOSTOLIC PREACHING~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 2:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.4-5)~~***

"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."

IN the education of persons for the ministry, it is justly thought that all possible attention should be paid to the attainment of whatever may render them eminent in their profession, and useful in the Church of God. Yet it may well be doubted whether a proper distinction be made between the acquisition of knowledge and the use of it. A man cannot acquire too much knowledge; but he may use his knowledge unprofitably, and even injuriously, in the discharge of his holy calling.

*There is, in the truths which he has to deliver, a dignity, which should be obscured by the artificial ornaments of human oratory.*Hence Paul, even when at Corinth, where human eloquence was in high request, forbore to comply with the prevailing taste, lest, by yielding to it, "he should make the cross of Christ of none effect [1 Corinthians 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.17)."

Nor did he apologize for this departure from their established usages: on the contrary, he vindicates it, and assigns what they could not but acknowledge to be an abundantly sufficient reason for his conduct.

That we may not lose the benefit of his example, I will enter more particularly into the consideration of it; and show,

***~~I. How Paul conducted himself in his pastoral office—~~***

It is evident that he here contrasts his own conduct with that of their most celebrated instructors, whom they were accustomed to admire.

The *philosophers*, whom they had followed, were fond of displaying the profoundness of their own wisdom, and the extent of their own researches: and they were admired in proportion as they were able to maintain their theories with logical subtlety and plausible argumentation.

Their great *orators*, too, to whom they had been accustomed to listen with delight, had filled their discourses with all the flowers of rhetoric, that, by pleasing the imagination of their hearers, they might suspend the severer exercises of judgment, and persuade beyond the just impulse of deliberate conviction.

But to none of these artifices would the Apostle condescend.

***~~He conducted his ministrations with the utmost simplicity—~~***

He was himself a man of great talent: having been educated under the most celebrated teacher, and made a proficiency in knowledge beyond most of his fellow-students; so that, if he had judged it expedient, he could have moved with celebrity in the path which the most distinguished philosophers had trod. But*he disdained to seek his own glory in the discharge of his sacred office*: he therefore would have nothing to do with "the enticing words of man's wisdom." He had received a message which he was anxious to deliver; and, in delivering it, "he used great plainness of speech." He looked not to the powers of language, to impress the minds of his hearers, but to the Spirit of the living God; whose energy needed no artificial aid, and whose power was amply sufficient to carry conviction to the soul. He was taught to expect from God such attestations to his word. He was enabled, indeed, to confirm his word with signs and miracles: but it was to the mighty working of the Spirit of God upon the souls of men that he chiefly looked; and, in dependence upon that, he labored both in public and in private.

"His speech," when conversing with individuals, and "his preaching" before assembled thousands, were both of the same character. To make known the mystery of redemption through our incarnate God was the office committed to him: and he determined to execute it with all simplicity of mind; "knowing nothing among his people but Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

***~~In this he had respect to the best interests of mankind—~~***

The very aim of the principal philosophers was to establish dogmas of their own, which were to be received by their followers as characteristic of the sect to which they belonged. But Paul would not have the faith of his hearers to stand on the dictates of human wisdom. *The word was God's: the power that alone could make it effectual was God's: nor could it be of any real service to the souls of men, any further than it was applied with power from on high.*However the people might accede to it as a truth, that they were corrupt and helpless creatures, they could not feel it aright, unless they were taught it by God himself. And, however they might be persuaded that Jesus Christ was the Savior of the world, *they could not believe in him to the salvation of their own souls, unless that faith should be wrought in them by the Holy Spirit*.

In like manner, *every truth of Christianity must be experimentally received, and divinely communicated*: and therefore the Apostle would not run the risk of having any of its efficacy imputed to his statements: he would have the faith of all its adherents to be purely and undeniably the offspring of a divine power; so that God alone might be glorified in every believing soul.

Such was the character of Paul's ministry. Let me now suggest,

***~~II. The hints which we may derive from it in the relation in which we stand—~~***

If Paul was an example to us as a Christian, he was not less so as a Minister. Now, from his mode of ministering, some important hints arise,

***~~1. To those who preach—~~***

We have the very same message to deliver as that which was committed to the Apostle Paul. And, though we cannot hope, like him, to have our word confirmed with miracles, we may hope that it shall be *accompanied with power from on high, to the conviction and consolation of those who hear us.*On us, therefore, the same obligation lies, to wave the use of all rhetorical ornaments, and of artificial statements that savor of human wisdom; and *to look to the influences of the Holy Spirit to render our word effectual for the good of men.*

The same holy watchfulness should be found in us respecting the honor of God in the work of man's salvation. Were our talents ever so great, we ought to deem the exercise of them, in dispensing the Gospel, a matter of extreme care and jealousy. I mean not that they are to be laid aside; for they may be employed to good purpose: but they are not to be employed for the purpose of *display*, or to exalt our own wisdom. They must be improved only for the purpose of unfolding more clearly the great mysteries of the Gospel, and of rendering them more intelligible to the basest capacity. The *object*which we should ever keep in view should be, *to have our word accompanied with a divine unction to the souls of men*, and to see faith wrought in their hearts with a divine power.

***~~2. To those who hear—~~***

The same simplicity of mind as befits your minister, befits you also. You should not wish for displays of oratory, or that preaching which savors of human wisdom. You should desire only "the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." You should be on your guard against adopting the Shibboleth of a party, or the dogmas of any particular sect. Beware, too, of becoming followers of Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, as your own carnal prejudices may incline you: you must receive the truth as little children; and embrace it, "not as the word of man, but as the word of God."

If rightly ministered, the Gospel will "be declared to you as the testimony of God" respecting his dear Son, verse 1. Now, a testimony is not received on account of the figures with which it is embellished, but on account of its intrinsic importance, and the veracity of him by whom it is borne: and in this precise way must you receive the testimony of God, who says, that "He has given us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son; and that he who has the Son, has life; and he who has not the Son of God, has not life, [1 John 5:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.11-12)." To know this truth, to feel its importance, to taste its sweetness, and to experience its sanctifying and saving efficacy—this must be your end in attending on the ministry; and, in comparison with this, all gratifications resulting from a display of human wisdom ought to be lighter than vanity itself.

***~~In conclusion, let me recommend to you,~~***

***~~1. That you form a right judgment respecting spiritual edification—~~***

There is scarcely any subject on which the Christian world are more in error than this. If persons are pleased with the talents of a preacher, they are ready to suppose that they are edified: but real edification consists in our being more humbled, more quickened, more strengthened in the service of our God: and whatever produces not these effects, however it may please us, is only as a musical exhibition, which leaves us as carnal and corrupt as we were before, [Ezekiel 33:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.31-32).

***~~2. That you seek edification in the way in which alone it can be obtained—~~***

God alone can work it in the soul: "Though Paul should plant, or Apollos water—it is God alone that can give the increase, 1 Corinthians 3:5-7." You must cry to God for the gift of his Holy Spirit; and beg that "the word may come to you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, [1 Thessalonians 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 1.5)." To Him you must look in prayer, before you come hither; and while you are hearing the word; and when you go hence: then may you hope that the word shall be clothed with energy, and prove "The power of God to the salvation of your souls!"

***~~#1936~~***

***~~WISDOM OF THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 2:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.6-7)~~***

"We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began."

THESE words appear, at first sight, to have an air of conceit and arrogance: and, if uttered by an uninspired man in reference to lucubrations of his own, they might perhaps be not unjustly condemned, as betraying in the speaker, and generating in the hearers, the unhallowed feelings of pride and self-sufficiency. But, as spoken by the holy Apostle, they are open to no such unfavorable construction. If we were to understand by them, that the Apostle held one doctrine among those who were initiated into the secrets of his mind, and another among his less-instructed disciples—we could by no means justify him in such a conduct; for he should then resemble those philosophers of old, who, in private, exposed the fallacy of popular errors, which in their public discourses they upheld and sanctioned. This the Apostle never did. If he brought some things to the view of his more enlightened followers, which he forbore to state to others, it was not from any doubt of the truth of the sentiments which he concealed, or from any fear of incurring the displeasure of men by the promulgation of them; but only from a condescension to the weakness of those whose organs of vision were not capable of sustaining the flood of light which he was able to pour upon them.

From such motives he certainly did, on many occasions, withhold truths from those who were unable to bear them, and content himself with administering milk to those who were incapable of digesting strong meat, [1 Corinthians 3:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.1-2). [Hebrews 5:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.11-14). But this is not the import of the passage before us. The simple meaning of it is, that while the great subject of his ministrations was by many of his hearers regarded as "foolishness," it was, in the eyes of those who properly understood it, "wisdom."

His words will naturally lead me to show,

***~~I. What the true character of the Gospel is—~~***

The Gospel which the Apostle preached was, salvation through a crucified Redeemer: "I determined," says he, "to know nothing among you, except Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Now this, whatever an ignorant and ungodly world may say of it, is "wisdom."

***~~It is indeed a "hidden" wisdom—~~***

It was hidden from all eternity in the bosom of the Father: nor had the first Archangel any conception of it, until it was revealed to man in Paradise: and all the knowledge which is at this very hour possessed by the Principalities and Powers of Heaven respecting it, is derived to them through the progressive revelation made of it to the Church by the Prophets and Apostles of succeeding ages, [Ephesians 3:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.9-10). Even under the Mosaic dispensation it was for the most part "hidden:" because the types and ceremonies, by which it was adumbrated, cast so thick a veil over it, that it could scarcely be discerned at all; and the very prophets who foretold it were unable to unravel the mysteries which they proclaimed to us, [1 Peter 1:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.10-12).

The things which it unfolds to our view are perfectly different from anything that ever entered into the minds of uninspired men, verse 9; and at this moment are they "hidden from the wise and prudent, even while they are revealed unto babes, [Matthew 11:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25-26)."

***~~But in it is contained the "manifold" wisdom of God—~~***

It was "ordained by God before the world, for our glory," even for the salvation of our souls. And in this "great mystery, verse 7 with [1 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 3.16)." we may behold his inventive wisdom, his administrative wisdom, his effective wisdom.

No finite intelligence could have conceived such a plan of rescuing from perdition our fallen race, without dishonoring that law which we had violated, and suspending the sentence which justice had denounced. He alone, "whose understanding is unsearchable," was capable of *devising a plan whereby the offense might be punished, and the offender saved*.

But how shall this plan be executed? If it is not made known, none can avail themselves of it: and If it is known, it can never be carried into effect: for who should ever dare to lay his hands upon his incarnate God, and inflict on him the things which he was doomed to bear? The Apostle himself tells us, that "if the princes of this world had known what they were doing, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, verse 8." And, now that the plan is executed, how shall the benefits of it be so imparted, that, while no room is left for any man to glory, the *sovereignty of God*shall not supersede, or in any degree interfere with, the *free agency of man?*Who but God could divine this?

Again: shall anything be left to chance? Shall it be uncertain whether, after all, God's ends shall be attained? No! man shall have the benefit; and God the glory. God will "give a people to his Son, whom he shall have for an inheritance, [Psalm 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.8)." "A seed shall serve him, [Psalm 22:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.30);" and, however far off they may be, God will apprehend them, and bring them to his Son [John 6:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.37), and "keep them unto the end," and "perfect in them the good work he has begun [Philippians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.6)."

Of those whom from eternity he has given to his Son, "not one shall be lost, [John 18:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 18.9)," "not one be ever plucked out of his hands, [John 10:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28-29)." At the same time, all his own perfections shall be glorified; *justice*in punishing the offense, and *mercy*in pardoning the offender. Yes, mercy shall be the more magnified, because it is exercised in away of justice; and justice, because it is honored in a way of mercy.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out [Romans 11:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.33)." This indeed may be said in reference to any single part of his plan: and, if so, how much more in reference to the whole stupendous mystery, in all its branches! Truly, in the mystery of redemption, as viewed in all its parts, there "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge! [Colossians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.3);" insomuch that, though *they shall be progressively unfolding to all eternity, they shall never be fully seen, never adequately comprehended.*

Such, then, being the true character of the Gospel, we proceed to show,

II. Whence it is that the godly alone view it in its true light—

The persons here called "perfect," are the same as in the foregoing chapter are called "the saved, [1 Corinthians 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.18)," and "the called, [1 Corinthians 1:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.24)." As for absolute perfection, there is no such thing to be found in any child of man, [Philippians 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.12). But persons are sometimes called "perfect," as having grown from children to man's estate, See [1 Corinthians 14:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 14.20) and [Hebrews 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.14). both of them in the Greek; and sometimes as being truly upright in opposition to the unbelieving and ungodly world, [Job 1:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 1.1). [Matthew 19:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 19.21). [Philippians 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.15). It is in this latter sense that the term "perfect" is used in our text. These persons, though they be only babes, behold a wisdom in the Gospel; though doubtless their insight into the glory and excellency of the Gospel is deep in proportion to the attainments they have made in the Divine life.

***~~Now these persons alone behold the wisdom of the Gospel,~~***

***~~1. Because they alone feel their need of the salvation revealed in it—~~***

Others know not their lost estate: they see no such evil in sin, but that it may be atoned for by some little act of penance, and be counterbalanced by a few self-righteous and formal services. What then can they lack of such a provision as the Gospel has made for their reconciliation with God? What need have they, that Almighty God should become incarnate, and offer himself a sacrifice for their sins? What need have they to plead the merits of a dying Savior, when their own will suffice? What need have they that the Holy Spirit should come down and dwell in their hearts, when they have a sufficiency of strength within themselves for every service which they are called to perform? But the man who knows how low he has fallen, and how utterly impossible it is that he should ever reconcile himself to God, or attain by any obedience of his own a righteousness in which he may stand before God, will be filled with amazement at the revelation which is made in the Gospel, and at the stupendous mystery there contained: in whatever light it be viewed by others, it will in his eyes be "the power of God, and the wisdom of God! 1 Corinthians 1:23-24."

***~~2. Because they alone seek to be instructed in it—~~***

Others "lean to their own understanding;" and, being "wise in their own conceits," "they are taken by God in their own craftiness, [1 Corinthians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.19); [1 Corinthians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.19)." Not so the humble inquirer. To him is imparted "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God's dear Son; so that the eyes of his understanding are opened, [Ephesians 1:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.18-19);" and he is enabled to discern with clearness and certainty "the things which are freely given to him of God, verse 12." By this divine Agent he is led to view "the deep things of God, verse 10;" and to comprehend, in a measure, the depth and height and length and breadth of that love of Christ, which, in its full extent, is utterly incomprehensible, [Ephesians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18-19).

***~~3. Because they alone are willing to embrace its self-denying doctrines—~~***

Others are offended at the humiliation it requires: nor can they endure to renounce the world, and to live only for God and for eternity. In justification of themselves, therefore, they "deride" what they choose not to embrace. See, and mark particularly in this view, [Luke 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 16.14). But *the man whose heart is right with God wishes to be humbled in the very dust as a Hell-deserving sinner, and delights in "receiving everything out of the fullness" that is treasured up for him in Christ*. Could he have the desire of his soul, he should be "holy as God himself is holy," and "perfect as his Father who is in Heaven is perfect."

Hence, when he finds in the Gospel everything that he stands in need of:

*wisdom*for the ignorant,

*righteousness*for the guilty,

sanctification for the polluted,

and *redemption*for the enslaved,

he cannot but adore the wisdom that has ordained so mysterious, so effectual, a salvation.

***~~4. Because these alone give themselves up to the contemplation of it—~~***

Others "let slip all that they hear," having no wish to treasure it up in their minds. But the truly upright lay up the word in their hearts, (even as Mary did the words of her youthful Son;) yes, and meditate upon it day and night. They resemble in this respect the holy angels, who are represented as bending down upon the ark, and inspecting with all possible care the law contained in it, [1 Peter 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.12). No wonder they are instructed; no wonder the veil is taken from their hearts: for God has said, "Then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord."

Hence, then, we see the grounds on which the perfect man admires as "wisdom" what all the world besides regard as folly. Being enabled by God to discern its *suitableness*, and to experience its *sufficiency*, he glories in it as the perfection of wisdom, and as a comprehensive summary of all that is good and great.

Now, as in the text are mentioned the speaker and the hearers—the *speaker* delivering with confidence, and the *hearers* receiving the dictates of inspiration with submission, **I will, in conclusion, address myself,**

***~~1. To those whose office it is, or may hereafter be, to preach the Gospel—~~***

The Apostle, knowing the Gospel to be the very wisdom of God himself, was extremely careful to deliver it with the utmost simplicity. He was able to preach it "with wisdom of words," and to set it forth with all the powers of language, if he had been so inclined: but he would not do so, "lest he should make the cross of Christ of none effect, [1 Corinthians 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.17)." He appeals to the Corinthians themselves, that he had "come to them not with excellency of speech or of human wisdom, verse 1, 4;" being anxious "that their faith should stand, not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God, verse 5, 13.

Now, in this he has set an example for us which we ought carefully to follow. We greatly err, if we hope by any meretricious ornaments to embellish the Gospel of Christ. That appears most beautiful, when it is exhibited most simply in its own native form. The whole world would in vain attempt to add anything to light: and equally vain will be any endeavor to exalt the Gospel by the gaudy trappings of rhetorical expressions.

*It is by the plain exhibition of a crucified Savior that God will work!* On the wisdom of the wise he will pour contempt: but "by the foolishness of preaching," that is, by such preaching as the wise of this world account foolishness, "he will save those who believe." Let ministers then learn from hence how to preach the Gospel, remembering that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men, [1 Corinthians 1:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.25)." We may by our additions weaken the Gospel of Christ; but we can never strengthen its efficacy by anything that we can add. It is in itself "the rod of God's strength:" and, if we wield it faithfully, all the powers of darkness shall fall before it.

***~~2. To those who hear the Gospel—~~***

You must seek to attain simplicity of mind, even the simplicity of little children. "If you would be wise, you must become fools that you may be wise, [1 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.18)." It is the truth of God that you are to regard, and not the human eloquence with which it maybe proclaimed. You must "hear the word," not as the word of man, but of God." You must hear it as God's word to your own selves in particular; and must "receive it with meekness, as an engrafted word, able to save your souls, [James 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.21)."

Let this thought be duly impressed upon your minds, and it will operate powerfully to counteract that sad propensity which is in us to set up one preacher above another, because of his peculiar gifts and talents. For what is any man, but a mere instrument of God, whereby God himself was pleased to work upon you, [1 Corinthians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.5).

Whether it was "Paul who planted, or Apollos who watered—it was God alone who gave the increase:" and therefore "neither Paul nor Apollos should be anything in your estimation, (except as you may love them for their works' sake,) but God who gave the increase." The praise and glory should be His alone, [1 Corinthians 3:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.6-7).

On the other hand, neither should you despise the word, because it is delivered in weakness. God is often pleased to "magnify his own strength in the weakness" of his instruments, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9). He has "put his treasure into earthen vessels for this very end, [2 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.7);" and, if you will look to him for his blessing on the word, he will "ordain strength in the mouths of babes and sucklings, [Psalm 8:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 8.2)," and "enrich you by those who are the poorest in themselves, [2 Corinthians 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.10)."

Only seek to behold and to admire the wisdom of God in his Gospel; and you shall find it to be "the power of God to the salvation of your souls! [Romans 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.16)."

***~~#1937~~***

***~~MYSTERIOUSNESS OF THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 2:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.6-7)~~***

"We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No,*we speak of God's secret wisdom*, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began."

AMONG persons of intelligence, nothing is so highly esteemed as wisdom. And well may it be preferred to every other attainment; because it elevates its possessor in the scale of being, and assimilates him to the highest order of finite intelligences. Even the wisdom that is merely human, is deservedly ranked far above all the riches or honors of the world: and much more does divine wisdom merit this place in the estimation of mankind.

It is of this latter wisdom in particular that we are now to speak. But, in truth, it far exceeds all human comprehension: for it is the wisdom of God himself; and that wisdom, too, in a mystery, that from all eternity was hidden in the bosom of the Most High. Yet is it sufficiently intelligible to answer all the purposes for which it has been revealed, and to enrich the souls of all to whom the attainment of it is given. That which contains it all is the Gospel: and it is my intention, at this time, to show what there is in the Gospel which entitles it to this high character. There are four things, which I will specify:

***~~I. The profundity of the Gospel's principles—~~***

The great principle of the Gospel is precisely that which was typified under the Law: Reconciliation with God through the sacrifice of his Son. Contemplate this:

***~~Reconciliation with God!~~***

What a mystery! Consider the greatness of the Divine Majesty. Consider the baseness and worthlessness of the human race, who, whether they were annihilated, or consumed in the regions of eternal misery—would not be missed from the creation of God, who needs them not, nor can receive anything from them; and who could, if he pleased, by a mere act of volition, create millions of holy beings to supply their place.

Why are they not left to their fate?

Why does the Most High God concern himself about them?

Why, when they have sinned like the fallen angels, are they not left, like them, to reap the bitter fruit of their wickedness?

How can we conceive that God should ever think of being reconciled to such rebellious creatures?

Even if a proposal to this effect had first come from man, we could not conceive that God should ever accede to it: how much less then can we imagine, that when no such desire was evinced by man, the proposal should ever originate with our offended God?

But contemplate further,

***~~Reconciliation by sacrifice!~~***

What can there be in *sacrifice*that should answer any such end as this? How can that which is innocent be substituted in the place of the guilty?

If such a proposal were made by man, how could a holy God acquiesce in it? And where could a fitting victim be found? Shall the blood of bulls and of goats take away sin? Impossible.

Should the highest archangel offer himself for us? What could he effect, either by doing or suffering, for us? What could he do, beyond what he is by the very law of his creation bound to do? or what could any sufferings of his avail for expiating the guilt of a fallen world? But contemplate yet further,

***~~Reconciliation by the sacrifice of God's only dear Son!~~***

Impossible! The co-equal, co-eternal Son of God be given for such an end! The eternal God become a man! The Creator of all things substitute himself in the place of his rebellious creatures! The Lord of Life and Glory die, and bear the curse due to sin, yes, and expiate thereby the guilt of the very persons who nailed him to the cross!

Truly, if God has revealed all this in his Gospel, it must be true: but nothing less than the most unquestionable evidence of such a revelation having actually proceeded from God can warrant us to entertain the thought of a reconciliation effected by such means as these.

But, to get a clearer insight into the mystery of the Gospel, let us notice,

***~~II. The comprehensiveness of the Gospel's provisions—~~***

Nothing in it is lacking that can contribute to,

***~~1. The honor of God—~~***

Were the Gospel at all deficient in this view, it would be impossible for God to approve of it. But there is not a perfection of the Deity which is not honored by it. The *justice*of God has all its demands satisfied: the *holiness*of God is displayed in the brightest colors: his *truth*is kept inviolate: yes, all the perfections of God are more glorified in this way of exercising mercy, than they would have been if man had never fallen, or never been redeemed. In truth, it is this which gives to the Gospel its chief value. It is valuable, doubtless, as saving man; but *it is infinitely more valuable as displaying and magnifying the glory of God*.

***~~2. The salvation of man—~~***

Does fallen man need the removal of his guilt?

It is removed from him, as far as the east is from the west, by virtue of this sacrifice. Be it so: the debt we had contracted was infinite: but infinite also was the value of that blood which was shed to expiate our guilt; so that justice itself, being satisfied by our Surety, has nothing to demand at our hands.

Does sinful man need also the renovation of his nature?

For this also is ample provision made, seeing that by virtue of the blood of Christ the gift of the Holy Spirit is purchased for us; by whose Almighty agency every man may be renewed and sanctified, yes, and transformed also into the very image of his God.

Does he need yet further a perfect righteousness wherein to stand before God?

This, too, is secured to him by Christ's obedience unto death: for by that a righteousness is formed perfectly commensurate with all the requirements of the law; and it is imputed to every believing soul; so that, clothed in it, he stands perfect and complete before God, without spot or blemish.

Nothing that can in any way contribute to a man's peace of conscience, or holiness of life, or fitness for glory, is lacking in this stupendous mystery! All is provided for; all is secured: and in every part of it the wisdom of God is incomprehensibly and unsearchably displayed!

The mysteriousness of the Gospel will yet further appear, if we notice,

***~~III. The Gospel's remoteness altogether from human apprehension—~~***

Supposing man to be informed that God had designs of mercy towards him; in what way would man expect it to be exercised? He should look for it,

***~~1. In a way of mere gratuitous forgiveness—~~***

He would never once have the remotest idea of a substitutionary atonement. It should appear in his eyes a perfect absurdity. In fact, it did so appear "both to the Jews and Gentiles; being to the one a stumbling-block, and to the others foolishness." In this light it does appear to the wise and prudent of the present day. For, though the general notion of an atonement may be admitted, and even contended for, by many, as a sentiment in opposition to Socinians and Deists, it is really approved by those alone who are taught of God the truth as it is in Jesus. The minds of all by nature lean to the side of uncovenanted mercy, as being less humiliating than that plan of forgiveness which the Gospel prescribes.

*The imputation of our sin to Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness to us*, are doctrines at which the natural man revolts: nor is any man brought cordially to acquiesce in them, until he has been made to feel the extent of his own demerit, and his utter incapacity to do anything which is good.

Yet, while we thus incline to uncovenanted mercy in preference to an atonement, we still expect that mercy,

***~~2. In a way of self-righteous dependence—~~***

To renounce all dependence on our own works appears absurd in the extreme: for, if we are not to be saved by our works, then what need is there for us to perform them? To set them aside in point of merit, seems to supersede all occasion for the performance of them. Man cannot endure to discard all boasting before God. If he cannot purchase Heaven altogether, he will do it in part: and if he is constrained to accept of Heaven as a free gift, still he will look to himself for something which shall be a ground of preference in the sight of God, or at least a warrant for him to look to God for the communications of his grace. *A free salvation, without money and without price, and apprehended solely by faith, is, to the great mass of professors, an object of offense, rather than of desire and love.*

***~~3. In a way of self-confident exertion—~~***

The doing of something to merit salvation, is always associated with the doing of it in our own strength. The natural man has no conception but that, as he is responsible for all that he does, he must of necessity have a sufficiency for all that he needs to do. The attempting of anything in the simple exercise of faith, and in expectation of strength communicated from above—appears to him to be an enthusiastic conceit, unworthy of a sober mind.

In short, every part of the Gospel salvation, whether as bringing us to God, or fitting us for the enjoyment of him—is the very reverse of what the natural man would either suggest or approve. It cannot even be understood by any who possess not a spiritual discernment, nor ever is received but through the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Distant, however, as it is, from human apprehensions, we cannot but acknowledge,

***~~IV. The Gospel's suitableness to the end proposed—~~***

***~~Does God propose to humble the sinner?~~***

Nothing effects that work like the Gospel: for in the death of Christ he sees the awful desert of sin, and the impossibility of obtaining mercy without an adequate atonement for it. In the requirement of a life of faith in the Son of God—he sees his own utter incapacity for anything that is good. In the imputation of Christ's righteousness—he is constrained to acknowledge, that even his best works are full of imperfection. He sees that salvation, from first to last, is, and must be, by grace alone.

***~~Does he desire to exalt the Savior?~~***

The honor of salvation is altogether reserved to Christ, as the Author and Finisher of it. To Christ alone, both in Heaven and earth, must all the glory of it be ascribed. Not a hope enters the sinner's mind, but through Christ's atoning sacrifice. Not a prayer is offered, but through Christ's mediation and intercession. Nor to all eternity will a blessing be enjoyed, without being traced to Christ's merit as the procuring cause, and to the influence of his grace as the efficient cause. So entirely will the glory of it all be given to Christ alone.

***~~Does he determine to secure holiness?~~***

Here it is secured, beyond a possibility of failure: nor is it found in any creature under Heaven, but in him who receives the Gospel of Christ. Semblances of holiness we may find in self-righteous formalists; but real holiness in none but those who are penetrated with redeeming love.

In confirmation of this truth, we appeal to the records of the Church in every age of the world. Even at the present hour, we shrink not from a comparison with all other people under Heaven: and we are free to acknowledge, that the professor of religion who lives not in holiness above unbelievers, is unworthy of the name of Christian, and will have no part with Christ in his kingdom and glory.

Thus we trust that the Gospel, however despised by an ungodly world, is justly entitled to the appellation given it in our text, "God's secret wisdom."

***~~See, then, from hence,~~***

***~~1. What is the office of a minister—~~***

It is to proclaim "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." We are to "speak the wisdom of God in a mystery." We are appointed for this very end, even "as stewards of the mysteries of God." We are not to be bringing forth notions out of our own minds; but simply to declare what God has done for the salvation of mankind, and how a guilty world may be reconciled to him. This is the ministry of reconciliation, committed unto us; and in the execution of our office, we beseech you to be reconciled to God!

***~~2. What is the duty of those to whom he ministers—~~***

Is that which he brings to their ears "a mystery?" It befits them to receive it into their hearts, with teachableness, submission, and gratitude. We expect little children to learn from us, without questioning the solidity of our judgment, or the truth of our assertions.

That he cannot altogether comprehend the lessons we teach him, is no reason why we do not expect his assent to them. On the contrary, it is by their first receiving our testimony with implicit faith, that they afterwards come to see both the truth and excellence of our instructions.

It is in this way that we also must acquire the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ.

We must also submit to the plan proposed by God, and seek remission altogether in the way pointed out by him.

Finally, we must feel our obligations to the Most High God, who has done such wonders for the salvation of our souls.

While on earth, we must, to a certain degree, be penetrated with the zeal and love which we shall feel in Heaven; and both here and in eternity "glorify him with our bodies and our spirits, which are his."

***~~#1938~~***

***~~IGNORANCE OF THE GOSPEL, FATAL~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 2:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.7-8)~~***

"No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. *None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory!*"

IT has been supposed that there is such a transcendent excellence in virtue, that if it were embodied upon earth, it would be universally revered and honored. But virtue has been embodied in the person of God's only dear Son; and yet, instead of receiving from man all the homage which might have been expected, it has been treated with all possible indignity, even to the murder of the person in whom it was found.

But in the assumption that all men should honor it, it is taken for granted that all should be able to appreciate virtue's excellence: whereas men, with jaundiced eyes, see everything with an unfavorable tint upon it; and, consequently err exceedingly in their judgment respecting it. Through this unhappy bias, men "put evil for good, and good for evil; darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." No wonder, therefore, if their aversion to what is really excellent rises in proportion to its exalted qualities, and their opposition to it be found to correspond with their judgment.

We have the authority of an Apostle for saying that this was the real cause of the indignities offered to our incarnate God. Had men been able to form a correct estimate of his character, they could not have treated him as they did. Had they fully understood the errand of love on which he came, and the purposes of grace which he was destined to accomplish, they could not have raised their hands against him. It would have been impossible for persons comprehending the great mystery which he came to consummate, so to act. No "if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory."

In speaking of the ignorance of mankind, and especially their ignorance of true religion, I will endeavor to show,

***~~I. The extensive prevalence of gospel ignorance—~~***

***~~Ignorance of the gospel prevailed to an awful degree in the apostolic age—~~***

Respecting the way which God had devised for the salvation of a ruined world, the wisest philosophers had not the slightest notion. Nor had the governors of the Jewish people any just conceptions respecting it. Though they had the Scripture in their hands, and the great mystery of godliness was shadowed forth in all their sacrifices—yet they could not comprehend the purposes of God which were revealed to them.

They had the *moral law*, but knew not its spirituality and extent.

They had the *ceremonial law*, but knew not its typical import.

They had the *prophecies*, but knew not in what way they were to be accomplished.

They saw a *Messiah promised*, but they altogether mistook the nature of the kingdom which he was to establish in the world.

***~~Ignorance of the gospel prevails also, nearly to the same extent, at this time—~~***

"The princes of this world," though born in Christian lands, know, for the most part, but little of Christianity: nay more; the very rulers of the Church itself are far from having that insight into the hidden mysteries of our religion which their general information might give one reason to suppose.

As far as a knowledge of the languages in which the Scriptures were written, and a critical skill in interpreting them, and an extensive acquaintance with ecclesiastical history, will qualify men for the sacred office, there may be no cause for complaint. But, if we inquire into men's knowledge of the "hidden wisdom of God in the great mystery" of redemption, it is lamentable to think how few there are who manifest an acquaintance with it; such an acquaintance, I mean, as has a *transforming efficacy*on their souls.

We see somewhat of the feelings which are generated by a knowledge of this mystery in Heaven. We behold, also, the effects produced by it upon the Apostles and martyrs upon earth. But where do we see these feelings excited, and these effects produced, in any considerable degree, in "the princes of this world" among ourselves? I mean not to speak disrespectfully of any, or to judge uncharitably of any: but I simply ask, whether, in the public ministrations of men, or in their printed addresses, or in their conversation with each other—there is such a preponderance given to this great mystery as might be expected, or such as should infallibly be given, if its excellence and importance were duly appreciated?

Of the secret transactions of men, and the fellowship which may take place between God and their souls, I presume not to speak. I speak only of what is manifested in open act: and of men's knowledge of this mystery, as tried by that standard, I am constrained to say, that it is very partial and confined. Nor need I bring any other proof of my assertion than this, that, wherever this mystery is fully opened, and the different parts of it are inculcated with the energy which its importance demands—the doctrine draws attention as a novelty; and excites odium, as differing from the common standard of the established churches.

But could this be, if the mystery of the Gospel were so generally known, and its truths so faithfully promulgated, as some should assert? A candle would attract no notice during the day; but it is seen at a great distance at night, by reason of the surrounding darkness: and, for the same reason, even a very slender exhibition of the Gospel, which would have passed unnoticed in the apostolic age, now calls forth adoring gratitude on the part of some, and provokes inveterate hostility on the part of others; a sure proof, that such exhibitions are not so common among us as they ought to be.

To show how great an evil this ignorance of the Gospel is, I will proceed to mark,

***~~II. The injurious tendency of gospel ignorance—~~***

***~~In the Jews, ignorance of the gospel led to nothing less than the crucifixion of the Lord of Glory!~~***

Both Jews and Gentiles concurred in this act. They did not merely refuse to become the disciples of Jesus, but reviled him, and treated him with unimaginable indignities, and at last put him to death, even the accursed death of the cross.

And to what but ignorance can we refer it? Can we conceive that if they had really known Jesus to be "the Lord of Glory," they would have dared to treat him thus? Methinks, if love to him for his condescension and grace had not restrained them, a fear of his displeasure must have disarmed their malice. It would have been impossible for them to proceed to such extremities, if they had had any just conception of his person and character, his work and office.

***~~In a similar way ignorance of the gospel operates on us also—~~***

It is obvious that men of all ranks and orders live in a neglect of Christ and his salvation, and seek their happiness rather in the things of time and sense. But could it be so, if they really knew what a glorious Savior he is? Could they think so little of all the wonders of his love, if they had any just comprehension of them in their minds? By our treatment of him, we do, in fact, "crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame." I ask, Could we do this, if we knew him to be indeed "the Lord of glory," who had divested himself of all his glory for us, and become a man for us, and died upon the cross for us, and to be carrying on his work in Heaven for us, and coming again to make us partakers of his glory for evermore?

As bad as human nature is, it could not withstand such a miracle of love as this: it must lay down its weapons of rebellion at the sight of this: at the sight of this it would feel "a constraining influence to live to Him" who has so "loved us and given himself for us." From our first inquiry, "Who are you, Lord?" another should instantly follow, "Lord, what will you have me to do? [Acts 9:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.5-6)," and a life of entire devotedness to his service must of necessity ensue.

Can we wonder then at,

***~~III. The fatal outcome of gospel ignorance—~~***

***~~Ignorance of the gospel was, to the Jews who continued impenitent, of the most fatal consequence—~~***

Doubtless their ignorance did in some respects extenuate, but it could by no means excuse, their guilt. The Apostle apologizes for them; saying, "I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers:" but yet he adds, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out! [Acts 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 3.17); [Acts 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 3.19);" evidently importing, that without repentance, and thorough conversion to God, they must eternally perish. And Paul, while he speaks of having "obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief," still calls himself "a blasphemer, and injurious, and a persecutor," and "the very chief of sinners," yes, as the greatest miracle of mercy, *a monument of mercy*to the whole world, [1 Timothy 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.13); [1 Timothy 1:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.15-16).

In the Old Testament, God had declared by the prophets that he should not regard ignorance as any excuse for their iniquities: "They are a people of no understanding: therefore He who made them will not have mercy on them, and He who formed them will show them no favor, [Isaiah 27:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.11)." And again, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, [Hosea 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 4.6)."

Under the New Testament, it is even made a matter of appeal to *us*, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation [Hebrews 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.3)." And again, "If judgment begins at the house of God, what shall the end be of those who obey not the Gospel of God? If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? [1 Peter 4:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.17-18)." Truly no candid person can doubt what the outcome was to the unbelieving Jews.

***~~Will not ignorance of the gospel have the same outcome with respect to us?~~***

The greater our advantages are above the Jews, the greater is our guilt in neglecting to improve them. It is generally imagined, indeed, that those who commit no sin to lower them in the estimation of their fellow-creatures, are eternally blessed when they die: and to intimate a doubt of this would be deemed very uncharitable. But "none, except they be converted, can ever enter into the kingdom of Heaven!" True indeed it is, that men ignorant of the Gospel, and of the wonders of love and mercy contained in it, are confident, in their own minds, that they have nothing to fear: and hence they continue in "the broad road that leads to destruction," without ever thinking of their impending fate, until they drop into eternal perdition!

A fact which a pious writer records, as seen by himself, will well *illustrate*this. A flock of sheep being frightened on a bridge at the time of a high flood, one of them leaped over the side: all, one after another, followed its example, each supposing that those which had preceded him were safe and happy: but all, to their cost, found out their error when it was too late: for all were immersed in the flood, and perished in the waters.

This gives us an exact picture of what is passing all around us. And it is abundantly confirmed in Holy Writ. In the parable of the *Rich Man and Lazarus*, the rich man, who had no flagrant sin laid to his charge, supposed himself sure of blessedness in death; just as his five surviving brethren did, while walking in his steps. But from the depths of Hell we hear him crying for a drop of water, to cool his tongue; and entreating, that a messenger might be sent from Heaven to warn his brethren of their danger: and, as this request could not be complied with, we have reason to suppose that they also, however confident of their safety, became partakers of his awful doom.

And would not many, who are gone before, be glad to send such messengers to us? Yes, I doubt not but that thousands and millions of them should be coming from Heaven, if they were allowed to perform that friendly office for our self-deceiving race: for, whatever we may think to the contrary, that very Jesus, whom we slight, will before long "be revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power! [2 Thessalonians 1:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.7-9)."

***~~To improve this subject, I should entreat you to consider,~~***

***~~1. What use you should make of your present opportunities—~~***

You have "the Lord of glory" set before you, and all the mysteries of redeeming love unfolded to you. Yes, I can appeal to God, that "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." I beg you, then, continue not ignorant of this great mystery; for it is "the wisdom of God, and the power of God" to salvation to all those who receive it.

I need not say in this place, The University of Cambridge, how eagerly knowledge is sought, in the hopes of promoting men's future advancement in life: and shall that knowledge be neglected which has so intimate a connection with your happiness through eternity? I mean not to detract from the importance of human sciences: but I must say, that,*when weighed against the knowledge of this mystery, all earthly knowledge is but as the dust upon the balance!*For Paul, whose judgment in that particular we cannot doubt, "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." Though you possess ever so small a portion of the one, you may be happy: but without the other you can never be happy, in time or in eternity.

I must say, then, to every one among you, Seek the knowledge of this mystery: seek to comprehend the height and depth, and length and breadth of the love of Christ contained in it! So shall it be progressively opened to your view, and your souls "be filled with all the fullness of God."

***~~2. What zeal you should manifest for the glory of your Lord—~~***

Did those who knew him not, crucify him? And shall not those who know him, honor and exalt his name? Would you forbear to do so, "the very stones should cry out against you." Let an ungodly world complain of you: let them call your zeal enthusiasm, and your love hypocrisy; but be not deterred from duty by all the clamor that can be raised against you.

You well know what efforts Pilate made to save Jesus from the fury of his persecutors: yet did his entreaties only increase their thirst for his blood. Learn of them, and show the same pertinacity in his righteous cause; yes, rather, let your knowledge operate more forcibly than their ignorant animosity: and as they accounted nothing too much to inflict upon him, account nothing too great to do or suffer for the honor of his name.

***~~3. How well you may be reconciled to sufferings for his sake—~~***

He has ordained that all his followers shall have a cross to bear. But shall you account it hard when it is laid upon you? Was he, the Lord of Glory, crucified for you; and will you not bear a cross for him? It is not without reason that he bids you, under such circumstances, to "rejoice and leap for joy!" for "you are partakers of his sufferings," and rendered conformable to him; and your reward in Heaven is proportionably augmented by it. Be not, then, either afraid or ashamed of the cross for his sake; but glory in it, and bear it after him with joy; and "rejoice that you are counted worthy to bear it for his sake."

You may suppose that you may disarm the malice of the world by the blamelessness of your conduct. But the more you resemble Christ in your conduct, the more will you he called to suffer for his sake. As open as his character and dispositions were, men knew him not. Nor do they know you, [John 15:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.20). [1 John 3:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.1-2). Your conduct is as incomprehensible to the ungodly world as Christ's was. They cannot conceive why you would separate so entirely from their ways, or give yourselves up so entirely to God. If they knew all your views, motives, principles, and habits, they would not so despise you. But, as all that our blessed Lord said or did was perverted, and made an occasion of contempt, so must you expect "all manner of evil to be spoken against you falsely for his sake." But let it not grieve you to be so treated: for "the servant cannot expect to be above his Lord." Be contented to "suffer with him" here; and be assured that you shall "reign with him" in glory forever and ever!

***~~#1939~~***

***~~THE GOSPEL, A STUPENDOUS MYSTERY~~***

**[1 Corinthians 2:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.9-10)**

However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

THE former part of this passage is generally quoted as relating to the eternal world. But, if the latter part is taken in connection with it, as it ought to be, the sense is evidently determined to be those things which were revealed by the Spirit to the Apostles of Christ. And it is in this sense that the words were originally used in the place from whence they are cited. They are part of a prayer, which the Jews, as soon as they shall begin to embrace the Gospel, will pour out before God in behalf of their afflicted nation; entreating him to interpose in their behalf, as powerfully as he formerly did when he brought them out of the land of Egypt; and to make known to them those great and glorious truths of which hitherto they have never had any just conception, [Isaiah 64:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.4). The prayer begins at [Isaiah 63:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.15) and continues to the end of the sixty-fourth chapter.

To the same purpose the Apostle cites them in our text. He is speaking of the Gospel as "foolishness" indeed to the natural man, but as in reality the most stupendous display of the Divine wisdom; such as had never before been seen, or heard, or thought of, from the foundation of the world, verse 6-8; and such as, if previously known to those who crucified our Lord, would have effectually deterred them from executing in that respect, the eternal counsels of the Deity.

Confining then our views of the passage to what is revealed in the Gospel, we will show,

***~~I. How infinitely superior the Gospel is to anything that human reason ever devised—~~***

***~~Human reason has certainly evinced great powers in relation to natural and temporal things—~~***

It has penetrated far into the regions of *science*. It has comprehended within its grasp the whole extent of that field which was laid open to the mind of Solomon; and has arranged according to their nature and properties all parts of the animal and vegetable creation, "from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springs out of the wall, together with all the different orders of beasts, and bird, and fish of the sea, 1 Kings 4:33."

Nay, it has soared beyond this terraqueous globe, even to the starry heavens; and has found out the magnitude and distances and courses of the heavenly bodies, together with the laws by which they move in their respective orbits. It has in these and many other respects carried its researches far beyond the limits which nature appeared to have assigned to it, and has raised man far higher in the scale of creation than by his contracted powers he seemed destined to stand.

***~~But human reason has made little progress in relation to spiritual and eternal things—~~***

Man with, all his powers was not able to find out God. Not even the unity of the Godhead was discovered by him; much less were his great and glorious perfections. The wisest philosophers spoke on these subjects with much uncertainty and inconsistency. As for any way of reconciliation with God, consistent with the Divine perfections, not so much as a thought of it ever entered into the mind of man, until it was revealed to man by the Spirit of God. It was far out of the reach of human reason to declare, how God should be just, and yet the justifier of sinful men. Even a future state of existence was rather guessed at than fully ascertained; and the nature of that state was wholly unknown. So true is it, in reference to the whole circle of divine knowledge, that "man by wisdom knew not God! 1 Corinthians 1:21."

Thus, when we compare the knowledge which we enjoy under the Gospel with the discoveries of uninspired men, we are constrained to say, that they are as wide asunder as light is from darkness, and Heaven from Hell!

But, to form a correct estimate of the Gospel, we would see,

***~~II. How far superior it is to anything that men had a conception of under the Jewish dispensation—~~***

God did reveal himself to Moses, but his views of God were very partial and indistinct: he saw only, as we are told, "his back parts, [Exodus 33:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 33.23)." As far as he, and David, and Isaiah had a clearer insight into the great mystery of redemption than others, they received it rather by special inspiration, than from the notices given of it in the Mosaic law. The Jews as a people had very indistinct notions on the whole subject of religion:

***~~1. Their views of God himself were very dark—~~***

To them he appeared rather as a Sovereign than as a Father; and as a Sovereign of their own nation only, and not the Father of the whole human race. They beheld him rather in the terrific aspect of his majesty, than in the endearing attribute of mercy.

***~~2. They knew but little of the way of acceptance with him—~~***

They had sacrifices, it is true, but such as could give no peace to a wounded conscience. The very necessity of repeating the same sacrifices from year to year, clearly showed to them, that their past sins were not fully expiated or blotted out. The sacrifices, in this view, were rather "remembrances of sin," than real expiations of it. For some sins, as murder and adultery, no sacrifice whatever was appointed: and for these therefore there was no well-grounded hope of pardon. All that they were assured of, in any case, was, rather an exemption from punishment by the civil magistrate, than an everlasting remission of their sins by God himself: so dark, even in this respect, was the dispensation under which they lived.

***~~3. The real blessedness of the Jewish people could not be duly estimated by them—~~***

They possessed indeed many privileges above the heathen; but yet they were kept at an awful distance from God. The people at large could not enter into the court of the more privileged orders, the priests and Levites: nor could any but the high-priest alone enter into the most holy place; and he only on one day in the year, and in the way that was particularly prescribed.

Their services consisted altogether in burdensome rites and ceremonies, which, instead of calling forth a sublime exercise of spiritual devotion, were "a yoke which none of them were able to bear." They went in and out before God as servants actuated by fear, and not as children under the influence of love.

***~~4. Not even the future state of rewards and punishments was clearly known to them—~~***

Some light indeed was thrown upon the eternal world; but it was faint and glimmering. Little was seen throughout the Mosaic writings but a prospect of temporal rewards and punishments, of an enjoyment of Canaan with much earthly felicity, or of an ejection from it with the attendant miseries of captivity and bondage.

Thus the whole of the Jewish state was at best only as an intermediate state between the darkness of heathenism and the light of the Gospel: it was as the early dawn to usher in the brighter day.

To elucidate the infinite superiority of the Gospel, we must proceed to show,

***~~III. How full and rich a manifestation of it we enjoy—~~***

"The darkness is now passed, and the true light now shines, 2 John, verse 8"—

***~~1. God himself is now fully revealed to us—~~***

We see not only his unity, but his subsistence in Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; all in glory equal, and in majesty co-eternal. All his perfections also have been made, as it were, to shine both in their separate, and united, splendor before our eyes; *justice harmonizing with mercy, and righteousness combining with truth, in the salvation of fallen man. Yes, justice glorified in the way of mercy, and mercy in the way of justice, and truth and righteousness in all.*Yes truly, "the whole glory of the Godhead now shines before us in the face of Jesus Christ! [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6)."

***~~2. The mysterious plan of redemption also is now fully opened—~~***

We are introduced, if we may so speak, to the eternal counsels of the Deity, wherein the Father gave to his Son a people to be redeemed, and the Son undertook to lay down his life for them. In the fullness of time we behold the eternal Son of God laying aside that glory which he had with the Father before the worlds were made; and taking upon him our nature, on purpose that in the nature which had sinned, he might suffer the curse that was due to sin. *We behold him fulfilling the perfect law of God for us, that we may have his perfect righteousness imputed to us, and at the same time expiating our guilt by his own sufferings on the cross.*

We see him further *rising*from the dead, and ascending up to Heaven, to carry on there the work he had begun on earth; to be the continual Intercessor for his people, and, as their living Head, to supply them with all that their necessities require.

And, finally, we behold him *coming again*to judge the world, and to assign to his friends, and to his enemies, the portion prepared for them; and then, having completed the whole work of redemption to the uttermost, "surrendering up the kingdom into the Father's hands, that God may be all in all."

How amazing is all this! How infinitely beyond all that human eye ever saw, or ear heard, or heart conceived!

***~~3. The felicity of God's people is now also plainly declared—~~***

"Perfect peace" is now to be enjoyed by all who believe in Christ. No doubt rests upon the mind respecting the fullness and sufficiency of his atonement: it is known to be a sufficient "atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world." Now every believer has free access into the holiest of all, to behold God himself upon his mercy-seat, and to present before him his sacrifices of prayer and praise. Every saint now regards God as his Father, and with a filial confidence goes in and out before him, assured that everything both in Heaven and earth shall be ordered with an immediate view to his good, as much as if there were not another creature in the universe.

And lastly, he looks up to the more immediate residence of Jehovah, assured that a crown and a kingdom are prepared for him, even a participation of the Redeemer's glory, and an everlasting fruition of God himself.

Say, Did ever any man, even among the Jews, foresee such things as these? Did even the highest archangel ever form any adequate conception of them, before they were revealed to the Christian Church? No! they were hidden from angels, as well as men, [Ephesians 3:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.9-10).

But to us these glorious things are now revealed: they are revealed to us in the written word; and they are revealed in us by the mighty power of the Spirit taking the veil from our hearts, and giving to us a spiritual discernment, [1 Corinthians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.12); [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14).

We are authorized to declare, that the most ignorant of true believers at this day is greater than all the prophets, not excepting the Baptist himself, who personally knew Christ, and pointed him out as "the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world, [Matthew 11:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.11)."

***~~Improvement—~~***

***~~1. How inexcusable are those who inquire not into these things!~~***

Has God in his infinite mercy revealed such things to us, and shall we pay no attention to them? Shall we treat them as if they were no other than "a cunningly-devised fable?" Shall "the *angels*in Heaven be desiring to look into them, [1 Peter 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.12)," and *we*be unconcerned about them?

O, what account shall we give of ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, if, when he says to us, "Search the Scriptures, for they testify of me," we prefer every other book before them, and either neglect the Bible altogether, or read it only as a formal exercise? Surely our "study should be in it day and night," and it should be "sweeter to us than honey, or the honey-comb!"

***~~2. How blind must we be, if we see no glory in them!~~***

What! see nothing wonderful in an incarnate God! Nothing wonderful in God dying in the place of his own rebellious creatures! Nothing wonderful in our being brought by these means into union and communion with God, and an everlasting participation of his glory in the world to come!

If these things are not wonderful—then tell me something that is.

You should be filled with utter astonishment, if a fellow-creature were to tell you some of the phenomena of *nature*; and are you not when God tells you all the wonders of his*grace?*If these things produce no admiring and adoring thoughts in your hearts, know assuredly that the god of this world has blinded your eyes, and that "you are in darkness even until now." Were you of the happy number of the Lord's people, it would have "been given you to behold the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven:" but "if you see them not, it is because you are not of God."

***~~3. How ungrateful are those who do not endeavor to walk worthy of them!~~***

These things are revealed, not as matters of speculation, but as means of happiness, and as incentives to holiness of life. Do but think what manner of persons you ought to be in all holy conduct and godliness; you, I say, for whom such things have been done, and to whom they have been revealed!

But it will be well for you to attend to that expression in our text, that "God has prepared these things for those who love him." True, in the first instance it is for his enemies: but they do not remain his enemies; on the contrary, they "love him," and serve him, and "wait for him," and truly, if, after you have been enlightened by the Spirit of God, and been enabled to behold all these wonders of love and mercy, you do not devote yourselves wholly to the Lord, you show that you have no part or lot in this matter. You may have believed, like Simon Magus; but like Simon Magus you shall perish: for know assuredly, that, "if you are Christ's, you will crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, and will glorify God with your body and your spirit, which are his.

***~~#1940~~***

***~~THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD~~***

**[1 Corinthians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.10)**

"The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God."

IN the verse immediately preceding our text, which is a citation from the Prophet Isaiah, there is a remarkable difference between the words, as uttered by the Prophet, and as cited by the Apostle. The Apostle quotes only so much as was sufficient to show that the great mystery of redemption was never conceived by man before it was revealed to us by God. But the prophet excludes all the bright intelligences of Heaven, no less than men; and intimates that none but God was privy to the Divine counsels: "Neither has eye seen, O God, besides you, what He has prepared for him who waits for him, [Isaiah 64:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.4)." This omission we would not have particularly noticed, if the Apostle had not, by his subsequent observations, drawn our attention to it more particularly, by showing, that though there was no finite intelligence privy to these counsels, there was One, who, though God, was in some respects to be distinguished from Him, whose counsels they were, and who did "search," and behold with perfect accuracy, the very utmost depths of that mystery, and who also had revealed them to the Apostle: "God," says the Apostle, "has revealed them to us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." Now, throughout this whole passage, there is repeated mention made of God, as the source and fountain from whence this mysterious plan emanated; and of the Spirit of God, as a distinct Agent discovering these depths to us. From hence we have an insight into the doctrine of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead; a doctrine obscurely intimated in the words of the prophet, but plainly declared in the Apostle's fuller explanation of them.

The personality of the Holy Spirit, and his divinity, are here repeatedly asserted: and a beautiful light is thrown upon those words of the prophet, "No eye has seen, O God, besides you:" for though no created being has seen, the Holy Spirit has: for "the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God."

In these words we are led to contemplate *the province of the Holy Spirit in relation to the great mystery of redemption*; to contemplate it, I say,

***~~I. As exercised by him in reference to God—~~***

He "searches the deep things of God," he searches,

***~~1. The eternal purposes of his grace—~~***

From all eternity God determined to allow the fall of man, and to provide means for his recovery. The means ordained by him were, the incarnation and death of his only dear Son, whom he would send into the world to be an atoning sacrifice for sin, and to work out a righteousness whereby the believing penitent might be justified. Every particular relative to this mysterious plan was foreseen and fore-ordained. The *person*of whom the Son of God would take our flesh; the *time*at which he should come into the world; the various incidents of his life; the minutest circumstances of his death; the agents that would effect it, and the precise part which every one of them would bear in effecting it, whether Judas in betraying him, or Pilate in condemning, or the Romans in crucifying, or Joseph and Nicodemus in burying him: everything also relating to his resurrection and ascension, and the sending of his Holy Spirit, and the consequent establishment of his kingdom in the world—all was ordained of God the Father. But all was searched out by God the Holy Spirit. He had the same perfect knowledge of it as the Father himself; and not the smallest incident that occurred in any part of it was hidden from his all-seeing eye. "No eye saw it, besides his:" but he saw it in all its parts, and in all its bearings: not the slightest thing connected with it was hidden from him.

***~~2. His particular dealings with every individual of mankind—~~***

The salvation of all was to be by grace, from beginning to end. Yet was man to be dealt with as a rational and responsible being; every man being left to the freest exercise of his own will—yet subject to an agency within, which, in all that should be saved, would be effectual for the overcoming of all the evil propensities of his nature. It was not ordained that all should ultimately be saved: but it was ordained, that those who were saved would have nothing to boast of; and that those who perished would have nothing to complain of: the saved should owe their salvation to him alone; the lost should owe their condemnation wholly to themselves.

But who could fathom such depths as these? Who could tell how God would ordain all, and yet not interfere with the free agency of any; and how he should reserve to himself the praise from all that were saved, and leave all the blame of condemnation to rest on those who would bring that doom upon themselves?

But the Spirit of God searched out all these unfathomable depths. He saw how the whole should be carried into effect, in every individual of the human race: at what time, in what manner, and by what means, the elect would be converted, preserved, perfected. And, at the same time, how the rest should be left to reject the mercies offered them, and to perish under an accumulated weight of misery. If Paul, in relation to the calling of the Gentiles and the restoration of the Jews, exclaimed, "O the depths!" much more must we, in the contemplation of such mysterious works as these.

***~~3. The glorious outcome of all his dispensations—~~***

The result of all will be the glory of God, both "in those who are saved, and in those who perish." "Though Israel be not gathered—yet will He be glorious, [Isaiah 49:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.5)." God declared that he should get himself glory on Pharaoh and all his hosts, [Exodus 14:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 14.17); and, on his destruction of them all, Moses said, "Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power: your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy, [Exodus 15:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.6)." In the judgments also that were executed on Nadab and Abihu, God was "glorified [Leviticus 10:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 10.2)." In like manner, even in the torments of the damned, will God be glorified: for all who behold the infliction of his wrath will be constrained to say, "Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments! [Revelation 16:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 16.5-7); [Revelation 19:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.2)."

It is indeed a tremendous thought, and to our weak apprehensions it appears incredible, that *God should be glorified in the eternal condemnation of any of his creatures*. But so it will be: and at the last day, when Jesus "shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all those who believe, [2 Thessalonians 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.10)," will the objects of his wrath be confounded before him, and never have one word to utter in arrest of his judgments! [Matthew 22:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.12).

Now all this the Holy Spirit saw from the beginning. He saw that if *mercy*was glorified in the salvation of some, *justice*should be glorified in the condemnation of others: and that the whole outcome of this stupendous mystery would be worthy of the Most High God:

of the Father, who had *planned*it;

of the Son, who had *executed*it; and

of the Spirit, who had carried it into full *effect*.

But as the Holy Spirit, in the exercise of this office, has respect to us, it will be proper for us to contemplate it,

***~~II. As exercised by him in reference to us—~~***

"He searches all things," as the Apostle intimates, on purpose to reveal them to us. He searches them,

***~~1. As a Teacher, to reveal them to us—~~***

It is the Holy Spirit who revealed this hidden mystery to *prophets*first, [2 Peter 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.21), and then to the *Apostles*of our Lord, [John 16:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.13-14); and the whole of the written word was penned by inspiration from him. But in the sacred volume there is much that is beyond our comprehension: indeed, if it were all level with our capacity, we would have reason to doubt whether it were really from God; seeing that it would be totally unlike his other works of creation and providence, in which there is confessedly much that no human being can explain. But the Spirit having searched the deep things of God, is perfectly acquainted with them all, and has revealed to us nothing but what he knows to be true.

We, therefore, must receive by faith all that he has declared. Our only concern is, to know what the Holy Spirit has spoken in his word: and that once ascertained, we must receive it with childlike simplicity; saying, 'What I know not now—I shall know hereafter.' That we cannot comprehend it, should be no objection to us: for, if God had explained the whole ever so clearly, there must be many things which we could not comprehend.

Let a philosopher declare to an uninstructed peasant some of the more hidden depths of astronomy, could the peasant comprehend them? Or could the philosopher, by all the clearest demonstrations, enable him to comprehend them? And if such a distance exist between men, may we not well suppose that an infinitely greater distance will be found between God and man?

It is our wisdom to submit our understandings to the word of God: and there is no juster lesson afforded us in all the Scriptures, than that of the Apostle, "If any man will be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise! [1 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.18)."

***~~2. As an Instructor, to reveal them in us—~~***

To Him we are directed to look for that spiritual discernment, whereby alone we can comprehend the truths of God, verse 14. The Apostles themselves, after they had heard our Lord's instructions for nearly four years, were unable to understand the Scriptures, until "he opened their understandings to understand them [Luke 24:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.45)."

So it is with us: we must have a "spirit of wisdom and revelation given to us," before we can attain "the knowledge of Christ, [Ephesians 1:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17-18),;" and must "all be taught of God, [John 6:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.45)," before we can "know the things that have been freely given to us by God, verse 12."

Let me then recommend, that, whenever you open the inspired volume, you lift up your hearts to him, and say, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law!"

Shall this be thought unnecessary? Shall it be supposed, that, because we have the words and sentences plainly written, we can necessarily discern the mind of God in them? Were this the case, every student of the Scriptures would, in all their principal and fundamental points at least, have a clear understanding of them. But experience proves, that, like the Scribes and Pharisees of old, *we may have an accurate knowledge of the letter, and yet have no conception of the spirit of them*. They are a sealed book to us at this time, as they were to those of former days. Like a dial, which has the figures accurately marked; but yet you look at it in vain, until the light of the sun shines upon it: so *in vain do you read or study the Holy Scriptures, until a light shines upon them from above, or until God "shines into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*,2 Corinthians 4:6."

***~~3. As a Governor, to bring us into subjection to them—~~***

If the Spirit of God has searched out for us the deep things of God, and have made them known to us, it is not that we should *speculate*upon them, but that we should, as far as possible, *be conformed to them*. *We must be as ready to obey him in what he commands, as to believe him in what he reveals*. We must complain of nothing as a hard saying; but must give up ourselves as willing servants to fulfill his will, or rather must be like metal that is ready to be poured into the mold which God has prepared for us.

This is the very idea suggested by the Apostle Paul, when he says of all true Christians, "You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you:" his expression rather is, "You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, into which, as into a mold, you were delivered, [Romans 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.17)." If this is not attained, the manifestation of God's will in the written word will be of no use: indeed, it will only occasion our heavier condemnation.

If any reply, that there are commands which appear unreasonable, and that we cannot be required to obey them; I answer, We are not to sit in judgment upon God, and to determine whether his commands are reasonable or not. We expect to be obeyed by our children and our servants, though they do not know all the objects we have in view when we issue our commands. We expect them to give us credit for ordering only what is wise and good; and to take for granted, rather than deliberate upon, the wisdom of our commands. And what we expect of others, we may well be required to render unto God.

***~~4. As a Witness, to testify of our conformity to them—~~***

It is said of him, that "He searches all things:" and if he searches "the deep things of God," does he not also search the deep things that are in our hearts? Yes, "He searches the heart and tries the thoughts," and discerns the inmost thoughts and intents of our hearts. "I know," says he, "the things that come into your minds—every one of them!" Yes, "He weighs the spirits," and ascertains precisely the measure of good and evil that there is in the heart of every one among us. We must not suppose that he has fully executed his office when he has revealed to us the deep things of God. No! he searches how we *receive*them; how we *improve*them; how we answer the end of God in them. And this he does with a view to a future judgment, that we may all "receive according to what we have done in the body, whether it be good or evil."

Let us, then, bear this in mind: let us remember that the Spirit fully knows every inclination, every affection, every appetite of our souls. The darkness is no darkness with him, but the night is as clear as the day: and as his testimony respecting God is true, so will his testimony respecting us be true.

Attend then to the way in which every day and every hour is spent. Mark in what frame your mind is, in all your public or private addresses to the Most High. Call yourselves to a minute account respecting every duty and every defect. After all, you will never weigh yourselves so accurately as he weighs you: and "if your heart condemns you, God is greater than your hearts, and knows all things: but if your heart condemns you not, then have you confidence towards God, [1 John 3:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.20-21)."

***~~#1941~~***

***~~INFLUENCES OF THE SPIRIT~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.12-13)~~***

"We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words."

NO man was ever better qualified to please men with the charms of oratory than the Apostle Paul: for, in point of talent, few perhaps have ever exceeded him; and, in point of knowledge, no uninspired man ever came near him. In the great subject of his ministrations there is a sublimity, in comparison with which all other subjects are but as a candle before the meridian sun. Yet, in setting forth that subject, he was particularly careful to "use all plainness of speech," lest he should obscure, rather than illustrate, its excellency by any vain attempts to embellish and adorn it. This he repeatedly mentions, as the stated rule prescribed to him by God, and followed by him. "Christ," says he, "sent me to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect, [1 Corinthians 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.17)." In conformity with this commission, he says, "I came to you not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring the testimony of God." Again, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom." So also in the words of my text, "Which things we speak, not with words which man's wisdom teaches, verse 1, 4, 13." As, in receiving the Gospel, he had been taught it by the Spirit of God; so in communicating the knowledge of it to others, he would make use of no other language than that which the Spirit himself had provided.

The declarations of the Apostle in my text will lead me to show,

***~~I. Whence a minister must receive his choicest qualifications—~~***

***~~Of course, if he should instruct others, he himself must be instructed in "the things which are freely given to us of God"—~~***

God has given us salvation in the Son of his love: He has also made known to us this salvation in the fullest manner: And this is the subject which every servant of his has it in commission to unfold to a benighted world.

***~~But how is he himself to obtain the knowledge of it?—~~***

He must "receive it, not from the spirit of the world, but from the Spirit of God." It is itself altogether foreign to all that the world either cultivates or admires. It is not within the power of human intellect to comprehend it; or of human investigation to search it out; or of human wisdom to impart the knowledge of it. The Spirit of the living God alone can convey it to the mind.

If it is asked, How are we to account for this? I will confess that the statement by which persons very generally endeavor to account for it, I greatly disapprove. We are told in the words following my text, that "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, verse 14." Hence some imagine that a distinct sense must be given to us, without which we can no more discern the truths of the Gospel, than a man can discern the objects of sight, or smell, or taste, while he has not the organs proper for the perception of them. But, were this the case, a man should be no more blameable for his ignorance of divine things, than a man who was born deaf or blind would be for not perceiving objects by his eyes or ears.

A juster view of the case, I apprehend, is this. The word is that seal which the Spirit of God uses for the stamping of the Divine image upon man; and the heart of man is the wax, which is ordained of God to receive the impression. But the wax is hardened by sin; so hardened, that not even the word of God can make any impression on it. Hence it resists the word, even as stone or iron should the action of a seal upon it. Thus is man's ignorance to be ascribed, not less to the *hardness*, than to the *blindness*of his heart, [Ephesians 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.18).

Nor is this all. Man does not only withstand the word, as stone or iron would the impression of a seal, but as a spring should resist it. In a spring there is a reaction proportioned to the force which acts upon it: and this is the kind of resistance which the heart of man gives to the word of God. *Man's heart rises in opposition to the word, and with all its power repels it.*The Jew rejects it as "a stumbling-block;" and the Greek despises it as "foolishness." And hence it is, that *no power but that of the Spirit of God can overcome the obstinacy of man's resistance to the word of God.*

And how does the Spirit of God produce this effect? It operates as fire on the wax. Our Lord has said, that he will "baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire;" that is, with the Holy Spirit, who shall operate as fire. And when that divine Agent applies the word to the soul, he humbles the soul, and softens it, and renders it susceptible of that very impression which the word is intended to make upon it. And this is the very account which Paul himself gives of the process, when he says, "You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you;" or, as it should rather have been translated, "You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, into which (as into a mold) you were delivered, [Romans 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.17)."

The dependence of a minister on the Spirit of God for the instruction of his own mind shows,

***~~II. How alone his efforts can be made effectual for the salvation of his hearers—~~***

***~~It is not by the power of human eloquence that he must prevail—~~***

Human eloquence is good in its place, but it can add nothing to the truth of God. On the contrary, it rather takes from the power of God's word, than adds anything to it; just as any efforts of man to augment by paint the brilliancy of a diamond, would only, in the outcome, obscure its luster. There is a majesty in the word of God, which we may enervate, but can never augment.

***~~It is by the simple statement of the Gospel, as revealed in the sacred records—~~***

The words of Scripture have a power which no words of man can attain. And, though it is not necessary that they should be used on every occasion, they must always be the foundation of what we assert, and must always be referred to in confirmation of it. Paul "compared spiritual things with spiritual:" he had to unfold spiritual truths; and he referred to what the Spirit of God had previously revealed, as containing the substance of all that he promulgated.

Did he set forth Jesus as the Messiah? He referred to the prophecies which had announced his advent, and were fulfilled in him.

Did he expatiate upon the work and offices of Christ? He referred to those typical institutions which had been appointed to shadow them forth.

Thus, in like manner, must we do; particularly pointing out the spiritual provisions of the Gospel as suited to the spiritual necessities of man. It is this kind of statement which alone succeeds to any great extent. God might, if he pleased, render more partial statements effectual; and on some occasions he does: but *for the most part, it is by an exhibition of the Gospel as a remedy, that he chiefly works for the salvation of man*. The state of man, as fallen, must be fully opened: his guilt and danger and helplessness must be set forth with all fidelity: then must the Savior be proclaimed, as making a full atonement for our sins, as bringing in for us an everlasting righteousness, and as supplying out of his own fullness all that our utmost necessities can require. This is the doctrine to which the Holy Spirit bears testimony, and which he uses as a seal, to stamp the divine image on our souls.

A striking instance of this may be seen when Peter opened this Gospel to the Jews, [Acts 2:36-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.36-37); and again, when he also first opened it to the Gentiles. On the latter occasion, when he had said, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins," it is particularly noted, "When Peter spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word, [Acts 10:43-44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.43-44)." And we also can bear testimony, that he does yet set his seal to these blessed truths, and make use of them for the consolation and salvation of those who hear them.

***~~From this subject we may learn,~~***

***~~1. How to judge of our knowledge of divine things—~~***

A HEAD-knowledge of them may be obtained from men and books: but *a HEART-knowledge can be acquired only by the teaching of the Holy Spirit*. We should carefully inquire, therefore, of what kind our knowledge is. If it is such as *man*can impart, it is not that which will prove of saving benefit to our souls. But it may be asked, 'If the subject matter is the same, how shall I distinguish between human teaching and divine teaching?' I answer, The distinction can be known only by experience.

Suppose a person who had constantly seen the sun, but never felt its beams, were told, that a man exposed to the action of its rays had a totally different perception of the sun from any which a mere sight of it should produce: he could not enter fully into the distinction, as the person could, who felt the genial warmth of the sun. Just so, a person, unacquainted with the operations of the Spirit upon the soul should have a very inadequate idea of the experience of one who felt them, even though we would labor ever so much to make him comprehend it.

But yet, methinks, you will not be altogether at a loss to comprehend the distinction, if I say that the truths of the Gospel, when received from man only, abide in the mind much in the same way as any speculative subject does. Whereas, when applied to the soul by the Spirit of God, they produce a feeling corresponding with the truths themselves; that is, a feeling of humiliation, or confidence, or joy, as the subject itself may require.

Perhaps we may understand the matter yet more clearly, if we refer to the illustration before used, of a seal and the wax: the same seal is applied to both; but the one, by reason of an invisible action of heat upon it, receives an impression; while the other, by reason of its obduracy, remains unimpressed.

Inquire then, I beg you, whether divine truth operates on your minds, to the production

of penitential sorrow,

of holy joy,

of unreserved obedience.

It is from its *effects*, in assimilating the soul to the Divine image, that you must judge of the source from whence your knowledge flows. If it is from God, you may rest assured that it will lead you to God.

***~~2. How we may grow in all that is good—~~***

If we can learn only from the Spirit of God—then we must still continue to seek his heavenly teaching. Even after our eyes have been opened by the Spirit of God, *the Scriptures will still be to us as a sealed book, unless He shines upon it from on high, and shines into our hearts also, to give us the knowledge of it*, [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6).

Remember, then, to seek, even to your last hour, instruction from Him. If at any time you take up the Scriptures, to *read*them, forget not to pray, with David, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law!" So also, when you come to *hear*the word, look up to the Holy Spirit for his gracious influence upon your soul: for if it comes not home to you "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," it will be only "as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." But if you rely simply upon him, and "receive it with meekness" as little children, you shall find it "mighty, through Him, to the pulling down of every obstruction," and shall experience its sufficiency to sanctify and save the soul!

***~~#1942~~***

***~~THE NATURAL MAN'S IGNORANCE OF DIVINE THINGS~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14)~~***

"The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither *can*he understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

CHRISTIANITY, as far as relates to its provisions, is founded on the necessities of man: there is a perfect correspondence between the need and the supply: whichever of the two is contemplated, we of necessity behold, or at least may behold, the other. Men, it is true, are not very willing to acknowledge their spiritual necessities; and hence they think lightly of the blessings of the Gospel salvation: and many, who are willing to confess the depravation of their will and their affections through the fall of our first parents, are very averse to admit the loss they have sustained in their intellectual powers.

But it is certain that the mind of man is no longer what it was before the introduction of sin into the world: it can no longer discern the glory and excellency of Jehovah, or the mysteries of his spiritual kingdom. This is expressly declared in the words before us; which it is our intention,

***~~I. To explain—~~***

That we may have a just view of them, we will distinctly show,

***~~1. Whom we are to understand by "the natural man"—~~***

The term which we translate "natural," is differently translated in different places; and the sense must always be determined by the context. Now the whole context shows, that the person here spoken of is man in his natural state, untaught and unassisted by the Spirit of God. From the middle of the preceding chapter, two descriptions of persons are mentioned:

one, wise in respect of earthly knowledge, but spiritually blind, and, in consequence of that blindness, pouring contempt upon the Gospel;

the other, as spiritually enlightened, and, in consequence of that illumination, accounting the Gospel the richest display of God's wisdom and power.

The former the Apostle denominates the "wise, the scribe, the disputer of this world," and comprehends among them "the princes of this world:" these, in our text, he calls "the natural man," that is, man conversant with worldly knowledge, but uninstructed by the Spirit of God.

***~~2. What are those things which he can neither receive nor know—~~***

These are "the things of the Spirit," or, the great mysteries which are revealed to us in the Gospel. And when it is said, that the natural man cannot understand them, we are not to understand merely that these mysteries are not discoverable by the light of reason, so as to supersede the necessity of divine revelation; but that, however revealed to us externally by God, they cannot be inwardly comprehended, without a special discovery of them to the soul by the influence of the Holy Spirit. As far as they are capable of being judged of by reason, or are mere matters of science, any man may, by the application of his own natural powers, understand them. But, as far as they are objects of faith, and matters of experience, no man can understand them, unless he is taught of God. *Theoretically*, he may maintain the whole system of the fall and the recovery; but, *practically* and *experimentally*, he cannot realize in his soul the truths which he maintains: the humiliation which his depravity calls for, he cannot feel; nor the gratitude, which the wonders of redemption so imperiously demand. On the contrary, the whole system, however as a *theory*it may be approved—as a *practical*and *influential*principle in the soul is accounted "foolishness."

***~~3. Whence this inability arises—~~***

It is well accounted for in the words before us: "He cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned." We are not to understand by this, that the spiritual man is endued with any new faculty, which the natural man does not possess; for then the natural man would be rather to be pitied for a defect which was unavoidable, than to be blamed for a weakness to which he himself was accessary. We are rather to understand that the natural man does not make a right use of the faculties which he already possesses, but, through the corruption of his own heart, renders them unfit for the use for which they were originally designed.

Perhaps we may attain some insight into this matter by means of an easy and familiar illustration. Many by nature are very indistinct in their organs of vision; and human ingenuity has enabled them to supply the defect. From the formation and structure of their eye, the objects which they behold do not fall upon the retina that should reflect them, but either fall short of it, or go beyond it: but, by interposing a proper pair of glasses, the object is brought to such a focus as the eye requires; and is then clearly discerned.

Now we may suppose our natural pride, and unbelief, and sensuality, to have rendered our spiritual discernment so indistinct, that nothing is seen aright; but objects, especially spiritual objects, are dim and distorted: but humility, and contrition, and faith being given by God as a new medium through which they shall be seen, the objects are made, so to speak, to fall upon the heart, and are discerned by the heart in all their true colors and dimensions.

We do not propose this as a perfect illustration; for nothing in nature will perfectly represent the mysteries of grace. But it may serve perhaps to convey some faint idea of our natural incapacity to know and to receive the things of the Spirit; and may show us what we want in order to a spiritual discernment. It is the Spirit of God alone who can supply us with those qualities of mind which will rectify the defects of our spiritual visual organs: but when he does supply them, then, in proportion as they are communicated, will be the clearness of our sight.

We again say that we do not bring this as a perfect illustration, and much less as a proof, of the truth we are considering: but we apprehend, that it is such an illustration as the word of God sanctions. Our blessed Lord tells us, that, "if our eye is evil, the body will be dark; but that, if our eye is single, our whole body will be full of light:" and Paul says, that "by reason of use our senses are exercised to discern both good and evil, [Hebrews 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.14);" by which two passages we learn, that the rectification of our visual organs, and the due application of them to their proper objects, are the appointed means of communicating to us a spiritual discernment.

This truth, we now proceed,

***~~II. To confirm—~~***

***~~The natural man, under all circumstances, is blind to the things of God:~~***

***~~It was so in our Lord's day—~~***

Never was there any light comparable to that which was diffused by the Sun of Righteousness: yet the darkness comprehended it not. Our Lord came to his own, and his own received him not, [John 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.5); [John 1:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.10-11). The very people who, from their acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, and their opportunities of knowing the character of our blessed Lord, and the proofs of his divine mission, had the best means of ascertaining the truth of his Messiahship, could see "no beauty or loveliness in him for which he was to be desired, [Isaiah 53:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.2)." The great mass of the Jewish people accounted him as an impostor: and when his own Disciple, Peter, confessed him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, our Lord said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father who is in Heaven! [Matthew 16:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.17)." Whence it is evident, that none can truly receive Christ in all his characters and offices, unless a spiritual discernment is given unto them by the Spirit of God.

As clear as our Lord's discourses were, they were not understood fully even by the disciples themselves. "To them indeed it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven" more clearly than to others; but even they could not enter fully into the nature of his kingdom, no, not after he had risen from the dead, until "he opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures, [Luke 24:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.45)."

***~~It was so under the ministry of the Apostles—~~***

Paul himself, so far from being convinced by the wonders of the day of Pentecost, was the most determined enemy of the Christian Church, until Christ himself arrested him in his mad career, and revealed himself to him by an immediate vision, and a special revelation from Heaven.

In like manner the ministry of Paul was as offensive to some, as it was delightful and instructive to others. Those "whose hearts the Lord opened," as he did Lydia's, "to attend to the things spoken by Paul," received the word with all gladness; but the great majority of his hearers rejected it with abhorrence. The very same words spoken before Festus and Agrippa, made one to cry out, "Paul, you are beside yourself:" and the other to say, "You almost persuade me to be a Christian."

***~~And thus it is also at this day—~~***

The work of conversion does not go forward among "the wise, the mighty, the noble:" on the contrary, the Gospel is very generally esteemed as "foolishness" among them. We still find occasion for the same acknowledgment as our Lord himself made: "I thank you, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight! [Matthew 11:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25-26)." To this source we must trace all the difference that we still observe among the hearers of the Gospel: "the Spirit of God works all in all; and divides to every man severally as he will, [1 Corinthians 12:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.6); [1 Corinthians 12:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.11)." If we know Christ, it is because "he has given us an understanding that we might know him, [1 John 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.20)," and "an unction of the Holy One," whereby our faculties were enabled to apprehend him, [1 John 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.20); [1 John 2:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.27); and, if we have come to Christ, it is because "we have heard and learned of the Father, [John 6:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.45)."

Humiliating, no doubt, this declaration is: nevertheless it is one which we shall do well,

***~~III. To improve it—~~***

We may learn from it:

***~~1. How to appreciate divine knowledge—~~***

As valuable as human knowledge is, it bears no comparison with that which is divine. So superior is "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," that Paul accounted all things but as dross and dung in comparison with it. Spiritual knowledge is more excellent in its nature, more exalted in its origin, and more beneficial in its use. Into the mystery of redemption the very "angels themselves desire to look." To understand it, we must be taught, not of man, but of God; and, when we have received it aright, it will renew and sanctify us after the Divine image. Let it then be sought by us, not exclusively indeed, but supremely. Let us not be satisfied with any knowledge which the natural man can attain: but let us seek that which shall carry its own evidence along with it as divine, by its renewing, sanctifying, and comforting influence upon the soul.

***~~2. How to seek it—~~***

Nothing is to be attained without diligence: but it is not by study only that the knowledge of divine things is to be acquired: we must "cry after knowledge," at the same time that we "search for it as for hidden treasures." It is "the Lord alone who gives wisdom;" and therefore we must seek it from him by earnest prayer. We must beg him "to give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him," that the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we may see "the deep things of God."

He first "commanded light to shine out of darkness" in the material world; and a similar process must take place in our minds through the operation of his word and Spirit. We must be "taught of God, as all his children are:" and then only shall we behold "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, when he shines into our hearts to give it to us! [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6)." Our studies therefore must all be accompanied with prayer, and we must never take up the Holy Scriptures without crying, like David, "Lord, open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law!"

***~~3. How to employ it—~~***

Has God in his unbounded mercy opened our spiritual eyes, and enabled us to see what the natural man is not able to receive? Surely we should endeavor to employ that light in the way that shall most conduce to his glory. We should make use of it as the means of searching out his glorious perfections, and of discovering the heights and depths of his unsearchable love! We should also employ it for the rectifying of all our own views, and spirit, and conduct: and, finally, for the diffusing, to the utmost of our power, the knowledge of him throughout the world.

As it was said to Peter, "When you are converted, strengthen your brethren;" so is it said to us, "Freely you have received, freely give." No one gift is bestowed on us for ourselves alone, but for the good of others: and spiritual knowledge in particular is a talent entrusted to us for the benefit of all around us: "it is a light that is to be set on a candlestick, and not to be hidden under a bushel." If then, through the distinguishing grace of God, we have been called to the knowledge of the truth, it befits us to "shine as lights in the world," and so to "hold forth the word of life," that others may be "guided into the way of peace."

***~~#1943~~***

***~~ADVANTAGES OF THE SPIRITUAL MAN~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.15-16)~~***

"He who is spiritual judges all things—yet he himself is judged by no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

TO claim, in the behalf of any person, a pre-eminence and distinction which does not belong to him, is invidious and unwise; but to prefer such a claim in behalf of persons on account of some peculiarity in their religious sentiments or feelings, would be an act of palpable impiety. In proclaiming, therefore, the advantages of a spiritual man above those who are only carnal, I should proceed with extreme caution, lest I should appear to arrogate in his behalf what does not truly and properly belong to him. Yet we must not think that the Scriptures do paint in very bright colors the privileges of the true Christian; and that he is represented as a "child of light," while others are "children of darkness;" yes, and as "a child of God" too, while others are declared to be "the children of the wicked one."

It is evident that there is in the passage before us a comparison drawn between the natural and the spiritual man. The *natural*man is he who has nothing but what he possesses by nature, or has acquired by his natural powers. The *spiritual*man is one who has been enlightened and renewed by the Spirit of God. The former, in all his views, desires, and pursuits, is circumscribed by the things of time and sense. The latter soars to spiritual things, and lives, as it were, in a sublimer atmosphere, the element of Heaven.

Of these latter the Apostle speaks in the words which I have just read; which will lead me to set before you,

***~~I. The advantage which the spiritual man enjoys above all others—~~***

***~~"He judges, or discerns, all things"—~~***

Of course, we must understand this observation as relating to those things only which come properly before him as a spiritual man: for, in relation to arts and sciences, or indeed to anything which is within the reach of the natural man, he has no advantage whatever. Solomon speaks in the same unqualified terms: "Evil men understand not judgment: but those who seek the Lord understand all things [Proverbs 28:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 28.5)." John also uses nearly the same language: "You have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things, [1 John 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.20); [1 John 2:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.27)." But common sense, as well as experience, shows, that we must limit the assertion to those things which pertain to the salvation of the soul. And here I might enumerate a great variety of things: but I will content myself with specifying two things, which will carry their own evidence along with them.

The spiritual man, then, "discerns" (that is the meaning of the word, which we translate "judges," and it is so translated in the margin of our Bibles) wherein true happiness consists: he sees it, knows it, feels it, and has his judgment completely made up upon it. He discerns that *his happiness, as a rational and immortal being, is bound up in communion with God as a reconciled God and Father, and in a conformity to his image.* By this view of happiness, all earthly things are cut off at once from any share of this honor, any further than they are made subservient to the bringing of Almighty God near unto us, or to the transformation of our souls into his likeness.

In forming this judgment, the spiritual man inquires what constituted the happiness of man in his first creation. And here he has no more doubt than he has about the happiness of the heavenly hosts. And with this agrees his own experience. For he can have no comfort in his soul while he is in doubt whether God is reconciled to him, or while the light of God's reconciled countenance is hidden from him. *Nor can he find any true comfort while he feels within him any reigning sin, or any unmortified lust whatever.*

Next, he discerns the *means*by which alone this happiness can be attained. He sees that it can be attained only by the simple exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is by that only that he can obtain reconciliation with God, or a sense of the Divine favor in his soul. It is by that alone that he can obtain "the witness of the Spirit," or "the pledge of the Spirit," or "the sealing of the Spirit," which are necessary to elevate his soul above all earthly things. As the Apostle has said; "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith [1 John 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.4)." It is by that, too, that he attains the Divine image on his soul, even by "the faith that purifies the heart, [Acts 15:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 15.9). [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18)."

In a word, it is by the simple exercise of faith that he receives everything out of the fullness that is in Christ, and is filled with that "love of Christ that constrains him," as a mighty torrent, "to live no more unto himself, but unto Him who died for him, and rose again! 2 Corinthians 5:14-15."

***~~"But he himself is judged and discerned by no man"—~~***

The natural man does not discern these things. However he may speculate upon such things, there is not a natural man in the whole world that truly and practically discerns them, so as to have the same fixed judgment in relation to them that the spiritual man has. *The natural man knows not how to estimate the spiritual man, either in relation to his principles or conduct*. Judge him indeed he will, and confidently enough; setting him down for a weak enthusiast, if not for a designing hypocrite. But, to form a just estimate of him, he has no power. He has no idea of spiritual enjoyment; no conception of the efficacy of faith: consequently the experience of the spiritual man appears to him a mere delusion, a fanatical conceit. His pretensions to joys which the natural man never experienced, appear as wild as if he claimed the possession of a sense which none but himself and a few other favored persons had ever exercised.

Suppose, for instance, when all the world besides were destitute of someone of the senses that we enjoy; say, of sight, or hearing, or smelling; and one were to profess that he was enabled by that particular organ to distinguish things which the others could not perceive—would they not account him a deceiver? Just so do the ungodly world account the true Christian, who by faith discerns the excellency of those things which never were discerned by the eye of sense: they are ready to exclaim, as Felix to Paul, "You are beside yourself! Much learning (or much conceit) has made you mad."

But Paul was "not mad:" nor are they mad who seek their happiness in the way before described. If they appear so, it is because their principles and conduct are not duly appreciated. Not that he has any new sense: for that he certainly has not. But a new perception he does have, [Philippians 1:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.9-10). By means of that he is enabled to judge of these things as they are. At the same time, he himself is judged of no man; because no natural man does view things as they are; he never takes eternity sufficiently into his account: if he did, he would see at once, that "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. [Psalm 111:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 111.10)."

Let me now proceed to point out,

***~~II. The true source of his superiority—~~***

***~~The natural man possesses not that kind of knowledge whereby to instruct him in true wisdom—~~***

What, I should ask, is the standard of true wisdom? Is it not "the mind of the Lord?" Is there a man in all the world who believes in a divine revelation, and will, for a moment, controvert this truth? Let this, then, be settled in our minds: let this be admitted as a point agreed upon by all parties: let this be laid down as an axiom, which admits of no doubt: *the mind of the Lord is the only standard of true wisdom.*

Now then, I will ask: What natural man knows that mind? There are but two ways in which he can know it; namely, either by the written word alone, or by a special revelation of it to his soul. But by the written word alone (whether with human instruction, or without) he cannot understand it; as we are told in the words before my text: "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, verse 14." As for a spiritual revelation of them to his soul, that is out of the question: for if he had that, he should already have become a spiritual man: but, not having received that, he neither knows, nor can "know, the mind of the Lord;" and consequently cannot instruct the spiritual man, either in a way of refutation, or of more accurate and enlarged information. If he attempts to dogmatize on such subjects, he will only betray his own ignorance, which even a babe, if taught of God, will discover.

***~~But the spiritual man possesses that very knowledge which is requisite for his guidance in the divine life—~~***

"He has the mind of Christ:" he has it revealed to his soul by the Spirit of God: as Paul has said, "God has given him the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of his Son, [Ephesians 1:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17-18)." Nay, "he is himself one spirit with Christ, [1 Corinthians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.17)," and "has in him the very mind that was in Christ, [Philippians 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.5)." He has, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ," the very "law of God himself written in his heart, [Jeremiah 31:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.33);" so that he may be "seen and known of all men to be an epistle of Christ, written, not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God! [2 Corinthians 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.3)."

True, indeed, he always needs fresh instruction from above; and will, even to his dying hour, have occasion for that prayer, "What I know not, teach me." At first he is only "a babe, and unskillful in the word of righteousness: and it is not until after his spiritual senses have been long exercised to discern both good and evil, [Hebrews 5:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.13-14)," that he attains the fuller "mind of Christ." But, even as "a babe, he has opened to his view things which are hidden from the wise and prudent, [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25);" and an inward monitor, saying, "This is the way, walk in it, [Isaiah 30:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.21) with [Matthew 12:34-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.34-35)." Hence, therefore, whatever superiority a natural man may have over him in relation to the things of time and sense, he is himself superior to the natural man in reference to spiritual things; nor can the natural man either add anything unto him, or correct him.

***~~What then shall I say? I will say to every one who is taught of the Spirit,~~***

***~~1. Do not regard the ridicule of an ignorant and ungodly world—~~***

They will ridicule you; and they will despise you; and they will represent all your pursuits as folly—but "they know not what they say; nor do they understand whereof they affirm." Nay, they themselves have a secret consciousness, that, at least in the main you are right. Do this then: Ask them if they are right: ask them on what their own conduct is founded, whether on the commands of God, or on the dictates of the world. Ask them which is the more likely to end well at last, a life of worldly conformity, or a life devoted to God.

I mean not by this to encourage anything that is really enthusiastic or absurd. You must doubtless "walk in wisdom towards them that are without," and "give no occasion to any one to speak reproachfully:" but you must nevertheless maintain a holy and consistent conduct; and, "if reproached or persecuted for righteousness' sake, you must rejoice, [Matthew 5:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.11-12)," and bless God, who has counted you worthy of such an honor, [Acts 5:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.41) with [1 Corinthians 4:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.3).

***~~2. Study diligently the mind of God in his word—~~***

That, as we have observed, is the one only standard either for faith or practice; and from that alone can the mind of God be ascertained. *Though the Spirit is necessary for your guidance into truth, it is only by and through the word that he will instruct you*. He will not bring to your minds any one truth that is not there revealed. Study, therefore, the word; and study it with fervent prayer to God for the teaching of his Spirit: and never adopt, either in sentiment or practice, any one thing which may not be clearly proved by God's written word.

***~~3. Let your pretensions to "the mind of Christ" be justified by your conformity to his example—~~***

If you "have indeed the mind of Christ," you will undoubtedly "walk as he walked, [1 John 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.6)." He came, not only to redeem you by his blood, but also "to set an example for you, that you should follow his steps [1 Peter 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.21)." Let it be seen, then, that Christ is truly in you: that in all your tempers and dispositions you resemble him; in your deadness to the world; in your devotedness to God; in your meekness and patience, your kindness and benevolence, your purity and holiness, your self-denial and zeal. It is by this only that the world can judge of your pretensions to a superior knowledge of God's mind: and by this will your improvement of your advantages be tried in the last day. Show that, in these respects, you are "one with Christ" now, [John 17:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.21); and doubt not but you shall be one with him, to all eternity, in the eternal world!

***~~#1944~~***

***~~UNDUE PARTIALITY TO MINISTERS REPROVED~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 3:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.5-7)~~***

"What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow."

WE are apt to conceive of the primitive Churches as patterns of all perfection; and doubtless there were among them many individuals whose attainments in piety were truly apostolic: but *there were in most of the Churches as great blemishes as can be found in any society of Christians at the present day*. The Church of Corinth was peculiarly corrupt. They were indeed distinguished for *gifts*, 1 Corinthians 1:5; but, in respect of *graces*, too many of them were sadly deficient. One evil especially prevailed among them to a great extent: namely, the indulging of a contentious spirit, by means of which the Church was divided into parties; some accounting themselves followers "of Paul, others of Apollos, others of Cephas, and others of Christ, [1 Corinthians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.12)."

Now, though this evil did not prevail so far as utterly to subvert their souls, it kept them in a low, and, as it were, an infantile state; insomuch that the Apostle "could not speak to them as to spiritual" persons, who had made any considerable advances in the divine life; but was forced to address them as mere "babes in Christ," to whom he could only administer "milk," when he should gladly have rather "fed them with meat, verse 1, 2." Their being "puffed up for one minister against another, 1 Corinthians 4:6." showed that a great measure of "carnality was yet in their hearts verse 3, 4;" and that, though spiritual in the main, they yet conducted themselves too much like the "men" of this world, whose chief zeal was occupied in contending for the leaders of their respective sects.

The same spirit, as might be expected, still infests the Christian Church. And that we may be put on our guard against it, I will endeavor to show,

***~~I. In what light ministers should be viewed—~~***

***~~They are instruments, whereby God carries on his work in the souls of men—~~***

God is pleased to work by means, and to make use of men for the accomplishing of his gracious purposes in the world. Even when he has employed angels, he has still chosen to put honor upon men as his immediate instruments of good; as when he directed Cornelius to send for Peter to instruct him, and removed from Peter's mind the scruples which would have kept him from executing that office of love.

Though God might as easily effect his work without instruments—yet he has decreed that "faith shall come by hearing:" and where no minister is sent to til the ground, there is one great desert, in which no plant of righteousness is found, no real goodness exists. The land uncultivated brings forth nothing but briers and thorns.

Human learning, to whatever extent it is carried, can produce no spiritual change in the heart of man. The most learned philosopher needs instruction from God's ministers, no less than the untutored savage. Yes, and to the end of life, no less than at the commencement of his Christian course, does every saint require the aid of ministerial exertions, to "water" that which Divine grace has "planted" in his soul. The more exalted any man's attainments are, the more highly will he esteem the ordinances of God, and the more sensible will he be of his dependence on them for a supply of those blessings which he stands in need of.

***~~They are, however, mere instruments, and nothing more—~~***

They can effect nothing of themselves: *not even Paul himself, with all his eloquence and force of reasoning, could bring conviction to the minds of his hearers*. The very discourses which converted some, only irritated others against him, and caused them to regard him as "a babbler," and a maniac, [Acts 26:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.24). If any received his word aright, it was because God had "opened their hearts to attend to it." "Whether he planted, or Apollos watered, it was God alone who gave the increase."

This is universally felt and acknowledged in the natural world. There may be a great disparity between the skill and industry of different laborers: yet no one ever thinks of ascribing the harvest to the skill of man: everyone knows, that without the influences of the sun and rain the gardener will cultivate his land in vain.

The same is true respecting ministers, who will labor to no purpose, if God does not accompany their word with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. The very best of men are but as "a voice crying in the wilderness," *as unable in themselves to convert a soul as they are to raise the dead!*

The manner in which Paul speaks of them, will lead us to consider,

***~~II. The importance of forming a right estimate of their labors—~~***

A just view of them will teach us,

***~~1. To moderate our regards for man—~~***

We are apt to idolize those from whose ministry we have derived benefit to our souls. From their labors we expect a blessing which we scarcely hope to derive from any other quarter; and a secret dissatisfaction arises in our minds, if, at any time, his place is occupied by a less-favored minister. We forget that neither the *word*, nor the *power*with which it has been accompanied, were his; and we are ready to ascribe to him the honor which is due to God alone.

But if we duly considered that *ministers are only the channels of communication*between the Fountain and us, and that the waters by which we have been refreshed have proceeded from God alone—we would look through them to God, and limit both our expectations and our gratitude to Him, from whom alone any spiritual good can flow. I do not say that we are to feel no gratitude towards them: for "we are to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake." Nor do I say that some measure of partiality may not fitly be shown towards those to whom, under God, we owe our own souls: for "though we have ten thousand instructors—yet have we but one Father," to whom, therefore, we owe a filial regard: but such a measure of attachment to one, as leads us to undervalue others, is a mere carnal feeling, which ought to be suppressed.

Paul repeatedly appealed to the Corinthians themselves respecting this: while you indulge such partialities, "are you not carnal? Yes, are you not carnal, and do you not walk as carnal men?" I may say, therefore, that a just estimate of the labors of ministers will prevent an undue rivalry among them in our affections.

***~~2. To augment our dependence of God—~~***

The gardener, when his fields are sown, looks to God for a blessing on his labors. In like manner will our eyes be directed to God alone for a spiritual harvest, if we are thoroughly convinced that he is the only source from whence it can spring. We shall not look to the creature, but to God, in and through the creature: and to the same gracious Giver of all good shall we render thanks for all the good we have received; ever mindful that it has proceeded from his Holy Spirit, "who divides to every man severally as he will."

We shall be afraid of provoking God to jealousy, by ascribing to man any part of that glory which belongs to God. We should live in the very frame of those who are around the throne of God, who, ever mindful of the benefits they have received from him, are singing, "salvation to God and to the Lamb for ever and ever." As in Heaven, so on earth, the creature will be "nothing;" but God will be "all in all!" "Neither he who plants, nor he who waters, is anything.""

***~~Application of this subject,~~***

***~~1. Some matter of inquiry—~~***

What benefit have *you*received from all the labors of your minister? Are there not many who are as ignorant and as worldly in this church, as if they had never heard the Gospel at all? You can bear me witness, that, from the beginning, "I have never known anything among you, except Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" and yet how many of you have derived no benefit to your souls! To what has this been owing?

I acknowledge, with shame, that the word has been ministered to you in much weakness; but if Paul or Apollos had ministered unto you, even their labor would have been lost, it is to be feared, on many of you, because you have not regarded the word as God's, nor looked to him for a blessing upon it. To some, we would hope, the word has not been altogether in vain: but should it not have taken far more effect, if you had looked less to the creature, and more to God?

I beg you to be on your guard respecting this. The brazen serpent was broken to pieces as "Nehushtan" (a piece of brass) because to it was transferred the honor that was due to God alone. Cease! O cease from all "carnal" partialities! and, by whoever God shall speak to you, "receive the word, not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God."

***~~2. Some ground of encouragement—~~***

Behold what God has wrought by means of a few poor fishermen! And can he not make his word effectual for you? Is it not "sharper than any two-edged sword?" and shall it not still be "mighty, through Him, to the pulling down of strongholds, and to the casting down every thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of Christ?" It *gained*not its efficacy from the wisdom of Paul; nor shall it *lose*its efficacy because spoken by me. God has ordained, that "by the foolishness of preaching he will save those who believe:" and if you receive our testimony, however weak it may be, it shall prove to be "the power of God to the salvation of your souls."

Direct your eyes, then, simply to the Lord. Only let your expectations be from Him alone, and you shall not be disappointed of your hope. "Open your mouth wide; and he will fill it!"

***~~1945~~***

***~~CHRIST THE ONLY FOUNDATION~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11)~~***

"Other foundation can no man lay than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

THERE is not anything more injurious to the Church of God than a party-spirit: yet even in the apostolic age did it begin to distract the Christian community. At Corinth it prevailed, and rose to an alarming height: and Paul was obliged to exert all his influence in order to counteract it. He reminded the partisans, that, as "God's building," they should be cemented together with brotherly love: that they should study to show themselves worthy of the place they held in the Church, in expectation of that day when all their works should be tried by fire: and that, instead of fomenting strifes and divisions, they should unite with each other in cleaving steadfastly to the one foundation, whereon they stood.

The declaration in the text is plain, and of infinite importance.

To enter more fully into it we shall consider,

***~~I. What foundations men lay for themselves—~~***

Every man has some foundation for his hope of eternal salvation. Though there are many shades of difference in the sentiments of different men—yet their grounds of hope may be reduced to two:

***~~1. Their own goodness—~~***

Some think that nothing but gross sin can expose them to the wrath of God. They therefore congratulate themselves as having never done anything to merit his displeasure. Others imagine that they may trust in the good works that they have done. They have, in their own apprehension, been regular in their duties to God and man: nor can they conceive that they should have any reason to fear. Thus, like the Pharisee of old, they thank God that they are not as other men; and are filled with self-delight, because they are punctual in the observance of certain duties, [Luke 18:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.11-12).

***~~2. Their own works and Christ's merits united—~~***

Many, who see that their own works cannot justify them according to the strict tenor of the law—yet hope that they will, according to the milder demands of the Gospel. If they see that these will not suffice, they will look to Christ to supply their deficiencies. If they see that such a union is impractical, and, that Jesus must be their only foundation, they hope, however, that he will save them for their works sake.

Thus they either avowedly profess to participate with Christ the honor of their salvation; or, while they pretend to give the honor of it to him, they look for the original and moving cause of it within themselves. Like the Judaizing Christians, [Acts 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 15.5), or the Gentiles whom Peter misled, [Galatians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.12); [Galatians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.14), they unite the law to Christ; as though Christ needed to have something superadded to him, to render his death effectual. At all events, if they find their error in this respect, they will regard their works as their warrant to believe in Christ; and will expect mercy at his hands, not so much because his grace is free and all-sufficient, as because they have something in themselves, which may deserve his notice and regard.

These plans of salvation however will be found very erroneous, if we inquire,

***~~II. What is that foundation which God has laid—~~***

***~~Nothing can be more clear, than that he has not laid either of those, which have been mentioned above—~~***

He often describes his people as performing good works: and often promises them, under that character, eternal life. But *he always represents us as sinners, and as standing in need of his mercy*. And he has sent his Son into the world for that very reason, because none could obtain mercy by any works of their own.

Nor has he less clearly shown, that *works*are wholly useless. He has told us, that salvation must be wholly of grace—or wholly of works, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6). That every degree of boasting is excluded from that salvation which he has revealed, [Romans 3:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.27). [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.8-9). And that the persons, whom he justifies, are ungodly, and without any works whatever to recommend them to God, [Romans 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.5).

***~~Christ is the one foundation which he has laid in Zion—~~***

He "has set forth his Son to be an atoning sacrifice for sin:" and every sinner is to build his hope on Christ alone. Christ is the foundation laid in the covenant of grace, [Genesis 17:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 17.19). [Hebrews 8:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.6). The same is laid in all the promises, [Genesis 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.15); [Genesis 22:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 22.18). [2 Corinthians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.20). The same was exhibited in all the types The Paschal Lamb, the Scapegoat, etc. The same is laid also in the Gospel, [1 Peter 2:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.4-6). We are expressly told that there is no other Savior, [Acts 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.12). Nor indeed can there be any other to all eternity.

The necessity of building upon this will appear, while we consider,

***~~III. Why no other foundation can be laid—~~***

Many reasons might easily be assigned: but one or two may suffice:

***~~1. Any other foundation would be unworthy of the Divine Architect—~~***

God himself is the architect verse 9; and must have all the glory of beginning and perfecting this building. But, if men were to found their hopes on anything but the Lord Jesus Christ, they would have something to boast in, [Romans 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.2). So far as respect was had to any merit in them, so far might they ascribe the honor to themselves. Even in Heaven their song must differ from that of the redeemed. Instead of giving all the glory to God and to the Lamb, [Revelation 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.13), they must take a portion of it to themselves! But this should be utterly unworthy of God to allow. Indeed he has told us that he never can nor will allow it, [1 Corinthians 1:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.29); [1 Corinthians 1:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.31). [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.8-9). We may be sure therefore that no such way of salvation shall ever be established, as leaves man at liberty to boast. We shall be rewarded according to our works, and in some respect for our works; but the only ground of acceptance, either for our persons or our services, is in Christ alone! [Ephesians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.6).

***~~2. No other foundation would support the weight that is to be laid upon it—~~***

Whatever our souls need in time or eternity must be derived from that which is the foundation of our hope. Our *pardon*must be obtained by it; our peace flow from it; our *strength*and righteousness must be given us on account of it; and *eternal glory*must be bestowed on us, as the reward of it. And can we build our hope of such things in any degree on our own works? Can we, who, if we had done all that is commanded us, would be only unprofitable servants, imagine, that we can in any respect merit such things, when we have done nothing that is commanded us, at least, nothing perfectly, or as we ought to have done it?

Surely such a hope would soon appear to be a foundation of sand; and should infallibly disappoint us to our eternal ruin.

Yes, the very persons who build on such a foundation, almost invariably deny that any man can be assured of his acceptance with God; they account such an assurance to be an enthusiastic delusion; which is a clear acknowledgment of the insufficiency of their foundation to bear this weight.

**Inferences,**

***~~1. How needful is it to inquire what foundation we are upon!~~***

If we build but a common house, we are careful on what foundation we raise it. How much more care should we exercise, when we are *building for eternity!* Let us inquire, whether we have been deeply convinced of the insufficiency of our own goodness, and of the impossibility of uniting any works of ours with Christ's sin-atoning sacrifice? And let us examine whether Christ's obedience unto death be our only hope, our only confidence? We never can be saved, unless, with Paul, we utterly renounce the filthy rags of our own righteousness, and desire to be found clad in Christ's unspotted robe! [Isaiah 64:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.6). [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9).

***~~2. How secure are those who are built upon the Lord Jesus Christ!~~***

Christ, on whom they stand, is justly called "a tried stone, and a sure foundation, [Isaiah 28:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.16)." He never yet failed those who trusted in him. The vilest of mankind have found him able to save them to the uttermost. He is a rock to those who trust in him; nor shall the gates of Hell prevail against them, [Matthew 16:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.18). Let all believers then rejoice in their security; and hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering, [Hebrews 10:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.23).

***~~3. How careful should we be, what superstructure we raise upon him!~~***

While Christ is the foundation of our hope, we are also to build upon him all our works. But our works will all be tried by fire. If they be not such as tend to his glory, they will be burnt up as hay, and wood, and stubble. If they be truly good, they will stand the trial, like gold, or silver, or precious stones, verse 11-14.

Let us then give diligent heed to our works. We may suffer loss *in*Heaven, though we would not suffer the loss *of*Heaven, verse 15. Let us then seek "a full reward, 2 John, verse 8." While we renounce good works in point of salvation, let us practice them from love to our Redeemer. Thus shall we put to silence our adversaries; and adorn the doctrine of God our Savior!

***~~#1946~~***

***~~INSTRUCTIONS TO THOSE WHO BUILD UPON THE TRUE FOUNDATION~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 3:12-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.12-15)~~***

"If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."

IN our natural state, we follow the dictates of our own will, without consulting the honor of our God. *Even after we are converted to God, there yet remains within us a proneness to follow our own inclinations, except as Divine grace counteracts that propensity, and prevails against it.*

In the Corinthian Church there were many solemn proofs of this fact. The irregularities which prevailed among them, were both numerous and deeply reprehensible. A party-spirit in particular, created very grievous dissensions among them. Paul, reproving their unfitting conduct, reminds both the preachers who fomented such divisions, and the people who were drawn aside by them, that their eternal happiness should be advanced or diminished in proportion as they cultivated or neglected a Christian temper; and that, if they should be approved of their God in the day of judgment, they must not only build on the *right foundation*, but raise upon it a *superstructure*that should be worthy of it.

To elucidate the words before us, we shall show,

***~~I. What is that superstructure which we ought to raise upon the true foundation—~~***

Among the persons who rely on Christ as their only hope, there is a great diversity both of sentiment and action. This is intimated by the different images under which their conduct is represented in the text.

***~~There are some whose actions may be compared to "wood, and hay, and stubble"—~~***

There were in the apostolic age two sets of teachers, who occasioned much strife and dissension in the different churches, namely:

those who contended for the observance of the *Mosaic rituals*;

and those who introduced into religion the dogmas of *philosophy*.

Persons of similar dispositions and sentiments have infested the Church in every age.

Some are distracting the minds of those around them with subtle questions and *unedifying disputes about doctrines*.

Others are magnifying the *external forms of Church-government*, as if they were of equal importance with the most fundamental articles of our faith.

Others are bringing forward some fond conceits, which, from a desire of popularity and distinction, they propagate with all their might!

How justly the superstructure which these men raise, may be compared to "wood, and hay, and stubble," appears from the natural tendency, and universal effect, of their exertions: for, instead of edifying the Church in faith and love, their doctrines uniformly lead to error—to contention—to bondage. Hence it is that Paul studiously dissuaded all ministers from engaging in such unprofitable disputes, and all Christians from being led astray by them. He bids us beware of the subtleties of philosophy, on the one hand, [Colossians 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.8). [1 Timothy 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 4.7); [1 Timothy 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 6.20). [2 Timothy 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.16); [2 Timothy 2:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.23) and of the bigotry of superstition on the other, [1 Timothy 1:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.3-4). [Titus 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.9).

***~~But those actions which we ought to be performing, may rather be compared to "gold, and silver, and precious stones"—~~***

As the Apostles themselves were, so have many in all successive ages been, intent on cultivating, both in themselves and others, all the graces of the Spirit. It has been their ambition, while they have founded all their hopes on Christ, to show, by the holiness of their lives, that the Gospel is indeed "a doctrine according to godliness."

Now such a superstructure does indeed resemble the materials here mentioned; for it is valuable in itself—suitable to the foundation—ornamental to the edifice—and worthy of the Divine Inhabitant.

Such is the superstructure which we all should raise: and it is the orderly accumulation of such materials as these, which assimilates the Church to that temple wherein God visibly resided, [1 Chronicles 29:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Chron 29.2); 1 Chronicles 29:7-8, or rather, to that more glorious temple wherein he dwells invisible to mortal eyes, [Revelation 21:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.18-19).

That we may be stimulated to care and diligence in these things, let us consider,

***~~II. The importance of erecting such an edifice as will be approved of by God—~~***

This is set forth by the Apostle in very solemn and appropriate terms:

***~~1. Our works will all be tried as by fire—~~***

In that day when God shall judge the world, "he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the most secret counsels of our hearts." As the Judaizing teachers of old, or the philosophical reasoners, thought that they were actuated solely by a regard for truth, while they were in reality instigated by pride and bigotry; so the contentious disputers about doubtful points of doctrine, or indifferent matters in Church-government, little think "what spirit they are of."

But, as fire tries the metals, and reveals the dross that is in them; so will that fiery trial reveal the unworthy mixtures with which our most specious actions were debased. It is to no purpose therefore to deceive ourselves; for we shall most assuredly be undeceived in that solemn day, when "the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is."

***~~2. The works that are approved will add to our eternal happiness—~~***

Every grace which we exercise, is pleasing and acceptable to God. "A meek and quiet spirit," and consequently every other holy disposition, "is in the sight of God an ornament of great price." It is the heart which God regards.*A contrite sigh, a grateful aspiration, an adoring look, are of more value in his eyes than all the zeal or subtlety which ingenious disputants or pharisaic bigots can exercise.* Nor shall a pious thought or desire pass unnoticed or unrewarded.

***~~3. The works which are disapproved will detract from our felicity—~~***

It is supposed that we sincerely build upon the right foundation; and that this will secure our acceptance with God. But *the degree of our happiness will depend entirely on the superstructure which we raise*. We may suffer loss in Heaven, even though we should not suffer the loss of Heaven. Known deliberate sins will rob us of Heaven itself: and mistaken services, so far from increasing our reward, will diminish it.

The person who has "added grace to grace with holy zeal and diligence, will have an entrance ministered unto him abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior! [2 Peter 1:5-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.5-11)."

On the other hand, they whose spirit is less agreeable to the mind of God, will be saved only "as brands plucked out of the burning."

Wherein the precise difference will consist, we do not know. It is sufficient that we are informed it does exist, and will certainly be manifest at the last day. Some "will suffer loss," and others "receive a full reward." Surely this consideration may well make us careful to regulate our minds by the sacred oracles, and to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Let us look well to our foundation—~~***

It is obvious that, if those who build on the right foundation may be "scarcely saved," those who are not fixed on that, cannot be saved at all. Let us remember then that Christ is the only foundation of our hopes, and that we must depend solely on the merit of his blood and righteousness, verse 11 with [Isaiah 28:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.16). Every other hope must be renounced: and we must say with the Church of old, "In the Lord alone I have righteousness and strength!"

***~~2. Let us look well to our superstructure—~~***

The caution in the text clearly proves, that persons, upright in the main, are yet liable to err, and to be heaping up rubbish for the fire while they imagine that they are doing God service It is often said, 'These persons are pious; and therefore God will not let them be deceived.' The text gives a complete answer to this. Let us therefore take heed to our ways, and "take heed to our spirit." Let us not only endeavor to live and act for God, but to do everything from such *motives*, and in such a *manner*, as shall be approved by him in the day of judgment!

***~~#1947~~***

***~~THE DANGER OF DEFILING GOD'S TEMPLE~~***

**[1 Corinthians 3:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.16-17)**

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple."

EVERY passion of the human mind should be called forth in aid of vital godliness. The saints indeed are more influenced by considerations that excite their love and gratitude: but they still need to be sometimes impressed with truths that may awaken a holy fear and jealousy, especially when their conduct has been such as to deserve reproof. The Corinthians were in a high degree culpable on account of their contentions: the Apostle therefore warns them of the consequences of acting in a manner so unworthy of their profession.

In discoursing on his words, we shall consider,

***~~I. The acknowledged privilege of Christians—~~***

***~~Christians, like the temple of old, are the habitation of God—~~***

The temple was the place where God dwelt in a more especial manner. Not only was the visible symbol of his presence there, but there also he manifested himself to his people in tokens of his love and communications of his grace. Thus does he also now reveal himself in his church, [Ephesians 2:20-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.20-22). Yes, every individual believer is thus consecrated to his service, and honored as his immediate residence, 2 Corinthians 6:16.

***~~Nor is this a doubtful, but a clear acknowledged, privilege—~~***

Ignorant people may doubt "whether there be any Holy Spirit, [Acts 19:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 19.2);" but true Christians know him, and know themselves to be his habitation. Paul frequently appealed to the Corinthians respecting this, not imagining that any one of them could entertain a doubt of it. Compare with the text, [1 Corinthians 6:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.19) and [2 Corinthians 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.5). They must have often read of it in the Jewish scriptures, [Nehemiah 9:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 9.20). [Isaiah 66:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.1-2); Often too must they have heard it from him: nor could they fail of knowing it from their own experience. If for an instant they reflected on the light, the strength, the consolations with which they had been favored, they could not but ascribe them to the agency of God's Spirit: and consequently they must be conscious of his dwelling in them as in his temple.

Believers at this day have certainly not less grounds for drawing the same inference with respect to themselves: for they also are, "a spiritual house [1 Peter 2:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.4-5);" and therefore they may, and should, know, that they are in the actual enjoyment of this privilege.

But as this privilege is attended both with duties and dangers, let us consider,

***~~II. The declaration founded upon it—~~***

***~~God denounces the heaviest judgments against those who abuse this privilege—~~***

He would not allow any unclean person to enter into his temple of old, however free he might be from moral pollution, or however ignorantly he might have contracted his ceremonial defilement, [Numbers 19:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 19.13). These ordinances were intended to show, that sin of any kind, and much more such as now prevailed among the Christians at Corinth, was extremely hateful in his sight: such purity does he require in all that come near unto him. Doubtless there are errors, both in *faith*and practice, which, though injurious to his people's happiness, verse 15, will not destroy the relation that exists between him and them, verse 12-15; but, if they are of such a kind as to affect the foundation of the Christian's hope, or greatly to dishonor the superstructure, they will surely bring down the divine judgments on all who harbor them.

This is declared respecting every kind of open immorality, [1 Corinthians 6:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.18); but it is declared also, with very remarkable force and energy, respecting any departure from the principles of the Gospel, or any declension from a life of entire devotedness to God. Paul says to these very Corinthians, "I fear, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so any of you should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, [2 Corinthians 11:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.3)." Why does he use the term "corrupted?" Why does he not say, turned from the simplicity that is in Christ? Why does he use the very same word as in my text is translated by the terms "defile," and "destroy?" No doubt he intended to show us, that *any great departure from Christian principles would corrupt, defile, and destroy the soul*.

It is a fact that such a dereliction of Christian simplicity does proceed from corruption in the soul, and will generate corruption in the life. This idea is strongly confirmed by what the Apostle elsewhere says of those who propagate specious errors, being "vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind [Colossians 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.18). They do, in reality, the devil's work; and him they serve under the semblance of an angel of light, 2 Corinthians 11:13-14. Beware then of his devices, of whatever kind they be, lest you bring upon yourselves destruction from the Lord!

***~~This denunciation is even founded on the privilege itself—~~***

Why was God so jealous of the honor of his temple, but because it was his immediate residence? The more nearly it was connected with him, the more was he himself dishonored by any pollutions introduced into it. Thus we also, instead of having any reason to hope for impunity on account of our relation to him, are taught to expect rather the heavier indignation, if we provoke his holiness.

He may not indeed depart instantly and at once; because he is long-suffering as in the days of old. In forsaking his temple at Jerusalem, he removed to the threshold of the temple first, [Ezekiel 9:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 9.3); [Ezekiel 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 10.4), and then to the court of the temple, [Ezekiel 10:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 10.18), and then to the door of the east gate, [Ezekiel 10:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 10.19), and then to the mountain, [Ezekiel 11:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 11.23)—that very Mount of Olives, from whence Jesus, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, afterwards took his departure from the midst of them.

So he may be often grieved by us before he finally departs from us: but we may so resist his sacred motions as ultimately to "quench" them, [Genesis 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.3). [1 Thessalonians 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.19); and then he will abandon us to our utter ruin, [2 Chronicles 15:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 15.2). [Ezekiel 18:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 18.24). [2 Peter 2:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.22).

***~~Improvement—~~***

***~~1. Let us seek to possess this great privilege—~~***

As to be visited by an earthly monarch should be a higher honor than to be admitted into his palace—so to have God dwelling in our hearts on earth is even a higher honor than to be admitted into his temple above. Shall we not then be solicitous to obtain it? When God has designed that we should even know ourselves possessed of it, and enjoy all the happiness arising from it, shall we treat it with contempt, as a mere phantom of a heated imagination? Let us open wide the doors of our hearts, that the King of glory may enter in! [Psalm 24:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 24.7). With the Spirit of God dwelling in us, we shall have "all good things, [Luke 11:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.13) with [Matthew 7:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.11)," peace, joy, strength, purity, yes, a pledge and foretaste of our heavenly inheritance! [Ephesians 1:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.13-14). Let us never cease from our importunity until we have obtained from our God this "unspeakable gift! 2 Corinthians 9:15."

***~~2. Let us be careful lest we abuse this privilege—~~***

Doctrines arising from human systems, even though they are true in themselves, must never be pressed into the service of sin, or be brought to enervate the force of declarations, which, though apparently opposite, are equally clear and true.

*If some truths are revealed for the confirming of our stability, others are intended to create within us a holy jealousy.*Instead therefore of attempting to invalidate the declaration before us, let us flee from those defilements which alone can make it formidable*. Let us maintain that purity of heart which God requires, and study to "be holy as God is holy."*

Especially must we guard against abusing our privilege by enthusiastic conceits on the one hand, or presumptuous confidence on the other. The Spirit's operations do not supersede our efforts, but rather encourage them, and work by them, [Philippians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.12-13); yet are they not to be discerned, except, like the wind, by their effects, [John 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.8). Let your life, then, testify that God is truly with. "And I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be sanctified wholly, and preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! [1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.23)."

***~~#1948~~***

***~~THE MEANS OF ATTAINING TRUE WISDOM~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.18).~~***

"Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise."

CONCERNING the nature of true wisdom, God and the world are at odds; the wisdom of man being foolishness with God, and the wisdom of God being foolishness with man. Compare [1 Corinthians 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.18); [1 Corinthians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.23) with 3:19. To what now must this be imputed? Is there anything in the revelation which God has given us, that is contrary to right reason? or is it that man's reason is darkened, and that his intellectual powers, no less than his bodily appetites, are depraved by sin? We apprehend that an impartial judge will not hesitate long in determining this question.

But here another question arises: How shall man in his present fallen state be brought to entertain the same judgment of things as God himself does? Must he get some new faculty, whereby he shall have an additional mode of perception? or is there any way whereby his present faculties, weakened as they are, may be made to answer all the purposes for which they were originally given? To this we answer, that *man does not need any new faculty, but only a new direction to the faculties he already possesses*. We have a *film*upon the organs of vision, which needs to be removed: and for this end we must go to him who has said to us, "I counsel you to buy from me eye-salve that you may see, [Revelation 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.18)."

To the same effect is the advice given us in the text: "If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise;" let him acknowledge that he cannot see clearly at present; and let him submit to the operation of God's word and Spirit: thus shall the film be purged away from his eyes, and he shall "walk in the light, as God is in the light, [1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.7)."

This direction we should now submit to your consideration; and, for the fuller understanding of it, we will endeavor to set before you,

**I.** Its meaning.

**II.** Its reasonableness.

**III.** Its importance.

***~~I. The meaning of the directive.~~***

It cannot be supposed that we are to lay aside our reason: that were to "become fools" indeed. Reason, in those things that are within its sphere, is a useful, though not an infallible, guide. And, in the things that are beyond its sphere, it has its office: it ceases to be a guide indeed; but it becomes a companion, that must attend us every step we take, and often interpose its counsel in difficult conjunctures.

To become a fool, in the sense it is enjoined in the text, implies two things:

first, a consciousness of the weakness and fallibility of our reason, especially in things relating to God:

secondly, a willingness to submit our reason to the teachings of God's word and Spirit.

That our reason is weak and fallible, we see every day and hour. How differently will men argue on the most common subjects, and yet with equal confidence of the truth of their opinions! How will those very arguments, which, under the influence of vanity, or self-interest, or passion, once seemed to a man unanswerable, afterwards appear to him frivolous in the extreme, when the bias that was upon his mind has ceased to operate!

But it is in things relating to God that the fallibility of our reason more especially appears. How ignorant is the heathen world respecting the will of God, and the way in which they are to obtain acceptance with him! And how crude are the notions, which many who have the Bible in their hands, form respecting the path of duty, and the way of salvation! How absurd, for instance, was the idea that Nicodemus formed of the new birth, when he conceived it to be a repetition of a natural birth, [John 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.4); [John 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.9). Thus it is with many among ourselves: they cannot hear of the new birth, or of justification by faith, or of the influences of the Spirit, without annexing to them ideas, if not as gross—yet quite as erroneous, as those of Nicodemus.

But we may presume that Christ and his Apostles were right in their judgment of spiritual matters; and that others are right in proportion as they accord with them in sentiment, in spirit, and in conduct. In what light then will our boasted reason appear, if tried by this touchstone? Will not its dictates be found in direct opposition to the voice of inspiration, and consequently erroneous? Is there not such a universal departure from the scripture standard, that the few who adhere to it, are, as the prophet calls them, "Men wondered at! [Zechariah 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 3.8)."

***~~To become a fool, then, is to feel the insufficiency of our own reason, and to be sensible that we are exceeding prone to form wrong opinions on Divine subjects, insomuch that we need at all times greatly to distrust our own judgment.~~***

But this expression implies also a willingness to submit our reason to the teachings of God's word and Spirit. *Men who have a high opinion of their own reason, are ever ready to bring the word of God to their bar, and to pass judgment on it as true or false, according as it agrees with, or opposes, their own preconceived opinions*. They are not contented to let reason judge, whether the revelation itself be from God or not? (that is its proper office) but, having acknowledged it to be from God, they proceed to determine on the points that are revealed, exactly as if they were able with their shallow reason to fathom the depths of Divine wisdom!

This disposition must be mortified; and men, however learned or wise in the estimation of themselves and others, must submit to "be taught of God [John 6:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.45)." The only use of reason, as applied to revelation, is to ascertain whether the revelation, purporting to be from Heaven, be indeed of Divine authority; and, What is the true import of that revelation in all its parts. These two points being ascertained, it is not the province of reason to judge whether a thing confessedly revealed, be true or not: there faith steps in, and supplies the defects of reason; and assures the mind, that the point itself is true, because it is revealed in Scripture; and that if its truth does not appear evident to the eye of reason, it is not from any irrationality in the point itself, but from a lack of clearness in our reason to discern it, and a lack of purity in our hearts to receive it.

*Thus, to become a fool, is to take the word of God with the simplicity of a little child; to acknowledge our inability to comprehend it; and to implore of God the influences of his Spirit, that "the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we may be able to comprehend the heights and depths of his revealed will,*[Ephesians 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.18); [Ephesians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18)."

In short, it is to "receive with meekness the engrafted word, [James 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.21)," and to pray with Job, "What I see not, teach me, [Job 34:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 34.32)," or with David, "open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law, [Psalm 119:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.18)."

Now it must be confessed, that this is humiliating to our proud reason; and that it is difficult for those who "seem wise in this world," to condescend to receive instruction in such a way. But we shall find, that the Apostle's direction, if duly considered, may be vindicated (as we are in the next place to show) on the ground of,

***~~II. The reasonableness of the directive—~~***

To become fools in order to be wise, however paradoxical it may appear, is, in the view of it before stated, most highly reasonable: for, in so doing, we acknowledge nothing but what is undeniably true—and submit to nothing, but what we cheerfully submit to in the acquiring of human wisdom.

We acknowledge nothing but what is undeniably true. Let us look into the Scriptures, and see how our characters are painted there. In them we are told, that "the god of this world has blinded our eyes, 2 Corinthians 4:4;" that "we have walked hitherto in the vanity of our mind, having our understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts, [Ephesians 4:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.17-18);" that, on this very account, we need "a spirit of wisdom and revelation to enlighten us, [Ephesians 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17);" that, in our conversion, our "eyes are opened," and we are "turned from darkness unto light, [Acts 26:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.18)," yes, we are "brought out of darkness into marvelous light, [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9)."

We are further told that, so far from having in ourselves a knowledge of the things of God, we do not even receive them when offered to our view; yes, we account them foolishness, neither can we know them, because we are destitute of that spiritual understanding whereby alone they can be discerned, [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14).

These are plain truths which require no comment.

Let us now see these truths *exemplified*. If we would state our argument in its most advantageous point of view, we would adduce the Gentile world as proofs of the fallibility of man's reason; and show, that "by wisdom they knew not God, [1 Corinthians 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.21)." But we will wave this advantage, and take the instance of Paul, who had the Scriptures in his hands, who was educated under the most eminent teacher of his day, and who had made a proficiency in biblical learning beyond any of his own age.

With these helps, we might well expect that reason would perform its office to admiration, and prove to the world, that it was not so vitiated as some imagine. Doubtless he, who had the advantage of living under the brightest, fullest dispensation of Gospel light, should in no respect continue in darkness: he must have clear views both of his duty to God, and of that method of salvation which had been typified in the Scriptures, and was now made plain by the preaching of a crucified Savior.

Yet behold, this very man was grossly ignorant both of the law, and of the Gospel too: he knew not that the law condemned the inmost workings of iniquity in the soul, [Romans 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.7); [Romans 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.9); or that the prophecies had been accomplished in Jesus, [1 Timothy 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.13). Nor, unless God had caused the "scales to fall from his eyes [Acts 9:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.18)," would his reason ever have sufficed to rectify his views, or to keep him from being a self-righteous moralist, a furious zealot, and a bloody persecutor.

Thus much could reason do for him: "his very wisdom and knowledge, instead of guiding him aright, perverted him! [Isaiah 47:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 47.10);" "he became vain in his imaginations, and his foolish heart was darkened; professing himself to be wise, he became a fool, [Romans 1:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.21-22)."

In addition to what has been thus stated and exemplified, we will only observe that God speaks with utter indignation against those who imagine themselves wise, or expect ever to become so by the mere exertion of their own reason; "Vain man should be wise, though he be born like a wild donkey's colt, [Job 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 11.12)."

Here then permit me to ask: Does not God know more of us than we do of ourselves; and, Do not the passages that have been adduced, declare at least as much as they have been brought to establish? How much more they affirm, we shall not now inquire: but that they show the fallibility of our reason in things relating to God, and the propriety of submitting our reason to the teaching of God's word and Spirit, no candid person will deny.

Is it not then reasonable that we should acknowledge these truths? Shall we make ourselves wiser than God? Will not the very attempt to do so be an irrefragable proof that we are fools indeed?

But the reasonableness of becoming fools in order to be wise appears yet further, in that it is the very thing which we cheerfully do in order to attain human wisdom.

If a man begins to learn any science, and his preceptor tells him of some deep part of that science, which at first sight appears to involve in it a contradiction or absurdity; he does not presently determine that that point is false; but he conceives that there are things which he does not yet understand; and he contents himself with studying, in the method prescribed to him, those parts which are suited to his capacity, hoping that in due time he shall gain a further insight into those more abstruse matters, and see the truth and reason of those things which he cannot at present comprehend, and which through his ignorance of the intermediate points, he would not be able to comprehend, even if they were ever so clearly stated to him.

Now why should we not act thus with respect to religion? Has not that as great depths as any human science? Or rather, is it not more above the sphere of human intellect than any other science whatever?

But it will be asked, What are those first rudiments which we must understand well in order to qualify us for a deeper knowledge of the subject? To this we answer, (and O that God should impress it on all our minds!)

*The knowledge of ourselves is the key to all other knowledge!*If we do not know by deep experience, that we are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, [Revelation 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.17)," we never can "know any other truth as we ought to know it." On this the whole Scripture turns. It is because of our guilt and misery, that we need the sin-atoning blood, and unspotted righteousness, of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is because of our *blindness*and *pollution*, that we need the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. It is because we are altogether destitute of anything that is good, that we must be saved wholly by grace, and that we must receive "Christ as our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our complete redemption, 1 Corinthians 1:30."

We may indeed obtain a head-knowledge of these things from books, while yet we remain as proud and unsanctified as the most ignorant heathen. But*a real, spiritual, and saving knowledge of these things can be learned only by divine teaching, and must always be preceded by a knowledge of our own hearts*: indeed, it will always be exactly proportioned to our self-knowledge. The more we feel ourselves destitute of wisdom, goodness, and strength—the more insight shall we have into "the deep things of God," and the more precious will every Scripture truth be to our souls.

We repeat the question then, Why should it be thought unreasonable to adopt this method of attaining heavenly wisdom, when it is the method we invariably pursue in the investigation of human sciences? Is it not reasonable that we should pay as much deference to God as to man? Or is religion alone, of all subjects, so easy to men's apprehension, that those who have never paid attention to its first principles, are yet competent to sit in judgment on its most mysterious truths? Surely, if a submission to any given process be judged reasonable in the prosecution of human knowledge, much more must it be so in the pursuit of that which is divine.

We must not be satisfied however with showing the reasonableness of the direction before us; we must go on to state, in the last place,

***~~III. The importance of the directive—~~***

Every word of God deserves our deep attention. But the exhortation in the text is singularly important; for first, *It declares the only way in which we can ever attain true wisdom.*

If we could attain the end by different means, it would be of the less consequence whether we used these means or not. But here is the door of knowledge; and the only question is whether we will enter in by it or not. It requires us to stoop, yes, to stoop much lower than we wish: but stoop we must; or else we can never gain admission to "the secrets of God's covenant, [Psalm 25:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 25.14)." God holds the key of knowledge in his own hand: "he alone can give wisdom and understanding, [Proverbs 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 1.6);" we may compass sea and land; we may learn all languages, and explore all sciences, and recite the very Scriptures themselves from beginning to end; and yet never attain true wisdom.

*If any man will be wise, he must become a fool, in order that he may be wise.* The most learned man in the universe can know nothing savingly in any other way: and the weakest man in the universe shall know all that is needful for him, if he will but enter in at this door: "God will reveal to babes the things which he has hidden from the wise and prudent, [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25);" and "a wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein, [Isaiah 35:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.8)."

Can anything more strongly show the importance of this precept, than the consideration that none can remain destitute of true wisdom who obey it, or obtain true wisdom who despise it?

We are aware that some may ask, Are there not many persons learned in the Scriptures, who yet never attained their wisdom in this way? We answer, Either they attained their wisdom in this way, or their wisdom is no other than "the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with God." We have nothing to do with individuals. The point to be resolved is, Whether God requires us to become fools in our own estimation, in order that we may be wise in his? And if he does require it, then shall men become wise in his way, or not at all.

But there is another view in which the importance of this precept will appear, namely, that if we obey it not, then our reason, instead of guiding us aright, will only mislead us more and more, and render us more obstinate in our error.

The more confident we are respecting the truth of our present views, the more shall we regulate our conduct according to them: and consequently, if they are wrong, we shall wander further and further from the right way, and yet conceit ourselves to be in the path of duty. Moreover, *God himself will give such persons up to their own delusions, as a just punishment for the pride of their hearts.*The very words following the text are full to this point; "He knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain:" and again, "He takes the wise in their own craftiness, verse 19, 20." Let us hear our Lord himself speaking to the Pharisees, who disdained to be taught by him: "For judgment I am come into this world; that those who see not, might see; and that those who see, might be made blind." And when they answered with indignation, "What, are *we*the blind persons you are speaking of?" he answered, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains [John 9:39-41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 9.39-41)."

The language of the Apostle in the first chapter of this epistle, is peculiarly strong and animated: "It is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise man? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 1 Corinthians 1:19-20." Thus we may ask in reference to all who will not learn in God's appointed way, What does their wisdom do for them? Does it bring them to God? Does it enable them to overcome the world? Does it disarm death of its sting? Does it inspire them with a hope full of immortality? Does it sanctify them throughout in all their tempers and dispositions, and transform them into the image of the blessed Jesus? We may even ask, Whether, so far from loving to be taught of God themselves, they do not feel an enmity in their hearts against those who are taught of God; and account them fools, whom God declares to be the only wise ones?

Here then the point appears in its true light. If men will not become fools in their own estimation, they shall be fools indeed! For they shall wander incessantly "in their own deceivings," and shall "perish at last for lack of knowledge! [Hosea 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 4.6)."

***~~We cannot conclude this subject without observing—~~***

How much it reflects on a fact which has existed in every age of the Church, which yet it is not easy to account for, namely, that *few of those who are eminent for learning, are at the same time eminent for spirituality of heart and life*.

Paul in this very epistle says to the Church at Corinth, "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were *wise*by human standards; not many were *influential*; not many were of *noble*birth. But God chose the *foolish*things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the *weak*things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the *lowly*things of this world and the *despised*things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him, [1 Corinthians 1:26-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.26-29)."

Thus must we say in reference to our times, that not many wise, or many noble, are found among the despised followers of Jesus. And the reason is, that *men will not condescend to be taught of God in the way that God requires*: they are "wise in their own conceits:" their wisdom is even a greater bar to their salvation than their lusts: for, their lusts they will condemn, even while they inwardly indulge them: but their wisdom they hold fast, nor will they part with it, even for "the wisdom that comes from God, [James 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 3.17)."

Being therefore too proud to become childlike in order to learn, they are left in ignorance; and, stumbling at the very threshold of the sanctuary, they never enter within the veil.

Here then let us call to mind the first words of the text: "Let no man deceive himself." We all, and especially those "who seem wise in this world," are in danger of self-deception. But let us remember that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men! [1 Corinthians 1:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.25)." Let us therefore "not lean to our own understandings, [Proverbs 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 3.5);" but, aware of the weakness and fallibility of our own reason, let us submit ourselves humbly to the teachings of God's word and Spirit.

To this advice it may be objected perhaps, That we promote an enthusiastic dependence on divine impulses; and puff up ignorant persons with spiritual pride; and discourage the pursuit of sound learning.

Let us then be heard in reply to these objections.

In answer to the first we say, that we should indeed promote enthusiasm, if we exhorted anyone to follow impulses that were independent of the written word: but if we recommend all persons to regulate their sentiments solely by the written word, and to rely on the influences of the Holy Spirit no further than they accord with that—then neither we, nor they, are in any danger of enthusiasm, because *the sacred oracles are an unalterable standard to which every thought and action may be brought, and by which its quality may be infallibly determined*.

With respect to the encouraging of spiritual pride, surely the inculcating of humility is a strange way of promoting pride. Suppose we were to tell men that their own reason is sufficient for every purpose of spiritual instruction; and that they are at liberty to weigh every truth of Scripture in their own balance, and to admit, or alter, or expunge whatever accords with, or opposes, their own sentiments; then indeed there should be some foundation for the objection.

But when we recommend a cheerful submission to the voice of inspiration, and a humble dependence on God's promised aid—we cut up pride by the very roots, and lead men to confess, that all their sufficiency is from God alone. And if any pervert this doctrine to the fostering of their own pride (and what doctrine is there that has not been perverted?) the fault is not in the doctrine itself, but in those who abuse it. And if an argument from the *abuse*of a thing be valid, we must then give up the Bible itself; since every doctrine in it has been more or less abused.

Lastly, as to the discouraging of sound learning, how can that be a consequence of the foregoing statement? We have not insinuated that worldly wisdom is unnecessary for worldly purposes, but only for the attainment of divine knowledge: and therefore we can no more be said to speak against human wisdom because we deny the necessity of it in order to the attainment of that which is divine, than we could be said to decry divine wisdom, if we should deny it to be necessary in the investigation of human sciences. Nor have we intimated that human wisdom is of little value for the elucidating of the Scriptures; for most assuredly it is of exceeding great value in this view, especially when used in conjunction with, and in subserviency to, divine wisdom. And lest anyone should conceive, that deductions unfavorable to the pursuit of literature should appear to be authorized by this discourse, we declare unequivocally, that it is the duty, the indispensable duty, of all students, whatever be the sphere in which they are afterwards to move, to cultivate human wisdom, and with all diligence to prosecute the work assigned them.

We do not hesitate to say, that they should be culpable in the highest degree, if they should make religion a pretext for neglecting their Academic studies. We would solemnly exhort them all to remember, that, as in our families, so also in God's family, *every Christian best executes his Master's will, when he is most attentive to the duties of his place and station.*

Having thus endeavored in few words to obviate such objections as were likely to arise, what remains, but that we entreat those who think themselves wise, to become fools in their own sight; and those who feel that they "lack wisdom, to ask it of God, who gives to all men liberally, and without upbraiding, [James 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.5)."

***~~#1949~~***

***~~THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGES~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 3:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.21-23).~~***

"So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God."

IT is scarcely to be expected, considering the weakness and depravity of our fallen nature, that the Church in any place would be free from dissensions and disputes. If every man who embraced the Gospel were from thenceforth altogether under its influence, nothing but love and harmony would prevail. But, not to mention the insincerity of some, who, like Simon Magus, profess the truth without experiencing any of its sanctifying influence, the hearts of men are not changed all at once, but by a gradual and progressive advancement in the divine life. Hence corruption will be at work, as well as grace; and, while the Spirit lusts against the flesh, the flesh will lust against the Spirit, and in some cases prevail against it, to the disturbing and defiling of the Church.

So it was even in the apostolic age; and even where Paul himself preached. A party-spirit early prevailed in the Church of Corinth; different parties arraying themselves under different leaders; some saying, that they were of Paul, others of Apollos, others of Cephas, and others of Christ, [1 Corinthians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.12). To repress these contentions, the Apostle remonstrated with the people on the impropriety of their conduct: and, having exposed the evil of such a spirit, he now, in conclusion, shows, that to "glory in men" is highly sinful; because of,

***~~I. Our saving interest in God—~~***

All that God has, belongs to us, if we believe in Christ:

***~~1. His servants are ours—~~***

They are ours, with all their talents, and with all their labors: the most eminent among them is but "a steward of the mysteries of God," appointed by God to dispense them to his people; "an earthen vessel, in which treasures" are deposited by him for their use. They are Christ's servants; and they are ours for his sake, [2 Corinthians 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.5). Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas were not endowed with their respective powers for their own sake, but for the sake of the Church and of the world; as we are expressly told. When "Christ ascended up on high, he gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; *for the perfecting of the saints*, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, [Ephesians 4:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.11-12);" so that all to whom they are sent, may consider them as among their treasures, the gifts of God to them for the benefit of their souls.

***~~2. His creatures are ours—~~***

The whole "world," and all that it contains, is ours, if we believe in Christ. The sun is ours to light us by day, and the moon and stars by night. The rain is ours, and the produce of universal nature, as far as is for our good. As to the actual possession of it, we may have but little; but as to the sanctified enjoyment, we have all. Paul speaks of himself as often oppressed with want and nakedness: yet, notwithstanding in appearance he had nothing, in reality he "possessed all things! 2 Corinthians 6:10."

*As little as a worldly mind can enter into the idea, it is a fact, that the poor godly man has a richer enjoyment of his pittance, than the most opulent of ungodly men have of all their sumptuous feasts and large estates.*To live by faith is a sublimer happiness than to live by sense; because in the cup of one who so lives, there is an ingredient which the other never tasted, and never can taste: "God himself is the portion of his inheritance, and of his cup, [Psalm 16:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.5);" *whether he has little or much, he enjoys God in it; and therefore he has the best possible use of all sublunary good*.

***~~3. His dispensations are ours—~~***

"Life," with all its comforts, belongs to the believer; nor can it ever be taken from him until his appointed time has come.

"Death" also is among the number of his possessions. As terrible as it is to the unbeliever, it ceases to be so when once we give ourselves up sincerely to Christ as his peculiar people: from that moment its sting is drawn out: and every man who can say with truth, "To me to live is Christ," may with the fullest assurance add, "To me to die is gain! [Philippians 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.21)."

The pains and sorrows which usually precede death are only so many means of purifying the soul, and of preparing it for its appearance before God: and the final stroke is no other than the opening of the gates of Paradise for the soul's admission to the full possession of its inheritance. If the stroke is more sudden and violent, it may be regarded as the fiery chariot which bore Elijah to the realms of bliss. If it is more mild and gradual, it may be viewed as the wagons which Joseph sent to bring his aged father to a participation of all his glory in the land of Egypt.

***~~However death may come, it is to the true Christian a termination of all his sorrows, and a consummation of all his joys.~~***

"Things present" too, of whatever kind they are, are precisely such as the believer, if he did but see as God sees, would choose for himself: and "things to come," however involved in impenetrable darkness at the present, are all ordered for his eternal good. *To him they are uncertain: but Infinite Wisdom has ordained them all!* And though there may be insulated occurrences which in themselves may be evil, they shall all, when taken together, "work for good," to those who love God, [Romans 8:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.28).

Yes, for the believer is prepared the future judgment; and for him are reserved all the glories of the eternal world. And, that we may not doubt the truth of these assertions, the affirmation is renewed at the close of this catalogue, "All are yours!"

Before we point out the particular bearing of this part of our text, we will notice the latter part, wherein is stated,

***~~II. God's interest in us—~~***

Here it will be necessary to mark distinctly the drift of the Apostle's argument. He is showing, that we ought "not to glory in men," that is, not to indulge such partiality for some as would lead us to undervalue others. To evince this, he observes, that "all things are ours;" and that it is absurd to be so over-valuing a minute and comparatively insignificant part of our possessions, when we ought rather to be rejoicing in the whole: and that it is moreover highly criminal to be arranging ourselves under the standard of some favorite preacher, when we would be wholly and entirely given up to God as his exclusive property.

The former of these points we have already considered: the latter now calls for our attention.

We are not to give up ourselves to any man whatever, as though we had an exclusive property in him, or he in us: for,

***~~1. We are Christ's—~~***

In speaking upon this, we shall not enter into it at large, but shall confine ourselves to the precise view in which we conceive it to have been spoken by the Apostle.

We are Christ's, and not man's. *The minister*, who may be the honored instrument of bringing us to Christ, has no property in us: he *is only the servant whom Christ has sent to bring his bride to him*. Christ is the Bridegroom; the preacher is only the person who "presents the Bride as a chaste virgin to Him, [2 Corinthians 11:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.2);" and this is the precise view in which every convert ought to regard the person to whom the honor of bringing him to Christ is delegated. The bride may feel obligations to the friend who conveys her to the bridegroom; but she does not once think of showing to him any such partiality as would interfere with the sacred and inalienable rights of her husband.

Thus it would be with all who are converted through the instrumentality of men: they should regard those men as mere instruments, or, as Paul expresses it, "as ministers by whom they have believed," and by whom they have received the gifts which the Lord himself, their heavenly Bridegroom, sent to them, verse 5.

Let this then be borne in mind: "You are Christ's," wholly, and altogether Christ's. He *formed*you originally: he *redeemed*you with his own most precious blood: he *called*you by his grace: all that you are, and all that you have, is his. You must therefore consider yourselves as his: his exclusive property, in all the powers of your body, and in all the faculties of your soul. Yes, *so entirely must your affections be set on him, as to make all creatures dwindle into insignificance before him, eclipsed as stars before the meridian sun.*

***~~2. "Christ is God's"—~~***

Our affections are not to be so set even on Christ himself, as to forget that he, as our Mediator, is only God's servant, sent to bring us to God the Father, and to deliver us up to him when the whole work entrusted to him shall be complete. The Lord Jesus Christ is to be considered in a three-fold view; as *God*, as *man*, and as the *Mediator*between God and man.

As God, he is equal with the Father: as man, and as Mediator, he is inferior to the Father; as Paul has said; "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man: and the head of Christ is God, [1 Corinthians 11:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.3)." He is the Father's servant, to redeem both Jews and Gentiles by his own obedience unto death, [Isaiah 42:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.1); [Isaiah 42:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.6); [Isaiah 49:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.1-3); [Isaiah 49:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.6). In all that he *spoke*, and in all that he *did*, he acted agreeably to the commission which he had received from the Father: and all that he *suffered*was "according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God the Father."

While this glorious work is going forward, we must look to Christ, in whom all fullness is treasured up for the use of his Church, and "in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily:" but in the last day, when all the elect shall have been gathered in, and every enemy shall have been put under the feet of our victorious Lord, the whole body, with Christ himself at their head, shall be subject unto God the Father, being delivered up to him as the supreme Head of this glorious kingdom, that "God may be all in all! [1 Corinthians 15:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.24); [1 Corinthians 15:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.28)."

As a mediatorial kingdom, it has been received from God the Father; and when, as a mediatorial kingdom, there shall be no longer any need of the Mediator's office, it shall be given up into the hands of Him from whose counsels it proceeded, and by whose power it was completed.

Seeing then that we, and all the whole Church, are God's exclusive property, we must, from fidelity to him, guard against the smallest disposition to alienate from him any portion of that honor and authority which are due to him alone.

***~~We will improve the subject,~~***

***~~1. In its negative and more appropriate view—~~***

We must "not glory in men." It matters little whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, be the object of our preference; the attachment which leads us to set up one above another is altogether carnal. Four times in as many verses is this conduct characterized as carnal, verse 1-4. Happy would it be for the Church of God, if this disposition were viewed in its proper light—for there is scarcely a place where more than one minister officiates, but this hateful temper springs up to disturb the union and harmony of the Church. Moreover, as this temper is carnal in itself, so is it injurious to the welfare, as well of those who indulge it, as of all who are affected by it. Wherever it exists, it deprives the person of all the benefit which he might receive from those whom he so ungratefully undervalues: he contributes to excite divisions in the Church of God; and, as far as in him lies, weakens the hands of those ministers, on whom, in comparison with his favorite, he pours contempt.

Brethren, let the arguments of the Apostle have their proper weight. The object of your idolatrous regard is given, not to you only, but to the whole Church of God, for whose benefit he is sent forth: and while he is sent for others, others also are sent for you: and you are ungrateful to God in so limiting your regards, as not to give a due proportion of them to all who seek your welfare. Besides, you are not to view *them*, so much as *God*in them: for of themselves they are nothing: whoever plants or waters, it is God alone who gives the increase, verse 6, 7.

To God then supremely, and to God exclusively, are your affections due: and, if you will set them on any creature, you will "provoke him to jealousy," and cause him to take away from you, as "Nehushtan," (a piece of brass,) the instrument which he had raised up for the salvation of your souls, [2 Kings 18:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 18.4).

***~~2. In its positive and more general view—~~***

You should glory in God with your whole hearts. Think what reason you have to glory in him: what unspeakable *benefits*you have received at his hands, and what *obligations*you have to surrender up yourselves wholly unto him! Who, besides the believer, can take to himself the declarations of our text? Of whom, besides him, can it be said, "All things are yours?" Survey the catalogue, believer, and think whether there be anything in the whole universe that you can add to it? Should not you then be contented? Should not you be thankful? Or rather, should there be any bounds to your joy and gratitude? I ask not whether you be in health or sickness, in wealth or poverty, in joy or sorrow: *the state you are in is that which Infinite Wisdom has ordained for your greatest good*; and there awaits you, at your departure hence, the immediate and everlasting fruition of God himself. O be joyful in the Lord, all you people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard day and night! And, as God is wholly yours, so be wholly his, in body and in soul, in time and in eternity!

We cannot however *conclude*without entreating all to see that these blessings do indeed belong to them. It is to the believer, and to him alone, that they do belong: and we earnestly invite all, first, to believe in Christ as their only Savior, and, then, to make it evident by their works that they have indeed believed; for, if our character is not clear, we can have but little comfort in the promises to which the saints alone are entitled, and of which they alone will ever receive the final accomplishment.

***~~#1950~~***

***~~BELIEVERS ARE CHRIST'S PROPERTY~~***

**[1 Corinthians 3:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.23).**

"You are Christ's."

*TRUE Christians, however poor in this world, are indeed the richest people in the universe! There is not anything of which they have not the best use and enjoyment. All things temporal, spiritual, and eternal, belong to them! Yet they are not so rich in the property they possess, as they are in being themselves the property of another!*

The Apostle is enumerating in a climax the privileges of Christians; and having said that all things are theirs, he adds, as a more exalted privilege, that they are Christ's. To elucidate this truth, we shall consider,

***~~I. Whose we once were—~~***

The whole creation properly belongs to God; but mankind has alienated themselves from him: nor, whatever difference may have been made between us and others by the grace of God, is there any difference between us by nature. As long as we continue unregenerate we belong,

***~~1. To ourselves—~~***

The natural man disclaims God's authority over him, and thinks himself at liberty to live to himself. This was once the state even of the Apostles themselves, [Titus 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.3); nor is there one among us who was not once a rebel like unto them. Our *understanding*, *will*, and *affections*, we used as altogether our own. The members of our bodies too we employed wholly in our own service: even in our religious actions we regarded self rather than God, [Zechariah 7:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 7.6). With respect to all our talents of time, money, influence, etc. we said, "They are our own, who is Lord over us! [Psalm 12:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 12.4)."

***~~2. To the world—~~***

The world has an entire ascendency over us by nature. We adopt its maxims, follow its fashions, and obey its dictates: the pleasures, riches, and honors of the world are the idols which we worship. What more can be lacking to constitute us its vassals! [Romans 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.16). Our Lord himself declares, that all such persons are, not merely the friends, but the property, of the world, [John 15:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.19).

***~~3. To Satan—~~***

Satan rules in all the children of disobedience, [Ephesians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.2); he leads them captive at his will, [2 Timothy 2:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.26). Hence he is called the god of this world, [2 Corinthians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.4); and who among us has not fulfilled his will? This then manifests us to have been his children, [1 John 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.8); [1 John 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.10); and, If we are not converted by divine grace, it may still be said to us, as it was to the Jews of old, "You are of your father, the devil! [John 8:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.44)."

By conversion, however, we are brought back to our rightful Owner,

***~~II. Whose we now are—~~***

Christ is the heir and sovereign Lord of all things. Both men and devils are subject to his control; but believers are his in a more peculiar manner. They are his people, [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14), his bride, [Revelation 21:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.9), his very members, [Ephesians 5:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.30).

***~~1. We are Christ's, by donation from the Father—~~***

The Father, from eternity, chose a people for himself, [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4). These he gave to Christ to be redeemed by him, [John 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.6); and secured them to him by an everlasting covenant, [Psalm 89:34-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.34-36). To his eternal purpose we must trace the distinction made between them and others, [2 Timothy 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.9), and ascribe all our salvation to him alone, [1 Corinthians 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.10).

***~~2. We are Christ's, by his own purchase—~~***

Though salvation is freely given to us, it was purchased for us at a most invaluable price. Christ gave his own life a ransom for us: the price he paid was no less than his own blood! [1 Peter 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.19). This is the great subject of praise in Heaven, [Revelation 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.9); nor should it ever be forgotten by us on earth.

***~~3. We are Christ's, by the drawings of the Holy Spirit—~~***

No man, of himself, would go to Christ for salvation: all who are his, are *drawn*to him by the Spirit, [John 6:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.44). It is the Spirit who quickens and renews our souls: to him alone must we ascribe the power and the glory, [Zechariah 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.6).

***~~4. We are Christ's, by our own voluntary surrender—~~***

All Christ's people are made willing to be his, [Psalm 110:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 110.3). This they consider as their reasonable service, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1). Yes, they rejoice in it as their highest privilege. This is the peculiar character of all true Christians, [Jeremiah 50:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 50.5).

***~~Learn hence,~~***

***~~1. What an exalted character the Christian is—~~***

He is Christ's. He is Christ's property, and "purchased possession." He is so united to Christ, as to be even "a member of his body, [Ephesians 5:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.30);" yes, he is so entirely one with Christ as to be "one spirit with him, [1 Corinthians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.17)."

Amazing! one would be almost ready to account this blasphemy. But it is altogether the very truth of God. Compare him, in this view, with what he once was: how marvelously changed! There are changes in the natural world, which are truly wonderful; from an acorn to an oak; from a chrysalis, immured in its cell, to a butterfly, with all its gaudy plumage.

But the Christian far surpasses them: for they had in their very nature the elements of what they afterwards display: whereas the Christian had the very reverse; a carnal and earthly nature, which is changed into one that is heavenly and divine. Methinks, scarcely would Beelzebub himself, if restored to his former state, be a greater monument of grace than the Christian. Brethren, I charge you to keep this in mind. And, if any imagine that such a reflection will generate pride, tell them, that what you once were, is all that you can call yours; and that what you now are, is the gift of sovereign grace, to the praise and glory of God alone.

***~~2. What inestimable privileges he possesses—~~***

Is he Christ's? Then Christ acknowledges him as his, and fixes his eye upon him for good, and orders everything for his eternal welfare. Yes, the Lord Jesus "keeps him even as the apple of his eye," and will allow neither men nor devils "to pluck him out of his hand." To the Christian, the Savior looks as to the brightest jewel in his crown, and as a trophy, in whom he will to all eternity be glorified. It was in reference to him that the Savior, in his last, his intercessory, prayer, said, "Father, I will that they whom you have given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which you have given me! [John 17:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.24);" and never will he cease to watch over every one of them, until that prayer is answered, and they are enthroned with him in glory, at the right hand of God.

***~~3. How plain and obvious is his duty—~~***

Are you Christ's? Then for him you must live; and every faculty you possess, whether of soul or body, must be improved for him. Your whole life must be a commentary on those words of the Psalmist, "Depart from me, you wicked; I will keep the commandments of my God."

Having obtained this stupendous, this inconceivably exalted honor, you must "walk worthy of your high calling;" or, rather I would say, of Him who has called you, yes, "worthy of the Lord himself unto all pleasing." There should be no bounds to your desire after holiness, no limit to your efforts. You should desire to be "pure as Christ himself is pure," and "holy as your Father who is in Heaven is holy." This is what the Lord Jesus expects at your hands, [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14), and what your relation to him imperatively demands. Seeing that "you are not your own, but bought with a price, it is your bounden duty to glorify him with your body and your spirit which are his! [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20)."

***~~#1951~~***

***~~MINISTERS, THE LORD'S STEWARDS~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 4:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.1-2).~~***

"So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."

THE apostolic Churches were not so blameless as we are apt to imagine. Many evils prevailed among them; and not in a few insulated individuals only, but in the great mass of the people. The Church at Corinth was peculiarly faulty: many and great evils prevailed among them: dissension and division in particular, were fomented among them: and the very diversity of gifts which were exercised among them, instead of being an occasion of more exalted piety, was made a source of discord.

The people had their favorite preachers, under whom they ranged themselves as partisans and followers; one being of Paul, another of Apollos, another of Cephas; and another of Christ, as having heard and enjoyed his personal ministrations. To allay this spirit, Paul teaches them what account to make of all their teachers, and what to look for at their hands: not *flattery*, as heads of parties; but *fidelity*, as stewards of their great Lord and Master.

Let us here see,

***~~I. In what light people are to view their ministers—~~***

Ministers come not in their own name, but as ordained by God for the benefit of the Church. They are to be viewed,

***~~1. As ministers of Christ—~~***

They are sent by Christ. They come not of themselves, but as commissioned by him. It is his message which they bring; his will that they perform. By them it is that he speaks to men. As earthly kings are represented by their ambassadors, and speak by them in foreign courts, so the Lord Jesus Christ himself speaks by his ministers: they stand in his stead: they speak in his name: their word is not their own, but his; and must be received, "not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God."

***~~2. As stewards of the mysteries of God—~~***

They are not merely servants or ministers, but servants of a peculiar class. The whole Church is one great family; and they are appointed as "stewards," to "give to every one his portion in due season." To them "the mysteries of God" are more especially committed, that they may dispense them to all, according to their respective necessities; giving "milk to babes, and strong meat to those who are of full age." The whole of God's revelation is full of mysteries, which, in due season, they are to unfold: but *that which they are chiefly to make known, is the stupendous mystery of redemption*. They are to show, as occasion may require, the *need*there was of redemption; the *means*by which it is wrought, even by the incarnation and death of God's only dear Son; and the way in which it is *applied*to men, by the mighty operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul!

It is not necessary that they should be always insisting on one particular topic: the subject comprehends an immense range; and every part of it must be brought forward in its turn: but the one great mystery must be always kept in view; and the dispensing of it must ever be considered as the appropriate office of the ministers of Christ.

This being their true character and designation, it will easily appear,

***~~II. In what way ministers are to conduct themselves towards the people committed to their charge—~~***

A steward in a household must be faithful to his charge: and so must a minister be in the Church of God.

***~~1. He must be faithful to his Master—~~***

He is to receive instructions daily from his Master, and to carry them into effect to the utmost of his power. He must never be doing his own will, or following his own way. He must "in no respect seek his own things, but invariably the things of Jesus Christ." He must so act, as if the eye of his Master were immediately upon him; so that he may be able to give a good account of his stewardship, whenever he shall be called into his Master's presence. He must never be swayed by anything but his Master's will: there must be no vacillation in his conduct, as arising from carnal hopes or fears; nor any negligence, as arising from sloth. What his Master has appointed, he must do: and "whatever his hand finds to do, he must do it with all his might."

***~~2. He must be faithful to his fellow-servants—~~***

He must make a due inquiry into their state and circumstances, in order that he may know what to apportion to each, in a way either of work or sustenance. Having his eye on all, he must deal out to them severally that measure of approbation or displeasure, which may be a sure criterion and pledge of the recompense which will be assigned them at the coming of their Lord. He is never to aim at "pleasing them, except for their good to edification." I say, he must speak and act, at all times, "not as pleasing men, but God, who tries their hearts." He must indeed "speak the truth in love;" but the truth he must speak at all times, "commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." He must "never prophesy smooth things;" but "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine;" "doing nothing by partiality, and never preferring one before another." The express command of God to him is, "He who has my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff compared to the wheat? [Jeremiah 23:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.28)." The word which he is entrusted to dispense must be in his mouth "as a fire, and as a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces! [Jeremiah 23:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.29)."

He must consider his own soul as at stake: and must so "declare the whole counsel of God, as to be pure from the blood of all men," and, at all events, to "deliver his own soul;" that, if any have perished under his ministry, he may himself at least be approved of God.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Be thankful for the privileges which you enjoy—~~***

You have, I hope I may say, a faithful ministry. But you need to be cautioned against the error which prevailed in the Corinthian Church. You know, that wherever there are more ministers than one, there is apt to arise an undue partiality for one above another: and this sometimes verges on an idolatrous attachment on the one part, and a contemptuous indifference on the other. But the Apostle tells us, that this is a very reprehensible carnality. For, granting that you find one more profitable to your soul than another, "what is any man, but a minister by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man."

Look through men to God. All of them are "earthen vessels, and the treasure they dispense is God's:" if you look to man, God will withhold his blessing from you: but if you look simply to God, he will, by one as well as by another of his faithful servants, comfort and enrich your souls.

***~~2. Be faithful, on your part, in making a due improvement of them—~~***

If faithfulness is required on the pastor's part, so is it also on people's part. You must come to the ordinances with a real disposition and desire to "hear what the Lord God will say concerning you." You must have your minds open to conviction, and "receive with meekness every word you hear, that it may be an engrafted word, effectual to save your souls."

You must not be offended with the faithfulness of your minister; but consider Almighty God himself as speaking to you by him. Then may you expect from God those blessings which your souls need, and a happy meeting with your ministers in the realms of bliss!

***~~#1952~~***

***~~PAUL'S INDIFFERENCE TO MEN'S JUDGMENT~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 4:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.3-5).~~***

"I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God."

***~~THE ministers of Christ are generally either unduly exalted, or undeservedly depreciated, by those around them; but they should discharge their duties with fidelity, without any regard to the opinions of men, and approve themselves to Him who will judge them righteously in the last day.~~***

***~~I. The tribunal to which Paul referred his character—~~***

***~~He was not concerned about man's judgment—~~***

By some he was looked up to as the head of a party, 1 Corinthians 3:4; by others he was deemed unworthy to live, verse 13; but he knew that men's judgment would continue only for a day. He was therefore alike indifferent to their censure or applause.

***~~He could not wholly depend even upon his own judgment—~~***

He did not know that he lived in any allowed sin; yet he was aware that, through the deceitfulness of sin and of his own heart, he might be led to form too favorable an estimate of his own state: he knew that God might discern much iniquity where we see none, [Luke 9:55](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 9.55); he therefore could not venture too confidently to trust even to the testimony of his own conscience.

***~~He committed himself rather to the unerring judgment of God—~~***

He did not indeed hope for an acquittal on the ground of innocence, or expect a reward as due to him on the footing of strict justice; but he relied on God's equity as tempered with mercy, and willingly left himself to the righteous disposal of his Judge.

***~~II. The tribunal to which we must also refer our judgement—~~***

***~~God has appointed a day wherein to judge the world—~~***

He has constituted the Lord Jesus as the Judge of living and dead. And in due season he will summon the whole universe to his tribunal. Then will he bring into judgment, not the actions only, but the *inmost thoughts and desires*, of the whole world.

*Men*judge of actions only, and of those actions principally which have respect to the welfare of the community in which they live. They care little about the state of men's souls before God.

But God judges the inmost recesses of our hearts. "He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, (of which men can take no cognizance;) and will make manifest the *secrets*of men's hearts," and make the very designs and purposes of men the ground of his dealings with them to all eternity. He will notice what we have been as creatures: what we have been as sinners: what we have been as redeemed sinners. The very habit of our minds under all these characters will be brought before him; and, according as that has been conformed, or contrary, to his revealed word, will be his sentence of condemnation or approval in that day.

***~~To that period therefore we must all look, and for it we must all prepare—~~***

As by the written word we must all be judged, we should study it with all diligence, in order that we both know and execute God's holy will. As for *the world's standard of religion*, we must not regard it: nor must we regard the approbation or censure which it assigns to men in accordance with its own erroneous views. But to God's judgment we must look forward with the deepest solicitude, laboring if by any means we may approve ourselves to him, and "have praise of him."

To what purpose will it be to have monumental inscriptions in our favor, when God has sealed our condemnation, and loaded us with his merited displeasure? Or what effect will the censures of men produce on our minds, when God has passed a sentence of approbation upon us, and seated us with himself on thrones of glory? Methinks that laudatory word, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord!" will richly repay all the obloquy that man can cast upon us, and all the pain that he could ever inflict.

Then live, my brethren, in expectation of that day, and in continual preparation for it. Mind not what man approves or disapproves, in comparison with what God commands: and be as attentive to the motions and desires of your hearts as to your outward acts. "If you seek to please man, you cannot be the servants of Jesus Christ." You must therefore "not please men, but God who tries our hearts."

Let me entreat you not to defer this surrender of yourselves to God. Think what is now the mind of thousands, who, having "sought the praise of man rather than the honor that comes of God," are now reaping the bitter fruits of their folly in Hell! Whatever the whole world may either say or do, (for you must "expect to be persecuted by them if you will live godly in Christ Jesus,") "be steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, assured that at last your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."

***~~#1953~~***

***~~GOD TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED IN EVERYTHING~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.7)~~***

"For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"

IF there are advantages derived from education, there are also disadvantages frequently attached to it; inasmuch as *habit forms, as it were, a second nature*; and often both indisposes us to see what is good, and disqualifies us to a great extent for the prosecution of it.

The Corinthian Christians, while in their unconverted state, had been habituated to much evil, both intellectual and moral. From the wealth that abounded in their city, and the vicious courses that were there pursued, and particularly from the idolatrous regard shown there to the leaders of different sects, *they were but ill-disposed towards the humbling doctrines of the Gospel, and but ill-fitted for the self-denying habits to which it called them*. We wonder not, therefore, that they brought on themselves heavier censures than any other of the apostolic Churches: for, in truth, all things considered, their piety seems to have been, in many respects, very low and questionable.

The particular fault blamed in the passage before us was, their contentious disposition to exalt one teacher above another, and their readiness to range themselves under different heads or parties in the Church. The Apostle reproved their conduct with the utmost delicacy; transferring to himself and his friend Apollos the evils of which he complained; lest, by mentioning the names of others, he would provoke their hostility, and defeat his own ends.

His reproof may be fitly applied,

***~~I. To those who glory in others—~~***

Among the Corinthian converts, some preferred one preacher, and some another: and, not content with exalting each his own favorite, they poured contempt upon those who were of a different sentiment, and thus produced sad divisions in the Church.

The same fault obtains more or less in the Church, wherever the Gospel is preached: and men justify their partiality upon the ground of their favorite minister's superior endowments, or on the ground of the benefits derived from him. But this supposes that the object of their attachment has higher attainments of his own, which may serve as a ground of boasting.

But "what has any man, which he has not *received*" as a free gift from God?

Supposing him to be possessed of gifts, have they not been conferred upon him by "God; who dispenses to men according to his own sovereign will" and pleasure; and, whatever the particular operations be, God himself "works all in all, [1 Corinthians 12:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.6); [1 Corinthians 12:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.11)."

Or, supposing him to be made preeminently useful in converting souls to God, is it by any power of his own that he has thus prevailed? Can any man open the eyes of the blind, or unstop the ears of the deaf, or determine whom he will convert to Christ? Paul himself could not effect these things. Had the conversion of souls been left to Paul's disposal, he would have conferred that benefit on all: whereas, in every place, the great majority rejected his word, and were enraged by it almost to madness.

To boast then in any persons, as though they possessed these talents or powers independently of God, is as absurd as it would be to boast in a sword which had effected the slaughter of many enemies. Everyone sees that it is not the sword which has effected anything: all that it has effected was done by the hand that wielded it: and the person so using it might, if it had pleased him, have used any other sword as well as that.

This is what God himself said, in answer to the vauntings of Sennacherib: "But can the *ax*boast greater power than the person who uses it? Is the *saw*greater than the person who saws? Can a *rod*strike unless a hand moves it? Can a wooden cane walk by itself? [Isaiah 10:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.15)." True it was, that the Assyrian monarch had subdued many kingdoms: but he erred in supposing that it had been done by his own power. It was God who had made use of him, for the accomplishing of his own purposes; and it was not in the power of the proud boaster to go an hair's breadth beyond the commission he has received.

So, whatever a man has, he has it from "God, who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift, [James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.17);" and whatever he does, it is not he who does it, but God, who does it by him: and to God alone must be given the glory, which, through our ignorance and folly, we are but too apt to ascribe to man.

But the text may also be very fitly applied,

***~~II. To those who glory in themselves—~~***

If we have any particular endowments, whether of body or mind, we are apt to arrogate some honor to ourselves, as if we had ourselves been the authors of our own excellencies. But such a conceit is most offensive to Almighty God. For "*who*is it that has distinguished us, or made us to differ from others?" Suppose we have the highest attainments; for which of them are we not indebted to our God? We will suppose that we have light in our understandings: was it not "the Spirit of God who opened our eyes, [Ephesians 1:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17-18)," and "guided us into his truth?" Suppose that we possess decision in our wills: is it not God who "has made us willing in the day of his power? [Psalm 110:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 110.3)." Suppose we are blessed with success in our endeavors: is it not "God who has ordained it for us, and wrought all our works in us? [Isaiah 26:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.12)."

*How, then, can we take to ourselves the glory, which so evidently belongs to God alone?* When a fawning multitude applauded Herod as speaking like a God, he accepted the compliment; and, by laying the flattering unction to his soul, provoked God to fill him with worms, which from that moment began to prey upon his vitals, [Acts 12:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 12.21-23). Just so shall we incense our God against us to our destruction, if we take honor to ourselves of anything that we possess, and withhold from God the honor due unto his name. Let this, then, be an acknowledged principle within us, that, whatever eminence we possess above our brethren, "by the grace of God we are what we are;" and to Him must be given the absolute and undivided praise!

***~~In conclusion,~~***

***~~1. I will reply to an objector—~~***

A person may ask, in reference to our first view of this subject, 'Am I to entertain no preference for a man who has been the means of awakening, sanctifying, and saving my soul? Does not Paul say, in this very chapter, "Though you have ten thousand instructors—yet have you not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you, through the Gospel. Why I beseech you, be followers of me, verse 15, 16." '

I answer, We may have a peculiar love to those to whom we are so pre-eminently indebted: but we must never so exalt one, as to despise another; and never so love any man, as to forget, for a moment, that *he is only an instrument in God's hands*, or that *the glory of all is due to God alone.*

Again, it may be asked, 'Have I not used means which others have neglected; and obtained, in the use of means, that which has been withheld from others on account of their neglect?' To this I readily reply, Your statement is true and just: but your *inference*from it is altogether erroneous. You have not, as you imagine, any ground for self-preference or self-delight on this account: for it was "God alone who gave you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure, [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.13)."

To draw the exact line between Divine agency and the freedom of the will, is difficult, or perhaps impossible, to such an ignorant creature as man: but so far as is necessary for practical purposes, it is easy. Suppose we say, that whatever comes within the range of your physical powers you may do: but to do it in a spiritual manner, and for spiritual ends, is beyond your reach: God alone can enable you to do that. You are indeed responsible to God for not using the powers which you have; and to him you must give account of your abuse of them: but, if you succeed in anything that is good, you must ascribe that thing to God, as his workmanship; and say, "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto your name be the praise!" For "His is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever."

***~~2. I will turn the reproof into a fund of rich encouragement—~~***

Must it be said even to an Apostle, "Who made you to differ? and what have you which you have not received?" It may with equal truth be said to the most insignificant of men, What shall you not receive, if you are willing to accept it at God's hands, and to give him the glory for it? Truly, you need not envy any, if only you will cry unto your God. From your present selves, and from the ungodly that are around you, you shall differ: nor shall anything be lacking unto you, if only you will wait on God in the exercise of prayer and faith. But take care that you pride not yourselves in any of his gifts; for *as sure as ever you are "lifted up with pride, you will fall into the condemnation of the devil."*The more God bestows his grace upon you, the more must you abase yourselves before him, and give him the glory due unto his name!

***~~#1954~~***

***~~CHRISTIAN MEEKNESS~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 4:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.12-13)~~***

"When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world."

As there is a wide difference between the characters of the wicked and the righteous, so there are strong marks of difference between those who are truly pious, and those who have *taken up a profession of religion without having felt its transforming efficacy*. In too many there remains a proud, contentious spirit, amidst all their pretensions to piety. But in the sincere Christian there is a meek, patient, and benevolent disposition, which will show itself in the most trying circumstances, and afford a decisive evidence of his sincerity.

Of the former description were those teachers, who, in order to gain over to themselves a party in the Corinthian Church, introduced among them contentions and divisions. But to these the Apostle's conduct forms a striking contrast: and though he doubtless was peculiarly eminent in his attainments, we may see in him *what every Christian, according to the measure of his grace, will surely practice.*

We shall take occasion from his words to show,

***~~I. The treatment which every Christian meets with from an ungodly world—~~***

***~~The people of God have in every age been despised by the world—~~***

It was the common treatment of all the *Prophets*:

David, [Psalm 25:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 25.19); [Psalm 56:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 56.5-6).

Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 18:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 18.18) and [Lamentations 3:62](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lam 3.62).

In reference to all of them, see [Acts 7:52](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 7.52).

And *Apostles*, [1 Corinthians 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.9).

And of *Christ*himself, [John 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.7); [John 15:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.24-25);

that they were objects of hatred and contempt to all around them.

*We*also are taught to expect the very same treatment at the hands of ungodly men. [Matthew 10:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.22); [Matthew 10:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.24-25). We shall be "defamed" behind our backs, and "reviled" to our face: nor will our enemies be satisfied with injuring us merely by their words; they will also "persecute" us by acts of open hostility, [Matthew 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.11) and [2 Timothy 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.12); yes, they will account us as the very scum of the earth, and as execrable wretches that are fit only to be sacrificed to devils, to appease their wrath in a time of public calamity. This is the precise idea suggested in the text; and it refers to a custom which obtained in some heathen countries, and was probably well known at Corinth.

***~~As strange as this may seem, it may be easily accounted for—~~***

Christians are not thus detested because they are worse than others (for they are "the excellent of the earth," "more excellent than any of their neighbors, [Psalm 16:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.3). [Proverbs 12:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 12.26),") but because they exhibit a light which forces men to see their own wickedness, [Matthew 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.10). [Luke 6:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 6.22). [John 3:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.19-20). To this we must ascribe Cain's murder of his brother, [1 John 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.12), and the universal opposition which the seed of the serpent makes to the seed of the woman, [Genesis 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.15). [Galatians 4:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.29). [Psalm 38:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 38.20).

If we were of the world, the world would love its own: but because we are chosen out of the world, and walk contrary to its sinful customs, it does, and will, hate us even unto death! [John 15:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.18-20).

Doubtless such treatment is hard to be borne; but the Christian distinguishes himself by,

***~~II. His behavior under it—~~***

There are two things that characterize a true Christian under all his trials:

***~~1. A passive meekness—~~***

The saints are men of like passions with others; but, through grace, they are enabled to repress the workings of corruption, and to regulate their tempers by the word of God. Instead of giving reign to a vindictive spirit, they bear with silent resignation the injuries that are inflicted on them; or, if they speak, it is only in words of gentle "entreaty."

*David*, in his conduct towards Shimei, [2 Samuel 16:5-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 16.5-11); and Saul, [1 Samuel 26:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 26.8-9); [1 Samuel 26:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 26.18-20); [1 Samuel 26:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 26.24), exemplifies in both these points of view the Christian's duty, and the Christian's experience.

There are indeed occasions whereon, through inadvertence or the power of temptation, they may be overcome. For example, Moses, [Numbers 20:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 20.10). [Psalm 106:32-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 106.32-33) and Paul, [Acts 23:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 23.3-5); but, on the whole, they will "possess their souls in patience, [Luke 21:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 21.19)," and "show all meekness unto all men, [Titus 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.2)." Rather than provoke contention, they will endure the wrong that is done towards them, [1 Corinthians 6:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.7); and, forbearing to notice it in complaint to man [Psalm 38:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 38.12-14), will commit themselves into the hands of a righteous God! [1 Peter 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.19).

***~~2. An active benevolence—~~***

The natural man, under injuries received, is mindful only of his own troubles: but *the Christian feels a concern for the souls of those who injure him*. He is grieved for them, [Psalm 35:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 35.7); [Psalm 35:11-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 35.11-17); and would be willing to sustain any temporal evils whatever, if by means of his own sufferings he might bring his enemies to a better mind, and avert from them God's heavy displeasure, [Exodus 32:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 32.32). [Romans 9:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.1-3).

He will even *bless*his enemies, and pray for them, [Luke 6:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 6.27-28). [Romans 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.14), and rendering to them good for evil, he will heap coals of fire, as it were, upon their heads, in order to melt them into love, [Romans 12:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.17); [Romans 12:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.19-20). *He will contend indeed; but he will use no weapon except that of love*: and in this warfare he will fight strenuously, until, instead of being overcome by evil, he overcomes evil with good, [Romans 12:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.21).

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How different is the judgment of God from that of sinful men!~~***

Men hate and despise the righteous, [Psalm 37:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 37.32). [Isaiah 59:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.15); and would pour out their blood as water, if God would withdraw his restraints from them, [Psalm 79:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 79.2-4).

But God declares that, instead of their being unfit to live in the world, the world itself is not worthy of them, [Hebrews 11:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.38); that their blood is precious in his sight, [Psalm 116:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 116.15); that whoever touches them, touches the apple of his eye, [Zechariah 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 2.8); and that it were better for any man to be cast into the sea with a millstone tied about his neck, than that he would cause one of his little ones to sin, [Matthew 18:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.6).

Moreover the time is fast approaching, when this difference of sentiment shall be made to appear before the whole assembled universe, to the everlasting comfort of his afflicted people, and the eternal confusion of his enemies, [Isaiah 66:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.5).

Let us then learn to "take up our cross daily," and to follow the example of our blessed, Lord [1 Peter 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.21); [1 Peter 2:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.23); so shall we approve ourselves to be his true disciples, [Matthew 16:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.24-25), and obtain a glorious reward in the day of judgment, [Matthew 5:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.12).

***~~2. How superior are the operations of divine grace to all the suggestions of human wisdom, or all the efforts of human power!~~***

Philosophy never could devise means to eradicate a vindictive spirit from the heart: on the contrary, it extolled revenge as a virtue, and regarded the temper that is exhibited in the text, as baseness and weakness. If men had even endeavored to exercise such a disposition as Paul's, they would have failed in the attempt, because unassisted nature is wholly incompetent to such a work.

But what cannot the grace of God effect? It will turn a lion into a lamb; or rather, it will transform the vilest of the human race into the image of our incarnate God. Let us then follow the example of the saints and martyrs that have gone before us, [James 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.10). Let us exert ourselves in dependence on the Lord Jesus, and not doubt but that "his grace shall be sufficient for us." Then shall our very enemies be constrained to "glorify God in us, [Galatians 1:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.24)," and to "confess that God is with us of a truth, [1 Corinthians 14:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 14.25)."

***~~#1955~~***

***~~AN IMPORTANT ALTERNATIVE~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 4:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.21)~~***

"What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a whip, or in love and with a gentle spirit?"

AT Corinth, religion was at a very low ebb. Great were the abuses which prevailed there, even among the professed followers of Christ. Yet to those very persons the Christian Church is much indebted, for the displays which they occasioned the Apostle Paul to make of the Christian character in its highest perfection. How perversely they acted towards him, the Apostle tells us: "Now you are full: now you are rich; you have reigned as kings without us, verse 8, 10;" and, at the same time that they arrogated so much to themselves, they poured the utmost contempt on him: "We are fools for Christ's sake; but you are wise in Christ: we are weak, but you are strong: you are honorable, but we are despised, verse 12." But how did that blessed man conduct himself under these circumstances? He tells them: "When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly." And then, with most lovely delicacy, he adds, "I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children, verse 14."

Still it was necessary that he would correct what was amiss in them; and therefore he sent Timothy to rectify these abuses for the present, engaging that he himself would shortly come and put everything in order. But the proud leaders of that Church said, he would never dare to obtrude himself among them. He, however, assured them that he would come to them, and with power too, if they constrained him to do so: and he submitted it, as it were, to their option to determine in what way he would come to them; whether of needful severity, or of unmixed love.

Every minister of God has such a measure of authority vested in him over the people of his charge, that he may with propriety address them in the language of my text; "Shall I come unto you with a rod; or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?"

That I may make a suitable improvement of these words, I will,

***~~I. Set before you the diversified duties of a Christian minister—~~***

A minister is not merely "a steward of the mysteries of God, verse 1," to dispense to every member of God's family his portion in due season; but

***~~He is, as a father over them, to exert authority—~~***

Even a young minister, if there is occasion, is to "reprove" both sin and error, [1 Timothy 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 5.20); yes, to "rebuke with all authority, [Titus 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.15)," and even "sharply" too, rather than not effect the reformation he desires, [Titus 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 1.13). In this exercise of authority, he must seek "the edification, and not the destruction" of the offender, 2 Corinthians 13:10; but he must rather proceed to the utter excision of a corrupt member, than suffer the whole body to sustain irreparable injury, [Galatians 5:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.12). Nor is he to be influenced in this matter either by fear or love.

If the offender be as powerful as Ahab or as Herod—yet must Elijah reprove the one, and John the other: nor must the true Levite, the faithful minister, know even his own parents or children, so as to withhold from them the needful admonition, [Deuteronomy 33:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.9). Eli is, in this respect, a warning to all ministers, [1 Samuel 2:27-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.27-36), to "know no man after the flesh."

***~~At the same time, he must act under the influence of love—~~***

Even in the use of "the rod," a father is actuated by love: but where it is possible to effect his purpose without it, he would rather cast it away, and conduct himself only in a spirit of affectionate endearment.

Paul, towards this very Church, and at a time when they were actually setting him at defiance, writes, "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, [2 Corinthians 10:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.1-2)." And this was his constant habit. He could appeal to his converts, that "as a nursing-mother" he had nourished them; being so affectionately desirous of them, as to be willing to impart to them, not the Gospel of God only, but also his own soul, because they were dear unto him: and he further appeals to them, that, during his whole fellowship with them, he had "exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of them, as a father does his children, that they would walk worthy of God, who had called them into his kingdom and glory, [1 Thessalonians 2:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.7-8); [1 Thessalonians 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.11-12)." If there were any of whom he stood in doubt, he "changed his voice towards them, and even travailed in birth with them, until Christ would be formed in them, [Galatians 4:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.19-20)."

This is the true pattern for a Christian minister: he must have courage and firmness to use "the rod," where necessary; but in his soul he would affect nothing but "love, and a spirit of meekness."

Having stated the diversified duties of a minister, I will,

***~~II. Address myself to the discharge of them—~~***

Paul gave to the Corinthian Church their option between the two alternatives, and left them to determine in what way he would proceed with them. Now, as your stated minister, I am necessitated to "come unto you" from week to week, and I beg you to consider,

***~~1. What is the treatment which you desire?~~***

Too many are utterly indifferent about the ministry of the word; and are equally unaffected, whether we come in a way of reproof or of consolation. Yet, methinks, it is not altogether thus with you: but, in answer to the question, "What will you?" you are ready to say, 'Come in the way which you judge most suited to my necessities.'

Let me then proceed to ask,

***~~2. What is the treatment which you deserve?~~***

What is your conduct, in your *collective capacity*, as a Church? Are there among you "debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults?" Dear brethren, if this is the case, and "I find you such, you can expect only that I shall be found unto you such as you would not desire: and that, while I bewail your condition," I shall only administer such correctives as the occasion may require, 2 Corinthians 12:20-21.

As to *individuals*, of course, except in extreme cases, nothing of a personal nature can be spoken, but only in a way of private fellowship. But, beloved, I wish you to examine, whether you are "profiting by the word preached," and whether you "make that profiting to appear." I wish you to examine, whether there be in you any secret declension from God; or whether you are advancing steadily in your Christian course, and "daily growing up into Christ in all things as your living Head, [Ephesians 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.15)."

If this is the case, we shall greatly rejoice: for, as Paul said, "I really live, if you stand fast in the Lord [1 Thessalonians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 3.8);" and as John said, "I have no greater joy, than to hear that my children walk in truth, 3 John verse 4;" so I, brethren, according to the grace given unto me, would have all my own feelings and interests swallowed up in your welfare. If you are but "babes, I would feed you with milk: if you are grown to full age, I would administer strong meat" for your nourishment. In a word, I would endeavor to adapt my ministrations to your necessities, in accordance with the direction given me; "Warn those who are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, and be patient towards all men, [1 Thessalonians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.14)." The time is shortly coming, when both you and I must give account to God; I, of my ministrations; and you, of your improvement of them: and the Lord grant, that in that day I may be found to have discharged my duties with fidelity! May you be my crown of rejoicing to all eternity! Yes, of all of you, without exception, may I then be able to say, "You are our glory and joy! [1 Thessalonians 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.19-20)."

***~~#1956~~***

***~~SIN, A MALIGNANT LEAVEN~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 5:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 5.6)~~***

"Your boasting is not good! Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?"

THAT ungodly men may glory in their shame, may easily be conceived: but that persons professing godliness would ever be led to do so, can scarcely be imagined. Yet, such is the *force of habit*, that it may blind the eyes of persons who are not otherwise destitute of discernment; and may lead them to vindicate proceedings, which, on a calmer view, they would judge deserving of utter abhorrence.

The Corinthians, in their heathen state, had been proverbially addicted to lewdness of every kind. But, behold, a man after having embraced Christianity, had become guilty of incest: and when the Apostle protested against this, as an act of gross impiety, the elders of the Church at Corinth espoused the cause of the incestuous man, and refused to execute upon him the censure which his crime demanded. This conduct the Apostle justly reproved, both as detestable in itself, and as likely to prove exceedingly injurious to the whole Church: "Your boasting is not good! Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?"

Now in this expostulation we may see,

***~~I. The malignant nature of sin—~~***

The operations and effects of leaven are well known in every family: and it will serve, therefore, to illustrate, in the clearest manner, *the nature of sin*.

***~~1. Sin is CORRUPTING—~~***

The purest dough that was ever made has no sooner a portion of leaven blended with it, than it ferments, and becomes sour. And such was the effect of sin upon the soul of our first parent. Adam, when he came out of his Creator's hands, was formed in the perfect image of his God: not an evil propensity of any kind was found in him. But behold him as soon as sin entered into his soul: instantly he became so alienated from his God, that he fled from him, and strove to hide himself among the trees of the garden. And when interrogated by God respecting the act which he had committed, he cast the blame of it upon God himself. The sin which he had committed was as small as any that could be conceived; it was not a breach of morals, properly so called; but only a transgression of a positive precept, which rendered that sinful, which, if not particularly prohibited, would have been perfectly innocent. Yet did this small leaven so leaven his whole soul, that he became altogether corrupt; and the image of God was changed, as we shall see presently, almost into the image of an incarnate fiend!

***~~2. Sin is SPREADING—~~***

However large the mass of dough may be, the smallest leaven will leaven it throughout. And thus did sin operate on the soul of Adam.

His *understanding*was rendered dark;

his *will* was rendered perverse;

his *affections* were rendered sensual;

his *conscience* was rendered treacherous and partial.

Not a member of his body, or a faculty of his soul, retained its original purity: but, as the prophet says of the Jewish people, "The whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint: from the sole of the foot even to the head there was no soundness in him; but only wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." God's own testimony, respecting man in his fallen state, is, that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually".

***~~3. Sin is ASSIMILATING—~~***

The whole of the dough is by leaven changed, and will produce the same change on any other mass with which it may come in contact. So "Adam begat a son in his own fallen likeness;" and *all who have proceeded from him inherit the very same depravity which sin had produced in him*. In every age, and every place, human nature is the same: *there is, in all, the same alienation from God, and the same idolatrous regard to self.*Education may make a difference in the habits of men; but in their propensities there is no difference. There is, in all, the same "filthiness, both of flesh and spirit;" the same love to sensual indulgence; and the same disposition to pride, envy, malice, anger, and all uncharitableness. In every living man, whether civilized or savage, there is only that "wisdom which is from beneath, which is earthly, sensual, devilish! [James 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 3.15)."

The appeal which the Apostle makes on this subject leads us to consider,

***~~II. The importance of having just conceptions respecting it—~~***

It is no curious speculation that is here suggested; but a fact that is confirmed by universal experience, and the knowledge of which is of great importance,

***~~1. For the preservation of the Church—~~***

The Church of Christ is in continual danger, both from error and corruption: and, in reference to both of these, the Apostle gave the same beneficial warning. The Galatian Church was in danger of seduction by Judaizing teachers: indeed, even Barnabas himself had been seduced by Peter's dissimulation. To them, therefore, Paul suggested this beneficial admonition, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump, [Galatians 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.9);" and in numberless instances has the truth of that saying been evinced.

Aaron's calf became an object of worship to all Israel: and Jeroboam's calves perverted all the tribes that were submitted to his government; and continued to pervert them, until they were all destroyed.

The little leaven that, from time to time, was found among holy men in the primitive Church, wrought gradually to the production of all the abominations that have for centuries prevailed in the Church of Rome. And in the great majority of Protestant Churches has one error or another crept in, until all their members have become infected with it, and vital godliness been banished from their souls!

In the passage before us, the warning refers more particularly to morals; and intimates what experience so fully proves. To illustrate this among the ungodly world is unnecessary, because it is too obvious to have escaped the observation of any.

"Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character. 1 Corinthians 15:33" Among the Apostles themselves we may behold it on several occasions. Let a little leaven:

of *pride*, [Matthew 20:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 20.21); [Matthew 20:24-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 20.24-27),

of *covetousness*, [John 12:3-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.3-6), [Matthew 26:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.8),

of *self-confidence*, [Matthew 26:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.35),

or *cowardice*, [Matthew 26:56](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.56),

be brought among them, and they all immediately catch its baneful influence, and betray the weakness of their better principles. And wherever the Gospel is preached in its purity, the same solemn tendency is seen and felt. One person or another indulges a proud, conceited, or contentious spirit; and "his word will soon eat as does a canker [2 Timothy 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.17)."

***~~2. For the preservation of our own souls—~~***

The recollection of this fact will prove extremely serviceable to every child of God. For who is there that has not felt the bitter consequences of omitting to resist the very first incursion of an evil thought?

It was but a glance which *David*caught of Bathsheba; and we all know what sad effects it produced, to the dishonor of God, and well near to the destruction of his own soul. "The man after God's own heart" became, in a degree that was scarcely ever exceeded, a man after the very heart of Beelzebub himself.

If this idea teaches us to resist the first motions of sin, how much more strongly does it guard us against the harboring of any evil in the heart! How affectingly does it warn us to "pluck out the right eye, and to cut off the right hand or foot," lest our whole body be contaminated, and be consigned, as utterly irrecoverable, to the flames of Hell! [Mark 9:43-48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 9.43-48).

Nor does it less forcibly instruct us to guard against the means of evil, and the temptations to it. A man in the midst of many combustibles will dread the approach of fire. And who that considers how soon a fire may be kindled within him, and burn even to the lowest Hell, will needlessly venture himself into those scenes of temptation, where everything around him has a direct tendency to inflame and consume his soul?

Who, that considers "how great a matter a little fire kindles [James 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 3.5)," will be indifferent respecting the company with which he mixes, the conversation in which he engages, the books he reads, the thoughts he indulges in his heart?

Truly, if we would retain a purity of heart and life, we must never forget that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." If we pray to God not to lead us into temptation, *we must take care that we run not needlessly into it ourselves.*

**How shall I now apply all of this?** Beloved brethren,

***~~1. "Purge out," with all imaginable care, "the leaven that is within you"—~~***

This is Paul's own improvement of the subject, verse 7, 8. The Jews, at their Passover, were accustomed to search every corner of their houses with candles, in order to get rid of any leaven that might be found there; so that they might keep the feast with unleavened bread, according to the commandment.

Is "Christ our Passover sacrificed for us," and shall not we exercise the same care to "keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth?" I call you, then, to the utmost possible vigilance in relation to this matter. Guard against everything that is evil, whether in principle or practice; so that you may not be an occasion of corrupting others, and "may yourselves be preserved blameless unto the kingdom of your God."

***~~2. Endeavor to get your souls altogether leavened by divine grace—~~***

There is a leaven that proceeds from God himself, that is intended to assimilate us to the very image of his God, [Matthew 13:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.33). Entreat of God to impregnate your souls with that. See to it, that its operation be progressive, through all your faculties and powers: and never rest until it has had its perfect work within you, and "changed you into your Savior's image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18)."

***~~#1957~~***

***~~CHRIST OUR PASSOVER~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 5:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 5.7-8)~~***

"Indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

CHRISTIANITY affords us not only new grounds of hope, but also new motives to action, yes, the only motives that are capable of giving a uniform direction to our conduct. The arguments derived from the excellency of virtue, the fitness of things, or even the certainty of rewards and punishments, never could produce any effects comparable to those, which have been wrought by the exhibition of a crucified Savior. Paul, well knowing the efficacy of this topic, proposed it on all occasions. If he would enforce the duties of love, beneficence, or zeal—the love of Christ was both his pattern, and his plea.

Thus, in the passage before us, having enjoined the Corinthian Church to excommunicate their incestuous member, he reminds them of the sacrifice of Christ; and, in allusion to their accustomed method of eating the Paschal Lamb, exhorts them to celebrate the Christian Passover with befitting purity, both as to outward discipline, and inward affection. In considering his words we shall notice,

***~~I. The representation here given of Christ—~~***

***~~Christ is here said to have been "sacrificed for us"—~~***

Sacrifices were appointed of God from the very fall of Adam, as means of conciliating his favor, and expiating any offenses which had been committed against him. The creatures sacrificed were put to death, and were always considered as dying in the place of the offender, who, by his transgression, had forfeited his life to divine justice. Precisely in this way has Christ been sacrificed for us: "he died, the just for the unjust;" he was put to death not merely for our good, but in our stead: and *in his sufferings we may behold a figurative representation of what we had merited by our transgressions.*

***~~In this view he is called "our Passover"—~~***

The paschal lamb was sacrificed in a peculiar manner, and on a most extraordinary occasion. God had determined to destroy the Egyptian first-born, but to spare his own people: He appointed the Jews to kill a lamb, to sprinkle its blood upon the door-posts, and to eat its flesh roasted with fire, taking also with it some bitter herbs, [Exodus 12:3-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 12.3-9). Upon their due observation of this ordinance God promised to interpose for their deliverance, and not to allow the destroyer to involve so much as one of them in the common ruin.

Thus are we obnoxious to the wrath that is coming upon the ungodly world: but Jesus, that spotless Lamb, has, on the very same month, day, and hour, that the Passover was first killed, and in the midst of most inconceivable agonies both of body and soul—yet without the breaking of a bone, been slain for us! [Exodus 12:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 12.46) with [John 19:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 19.33); [John 19:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 19.36). And we are by faith to sprinkle our hearts with his precious blood: we are also to feed upon his body and blood; and, in so doing, are as sure of the divine protection as if we were already in Heaven. Though "thousands would fall beside us, and ten thousand at our right hand, the sword of the avenger would not come near us."

That we may rightly improve this glorious truth, let us consider,

***~~II. The exhortation grounded upon it—~~***

While the occasion of Christ's death affords us ground for**the deepest humiliation, the deliverance effected by it should ever be remembered with joy—**

The Jews were commanded to "keep" an annual "feast" in commemoration of their deliverance from the destroying angel. Such a feast is the Lord's Supper to us: as they fed on the Paschal Lamb—so do we feed on the body and blood of Christ, represented to us in the bread and wine. And, as their feast was a memorial of the mercies they had received, so is ours to be, to the last generation. Indeed our whole lives would be kept as a holy solemnity, because we are daily and hourly experiencing the saving virtue of the Redeemer's blood.

***~~The peculiar manner in which the Jews were to observe their Passover, was a figurative representation of the manner in which ours also should be observed—~~***

The Jews were enjoined on pain of death to forbear the use of leaven, and to remove it out of their houses for seven days, [Exodus 12:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 12.15); [Exodus 12:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 12.19); and they were to eat the lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.

Thus is the *leaven of sin*to be purged out of our hearts with the greatest care; and while we feed by faith in the spotless Lamb of God, we must partake also of the bitter herbs of repentance and "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

As for the "old leaven" of Gentile impurity, or of Jewish pride and malignity, it must be wholly put away. The scrupulosity with which the Jews searched and swept their houses to purge out all leaven, is an admirable pattern for our imitation. A sincere desire to know the will of God, a full and unreserved determination to do it, together with a corresponding meekness in our *spirits*, purity in our *thoughts*, sincerity in our *words*, and integrity in our *actions*—this, this is the Christian temper; this is the frame in which our whole lives would be kept as a feast unto the Lord.

Moreover as the Jews were to eat the Passover in haste, with their shoes on their feet, and their loins girt, so must we be in a continual readiness to go towards the promised land.

***~~From this most instructive subject we may observe—~~***

***~~1. How plain is the way of salvation!~~***

Ask of every one who was saved that night, To what he was indebted for his preservation? would there be two opinions throughout the whole nation of Israel? Would there be so much as one that would ascribe it to his own wisdom, or power, or goodness? No, not one. All without exception would say, I owe it to the blood of the Paschal Lamb sprinkled upon my door-posts! That was God's ordinance: and by the observance of that alone, I was kept from the sword of the destroying angel, who was constrained to pass over every house where that blood was seen.

Let us then see ourselves doomed to perish on account of our sins; but, through the application of the blood of Christ to our souls, preserved from death—and we have a perfect view of the Gospel salvation. Nothing can be conceived more simple or more intelligible even to the basest capacity.

***~~2. How beautiful is the Christian life!~~***

It is one continued feast—a feast upon the body and blood of our great Sacrifice! [John 6:53-57](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.53-57).

True, it must be eaten "with bitter herbs." But who is there among us who does not need to have his joys tempered with penitential sorrow?

It must be eaten too "with unleavened bread:" for if there be in us any allowed deceit, we can never hope to escape the wrath of God! [Psalm 32:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 32.2).

We must eat it also with our loins girt, and our staff in our hands, ready every moment to proceed on our journey to the promised land. Compare this state with that of those who were to be left behind in Egypt, wholly ignorant of these high privileges, and altogether destitute of these exalted hopes: truly of the Christian, whoever he be, it may well be said, "Happy are you, O Israel; who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord! [Deuteronomy 33:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.29)."

***~~3. How certain and glorious is the effect of faith!~~***

The whole that was prescribed to Israel was one act of faith. The killing of the sacrifice, the sprinkling of its blood, the feeding on its flesh, the uniting with it the bitter herbs of penitence, and the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, and the habitual readiness to depart—were all, I say, one act of faith.

And of its success we are fully informed. Of the whole nation not so much as one was lost! If anyone had refused to comply with the appointed ordinance, he would have perished: but in all Israel not so much as one was slain.

Just so, beloved, it shall be with you, if you live by faith in the Son of God. Sooner shall Heaven and earth pass away, than the least or basest of true believers shall perish. Be assured of this; and you shall have even now a foretaste of the blessedness that awaits you in the worlds above!

***~~#1958~~***

***~~GOD'S MERCY TO THE VILEST SINNERS~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 6:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.9-11)~~***

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

AS long as men retain within them the seeds of their original corruption, so long they will be liable to fall into sin, and consequently they will need to be fortified by every motive that can be adduced, to persevere in the ways of holiness. Now there are scarcely any stronger incentives to obedience, than a recollection of *the inseparable connection which there is between sin and misery*; and a view of the unspeakable mercies which we ourselves have received at God's hands. It was by these considerations that Paul urged the Corinthians to abstain from some practices in which they were engaged, and from others to which they were particularly exposed.

They had gone to law with each other even in the Gentile courts, instead of settling their disputes by arbitration among themselves. It is probable too that some among them thought but lightly of the sin of fornication; since the close of the chapter is wholly occupied with that subject. His address to them was well adapted to the occasion; in that it appealed at once to their fears and to their gratitude; and thus secured the influence of their sincere feelings, as well as of those which were of a more selfish nature.

His words will lead us to show,

***~~I. The awful condition of the ungodly—~~***

Those who live in sin will have no part in the inheritance of the saints. Though some of the sins specified in this black catalogue are such as cannot be mentioned with delicacy, or thought of but with horror—yet far the greater part are as common in Christian lands as among the heathen themselves: but, by whatever name men call themselves, those who live in such sins "shall never inherit the kingdom of God!" The manner in which this declaration is made, calls for our particular attention. Mark,

***~~1. The Appeal—~~***

The Apostle appeals to our own consciences, "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?" However ignorant you are, are you not well assured in your own minds, that persons living, and dying, in the commission of any of these sins, must perish? Does not Scripture, does not reason, does not conscience tell you, that there must be a difference put between the just and unjust in the day of judgment?

***~~2. The Caution—~~***

The Apostle next cautions us against self-deception. "Do not be deceived!" We are apt to extenuate these crimes, and to conceal their enormity by some specious name:

*Fornication*and adultery are called youthful indiscretions.

*Drunkenness*is called merrymaking.

*Covetousness*and extortion are called prudence, and the common licence of trade.

*Thieving*is called dishonesty.

*Defrauding*in payment of taxes, and a neglect of paying one's debts, and many other kinds of theft, are practiced without remorse.

As for "*reviling*," the conversation of many consists of little else than speaking against their neighbor; and especially when they have received from him any real or imagined injury: yet that is considered as nothing more than a proper token of their contempt for such conduct as they disapprove.

And a soft, easy, indolent, manner of life, such as indicates an aversion to do anything or suffer anything for Christ, is reputed innocent, as though a Christian had nothing to do but to please himself.

Moreover, if men be free from the grosser acts of sin, they pay no attention to the dispositions of their minds; though, in reality, dispositions are as hateful to God, and as much reprobated in the text, as overt acts. But, however they may hide from their own eyes their guilt and danger, God's decree is irreversible, and his threatened vengeance shall assuredly be executed upon them.

But, notwithstanding the danger to which sinners are exposed, the text informs us of,

***~~II. The blessed state to which they may yet be exalted by the Gospel—~~***

Many of the Corinthians had, while in their heathen state, been guilty of all the abominations mentioned in the text. But at their conversion,

***~~1. They were received into the Christian covenant—~~***

[Editor's note: We find the *Anglican theology*expressed in the next paragraph to be unbiblical.]

The word "washed" seems to refer to their initiation into the Christian Church by the ordinance of baptism; and therefore imports, that they had been admitted into the Christian covenant. We indeed, at our conversion, are not to repeat the rite of baptism; because the baptism administered to us in our infancy was in all respects as available for us as circumcision was for the Jews; yet, since we are brought only into the outward bond of the covenant in our baptism, we need to be made partakers of its saving benefits: and, however abandoned we may have been in our unregenerate state, we shall be received to a full participation of its blessings, as soon as ever we repent and believe in Christ.

***~~2. "They were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus"—~~***

Justification includes not merely a remission of sins, but a being dealt with, by God as innocent persons, or, in other words, an exaltation to eternal happiness and glory. Now this the Corinthians enjoyed as soon as they embraced the Gospel. They were not left to expect it after death: it was already given unto them. For the sake of Christ all their sins were blotted out as a morning cloud. And we also, as soon as we "believe in him, shall, for his sake, be justified from all things," however abominable our past lives may have been, and however much we may have deserved to be abhorred both by God and man.

***~~3. "They were sanctified by the Spirit of our God"—~~***

The Apostle, speaking in the fullness of his heart, did not observe any particular order in the arrangement of his words; and therefore no conclusion is to be drawn from the order of them: for, in strictness of speech, our sanctification does not precede, but follows, and flows from, our justification.

What a triumph of Divine grace was here! These people, who had been sunk beneath the very beasts by their iniquities, were renewed by the Holy Spirit, and transformed into the image of their God. Surely then none of us need despair! Whatever we have been, or whatever we may yet be, we still may look to that Divine Agent, who will renew and sanctify us wholly, provided we seek his operations in the name, and for the sake, of Jesus Christ.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. To those who are yet living in sin—~~***

Is there a person here, who, whether openly or in secret, gives way to impurity? You "shall never inherit the kingdom of God."

Is there a person here who corresponds in any respect with those described in the text? Does not your conscience tell you that you must perish? If you have bribed, or silenced your conscience, "deceive not yourself;" for God's word shall stand, whether you believe it or not! Hear this, you whoremonger, you adulterer, etc. etc. In the name of Almighty God I declare: You shall never inherit the kingdom of God, unless you repent and believe in Christ. Let me entreat you seriously to consider your guilt and danger, while there is a way of escape yet opened to you by the Gospel.

***~~2. To those who have experienced pardon and sanctification by the Gospel—~~***

It will be always profitable for you to bear in mind what you once were: for though your actions may not have been so abominable as those referred to in the text, none of you have any right to cast a stone at others; seeing that *the seeds of all of the vilest of sins are in your own hearts, and nothing but the preventing grace of God has made you to differ from your more abandoned neighbor.*What cause have you then to magnify and adore that grace which has so distinguished you; and to "love much, from a sense of having had so much forgiven!"

Well also may a recollection of the many *pounds*that have been forgiven you, incline you readily to forgive the *pence*that may be owing to you by an offending brother. It is particularly in this view that the text is introduced by the Apostle, and in this view it certainly ought to be improved. *Get but a just sense of the mercies given to you in the pardon of your sins by the death of Jesus, and the renovation of your natures by the Holy Spirit, and you will esteem nothing too much to do for God, and no forbearance too great to exercise towards the most unworthy of mankind.*

***~~#1959~~***

***~~THE DUTY OF DEVOTING OURSELVES TO GOD~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 6:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.19-20)~~***

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

THE word of God reveals to us many things which unenlightened reason could never have discovered. This is particularly manifest with respect to the offices of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. These were "mysteries hidden in God from the foundation of the world;" but they are supposed to be well known to every true Christian; indeed they form the basis of the Christian's hope; and they at the same time afford him his strongest motives to obedience.

Paul was dissuading the Corinthians from the sin of fornication: he reminded them therefore of the principles which they professed. We wave what he says respecting the Spirit dwelling in them, and shall confine ourselves to the words of our text.

We shall consider,

***~~I. The principle which the Apostle assumes—~~***

***~~All men naturally think they are "their own"—~~***

Men employ their time and faculties just as they please, [Isaiah 53:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.6). They think themselves at liberty so to do, [Jeremiah 23:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.17). Hence the language of their hearts is declared by the Psalmist, [Psalm 12:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 12.4). Their conduct, if not their speech, resembles that of Pharaoh, [Exodus 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 5.2).

***~~But no man is or can be his own—~~***

Men may be free from any human yoke; but no man is or can be independent of God. This is a principle even of natural religion.

***~~This every Christian is supposed to know—~~***

The manner in which the Apostle assumes this principle is remarkable. His question is a direct appeal to our consciences; he takes it for granted that no one can be ignorant of that truth; he expresses surprise that such a truth would be forgotten.

Indeed this principle cannot admit a doubt. This appears from considering,

***~~II. The argument he urges in support of it—~~***

***~~God, as our Creator, has an unalienable right over us—~~***

We possess not a faculty of body or mind, but from him, 1 Corinthians 4:7. We cannot exercise one faculty but by virtue derived from him, [2 Corinthians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.5). We therefore can be no other than his property.

***~~But he has also redeemed us—~~***

We were in bondage to the curse of the law, [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10), but God has redeemed us from this miserable state, [Galatians 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.13). He paid no less a price for us than the blood of his own Son! [1 Peter 1:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.18-19).

***~~By this he has acquired a further right over us—~~***

The great end of redemption was "that we might live unto God." The Scriptures speak of redemption in this light, [1 Peter 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.18). 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. [John 17:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.19). Thus our obligation to devote ourselves unreservedly to God is greatly increased and confirmed by it. If God complains of us for requiting with neglect his paternal care, [Isaiah 1:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.2-3), how much more may he, for our contempt of redeeming love!

The principle being thus established, we proceed to consider,

***~~III. The exhortation he founds upon it—~~***

***~~Our body and our spirit are entirely God's property. We are bound therefore to glorify him with both to the uttermost—~~***

We cannot indeed *add*anything to God's intrinsic glory, [Psalm 16:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.2). God however esteems himself glorified by our services, [Psalm 50:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 50.23). There are many ways in which we may glorify him daily. A devotedness to him is justly called "our reasonable service, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1)."

***~~Let the exhortation then have its due effect—~~***

God claims every one of us as his own. Let us not then live as though we were at our own disposal. Let us adopt the resolution of Joshua, [Joshua 24:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 24.15). Let us yield to him all the members of our bodies, [Romans 6:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.13). Let us glorify him with every faculty of our souls, [Psalm 103:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 103.1). Let us never disjoin what was so connected in Paul's experience, [Acts 27:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 27.23). Let us seek to have that inspired declaration fulfilled in us, [Romans 14:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.7-8).

***~~Inferences—~~***

We may see from hence,

***~~1. What lamentable ignorance prevails in the professing Christian world!~~***

[Editor's note: We find the *Anglican theology*expressed in the next paragraph to be unbiblical.]

Many are daily violating their infant baptismal vows without remorse. Though educated in the faith of Christ, they give not themselves to him. This may well be a matter of surprise to thoughtful minds. It justly excited the feelings of David, [Psalm 119:53](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.53). Let us beg of God to convince us of the evil of such conduct; let us turn from it with self-loathing and self-abhorrence! [Ezekiel 36:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.31).

***~~2. How reasonable and delightful is the Christian's duty!~~***

What more reasonable than that we would be his who bought us? And what so delightful as to be ever glorifying God? This constitutes the felicity of the perfected saints and angels. We would never be unhappy here if we abounded more in this duty. Let us know, then, and enjoy our inestimable privilege. To have honored God here, will be our crown hereafter!

***~~#1960~~***

***~~THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY RELIGION~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 7:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 7.16)~~***

"How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?"

WE, who live under laws generally known and acknowledged, have little conception what difficulties arose to the Church in the apostolic age, from the licentious habits of many upon their first conversion to Christianity. Those who had been brought up as heathen saw no evil in concubinage: and those who had been educated as Jews imagined that they were still at liberty to put away those with whom they had been united in the bonds of matrimony. In some respects, the very habits and ordinances of pious men among the Jews tended to confirm the Christian converts in their errors. They were not aware, that some things were tolerated among the Jews, and, on some particular occasions, even enjoined, which yet were positively forbidden by the Christian code.

It will be remembered, that, after the Babylonish Captivity, many of the Jews who had returned to Canaan "took wives of the people of the land," and thereby greatly provoked the Lord to anger. On that occasion, Ezra commanded all of them to put away their wives and children, [Ezra 9:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezra 9.2-4); [Ezra 10:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezra 10.2); [Ezra 10:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezra 10.10-11); [Ezra 10:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezra 10.44).

Hence, when persons had been converted to Christianity, a doubt arose in their minds, whether they were not bound, or at least authorised, to separate themselves from their unbelieving partners. This case had been stated to the Apostle, for his opinion respecting it: and he, by God's special command, forbad any such measure. Even if a person, being a Christian, had so far forgot his duty to God as to connect himself in marriage with an unconverted person, he was not at liberty to divorce her; but he must exert himself to the uttermost to effect the conversion of his unbelieving wife. This was the line prescribed equally to all, whether men or women: and agreeably to that rule they were all bound to conduct themselves, whatever difficulties might lie in their way.

The words thus explained will lead me to show you,

***~~I. The duty of persons in wedded life—~~***

Persons once brought into a marriage union should from thenceforth live, as it were, altogether for each other, even as the Lord Jesus Christ is incessantly occupied in promoting the welfare of his Church: and, as the Church is ever seeking to advance the honor of her divine Head, each would seek continually the other's salvation.

If there be a oneness of sentiment between the parties, this will be easy. But whatever diversity of sentiment there may be between them, the duty is still the same; and it should be performed with unremitting diligence. It is not to be supposed that such unions will often be found, as existed frequently in the primitive Church, when, through the conversion of one party to the Christian faith, light and darkness, Christ and Belial, a believer and an infidel, were joined together.

But between professing Christians, as converted to Christ or yet in a state of unregeneracy, there is scarcely a less difference than between persons of different religions. And this difference exists to a great extent wherever the Gospel is preached in sincerity and truth; and the duty of each party is then precisely the same as that which bound the converts from Judaism or idolatry to their unconverted partners. The utmost possible forbearance was to be exercised towards the person who was yet under the power of heathen darkness or Jewish superstition: and so would it be towards one who is yet in bondage to the world; and who, perhaps, is irritated and enraged at the change that has been wrought in the mind of his dearest companion. Great allowance should be made for for the unbelieving spouse. We must not expect him to see with our eyes: and, if he express grief or vexation at our conduct, we must consider how we would have felt, if the change had been wrought in him, and we had yet continued under our former blindness. Grateful to God for the mercy given to us, we should implore the same in his behalf: yes, we should "labor earnestly in prayer for him night and day," that God may open his eyes, and impart to him the salvation which we have experienced. We should remember, that the change has been wrought in *us*; and that therefore there is, so to speak, a ground for complaint on his side, who still retains his former sentiments and habits: and we must be prepared to endure unkindness from him, on whom we have inflicted so deep a wound. We must possess our souls in patience; and labor, by meekness and by love, to win him, whose heart has never submitted to the preached word, [1 Peter 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.1).

***~~In order to this, the most distant prospect of success should be a sufficient inducement—~~***

Whatever the state of our partner may be, God is able to effect a change: "there is nothing impossible with him:" he can "quicken the dead," and "call forth into existence that which had no being." And great beyond conception is the power of prayer. The person that continues instant in prayer is almost sure to succeed at last. And what if success would be granted, even though it were after years of suffering and of supplication? Would not that be a very abundant recompense for all? Yes! Years of labor would be well repaid by such an outcome.

And how do you know, O husband, or O wife, whether this shall not be the outcome of your prayers? How do you know whether you shall not be the happy instrument of saving your unbelieving partner? Surely a mere possibility of such an event would be sufficient to call forth our utmost endeavors; and we would with patient perseverance hold on to the end, "instructing in meekness him who opposes us, if God perhaps may give him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and he may at last recover himself out of the snare of the devil, by whom he has been led captive at his will, [2 Timothy 2:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.25-26)."

But the questions need not be restricted to those in wedded life: they show us equally,

***~~II. The duty of persons, in whatever relation they may stand to each other—~~***

Manifold are the relations of civil and social life; and in all of them, the same concern for the salvation of others befits us. Such is our duty,

***~~1. In our own families—~~***

A person at the head of a family should consider all under his roof as committed to his care, to be brought up for God. It was said by God himself, with special approbation respecting Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, [Genesis 18:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 18.19)." The same attention will he approve in us also: and the more we know of the evil of the heart, and of *the danger of dying in an unconverted state*, the more earnest should we be in the performance of this duty. And what if we are successful in one single instance; will it not richly repay all the labor we can bestow on this good work?

Even as it respects this present life, what a bond of union exists between a man and his spiritual offspring! What sweet counsel they take with each other, when going to the house of God as friends, or in the more retired fellowship of domestic life! But, if we take *eternity*into the account, what shall we then say? Think of saving an immortal soul! What an honor! what a joy! O cease not, any of you, from this good work; but go on steadily, with much patience, much forbearance, much earnestness, if by any means you may be honored with "turning one soul from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

***~~2. In the Church of God—~~***

The Church is one great family; among whom there is yet very ample occasion for mutual forbearance, and for mutual aid. All who believe in Christ are, in fact, one body; and every member should take a deep interest in the welfare of the whole.

It is to be lamented, that, even in the apostolic age, there were divisions and bitter animosities among those who ought to have been united in the bonds of brotherly affection: and so it is at this time. Many, because of a diversity of sentiment on some points, and frequently on points of inferior importance, are really separated from one another more widely than from the unconverted world. But such a disposition ill becomes the family of which Christ is the Head. We should all have but one object in view; and labor with incessant care so to watch over each other: and we should "become all things to all men, if by any means we may save some, 1 Corinthians 9:20-22."

***~~3. In the world at large—~~***

Wherever there is an immortal soul, there should be an object of our care and love. We would not ask, in reference to any human being, "Am I my brother's keeper?" We all have a debt of love, which we would be paying to every man. *Especially would we be concerned for the salvation of their souls, and be using all the means in our power to advance it.* The unconverted heathen, the unbelieving Jew, and the scoffing infidel, should be objects of our tenderest compassion, as should also be the careless and ungodly all around us; and, both by secret prayer and benevolent efforts, of whatever kind, we should seek their salvation. And what if we are the means of saving one single soul? Truly I say to you, that we shall cause all Heaven to rejoice: for "there is joy among the angels in the presence of God over one sinner that repents." Know this, brethren; "know, that whoever converts a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins! [James 5:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.19-20)." Shall not such a prospect stimulate us to exertion? You will say, you are not sure to succeed in your efforts. True: but are you sure that you shall not succeed? "How do you know, O man," what God shall be pleased to effect by your means? You may be among the weakest of the people; yet that would not discourage you: for God delights to honor those who honor him; and "he will perfect his own strength in your weakness."

But, at all events, if we would fail in doing good to others, shall none accrue to ourselves? This cannot be: for "God will reward every man according to his own labor, [1 Corinthians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.8);" and he who "watered others, shall be watered also himself."

***~~#1961~~***

***~~ABIDING IN OUR CALLING~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 7:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 7.24)~~***

"Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to."

THE state of the Church, at the first introduction of Christianity, was full of embarrassment: the *Jewish*converts knew not how to conduct themselves in reference to the Mosaic law, which was now abrogated; nor did the *Gentile*converts find it easy to submit to a moral discipline so different from that to which they had been hitherto accustomed, and so strict as that which Christianity imposed. The union also of Jews and Gentiles in the same society, like that of two contending elements, was a source of continual discord. The persecutions too, which each were called to endure, tended yet further to make their path of duty more intricate; so that not even the wisdom and authority of Paul himself were sufficient to adjust the difficulties which arose, without a special appeal to the whole college of Apostles, and the public sanction of their united authority.

The epistle before us gives a great insight into the state of things as existing at that day, and shows how much there was to be rectified in the whole Christian Church. But, not to notice the various evils which prevailed in the Church at large, we will fix our attention on some difficulties which the Corinthians had submitted to the Apostle for his advice. Many, who had been converted in the married state, had to encounter the most painful opposition from their unconverted relatives: the husband being filled with resentment against his wife, and the wife against her husband. Hence arose a question, whether it was not expedient for the two to separate, rather than, by continued feuds, to embitter each other's life. On this subject they wrote to him for his advice.

The Jewish and Gentile converts also consulted him how they might best satisfy their own minds under their respective circumstances, and most approve themselves to that God whom they desired to serve.

Doubts also arose among believing servants, whether they ought not, at any risk, to leave the masters who were hostile to the religion they had embraced. To each of these the Apostle gives an appropriate answer: and then lays down as a general rule, that "wherein soever any man was called, he would not think of leaving his calling, but would abide therein with God." This rule he twice prescribes, within the space of a few verses, 20, 24; and therefore we may well regard it as deserving the most attentive consideration.

For the elucidation of the whole subject, I shall endeavor to mark,

***~~I. The feelings which the Gospel is apt, under peculiar circumstances, to engender—~~***

***~~There is, as we all know, a great difference between the states and conditions of different men—~~***

The Jews, for instance, were, for the space of fifteen hundred years, distinguished above all the rest of the human race, by the light of revelation, and by ordinances of divine appointment: and, from the apostolic age, the followers of Christ have, in like manner, been honored as the depositories of the Gospel, whereby alone we are instructed how to obtain favor with God, and secure to ourselves the possession of an eternal inheritance.

If we compare the state of Muhammadans or Pagans with that of the Christian Church, we shall see how greatly we are favored; and what reason we have to adore our God for that light which we enjoy, and of which they have no just conception.

And as there is a difference in men with respect to *religious*privileges, so also is there in relation to their *civil*advantages.

Some are rich, and possessed of extensive authority; while others are poor, and altogether subjected to the will of their superiors.

Some enjoy the blessings of a liberal education, whereby their knowledge is expanded and enlarged; while others are shut up in ignorance, and, by a continued necessity for bodily labor, are precluded from all opportunity of enriching their minds by intellectual pursuits.

Some enjoy, without labor, all that the world can give; while others are scarcely able, even by the most unwearied exertions, to obtain what is necessary for the support of themselves and families; or perhaps even to get employment for their industry, or to exist at all, except by a degrading supply of benevolent aid.

***~~Now, to the natural man, these distinctions are an occasion of much murmuring and complaint—~~***

Men see that such a state of things exists; and they feel the inconveniences arising from it: and, inasmuch as it arises, for the most part, neither from any exalted merit in the higher classes, nor any peculiar demerit in the lower, they view it with an envious eye and a repining heart. They do not understand what necessity there is for such a state of things, nor how connected it is, for the most part, with civilization and the liberal arts.

They are not aware, that if the whole system were subverted, and all men were reduced to perfect equality, the same inequality would soon arise, and greater evils ensue than those which had been already experienced. The disparity alone is felt; and no wonder if, in an inconsiderate mind, it creates a measure of uneasiness and discontent.

***~~For a season, even the Gospel itself, instead of removing this feeling, is calculated rather to engender it—~~***

Doubtless, in itself, the Gospel is fitted only to reconcile the mind to every dispensation of providence: but, until it has gained a due ascendant over us, it may, through the corruption of our nature, operate rather as affording an additional ground for discontent: for it brings eternity to view: and a person, once beginning to feel the value of his soul and the importance of eternity, contemplates with more than common interest the advantages which men of learning and of leisure have, for the acquisition of knowledge, and the advancement of their eternal interests.

A servant, for instance, whose every hour is devoted to some laborious task, and to whom the very means of grace are denied by a cruel master, what prospect, it may be said, has he of attaining salvation, in comparison with one whose wealth and independence place within his reach every assistance that he can stand in need of? Can we wonder if a person so circumstanced murmurs and repines at his hard lot?

Such, no doubt, was the state of many, both of wives and servants, whom the Apostle speaks of in the preceding context. And hence arose the necessity for the encouragement which he affords the bond-slave, saying, "If you are called, being a servant, care not for it:" and for the direction which, with an emphatical repetition, he gives to all; "In whatever condition any man is called, let him therein abide with God."

A juster view of the Gospel, therefore, will lead us to contemplate,

***~~II. The conduct which it ought rather to inspire—~~***

A relinquishment of our calling is not that which the Gospel recommends. A continuance in it is rather enjoined, whether to those who are unhappily yoked to an unbelieving partner, or to those who are subjected even to the most oppressive bondage: for though it admits, that liberty, if offered, is rather to be preferred, it still requires that no unlawful effort be made to obtain it. In whatever state a man be called to the knowledge of the truth, he should abide therein with God; that is,

***~~1. In submission to his will—~~***

*Every state should be regarded as appointed to us of God.* Whatever are the means which are instrumental to the fixing of our lot, still it must be considered as disposed altogether by Him who "does all things after the counsel of his own will." There was not a tribe, no, nor an individual, in all Israel, whose inheritance was not appointed by the Lord. And so it is in every age, and every place. Now, we know that *God orders everything with perfect wisdom: and, whether we see the reasons of his dispensations or not, he will show, in due season, that he has done all things well*. He acts in reference to mankind at large, as he has done in reference to our natural body. He has given us many members; and has endued every member with faculties suited to its state, and proper for the discharge of its peculiar office. All the parts have not the powers of the eye or of the ear: but some have a higher, and others a lower, office assigned to them, so as most to conduce to the good of the whole.

And thus it is in the body politic; the whole of which is benefitted by a just distribution of abilities and offices assigned to the different members: nor has any member any just occasion to complain of its situation or use, since all are necessary to the perfection of the whole, and all subservient to the good of the whole. The collective welfare, rather than its own individual use, should be the ambition and the happiness of every part.

***~~2. In dependence on his grace—~~***

In every station we may serve the Lord. Doubtless it is more difficult to maintain our integrity in some situations than in others; but yet, whatever be our trials, "the grace of Christ is sufficient for us;" and God has promised that we shall have no temptation without a way to escape, or ability to bear it, [1 Corinthians 10:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.13)." We should, therefore, not sit down in despair, as though our calling were such as that God could not be served in it. If we cannot do all that we could wish in a way of active service, we may yet bear and sustain his will: and *passive obedience is no less acceptable to him than active* *obedience*; yes, it is in some respects the more acceptable, because it is the more difficult.

A man may shut us up in prison, and prevent our fellowship with men: but can he intercept our flight to Heaven, or prevent the descent of God into our souls? Can he rob us of the communications of grace and peace, which our heavenly Father has bestowed? No! We may laugh him to scorn, and defy his utmost efforts. The utmost that he can do is, to kill the body: he cannot, for a moment, touch the soul, or obstruct its happiness.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" Only let God be our refuge and our hope, and no situation under Heaven can prevent us from discharging the very offices which he has assigned us, or from drinking deeply of the "streams which refresh and gladden the whole city of God."

***~~3. In endeavors to promote his glory—~~***

As God may be served by all, so may he be glorified in all. It matters not what the particular service is to which we are called, if only we endeavor to honor him by it. The bond-slave honors him as much by a meek submission to his will, as the greatest potentate on earth does by the most diffusive benevolence. It is not in great things only that God is glorified: for, as he has told us, "whether we eat or drink, to do all to his glory," we may be sure that, even in the most common acts that can be performed, this blessed end may be attained. Aim, then, at this: keep your eye steadily fixed on this, under every circumstance of life: seek "that in all things God may be glorified, through Jesus Christ:" and if this end is attained, you need not care whether it be by action or suffering, "by life or death."

A question, however, of great importance here occurs: **Are we forbidden, under any circumstances, to change our calling?**

I apprehend not. The Apostle's rule is general, not universal. Were the rule absolutely universal, no converted person could marry, or assume the pastoral office, or perform many other duties, which must, without such a change, be totally neglected. But no man should change merely on account of the difficulties that attend his present calling. We should guard exceedingly against fickleness of mind, and a cowardly desertion of our post on account of the trials which we meet with in the way of duty.

Who ever sustained heavier conflicts than the Apostle Paul? Yet did he not account them any reason for abandoning his apostolic office. We should rise to the occasion, whatever the occasion be; and be ready, when dissuaded or discouraged, to reply, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may but finish my course with joy."

There may, however, be occasions whereon we may be "moved by the Holy Spirit" to give up a calling that is purely temporal, for one that is spiritual: yet, in reference to such calls, I confess that the greatest jealousy over ourselves is desirable, and the utmost watchfulness, that we deceive not our own souls. That many have taken upon themselves the ministerial office, who were never truly called to it, I have no doubt: but that many have relinquished other callings, and devoted themselves to this, to the great advantage of God's Church, is certain.

To lay down rules by which every case would be determined, and every difficulty solved, would be impracticable, because of the infinite diversity of circumstances which must be taken into consideration in every different case. But, in every prospect of change, recourse would be add to prayer for God's special direction: nor should we move, until we have some evidence that the pillar of the cloud is moving before us. One thing, under all circumstances, is necessary: whether we change our calling or not, we should be careful to "abide with God." We must walk with him; we must go in and out before him; we must approve ourselves to him; we must bear in mind the solemn account which we must shortly give to him at the judgment-seat of Christ. While we look to him in such a mind as this, we need not fear but that he will lead us aright, and prosper us in our ways, and conduct us in safety to his heavenly kingdom.

***~~#1962~~***

***~~MODERATION IN THE USE OF EARTHLY THINGS INCULCATED~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 7:29-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 7.29-31)~~***

"What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away."

IT is no inconsiderable part of Christian wisdom to distinguish clearly between things *lawful*, things *expedient*, and things *necessary*: since many things must be reduced under one or other of these heads according to the circumstances connected with them.

The Apostle is writing upon the subject of marriage; and gives it as his opinion, that though at all times lawful, and to some persons necessary, it was, at that particular season, inexpedient for those who could conveniently abstain from it; because the cares necessarily attendant on a married life would increase their difficulties during the present persecuted and afflicted state of the Church. But, while they were all left at liberty respecting the line of conduct they should pursue in relation to this, he solemnly warns them, that the same abstraction from worldly cares, and indifference to worldly pleasure, were necessary for all who would approve themselves to God. As his words equally concern the Church of God in all ages, it will be proper to consider,

***~~I. The direction given to us with respect to the things of time and sense—~~***

***~~It is but too obvious that men's regards to this world are for the most part, inordinate and excessive—~~***

If all do not set their hearts upon the same object, *there is something which every unconverted man regards with an idolatrous attachment*.

Has he some prospect of attaining it? Then his mind goes forth to it in warm and eager desire.

Is there reason to apprehend a disappointment respecting it? Then he is kept in anxious suspense, as though all his happiness were bound up in it.

Is he brought to the possession of it? Then he congratulates himself as having reached the summit of his wishes, and thinks he can never lend himself too much to the enjoyment of his newly acquired comforts.

Is he by any means bereaved of his beloved idol? Then what vexation of mind, and what dissatisfaction with the dispensations of Providence does he feel! He is so entirely swallowed up in sorrow for his loss, as to be insensible of all his remaining blessings!

Of course, men will differ widely as to the particular gratification which they desire:

Some find their delight centered in their wife or children.

Others find their delight in their wealth and honor.

Others find their delight in their ease and pleasure.

And others find their delight in some indulgences, which habit has rendered essential to their happiness.

But the same love of carnal things, however diversified as to its objects, pervades mankind of all ages and of all descriptions.

***~~But we should maintain an equableness of mind under all circumstances, however pleasing or afflictive—~~***

We are not required to exercise a stoic apathy under the various events of life; we may rejoice or weep, according as the occurrences of the day are suited to excite the affection of joy or sorrow. But "our moderation should be known unto all men;" nor should anything of a temporal nature so occupy our minds, as to make us forget that we have concerns of infinitely greater importance.

Have we "formed a connection" that promises us the highest bliss? Then we should so enjoy the creature as to be ready to surrender it up again to God, whenever he may be pleased to call for it.

Are we "weeping" for the loss of a dear relative, or on account of any other calamity? Then we should not so give way to sorrow as to forget that we have God for our friend, and Heaven for our inheritance.

Has anything of a very "joyous" nature befallen us? Then we should still remember, how unsatisfying it is in its nature, how contracted in its use, how precarious in its continuance, and how short in its duration; and we would regulate our joy by such considerations as these.

Have we been blessed with such success, that we are enabled to "purchase" great possessions? Then we should be watchful over our spirits, that we do not say, like the fool in the Gospel, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years, take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry! [Luke 12:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.18-19)."

And while we "use" our good things with thankfulness to the Giver, we should be careful never to "abuse" them to the purposes of pride, intemperance, and carnal ease.

This direction derives great force and importance from,

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

***~~Everything in this poor world is transient and of short duration—~~***

"Time is short!" If our days are extended to seventy or eighty years, the whole period of our existence will appear but, as it were, "a span long," when we come to the close of it. Or, if we compare it with eternity, it is no more than the twinkling of an eye.

Moreover, while our lives, like a sail that is in the act of being rolled up, are every moment contracting, everything around us also is drawing to a close.

As actors on the stage perform the part assigned them, and each succeeding scene brings their fictitious joys or sorrows to a speedy termination, so we make our appearance on the stage of life; and, having sustained the character allotted us by the Disposer of all events, we soon bid adieu to all these transient scenes, and enter on a state of everlasting bliss or woe!

Or as men please themselves with some empty show, that passes in procession before their eyes, but it is scarcely come fully into view before it begins to recede, and in a little time totally disappears; so we scarcely behold the glare and glitter of this vain world, before the enchanting prospect vanishes, and the phantom passes onward, to astonish and delude succeeding generations!

***~~Can there be any stronger argument for sitting loose to the things of time and sense?—~~***

Were either our joys or our sorrows permanent, there would be some reason for having our minds deeply affected with them: but when we know that a few months or years must put an end to every present gratification, does it befit us to be much elated with what is now pleasing, or much depressed with what is now painful?

Should not the infinitely greater importance of eternal things so engross our minds, as to render every temporal concern comparatively trivial?

Should not the prospect of appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ cause us to estimate our happiness by a far different standard, and to consider ourselves in a blessed or miserable state, not so much by what we enjoy or suffer in this present world, as by our preparation to give up our account to God, and our hope of an approving sentence from the Judge of the living and dead?

Let then *the transitoriness of earthly things*moderate our affection to them, that whether we attain and enjoy them, or lose and lack them, we may still have God as our abiding and all-sufficient portion.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. To the young and inexperienced—~~***

You are ready to imagine that some change in your circumstances, to which you look forward, or perhaps which you rather wish for than expect—would make your cup to overflow with joy, and perfectly satisfy your most enlarged desires. But be assured that, if you could at this moment possess all that your heart can wish—you would be quickly constrained to confirm the testimony of Solomon, that it is "all vanity and vexation of spirit!"

Happy would it be for you if you could learn the vanity of this poor world from the experience at the expense of others; and not, like those who have gone before you, grasp at a shadow until you lose the substance.

Ask those who are old and grey-headed, whether they have not found the world to be "a vain show, wherein men disquiet themselves in vain, [Psalm 37:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 37.6)." And ask the godly in particular, whether those who fear God have not a truer enjoyment even of this present world, than the votaries of gain or pleasure, [1 Timothy 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 6.17). [Matthew 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.5)." Or rather we should say, attend to God's expostulation, and obey his voice, "Why do you spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare! [Isaiah 55:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.2)."

***~~2. To those who have grown old in the service of the world—~~***

Lamentable it is, that the very persons who have found the insufficiency of the world to make them happy, are still as regardless of the eternal world, as those who are just entering on the delusive path! If age or experience have blunted the edge of their feelings with respect to present things, they are as insensible as ever either of pain or pleasure from spiritual concerns. Nor are they at all more stimulated to improve the time that remains to them, than if their eternal interests were of no value. Yes, old age has often no other effect than to confirm the errors, and rivet the prejudices, of their former years!

Inquire, brethren, whether you have profited by your experience; and whether you are now "setting your affections on things above, and not upon things below! [Colossians 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.2)." You have hitherto regarded the blessed Savior, and your own immortal soul, as though you regarded them not; and allowed your whole heart to be occupied about the world. Now reverse your conduct, and all will yet be well. Let the greatest concerns of time and sense make but a light impression on your minds; and let a saving interest in Christ, and the salvation of your soul, be regarded henceforth as *the one thing needful*. "Be no longer fools, but wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil, [Ephesians 5:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.15-16);" and while the fashion of this world is passing away, endeavor to secure an "incorruptible inheritance in Heaven!"

***~~#1963~~***

***~~AGAINST CAREFULNESS~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 7:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 7.32).~~***

"I would like you to be free from concern (or anxious cares)."

THERE were, as might be expected, subjects of great difficulty and delicacy submitted, from time to time, to the Apostle Paul, for his decision. In matters of *expediency*was he consulted, no less than of *duty*. Of that nature was the question which was proposed to him from Corinth, on the subject of marriage. Of the lawfulness of that holy ordinance there could be no doubt, since it was instituted by God himself, even in the time of man's innocency in Paradise. But of the expediency of embarking in the engagements of matrimony, under the circumstances of the Church in that day of trial and persecution, reasonable doubts might well be entertained. His opinion upon it therefore was asked; and he gave his judgment with all the tenderness that the occasion required.

"In that season of distress, verse 26," he thought that persons of either gender would do well to keep themselves unmarried; since they would be more at liberty to act, or suffer, for the Lord—than if they were involved in the cares and duties of a family. And as to the general question, while he left all to judge and act for themselves, he thought that, where no very urgent reason existed for engaging in the matrimonial contract, it would be found *more easy to serve the Lord fully in a single state*, than in a state which must necessarily be attended without many important concerns.

Upon this particular question I have no design to enter. But the basis upon which the Apostle framed his decision, is alike applicable to all cases, and in all ages: "I would like you to be free from concern."

Dismissing, therefore, from our minds the subject proposed to him, and which, in fact, must depend altogether upon the personal feelings and peculiar circumstances of every distinct individual, I will proceed to show you,

***~~I. The evil and danger of "anxious cares"—~~***

Every kind of concern is not evil; but only that care which is attended with anxiety. And this is evil,

***~~1. Anxious cares will distract our mind—~~***

It is surprising how even a small matter, upon which we set our hearts, will incapacitate us for attending to our spiritual concerns. Some *object*to be attained, or some *trial*to be avoided, or some *difficulty*to be overcome, though in itself of very trifling moment, will so dwell upon the mind as to indispose us for reading the word of God; and will even so disturb our repose by night, as to unfit us for any mental exertion. The injury which this must do to the soul is obvious.

***~~2. Anxious cares will impede our spiritual progress—~~***

The eastern dress is calculated to impede the movements of him who wears it: and hence Elijah girded up his robes, when he ran before Ahab, [1 Kings 18:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 18.46). To this the Apostle refers, when he speaks of "our laying aside every weight, and the sin that more easily besets us, [Hebrews 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.1)." Any needless care operates in this way—as a weight upon the feet, and an obstacle to our progress, even in temporal duties, and much more in those which are of a spiritual nature.

Our blessed Lord illustrates this by another image, taken from agriculture; and tells us, that "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the good seed that has been sown within us, and prevent it from growing up to perfection, [Matthew 13:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.22)."

***~~3. Anxious cares will tend to turn us from the path of strict integrity—~~***

Whatever strongly engages the affections, will warp the judgment, and produce a strong bias upon the mind. Duties, which would interfere with the prosecution of our temporal concerns, will be neglected; and measures, which may facilitate the attainment of them, will be adopted, without any scrupulous attention to their exact legality.

Truth, honor, decency, will be sacrificed, rather than the favorite object be lost. And what need I say more, to mark *the evil and danger of sinful desires?* To whatever it have respect, it is a root and source of evil, which, if not corrected, will destroy the soul! 1 Timothy 6:9-10.

You will then, of course, desire to be informed,

***~~II. How we may most effectually divest ourselves of anxious cares—~~***

Much might be spoken upon this subject, but two hints only shall suffice:

***~~1. Get a deep sense of the obligations which God has laid on us—~~***

See what your God has already given you in the blessings of *creation*: in the care of his *providence*: and, above all, in the wonders of *redemption*. What more can you wish for? would not a reflection on these things fill you with unutterable joy? What can anything else be in comparison with these stupendous mercies? Truly, whatever it is that is the object of your desire, it can be no more than the dust upon the balance, when weighed against the inconceivable blessings already conferred upon you!

***~~2. Get a lively sense of the obligations which God has laid upon himself also respecting us—~~***

He has bound himself to us by covenant and by oath, that "we shall nothing that is necessary." If only we "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, every earthly blessing shall be added unto us." We have only to "make our requests known to him, and all that we need shall be done unto us, [Philippians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.6)." We have no more real occasion for anxious cares than the birds of the air, [Matthew 6:25-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 6.25-34), or than the child in the mother's arms. The clouds, the rock, the very ravens, would supply our needs, and for forty years together—rather than we would be destitute of anything that is necessary. Only call to mind how the Almighty God cares for you, and you will feel no difficulty in casting your cares upon him, [1 Peter 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.7).

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

Dear brethren, I would have you all like Mary; who, when her sister "Martha was careful and cumbered about many things, was intent only on the one thing needful!" In relation to the concerns of eternity, be as careful as you will. In reference to these temporal things, the Apostle approves of, and applauds, our care. He uses the same word in reference to both, and no less than five times, verse 32-34; And, if only in this matter you will be "as wise as the children of this world," you shall never fail of obtaining all that your souls can desire.

***~~#1964~~***

***~~PROPER ACCOMPANIMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.1), [2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Corinthians 8.2)~~***

"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know."

OF all the apostolic churches, not one abounded with such various and enormous evils as that of Corinth. To bring the people to a better mind was the continual labor of the Apostle; and a difficult task he found it: for, while some denied his authority, others justified the very evils which he endeavored to correct. Hence, on different subjects, an appeal was made to him, that he might state his sentiments upon them fully, and lay down rules for their future conduct.

The eating of foods offered to idols was a ground of much contention among them. They all, to a certain degree, were agreed on this, that "an idol was nothing in the world;" and that the circumstance of food having been offered to an idol could not defile the food itself, or render it unfit for food.

But there were some who thought that by eating such food they would, in some respect, be partakers in the idolatry of those who had offered it to their idols. Those who saw their liberty in relation to this matter felt proud of their superior discernment; and, for the purpose of displaying their superiority to such antiquated prejudices, would actually go into the very temples of the idols, and eat with the idolaters themselves. This, as might be well expected, gave great offense to their weaker brethren, and proved a stumbling-block to many; who were induced, by this example, to pursue the same line of conduct, while yet they doubted the lawfulness of it in the sight of God; and thus were led to the commission of damning sin by the unhallowed boldness of their own brethren, verse 7-11.

The Apostle marked the precise line of distinction which ought to be observed in this matter. The eating of food offered to idols was allowable; since neither the act, nor an abstinence from it, would make them either better or worse in the sight of God. But the eating of it in an idol's temple was decidedly wrong; since it did, in fact, both sanction idolatry, and involve them in a participation of it, [1 Corinthians 10:18-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.18-22).

But the eating of it at all, in the presence of one who doubted the lawfulness of it, was wrong; because it put a stumbling-block in the way of a weak brother, and tempted him to violate the dictates of his less-enlightened conscience. The Apostle acknowledges that the general sentiment respecting the vanity of idols was right; but still declares, that if any person thought his knowledge so decisive that it needed not to be under the regulation and control of *love*, it was a clear proof that, "as yet, he knew nothing as he ought to know."

Now, though this subject is not of any great interest to Christians in general, I conceive it to be of very great importance to Churches, where there is any considerable profession of religion; and especially to Churches wherein there are, as at Corinth, a number of persons who need to *have the lines of demarcation drawn between Christian liberty and Christian duty.*

I will proceed, then, to set before you,

***~~I. The defects usually attendant on knowledge—~~***

We must not take the Apostle's words in too strict a sense, as though a person must be unconscious of any proficiency in knowledge: it is not possible for one who has studied a subject thoroughly to imagine himself as ignorant of it as he was before he turned his attention to it, or as another person who has never spent one hour in the contemplation of it. It is not possible for a philosopher to suppose himself on a level with a dunce in point of intellectual attainment. The very idea is altogether repugnant to reason and common sense: and, therefore, we must be careful not to put on the Apostle's words a construction which would involve such an absurdity as that.

But KNOWLEDGE, through the corruption of our fallen nature, is attended with many and great defects. It is but too frequently accompanied with, yes, and too often generates in its possessors,

***~~1. Pride—~~***

To speak of knowledge generally, would draw us too far from our subject. It is of knowledge as connected with religion that we are called to treat: and perhaps it is in that precise view that its attendant evils are most fully seen. For it is not attained by great labor, like other knowledge. There is a *key*to that, which is not to be found in relation to any other branch of knowledge whatever; a *key*which will open a way to all its richest stores, and without which its stores are inaccessible to mortal man: and *that key is a broken and contrite spirit*. Now, as this key may be in the possession of a poor unlettered man, while a man of learning and research has not found it, the poor man may have his mind enriched with stores to which his more learned neighbor is an utter stranger: and therefore it must not be thought strange, if, in an uncultivated mind, it would generate somewhat of conceit. The possessor of that key has a consciousness that "God has revealed to him, a babe, what he has hidden from the wise and prudent;" and therefore feels himself, in that respect, superior to his less-enlightened, though more learned, neighbor: and if he is somewhat elated with a superiority which nothing else could give him, we may lament it, but we cannot altogether wonder at it.

But this conceit is frequently carried beyond the objects of mere spiritual discernment, and leads persons to think that they have a like superiority in reference to all things connected with religion: and here they greatly err; for the things which come within the sphere of spiritual discernment are few, such as:

the depth of our fall,

the necessity of a Savior,

the beauty of holiness, and

our entire dependence on the influences of the Holy Spirit for the production of every good work within us.

But the things connected with these are infinite; and, for a just view of them, we must be indebted to much deep learning and critical research. And it is an evil, a very great evil, when religious people, because their eyes have been opened, and they can say, "Whereas I was blind, I now see," imagine that they can see what is really beyond the sphere of their observation.

***~~2. Dogmatism—~~***

Wherever there is conceit, there will be a proportionate degree of readiness to dictate to others. *Men, conceiving themselves to be right, will of course conclude all others to be wrong; and will lay down the law with as much confidence as if they were infallible*. Persons of every different communion will do this: the Papist and the Protestant, the Churchman and Dissenter, the various classes of Dissenters, *all are alike assured that they themselves are right, and that all who differ from them are wrong*. Nor is it only in the forms of Church government that they will express this confidence, but also in relation to the doctrines of our holy religion; every one being ready to make articles of faith for his neighbors, as well as for himself, and to exclude from the pale of his Church all who cannot pronounce his *Shibboleth*.

In truth, this has been the source of almost all the divisions that are to be found in the Church of God. It is this species of dictation which has driven from the Popish Church millions of holy men: and I am not sure that the Church of England also would not have done better, if she had left on neutral ground all which has no direct bearing on the spiritual welfare of her communicants.

The Apostle complains of those at Corinth who insisted on points, which, if complied with, rendered men no better, or, if neglected, rendered them no worse. And had his spirit been more generally prevalent among every denomination of Christians, there would have been more real unity among them than all the acts of uniformity in the world, and all the rules of every distinct body, ever did, or could, produce.

***~~3. Contemptuousness—~~***

This is nearly allied with the former. The next step to the believing that others are blind in comparison with ourselves, is, to despise them for their lack of just discernment. Hence religious professors often speak of those who maintain different sentiments from themselves, as ignorant and carnal. With what contempt will a *Calvinist*regard an Arminian brother, as having no insight into Divine truth; while an *Arminian*will ascribe to his Calvinistic brother every sentiment that is degrading to God, or discouraging to man. They both imagine that those of their own party are wise: but all others are "fools and blind."

How much of this *leaven*was there in the Corinthian Church! And how much is there of it in the present day! How many are "fond of vain jangling, desiring to be teachers, though they understand not what they say, nor whereof they affirm," but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmises, and perverse disputings, [1 Timothy 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.6-7); [1 Timothy 6:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 6.4)."

Whereas the one rule of conduct to a Christian should be this: "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves, [Romans 15:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.1)." In truth, I scarcely know whether ignorance itself is not preferable to knowledge so absurd: for *ignorance is destructive to ourselves only; whereas a contemptuous spirit of dictation is injurious to the whole Church*. But this I know, at all events, that "if a man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself, [Galatians 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.3);" and that true wisdom is, to "esteem others better and wiser than ourselves, [Philippians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.3)."

But let me turn from this painful subject, to mark,

***~~II. The qualities with which our knowledge should be imbued—~~***

Knowledge is doubtless a most signal blessing, if it is accompanied with those dispositions which will turn it to good account. It should in every instance be blended,

***~~1. With humility—~~***

The effect of knowledge would always be, to show us how little we know. In every science under Heaven we can advance but a little way: after a few steps, we are wholly out of our depth. And, if this be the case with respect to sciences which admit of demonstration, then how much more must it be so in reference to true religion, where we know nothing but by revelation!

Look at the philosophers of Greece and Rome, and see how little they knew, either of God or man. The most unlearned person who has been instructed in the knowledge of the Gospel has juster views of God, and of man, than all the wise men of antiquity put together. Yet what does the most exalted Christian know, either of the one or the other?

Of God we have no positive knowledge at all: our knowledge of him is altogether *negative*. We know that He is *not*a material being; and therefore we call him a Spirit: but we know no more what a Spirit is, than we did the hour that we were born. We assign to him certain perfections: but what those perfections are in themselves, or how they are exercised, we know scarcely anything: we only know that he is *not*weak, not unwise, not unjust, not unmerciful, and so on: but, if we would attempt to declare what he is, we would only "darken counsel by words without knowledge."

Of man, too, how little is known! Self-knowledge is exceeding rare: and the person in whom it exists in the highest degree will be the most ready to acknowledge the truth of that observation, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" In a word, "If any man would be truly wise, he must become a fool, that he may be wise, [1 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.18)."

***~~2. Self-distrust—~~***

Where such a multitude of opinions prevail on all subjects, who is he who shall claim an exemption from error? Who will venture to say, 'All others are wrong, and I am right?' Doubtless there are some truths of which, in a general view, we may be confident; because they are revealed so plainly in the word of God, that they cannot be misapprehended; and because we have the witness of them in our own souls.

But when we come to enter into particulars, we soon find ourselves involved in difficulties that are insurmountable, if not in absolute contradictions. Let us try this in reference to any point whatever; and we shall have evidence enough of our ignorance, even in the things that we are best acquainted with: nay, we shall find, on many occasions, reason to alter our opinions, and, on fuller information, to adopt those which we had before rejected. We should be careful, therefore, so to embrace sentiments, as to hold ourselves still open to conviction; and *so to maintain opinions, as to admit that others may be possessed of truth as well as we.*

***~~3. Consideration—~~***

There may be much knowledge, where there is but little wisdom. Knowledge may be superficial and crude; though, I confess, in that state it scarcely deserves the name of knowledge. It ought to be matured by a large and comprehensive view of things, under all the variety of circumstances in which they can occur: for, without such an attention to circumstances, our very knowledge may be foolishness, and our light no better than darkness. We know that we are to observe every ordinance that God has enjoined: but if the calls of mercy are heard, they must supersede even the plainest ordinance that is of a ritual nature.

In the chapter before us, as in the Epistle to the Romans, also Romans 14, the lack of consideration was that which was particularly blamed in those who ate the food which had been offered to idols. Had they done it in secret, there would have been no harm: but, when they did it in the presence of a weak brother, they showed a grievous lack of consideration, to discern the expediency or inexpediency of their conduct. It is right to declare the Gospel without fear: but it is not right to "cast pearls before swine."

In everything, therefore, of a practical nature, we should so attend to every minute circumstance of time and place, as to keep clear of offense to any, and to "prevent our good from being evil spoken of, [Romans 14:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.16)."

***~~4. Love—~~***

Without this, all knowledge is vain. Of what value was the knowledge of those Corinthians, who would display it at the expense of the souls of their own brethren, whom they led into sin! Many who preach the Gospel are particularly faulty in this respect. *They mind only what they are able to declare, without ever considering what their hearers are able to receive*. A man, coming into a sick chamber, would not at once cast a flood of light upon the eyes of the patient, when he was scarcely able to endure the glimmering of a taper: love would keep him from so injurious an act. The same heavenly principle should operate universally in the exercise of our knowledge: we should put a veil over our faces, if men are unable to behold the splendor of our communications; or, in other words, we would give "milk to babes, and strong meat to those only who are capable of digesting it."

In reference to the point before us, Paul shows us the proper office of love in these things: "If food makes my brother to sin, I will eat no food while the world stands, lest I make my brother to sin, verse 13."

***~~In order to a due improvement of this subject, let us cultivate,~~***

***~~1. Teachability of mind—~~***

In this especially are we to resemble little children, [Matthew 18:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.3). Divine truth is manifestly beyond our comprehension; and we must receive it simply on the authority of God. It is in this way that we attain even human knowledge. What does a child know of grammar? But, from acquiescing in the instructions given him, he comes to find that all those things which once appeared to him so dark and unintelligible have a real foundation in language itself, and that we could not communicate ideas upon any abstract subject without them.

Much more, therefore, must Divine knowledge be so received. We do not comprehend anything fully at the first: but from receiving implicitly God's declarations, respecting our *fall*in Adam, our *recovery*by Christ, and all the other wonders of redeeming love—we shall at last attain an internal evidence that things both are so, and must be so. The proper frame of mind for all of us is, that of the Centurion and his friends: "Now we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded you of God, [Acts 10:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.33)." If we come to God "poor and hungry, we shall be filled with good things: but if we come rich and full, we shall surely be sent empty away, [Luke 1:53](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.53)." "See a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope for a fool than of him."

***~~2. Moderation of sentiment—~~***

We must guard against running to extremes; or so embracing any subject, as to be unwilling to weigh what is to be said against it. I do not mean by this, that we should run into scepticism, or involve ourselves in controversy; but that *we should so hold our own sentiments, as to conceive that others who differ from us may have a measure of truth on their side as well as we.*We should doubtless form our own opinions on all things that come fairly before us: but *we should concede the same liberty to others; and be as willing that others should walk according to the dictates of their consciences, as we of ours*. Had this disposition reigned in the apostolic Churches, how happily might those of different sentiments have lived together! But "the weak would judge the strong; and the strong would despise the weak [Romans 14:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.2-3)." Had each made due allowance for the other, God would have been honored, and peace preserved.

***~~3. Tenderness of deportment—~~***

Lovely is that rule which the Apostle has laid down, in his Epistle to the Romans; "him who is weak in the faith, receive you; but not to doubtful disputations, [Romans 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.1)." How happy would it be, if this rule were more generally observed! But the evil is, that *almost every one is ready to insist on his own peculiarities, and to make them a ground of controversy and division*. Surely it were far better to live under the influence of love; and to *leave matters of minor consideration to the judgment of every individual*. Doubtless, about things of primary and vital importance, we must both maintain our own opinions, and inculcate them on others, with a holy zeal; according as it is written, "You should contend earnestly for the faith that was once delivered to the saints, Jude verse 3." But even in this we would be careful always to "speak the truth in love;" and be studious only to "win the souls" of men, and not to proselyte them to a party. We may "have all the knowledge of men or angels; but it will profit us nothing if it is not under the influence of love, 1 Corinthians 13:1-2." Knowledge may puff us up; but it is love alone that edifies, verse 1."

***~~#1965~~***

***~~PREACHING THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 9:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.16)~~***

"Woe is unto me, if I do not preach the Gospel!"

RESPECTING men's call to the ministerial office, it would be difficult to speak with any degree of certainty. That of the Apostles was clear and unquestionable: that of individuals, among ourselves, must be judged of by many circumstances, known only to the persons themselves, and but indistinctly known even to them. But the obligation to discharge the office with fidelity, when once it has been undertaken, is as manifest in relation to us, as it was in reference to Paul himself: a calling having been committed to us, we may every one of us say, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!"

In discoursing on these words, I will endeavor to explain,

***~~I. The office of ministers—~~***

This, in one word, is to "preach the Gospel." And here let us distinctly mark,

***~~1. What is meant by the Gospel—~~***

The Gospel imports glad tidings; and it is particularly to be understood of the glad tidings which are brought to men respecting a salvation provided for them, a salvation through the blood and righteousness of our incarnate God. Such a salvation has been effected for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, who expiated our guilt upon the cross; and now lives in Heaven to complete the work which he began on earth; and offers salvation to all who will believe in him: This is the Gospel—nor does anything but this deserve the name.

***~~2. The duty of ministers in relation to it—~~***

They must preach it, as God's heralds and ambassadors: they must preach it:

*fully*, in all its parts;

*freely*, without any mixture of self-righteous conceits;

and *constantly*, making it the one subject of all their ministrations.

If they preach the *law*, it must be in order to prepare men for the reception of the Gospel. If they preach *obedience*, as doubtless they must, it must be as flowing from the united influence of faith and love. They must speak to men nearly in the same strain as they would if they had received a commission to preach to those who are already suffering the penalty due to their sins. They should not flatter men with any conceits about their own goodness, or the ability which they possess to deliver themselves; but should offer them mercy through the atonement made for them upon the cross, and call them to accept it as the free gift of God for Christ's sake.

Supposing us to have undertaken this office, let us notice,

***~~II. The indispensable necessity of discharging it with fidelity—~~***

"Woe is unto us if we preach not this Gospel" faithfully. For if, from any consideration whatever, we forbear to do so, what account shall we give,

***~~1. To God, who has committed this office to us~~***

If we have neglected it, through the fear of man, or the love of this present evil world, or through mere indolence, then what shall we say when summoned to give an account of our stewardship? Should we have loved anything in comparison with Him? or feared any besides Him? or counted anything too much to do for Him? How vain will all our excuses appear in that day!

***~~2. To the souls whom, by our unfaithfulness, we have betrayed~~***

Men may now say to us, "Prophesy unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits;" and they may be pleased with our compliance. But when they meet us in judgment, how bitter will be their reproaches, and how loud their complaints against us! *The very persons whose favor we courted when on earth, will be among the first to cry out for vengeance on our souls.*

***~~3. To the Savior, whose dying love we should have made known~~***

What shall we say, when the Savior shall remind us of all that he has done for the salvation of our souls? Is it thus that we would have requited him? Did he come from Heaven for us, and die upon the cross for us, and confer on us the honor of being his ambassadors to a ruined world; and have we felt no more regard for him, and his interests in the world? How shall we call on the rocks and mountains to cover us from his merited indignation!

***~~4. To ourselves, who have trifled thus with our own salvation~~***

Now any foolish excuse will satisfy us: but how will our conduct appear in that day? Methinks our self-reproach will be the bitterest ingredient in that cup of bitterness which we shall have to drink for ever.

***~~But let us not close the subject without reflecting on what is evidently implied in it—~~***

***~~1. The woe which awaits those who embrace not the Gospel—~~***

If we are bound to preach it, no doubt you also are bound to receive it with all humility of mind, and with the gratitude which such tidings call for at your hands. You must not think that you have discharged your duty, when you have merely heard the word. You must receive it as the word of God to your souls. You must embrace it, as suited to your necessities, and sufficient for your wants. You must contemplate it, and rely upon it, and glory in it, and get your souls poured, as it were, into the very mold of the Gospel; so that it may have its perfect work upon you.

This you *must*do: and if you do it not, it will prove to you, "not a savor of life unto life, but a savor of death" to your heavier condemnation.

Remember, then, your own responsibility: and, while you pray for your minister, that he may be found faithful, be exceedingly urgent with God in prayer, that the word you hear may take effect, and prove the power of God to the salvation of your souls.

***~~2. The blessedness of those who discharge their ministry aright—~~***

They may meet with much opposition from an ungodly world: but they are truly happy, in the hope that "they shall both save themselves and those who hear them." Sweet is the thought which a faithful minister has in looking forward to the time of meeting his people at the judgment-seat of Christ. The sight of many whom he shall then have to present to God as his spiritual children, saying, "Here am I, and the children whom you have given me;" and the prospect, that, to all eternity, he shall have them as "his joy and crown of rejoicing" before his God; say, is not this delightful? Will not this be a rich reward for all his labors, and for all that he had suffered in the discharge of his high office? Yes, truly, if he had died a thousand deaths for them, this would be an abundant recompense: and this blessedness assuredly awaits the laborious minister, the faithful servant of his God!

***~~#1966~~***

***~~THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY~~***

**[1 Corinthians 9:19-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.19-23)**

"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

IT is a favorite sentiment with some, that the epistles of Paul, having been written to particular Churches and on particular occasions, are of little importance to us at this day. And, of all the epistles, this before us is most open to that objection, as having been, more than any other, written for the correction of some existing abuses, and in answer to some specific questions.

But God, by whom the Apostle was inspired, knew that, whether the same specific points would again arise or not, the general principles by which they were to be determined would be of use to the Church in all ages: and accordingly we find, that the views and sentiments which were elicited from the Apostle on these occasions give us a deeper insight into the Christian character than we could otherwise have obtained.

We are here instructed not merely by general and abstract principles, but by a practical application of those principles to circumstances fitted for the illustration of them. And we cannot but account it a great blessing to the Church, that the enemies of the Gospel were permitted so to assault the character of the Apostle, as to extort from him a vindication of it, and thereby to obtain for the Church in all ages a complete exposition of practical Christianity.

The words before us open with extraordinary precision *the nature and extent of Christian liberty*: for the fuller explanation of which we shall distinctly mark,

***~~I. Its proper boundaries—~~***

Liberty cannot exist without restrictions; for, if unlimited, it would degenerate into licentiousness. Besides, if every man were at liberty to act agreeably to his own corrupt wishes without any control, the weaker would be a prey to their more powerful neighbors, and would be the constant victims of tyranny and oppression. Paul, though at liberty to vary his conduct according to circumstances, was still under a law by which his liberty was restricted: "he was not without law to God, but under the law to Christ."

***~~1. Christian liberty is a right to do or forbear anything which is not evil in itself—~~***

What is evil in itself can be warranted by no circumstances under Heaven: "We must not do evil that good may come," even though the good which we promise ourselves be ever so great.

We must not do evil for the gratification of others. If our dearest friends and relatives endeavor to persuade us, we must be alike deaf to their menaces or entreaties. We must "not love father or mother more than Christ;" yes, we must even "hate them in comparison with Christ;" that is, we must, when their will comes in competition with that of Christ, act as if we hated them, giving no more heed to them than we would to an avowed enemy. The plain answer to be given to all who would wish us to act contrary to any command of God, is this; "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge you."

Neither must we do evil for our own advantage. If an act be sinful, we must, like the Hebrew Youths, refuse to do it, even though we saw the fiery furnace already burning with seven-fold intenseness, ready to destroy us. So likewise, if a duty is clear, we must not be deterred from the performance of it, even though we knew that the consequence of our perseverance must be an immediate incarceration in the den of lions. Like Daniel, we must prefer the maintenance of a good conscience to the preservation of courtly favor, and the avoidance of a cruel death, [Daniel 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 6.10). In all such circumstances we must embrace the offered alternative, and surrender up our lives rather than violate a command of God.

***~~2. Christian liberty is a right to do or forbear anything which is not evil in its consequences—~~***

An act perfectly innocent, in itself may, by the circumstances in which we are placed, become no longer innocent. If, for instance, the eating of food offered to an idol be likely to prove a temptation or a stumbling-block to a weak brother, we are then no longer at liberty to eat it, notwithstanding that in itself it is a matter of perfect indifference. We are bound to have respect to his weakness, and to abstain from a thing which may become an occasion of sin to him: and, if we do not abstain from it, "we sin against him," and "we sin against Christ, 1 Corinthians 8:8-12."

So likewise, if a thing would be injurious to ourselves, we must not do it, even though others might be at liberty to do it. Suppose, for instance, we know from experience, that splendid equipage or apparel administers to, and calls forth into exercise, the pride and vanity of our hearts; or that a luxurious table is apt to lead us to intemperance; or that some particular amusement operates as an incitement to covetousness or sensuality, or a provocative to wrath; we should deny ourselves in those particulars, and not seek an indulgence that we have reason to fear will become an occasion of sin. The express command of God in all such cases is, "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill it in the lusts thereof! [Romans 13:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.14)."

Thus under a variety of circumstances is our liberty abridged, even in things that are, under other circumstances, indifferent: for though all things may be lawful, they may not be expedient; and we must not so "be brought under the power of any," as not to be able to forego them, if the welfare either of ourselves or others demands the sacrifice, 1 Corinthians 6:12.

Such, we apprehend, are the limits beyond which Christian liberty has no existence. But within these limits there is abundant scope for,

***~~II. Its legitimate operations—~~***

***~~In all that we do, we should keep in view the best interests of mankind—~~***

Whatever Paul did, or whatever he forbore, his one object was to promote the salvation of his fellow-men. This he tells us six times in the short space of four verses: and in another place he tells us, that he had the same object in view in all that he suffered: "We endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory! [2 Timothy 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.10)." Such must be our object also in all that we do.

We must not be seeking merely to please men; for "if we please men, we cannot be the servants of Jesus Christ:" in as far as we seek to "please them, it must be solely for their good to their edification, [Romans 15:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.2)." To remove their prejudices, to conciliate their regards, to "choose out acceptable words," to accommodate ourselves to their apprehensions, are all legitimate methods of gaining a more easy access to their minds, in order that we may ultimately "win their souls:" and, as we administer milk or meat to persons according to their capacity to profit by it, with a view to the sustenance of their bodies, so we may do for the benefit of their souls: and, if only we keep this end in view, we shall in all that we do "be approved and accepted both of God and man, [Romans 14:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.18)."

***~~For this end our liberty may be used without reserve—~~***

It is delightful to see how free and unembarrassed the Apostle was in all his fellowship with mankind, and how studiously he adapted himself to all their varied prejudices or necessities. Was he with a Jew—then he submitted freely to the yoke which Moses had imposed, though he well knew that the Gospel had freed him from it. On the other hand, was he with Gentiles who had never been subjected to the law of Moses—then he readily conformed himself to their habits. If he was with one that was weak in faith—then he cheerfully bore with all his weaknesses and infirmities, and acted, as he would have done, if his own mind had been under the influence of the same doubts and fears as agitated the mind of his weaker brother. In a word, "he became all things to all men."

Now this is the very course which we should pursue: we should seek the welfare of our brethren precisely as he did, namely, in a way of self-denying restraint, and in a way of condescending compliance.

We would seek it in a way of **self-denying restraint**. Not again to recur to the mention of eating foods offered to idols, which "the Apostle would not do as long as the world would stand, if it would make his brother to sin, [1 Corinthians 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.13);" we may see in the chapter before us how determinately he refused to accept the support to which both by the laws of God and man he was justly entitled, verse 12, 15. Such concessions are most lovely; and would be productive of incalculable good in the Church of God.

In a family, for instance, the governing part of it is not willing that all which an inferior member of it may think conducive to his benefit shall be allowed to him: it should befit the inferior to evince a self-denying spirit, and cheerfully to concede a part of his privileges, that he may not irritate and embitter the minds of his superiors.

It may be asked, perhaps, "What, am I to sacrifice anything which I think profitable to my soul?" I answer, Yes, and God would repay you for so doing, provided you did it purely from a tender concern for the welfare of your superior: the very self-denial, which such an act would call forth, would itself be a more substantial benefit to the soul, than all the gratification which would have followed from self-indulgence. Paul himself has set us an example of this conduct: "I," says he, "please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved, [1 Corinthians 10:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.33)."

We should further seek it in a way of **condescending compliance**. Paul, in order to meet the prejudices of the Jews, and to gain the easier access to their minds, circumcised Timothy: and with the same view he submitted to the tedious rites and ceremonies which attended the performance of the Nazarite's vow, [Acts 21:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 21.26). And if we were more willing to meet the wishes of those who are prejudiced against the truth, we might greatly allay their hostility, and often win their souls.

There is in many young Christians an unreasonable stiffness in relation to matters of pure indifference; and they will often plead conscience for their non-compliance, when it proceeds solely from a lack of compassion for the ignorance of others, and of due concern for their souls. They will please themselves, however much their enemies be offended, when by kindness and condescension they might have operated a favorable change upon their minds.

Well do we know, that these principles may be easily perverted; and that it will often be extremely difficult to know how far, and in what manner, they are to be called forth into action. Nevertheless, the principles themselves are good, and indispensably necessary to be embraced and cultivated by all who would adorn the Gospel of Christ. If only we look well to the motive by which we are actuated, we shall not be likely to err very materially in the application of them.

The main point to guard against is, the doing anything which is in itself sinful, or anything, the lawfulness of which we ourselves doubt: for we ought certainly to be fully persuaded in our minds, that the restraint which we impose on ourselves, or the concession which we make, be not contrary to any express command of God. Where the concession which others require at our hands is forbidden of God, there the rule must be observed, "We must obey God rather than man."

***~~From the whole view of this subject, we cannot but remark,~~***

***~~1. Of what infinite importance is the salvation of the soul!~~***

Why was it that the *Apostle*labored so indefatigably in every possible way to save the souls of men? Why was it that he even "wished himself accursed from Christ, or after the example of Christ, for his brethren's sake?" Did it not proceed from a conviction that the souls of men were of infinite value, and that, if he could but "by any means save some," he would be richly repaid?

Think of all that *Christ*did and suffered: and then say, whether your souls are not of more value than ten thousand worlds; and whether any labor, any self-denial, any sacrifice can be too great for the advancement of their eternal welfare?

***~~2. How exalted is the morality which we are called to practice, if ever we would attain salvation!~~***

Doubtless it is through Christ alone, even through his blood and righteousness, that we must find acceptance with God: but we must *serve*Christ as well as *believe*in him. He has indeed fulfilled the law for us; but he has not therefore dispensed with its requirements. On the contrary, "we are under the law of Christ;" and are to fulfill his will precisely as the Apostle Paul did; having our hearts filled with zeal for his glory, and with love to the souls of men.

We quite mistake, if we imagine, that Christian morality consists in a mere abstinence from outward sins, or a compliance with outward observances: the heart must be given up to God, and the whole soul be engaged in seeking his glory.

It is well known, that by nature we are altogether selfish, and desirous that everything would bend to our will, and every person would consult it: but grace teaches us to have our own will mortified and subdued; and "to live no longer to ourselves, but altogether to our God." O brethren, aim at this: be satisfied with nothing short of this: and be aspiring after this blessed attainment daily, and with your whole hearts. For it is in this way only that you can "be partakers of the Gospel," and of the inheritance of the saints in light, verse 23. It is by this that you will approve yourselves "followers of Paul, as he was of Christ."

***~~3. How greatly do we need to be guided and strengthened by the Holy Spirit!~~***

Who is sufficient for these things? These attainments are high and difficult; and the very way to them is often unclear and slippery. It is easy to think ourselves upright in our intentions, when we are in reality actuated by a desire of man's applause, or a fear of his displeasure. It is easy also to imagine that we are sacrificing our own wishes for the good of others, when we are only gratifying our own earthly and carnal desires. In these things none but God can keep us from error; none but God can "perfect that which concerns us."

Pray then, that the Holy Spirit may guide you into all truth. Pray that He who upheld the Savior in all his arduous work, may "form in you the mind that was in Christ Jesus." Thus you may hope to be preserved blameless amidst all the difficulties with which you are encompassed, and to win by your conduct many, who would never have been won by the word alone.

***~~#1967~~***

***~~DIRECTIONS FOR RUNNING OUR RACE~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 9:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.24-25)~~***

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. "

THERE is not anything around us from which we may not draw some hints for our spiritual instruction. The habits and customs of the world, if duly improved, will afford us many valuable lessons. A reference to these is peculiarly useful when we wish to convey instruction to others; because it strikes the imagination more forcibly, and carries stronger conviction to the judgment.

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, availed himself of the Isthmian games which were celebrated there, to illustrate their duty with respect to their souls. Among other sports, that of the foot-race was held in high estimation; and great preparations were made by those who engaged in them, in order to qualify them for their extraordinary exertions. In reference to these the Apostle speaks of himself as running in this race; and proposes himself to the Corinthians as a pattern for their imitation, if they were desirous to win the prize.

We shall consider,

***~~I. The direction here given—~~***

The words of the text are not a mere exhortation to run our race, but a special direction respecting the *manner*in which we are to run it. To enter into the full meaning of the text, the whole chapter should be borne in mind: and in that view it will unfold to us a subject of no ordinary importance. This would be distinctly marked in all the passages that are referred to in this chapter. We should be, like the Apostle,

***~~1. We should be disentangled from worldly cares—~~***

Paul, as he tells us in the foregoing context, had equal liberty with others to marry, and to take a wife with him in his journeys. But he knew that such a step would involve him in many cares, and impede his exertions in the cause of Christ. He therefore lived in celibacy himself, and recommended it to others, both men and women, especially during those seasons of persecution, when they were liable every day and hour to be called to lay down their lives for the Gospel's sake, verse 5; [1 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 7.1); [1 Corinthians 7:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 7.7-8); [1 Corinthians 7:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 7.26-27).

Now, though there is not any necessity for us to imitate him in this individual act—yet we must admit the principle in its fullest extent, and live under its influence continually. We must study to be "without carefulness, [1 Corinthians 7:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 7.32)." We must endeavor to "serve the Lord as much as possible without distraction, [1 Corinthians 7:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 7.35)." We must "not entangle ourselves more than is necessary with the affairs of this life, [2 Timothy 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.4)," or multiply our cares in such a way as to rob our souls of the attention due to them. To do this would be as absurd as to "load our feet with thick clay, [Habakkuk 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 2.6)," when we were about to run a race. On the contrary, we should endeavor to "lay aside every weight [Hebrews 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.1)," conscious that cares of every kind impede our progress in the divine life, and, if allowed to increase, will endanger our ultimate success, [Matthew 13:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.22).

***~~2. We should be divested of selfish principles—~~***

Never was a *selfish spirit*more subdued and mortified, than in the Apostle Paul. Instead of claiming from the Corinthian Church that support, which God himself had assigned to every minister of the Gospel, he endured numberless needs and hardships, in order to set an example of unselfishness to others, verses 12-15. And, when he himself was perfectly acquainted with the extent of Christian liberty, he "made himself the servant of all," becoming all things to all men, that by all means he might save some, verse 19-22. Thus did he forego what he might have justly claimed, and consent, as it were, to pay, what none had any right to demand: he willingly sacrificed both his financial rights, yes, and his Christian liberty too (as far as conscientiously he could) for the benefit of immortal souls.

Such is the way in which we are to run. But O, how many professors of religion have been retarded (yes, and have cast stumbling-blocks also in the way of others) by a rigorous exaction of their dues, or by an unwillingness to sacrifice their worldly interests! How many also have been kept from making a progress themselves, and from helping forward their fellow-sinners, by an unyielding zeal for Christian liberty on the one hand, or a bigoted attachment to human forms on the other hand! Happy would it be for every individual in the Church of Christ, if a desire of advancement in the Divine life disposed them to "look, not on their own things only, but also on the things of others, [Philippians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.4);" and "to seek the welfare of others not only in conjunction with, but (to a certain degree) in preference to, their own, [1 Corinthians 10:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.24)."

***~~3. We should be determined, if possible, to win the prize—~~***

Those who proposed to contend in the race, maintained, for a long time before, the strictest temperance, verse 25, and habituated themselves to the most laborious exertions. In reference to them, Paul tells us how careful he was to keep under his body, and to bring it into subjection, in order that he might be the fitter to run the Christian race, verse 27. Thus must we be trained both in body and mind, in order that we may run well and "endure unto the end." *We must accustom ourselves to labor and self-denial, mortifying every corrupt affection, and "giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure!*[2 Peter 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.10)."

Let us next turn our attention to,

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

The Apostle's expression is concise: but there is much implied in it:

***~~1. We cannot win the race without running in this manner—~~***

However persons strove for the mastery in the games, they were not crowned, unless they strove according to the laws prescribed to them, [2 Timothy 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.5). Thus, however earnest we may be in running for Heaven, we never can gain the prize, unless we conform to the rules that have been laid down. This is the course that we are to run over. It abounds indeed with rough places, and steep ascents: but we must not deviate from it. We may easily find a smoother path; but we must run in that which is marked out for us, and abide in it to the end.

Let us then inquire, whether we be treading in the Apostle s steps. And let the fear of coming short at last, stimulate us to unremitting exertions, verse 27.

***~~2. If we run in this manner, we are sure of winning the race—~~***

Of those who contended in the race, only one could win the prize, verse 24; but it is not so in the race that we run: every one that enters the race, and exerts himself according to the directions given him, must succeed. None have any reason to despond on account of their own weakness; on the contrary, those who are the weakest in their own apprehension, are most certain of success! Only let us not be satisfied with "running well for a season;" but let us "hold on our way," until we reach the goal! [Philippians 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.13-14). Then we need not fear but that we shall "finish our course with joy, and obtain a crown of righteousness, from the hands of our righteous Judge! [Colossians 3:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.23-24) and [2 Timothy 4:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 4.7-8)."

***~~3. The prize, when obtained, will amply compensate for all our labor—~~***

As poor and worthless as the prize was to him who won the earthly race, the hope of obtaining it stimulated many to contend for it. How much more then would the prize held forth to us, together with the certainty of obtaining it, call forth our exertions! Compare our prize with theirs in respect of honor, value and duration; how infinitely superior is it in every view! Theirs was but the breath of man's applause; ours is honor coming from God himself. Theirs was a green chaplet, that withered in an hour; ours is an incorruptible, undefiled, and never-fading inheritance in Heaven! verse 25.

Let every one that is engaged in the race, survey the prize. Let him at the same time contemplate the consequence of coming short, (not a transient disappointment, or loss of some desirable object, but everlasting misery in Hell,) and the labor necessary to attain it will appear as nothing. None that have succeeded, now regret the pains they took to accomplish that great object: though thousands that have refused to run, now curse their folly with fruitless remorse: Let not any then relax their speed: but all attend to the directions given; and "so run, that they may obtain the prize!"

***~~#1968~~***

***~~THE MANNER IN WHICH PAUL SOUGHT FOR HEAVEN~~***

**[1 Corinthians 9:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.26-27)**

"Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

THE Scripture teaches us no less by *examples*than by *precepts*. Doubtless the great exemplar, which all are to follow, is the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom there was no sin at all. But, next to him, the Apostles deserve our regard. Paul frequently exhorts us to be imitators of him: but he always limits that counsel by the superior regard which we owe to Christ; and bids us to follow him, only so far as he followed Christ. In this view he introduces the passage which we have just read.

He has been recommending to the Corinthians a holy self-denying conduct. To enforce his exhortation, he states to them how he acted under a variety of difficult circumstances: and lastly, in reference to the Isthmian Games which were celebrated in that city, he gives them, in the words before us, a very animated view of his own experience, which he proposes to them for their imitation.

We may notice in these words,

***~~I. The manner in which the Apostle exerted himself—~~***

It is scarcely necessary to say, that Heaven was the prize for which he contended. For this he labored,

***~~1. With careful attention—~~***

As the course was precisely marked out for those who ran in the race, so there were certain *rules*prescribed in every one of the games; in allusion to which Paul elsewhere says, "If anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules, [2 Timothy 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.5)." Now in running the Christian race, there are rules indispensably necessary to be observed, if we would have the prize adjudged to us.

One rule in particular we mention, because it is expressly specified by the Apostle, and because it virtually includes all others: it is, that we must "look unto Jesus," as the pattern for our imitation, as the source of our strength, as the medium of our acceptance, "as the Author and the Finisher of our faith, [Hebrews 12:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.1-2)." Now the Apostle did not run as a person regardless of the rules, but as one who was determined in all things to observe them.

For lack of this care, many who appear desirous of getting to Heaven, fall short of it at last: they are not sufficiently instructed, especially in relation to the rule that has been specified: they are apt to satisfy themselves with rules of their own devising; and on this account they are found at last to have "spent their strength for nothing."

***~~2. With ardent zeal—~~***

A person who would be brandishing, as it were, his arms, and would "beat the air" in a way of sportive exercise, would be very unlike one who was engaged in actual combat. Such a difference exists between those who merely profess to engage with their spiritual enemies, and those who are really "warring a good warfare:" nor is this difference less visible in the Christian world, than it would have been on the stage where such spectacles were exhibited. Now the Apostle was not a mere pretender to religion: he saw too much of the importance of eternal things to waste his time in empty professions: he knew that, if he did not vanquish his enemies, his enemies would destroy him; and therefore he strove to "fight a good fight," and who would rather die than yield.

***~~3. With absolute self-denial—~~***

Those who intended to engage in the different games, used much self-denial in the whole of their diet and mode of living, in order that they might be the better able to endure the fatigues and hardships which they must inevitably experience in the contest: and, when they came to the contest, they put forth all their strength, that they might gain the victory.

The enemies with which the Apostle contended, were numerous and mighty. Those which he particularly refers to in the text, were, his own indwelling corruptions. He found that, in common with all others, he had "lusts warring in his members," yes, "warring against his soul." To subdue these, it was necessary that he would put forth all his strength. He had already gained a great advantage over them, as a man who had got his antagonist's head under his arm, and was beating him in the face with all his might. He would not give them any liberty to regain their former ascendancy, but was determined to subdue them utterly.

We shall easily account for these exertions, when we call to mind,

***~~II. The considerations by which he was actuated—~~***

It is painful to see how persons, who are enslaved by human theological systems, will wrest the Scriptures, to make them coincide with their own views. Did the Apostle mean to say, that he exerted himself thus, merely lest he would by any means be betrayed into some fault, which would cause him to be disapproved of men? Had he not respect to God also, and to his eternal state? No man living, whose judgment was not warped by a predilection for a system of his own, could doubt one moment but that the Apostle was actuated by two considerations:

***~~1. A hope of gaining the prize—~~***

This is manifestly implied in his words: and such a hope is the main spring of activity to every Christian that is under Heaven. The Apostle well knew, *how infinitely an unfading crown of glory surpasses the perishable chaplets that were awarded to the victors in the different games*. He could not endure the idea, that others would take so much pains to obtain a corruptible crown, which yet only one would win; and that he himself would be remiss in seeking an incorruptible crown, which *all*who contended earnestly for it must obtain. The securing of this he felt to be the one thing needful; and therefore he determined to make it the one object of his ambition.

***~~2. A fear of losing it—~~***

The person who executed the office of *herald*in the different games, introduced others, and encouraged them to the contest, but did not contend himself. But the Christian herald, who stirs up and encourages others to engage in the race or combat, must himself both run and fight: and, if he does not engage with his whole heart, however he may have animated others, he himself will not be deemed worthy of the prize.

Now the Apostle felt that the same exertions were necessary for him as for all others; and that peculiar guilt and shame would attach to him, if he, after having preached successfully to others, would at last fail of success himself. On this account therefore he labored to "destroy the whole body of sin." He was conscious that the smallest advantage gained by his bodily appetites might be attended with the most fatal consequences; and therefore he strove to "mortify his earthly members," and to "crucify his flesh with its affections and lusts."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are satisfied with the name and profession of Christianity—~~***

Were such a life as yours sufficient to obtain the prize, there were no propriety in such figures as the Apostle has used in the text. Be assured, that, if Paul found such exertions necessary for himself, they are no less so for you: and, that if he could not get to Heaven without them, much less can you.

***~~2. Those who have relaxed their exertions—~~***

It is not the beginning well, but *the enduring to the end, that will avail to the saving of the soul*. Some indeed will say, "Once a child of God, always so." But God warns you, that if any man turns back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him. *It is only by a patient continuance in well-doing that you can obtain the glory and honor and immortality which you profess to seek for*. The labor that has been bestowed upon you is all in vain, if you do not maintain your steadfastness even to the end. "Be not weary therefore in well-doing; for in due season you shall reap, *if*you faint not."

***~~3. Those who are discouraged through apprehensions of failure—~~***

Well might all be discouraged, if success depended on our own strength. But "God has laid help upon One that is mighty!" It is our privilege to be "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." However weak therefore you yourselves are, and however powerful your enemies, you have no reason to despond, since, "through the strength of Christ you can do all things."

***~~4. Those who are "contending earnestly for the faith" and practice of the Gospel—~~***

You know not indeed the precise measure of your course: but it is pleasing to reflect, that it may very soon be terminated, and that the prize shall be adjudged, not to the one who surpasses all others, but to *all*who "run their race with patience."

Methinks, the Savior, the Judge of all, is holding forth the prize to you; and the whole host of Heaven are witnesses of your exertions. Consider the countless multitudes that are already crowned, and that have bid an everlasting adieu to all the dangers of warfare, and the fatigues of running. Soon your hour also shall arrive: only, whenever it may arrive, let it find you exerting yourselves with all your might; that you may be able to say with your dying breath, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith! Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me; and not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing!"

***~~#1969~~***

***~~THE MANNA AND ROCK TYPES OF CHRIST~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 10:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.3-4)~~***

"They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ!"

THOUGH it is certain that the covenant of grace is ordered in all things and sure, and that God will fulfill his promises to all who believe—yet there is no man so absolutely assured of his own interest in the Divine favor, as that he can with safety cast off all watchfulness and circumspection.

The Corinthians, by going to the utmost verge of their Christian liberty in eating things offered to idols, were in danger of being drawn back into actual idolatry. The Apostle recommends to them therefore to exercise self-denial, as well for their own sake, that they might not be ensnared, as for the sake of others, whose weak consciences might be wounded. He tells them that he himself felt the necessity of mortifying all his appetites, and that he was obliged to "keep his body under control, and to bring it into subjection, lest by any means, after having preached to others, he himself would be a cast-away."

He then proceeds to remind them of the Israelites, who, notwithstanding the numberless privileges that they enjoyed, as God's peculiar people, perished in the wilderness for their manifold provocations. Among the privileges which he specifies, we shall fix our attention upon that referred to in the text; and shall take occasion from it to inquire,

***~~I. What was that spiritual food which the Israelites partook of in the wilderness?~~***

God, having brought his people into the wilderness, sustained them there with miraculous supplies of bread and water.

About six weeks after their departure out of Egypt [Exodus 16:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 16.1), their provisions were spent, and they began to be in lack of bread. God therefore promised them a constant supply from day to day: forbidding them to reserve any for the morrow, except on the day preceding the Sabbath, when they were to gather sufficient for two days' consumption. This food (which for lack of any more appropriate name they called *manna*, that is, a portion) descended from the clouds every night; and, when the dew that covered it was exhaled by the sun, it appeared on the face of the ground: it was a very small white thing like coriander seed, which they ground in their mills, and baked; and, in taste, it was like wafers made of fresh oil and honey, [Exodus 16:13-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 16.13-31) with [Numbers 11:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 11.8). Of this manna there was a constant and regular supply for forty years; nor did it ever fail, until their lack of it was superseded by the corn, of which they got possession in the land of Canaan.

In like manner, water was given them out of a rock in Horeb, by a stroke of that rod with which Moses had divided the Red Sea, [Exodus 17:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 17.5-6); and it was made to follow them in all their encampments for about thirty-eight years; when, for their further trial, the stream was dried up, and a similar miracle was wrought for them again in Kadesh-barnea, [Numbers 20:8-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 20.8-11).

This food, though carnal in its nature and use, was truly "spiritual;" inasmuch as it was,

***~~1. A typical representation of Christ—~~***

Our Lord himself copiously declares this with respect to the manna: He draws a parallel between the bread which Moses gave to the Israelites, and himself as the *true bread*that was given them from Heaven; and shows that, as the manna supported the natural life of that nation for a time, so he would give spiritual and eternal life to the whole believing world, [John 6:48-58](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.48-58).

The same truth he also establishes, in reference to the water that proceeded from the rock. He told the Samaritan woman, that if she would have asked of him he would have given her living water, [John 4:10-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.10-14). And on another occasion he stood in the place of public concourse, and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink [John 7:37-38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.37-38);" thereby declaring himself to be the only "well of salvation," the only rock from whence the living water could proceed. Indeed, the Apostle, in the very words of the text, puts this matter beyond a doubt; "they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them" and "that Rock was Christ!"

***~~2. A sacramental pledge of his blessings—~~***

Under the Gospel dispensation there are two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper: and these are not only "outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace," but they are also "means whereby we receive that grace, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

Thus when the Israelites were "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," they were consecrated unto God; and they received, as it were, a pledge from him, that all the blessings of his covenant would in due time be imparted to them, unless they, by their violation of the covenant, would provoke him to withhold them.

In the same manner the bread and water miraculously given and continued to them, were a pledge that they would one day "eat of the hidden manna," and "drink of the rivers of pleasure which are at his right hand for evermore," provided they continued steadfast in the covenant, and walked worthy of their heavenly calling.

Thus while their daily food typically represented, and, to those who partook of it in faith, really conveyed, spiritual blessings; it was "a pledge to them of that Spirit," whom the water typified, and "a pledge of that inheritance," which Christ would purchase for them by his obedience unto death! [2 Corinthians 1:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.22). [Ephesians 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.14).

And that this food was not peculiar to them may be shown by considering,

***~~II. In what respects it was the same with that which we now partake of—~~***

When the Apostle says, that they all ate the same spiritual food, he does not mean that all the Israelites subsisted on the same food (for that was obvious enough, and was of no consequence to his subject) but that *their spiritual food, represented by the manna and the water, was the same that still nourishes the Church of God*. To elucidate this we may observe, it was the same,

***~~1. In its nature and substance—~~***

As their bodies could not have maintained their vigor without the daily use of bread and water, so *neither could their souls flourish, unless they daily fed upon Christ, the living bread, and received from him renewed communications of his Spirit*. And are there any other means of subsistence for our souls? Has not our Lord expressly told us, that "unless we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we have no life in us?" Has not Paul also assured us, that none can belong to Christ unless they be partakers of his Spirit, [Romans 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.9). We are as destitute of strength in ourselves as the Israelites were; and need the same direction and support. If any man could be sufficient of himself, surely the great Apostle of the Gentiles was: but he corrects himself instantly when he appeared to have suggested an idea that was capable of that interpretation; "I live," says he, "yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me! [Galatians 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.20)." This is precisely what the believers in the wilderness did, when they subsisted on their spiritual food; and it is what every believer must do as long as the world shall stand.

***~~2. In its use and tendency—~~***

*The daily supply of manna, and of the water from the rock, continually reminded them of their dependence upon God*, and encouraged them to serve him with a willing mind. But the conveyance of spiritual blessings to them under these symbols would go further still, and actually produce the dispositions which the outward blessings could only tacitly recommend. And what are the dispositions which the eating of the bread of life, and the drinking of the living water uniformly create? *Do they not lead us to a dependence on God's care, and a devotedness to his service?*The very end for which our Savior died, was, that those who live would not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them: no doubt therefore his love, when shed abroad in the heart, will incline us to do this, [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14-15); and his grace communicated to the soul, will enable us to do it.

***~~We may learn from hence,~~***

***~~1. In what spirit we should attend the ordinances of the Gospel—~~***

The Israelites were left to feel their need of food before the miraculous supplies were given them: and with what avidity would they gather up the new created bread! With what insatiable appetite would they bow down to drink of the flowing stream! Such is the spirit with which we would approach the ordinances of our God. In them the *manna*is rained round about our tents: in them the *rock*is struck, and the waters of salvation flow around us: and if we come hungering and thirsting, we shall never be sent empty away. Let none then consider the ordinances as mere occasions for gratifying their curiosity, but as the place where spiritual food is set before them for the support and comfort of their souls.

The Israelites would ask but one question: Is this provision suited to my necessities? So neither should we concern ourselves much about the manner in which the ordinances are dispensed, but rather go, that we may receive Christ in them, and have more abundant communications of his Spirit imparted to us.

***~~2. What should be the habit of our minds when we have partaken of spiritual blessings—~~***

The particular object of the Apostle in the text is, to inculcate the necessity of fear and caution: and the argument he uses is well calculated to effect his purpose. Two million Israelites came out of Egypt: they were brought in safety through the Red Sea, and supported by this miraculous food: yet, of all who had attained the age of twenty, only two were allowed to enter into the promised land. All the rest perished in the wilderness: and the very profession which they made, and the privileges which they enjoyed, served but to enhance, in most instances, it is to be feared, their eternal condemnation!

Moreover they were intended by God himself as examples to us; that we, admonished by their fate, might suppress all irregular desires, and walk more worthy of our high calling. Well therefore does the Apostle add, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." *We never are so much in danger as when we think ourselves most secure.*Let us then "not be high-minded, but fear:" whatever mercies we have experienced, and whatever enjoyment of spiritual blessings may have been given to us, let us remember, that *we are not beyond the reach of temptation*: we may "have escaped for a while the pollutions of the world, and yet be again entangled therein and overcome, [2 Peter 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.20);" it is not sufficient for us to have "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come:" we may still "fall away, and return to a state from whence we shall never be renewed to repentance! [Hebrews 6:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.5-6)." "Let all then take heed, lest, a promise being left them of entering into God's rest, they would by any means come short of it, [Hebrews 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.1)."

***~~#1970~~***

***~~THE JUDGMENTS ON THE ISRAELITES TYPICAL~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 10:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.11)~~***

"These things happened to them as *examples*and were written down as *warnings*for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come."

THE Holy Scriptures were not given to the world, to amuse us with an account of past occurrences, but to instruct us in the way to eternal life. Nor are the *historical*parts less conducive to this end, than the *preceptive*; since they show us, in a striking view, the characters of those who are saved, and of those who perish. The history of the Israelites would be entertaining as a romance; but, as an exemplification of God's dealings with his Church, it is inestimable!

Hence the Apostle expresses great concern that the Corinthian Church would be acquainted with the things that had happened to the Jewish nation; in order that they themselves might be on their guard, lest, resembling the Jews in their conduct, they would also resemble them in their fate!

Let us consider:

***~~I. The typical events here specified—~~***

***~~The Jews, notwithstanding the mercies given to them, perished in the wilderness for their iniquities—~~***

Great, exceeding great, were the favors conferred upon them. They were brought, under the immediate direction of God, through the Red Sea, and were baptized thereby into the covenant which God made with them by Moses. They were also sustained by food miraculously afforded them: food, not carnal only, but "spiritual," if spiritually improved, verses 1-4.

But, instead of following the Lord fully, "they forgot God their Savior," and addicted themselves to idolatry, to fornication, to distrust and murmuring, verses 7-10. For these, and other impieties, the heavy wrath of God came upon them; and two only, of all the adults who had come out of Egypt, were allowed to enter into the promised land.

***~~In this view they were intended as types and examples to us—~~***

*Peter*mentions the judgments inflicted on fallen angels, the antediluvian world, and the cities of the plain, as exemplifying those which would come upon all who at any period, would live and die in an ungodly state, [2 Peter 2:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.4-6).

*Jude*, in addition to those instances, mentions also the Israelites, who perished in the wilderness, Jude verse 5.

The *former*might properly represent those who are wholly ignorant of God; the *latter*may more particularly characterize those who profess religion: and the disappointment which they experienced in consequence of their sins, was typical of that, which all must experience, who profess to have been called with a holy calling, and yet walk unworthy of their profession. In them we see that *the greater our privileges, the heavier, if we abuse them, will be our condemnation.*

Being so deeply interested in the events recorded concerning them, we would consider attentively,

***~~II. The admonitions they give us—~~***

The Jewish dispensation closed, and the Christian dispensation commenced, in the apostolic age: and, this being the last that ever shall be given to the world, we who live under it may be said to live in the concluding period of the world.

Now the foregoing events admonish us,

***~~1. Not to rest in a mere profession of religion—~~***

It was to no purpose that the Israelites called themselves the people of God, while they were unmindful of the obligations which such a profession entailed upon them. While they called God and Abraham their father, they were, like their descendants also, children of the wicked one, [John 8:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.39); [John 8:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.41); [John 8:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.44). Thus it will be in vain for us to *call*ourselves Christians, if we have not the power as well as the form of godliness, [Jeremiah 7:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 7.4).

On the contrary, as God disowned the people before referred to, so, however confident our claims to. his favor may be, will He disown us in the day of judgment Compare [Deuteronomy 9:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 9.12) with [Matthew 7:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.21-23). Let us seek then to be Christians, "not in word, and in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Let us not only unite ourselves to the church of God, but also devote ourselves to God in body, soul, and spirit.

***~~2. Not to indulge any evil desires—~~***

This is particularly specified by the Apostle as a principal end for which these events were recorded, verse 6. Had the Israelites watched against the first risings of sensuality and lewdness, they would not have fallen into those numerous sins which brought upon them God's heavy displeasure. Just so, if we would be preserved from spiritual idolatry, or even from the grossest acts of impurity, we must avoid all needless connection with an idolatrous world, and *labor to suppress the first motions of sin*which work in our members.

"God requires truth in our inward parts;" nor shall any but the pure in heart ever behold his face in peace, [Matthew 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.8). An "hypocrite in heart only treasures up wrath against the day of wrath!"

***~~3. Not so to presume on any past mercies, as to forget that we have need of continual watchfulness and circumspection—~~***

The Israelites thought, that, after so many signal manifestations of God's favor towards them, they could never be cast off. But, like Lot's wife, they stand as a pillar of salt to us, [Luke 17:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 17.32). Let us not then forget, that we may have "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, and yet be entangled again with it and overcome, [2 Peter 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.20);" and that "we may have been enlightened by the word of God, and have tasted of the powers of the world to come—and yet so apostatize, as never to be renewed unto repentance, [Hebrews 6:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.4-6)."

The Apostle himself felt the necessity of "keeping his body under control, lest, after having preached to others, he himself would be a cast-away, [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.27);" much more therefore would we, however confident we may be of our own steadfastness, "take heed lest we fall, verse 12."

Let us then not be satisfied with having come out of Egypt, or having put ourselves under the Divine guidance, or having lived hitherto on Christ, the living bread and living water: but let us go on in dependence on his grace, and in obedience to his will.

Let us combine a consciousness of our proneness to fall, with a humble affiance in him, "who alone is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy! Jude verse 24."

***~~Be admonished then, every one of you!~~***

***~~1. You who are resting in outward forms—~~***

See how earnest the Apostle Paul was in impressing these facts on the minds of his Corinthian converts, "I would not, brethren, have you would be ignorant of these things, verse 1." So say I to *you*, "I would not have you ignorant of them." Indeed, indeed, they are too little considered.

If you had asked all the six hundred thousand men after they had passed the Red Sea, and beheld all their enemies dead upon the seashore, Where are you going? They would all have confidently replied, "We are going to Canaan, and doubt not but that we shall in due time possess it." And this is what all say respecting Heaven. But of them, only two ever arrived in safety at that good land. And I tremble to think how many of *you*will in all probability fall short of the promised rest in Heaven. You are all Christians in name, but are you all such in truth? would to God you were! would to God that you were all living by faith in the Lord Jesus, and altogether devoted to his service! But I must tell you, that "the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent must take it by force:" for neither can a *race*be won, nor a *battle*gained, without very different exertions from what we behold in the Christian world at large.

***~~2. You who make a profession of vital godliness—~~***

This was the state of the Corinthian Church, on whose minds Paul labored so earnestly to impress these known and acknowledged facts. Do not think then, my brethren, that it is superfluous for me to inculcate the consideration of them upon you, and such an improvement of them as your state demands. Do not think that you have attained such stability as to render these admonitions unnecessary: but know that the more you possess of holy fear, the more certain will you be of God's effectual aid. It is only when you are weak in yourselves, that you are really strong in Christ; and, when in a simple dependence upon God you are "following the Lord fully," then only can you hope, with Caleb and Joshua, to possess that good land that flows with milk and honey.

***~~#1971~~***

***~~AGAINST SELF-CONFIDENCE~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 10:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.12)~~***

"Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall."

THE things which are recorded in the Holy Scriptures are written, not for the entertainment, but for the real improvement, of our minds. Doubtless, as gratifying our curiosity, there is no book under Heaven so interesting as the Bible; but as exhibiting what must be realized in our own experience, as showing us:

our *duties*and our *difficulties*,

our *helps*and our *remedies*,

our *punishments*and our *rewards*,

it claims, infinitely beyond all other books, our unremitting attention.

In this view the Apostle, having mentioned the misconduct of the Israelites in the wilderness, and the destruction which they brought upon themselves by means of it, founds upon their history this solemn admonition; "therefore let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall."

From these words we may learn,

***~~I. That all, even the most eminent, are liable to fall—~~***

The most distinguished characters of antiquity have fallen:

*Noah*, [Genesis 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.9) compared with 9:21.

*Lot*, [2 Peter 2:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.7-8) compared with [Genesis 19:33-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 19.33-36).

*David*, [Acts 13:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.22), compared with [2 Samuel 11:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 11.4-5); 2 Samuel 11:15.

*Solomon*(who was called Jedediah, the beloved of the Lord, [2 Samuel 12:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 12.24-25).) [1 Kings 11:1-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 11.1-9).

They have betrayed their weakness in those very points, wherein their eminence chiefly consisted.

*Abraham*, [Romans 4:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.20) compared with [Genesis 12:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 12.12-13); [Genesis 20:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 20.2); [Genesis 20:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 20.11).

*Job*, [James 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.11) compared with [Job 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 3.3).

*Moses*, [Numbers 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 12.3) compared with 20:10, 11.

*Jeremiah*, [Jeremiah 9:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 9.1) compared with 20:8, 9.

*Paul*[Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24) compared with 18:9, 10, when he seems to have been struck with a panic.

Who then among us will presume to say, "I am in no danger of falling [John 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.14) and [1 Peter 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.23), show the proper qualities and tendency of grace; but do not at all affect what the Scriptures elsewhere affirm to be the tendency of our inherent corruption."

***~~II. That the more self-confident we are, the more likely we are to fall—~~***

*Self-confidence naturally emboldens us to rush into temptation,* and necessarily provokes God to leave us to ourselves. By means of the *former*, our occasions of falling are greatly multiplied. By means of the *latter*, our ability to stand is utterly withdrawn We have a striking example of this in Peter, who to gratify his curiosity went into the midst of his enemies, and was then left to experience his own weakness, [Matthew 26:58](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.58); [Matthew 26:74](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.74).

God, for his own honor's sake, is concerned to let us fall, in order that we may know and confess, that our sufficiency for any good thing is derived from him alone! Thus he acted towards the Israelites, [Deuteronomy 1:42-44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 1.42-44).

***~~III. That, if we would be kept from falling, we must look well to our steps—~~***

As in a slippery path peculiar caution is required, and an inattention to our steps will probably outcome in some painful accident, so more especially is it necessary to use circumspection in the path of duty.

Who can tell the snares and temptations that beset us?

Who can tell what may be the consequences of any step we take?

Who can reflect on all the circumstances that arose from one single glance of David's eye, and not feel himself exposed to continual danger?

The most important events of our lives may be traced to some trivial cause, some matter of pure indifference: and events, equally or more important, perhaps no less than the everlasting salvation of our souls, may depend on the very next step we take! Surely then we should in "all things be circumspect, [Exodus 23:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 23.13);" we should "take heed to our ways;" we should walk in a humble dependence on God for direction and support; we should cry to him continually, "Hold up my goings in your paths, that my footsteps slip not [Psalm 17:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 17.5)."

***~~We shall conclude this subject with a few words of advice:~~***

***~~1. To those who are offended at the falls of others—~~***

Many, when they see a professor of religion act amiss, are ready to impute his misconduct to the Gospel itself, as though Christianity were only a cloak for hypocrites. But, considering the *temptations that surround us*, and the *corruptions that are within us*, it is rather a wonder that any stand, than that some would fall. We mean not to justify, or to extenuate, the sins of any: but we desire that religion would not be represented as promoting that which it utterly condemns. Let the blame fall on those who merit it, and not be cast indiscriminately on all who profess godliness. Let Judas be branded as a traitor; but let not the odium of his offense attach to all the other Apostles, and to their Divine Master.

***~~2. To those who are endeavoring to walk uprightly before God—~~***

It is of considerable use to persons when walking on slippery ground, to have hold of each other, that if one slips, the other may afford him immediate assistance. Many falls and bruises have been escaped by these means.

Just so, it is of great importance to Christians to walk together in love, each helping to support his neighbor, and receiving help from others in the time of need, [Ecclesiastes 4:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 4.9-10). Let all then watch over one another with a godly jealousy. If one falls, let others endeavor instantly, in meekness, to raise him up, [Galatians 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.1). Above all, let every one know in whom his strength is; and pray continually, "Hold me up, and I shall be safe! [Psalm 119:117](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.117)."

"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. Jude verse 24, 25."

***~~#1972~~***

***~~THE SECURITY OF GOD'S TEMPTED PEOPLE~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 10:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.13)~~***

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

WE are ever prone to run into the opposite extremes of *presumption*and *despair*.

To check *presumption*, we should reflect upon the manifestations of God's wrath.

To avoid *despair*, we should bear in mind the promises of his mercy.

With this view Paul sets before the Corinthian Church the judgments that had been executed on the Israelites in the wilderness; but lest they would turn his warnings into an occasion of despondency, he assures them, that God himself had engaged to keep all who diligently sought him, and humbly relied upon him.

His words naturally lead us to point out,

***~~I. The temptations of God's people—~~***

***~~Many, doubtless, are the temptations with which the godly are beset—~~***

It seems from the preceding context that the word "temptation" is to be understood in its most extended sense, as comprehending everything which might endanger their steadfastness in the ways of God.

The *world*strives to ensnare them both by frowns and allurements.

The *flesh*strongly inclines them to gratify its appetites.

And *Satan*labors incessantly to beguile them by his wiles and devices. Satan can easily assume the appearance of "an angel of light:" and he does so especially when he stirs up religious professors to distract the minds of the simple with matters of doubtful disputation, and thus to turn the weak, and the conceited, and the vain, "from the simplicity that is in Christ."

The temptations of all are such only as others experience in common with themselves. All are ready to suppose that there are none tempted like them: but if we knew the experience of others, we would find that, "as face answers to face in a looking-glass, so does the heart of man to man." All indeed are not tempted exactly in the same manner or the same degree (for there are temptations peculiar to men's age and condition in life) but there are none so singularly tried, but that there are many others in similar circumstances with themselves; and the ascertaining of this point often affords much consolation and encouragement to tempted souls.

Nor are there any trials so great but that believers may be confident of,

***~~II. Their security in the midst of them—~~***

God himself is interested in their behalf; and they may safely rely on,

***~~1. His power—~~***

"That they may not be tempted above what they are able," he will proportion their trials to their strength. Are they at present too weak to endure hardship?

He will delay its approach, [Exodus 13:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 13.17).

Or, if he permits it to come upon them, he will weaken its force, [Psalm 76:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 76.10) and [Isaiah 27:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.8).

If they are likely to faint under it, he will shorten its duration, [Psalm 125:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 125.3) and [Isaiah 57:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.16).

If he does not see fit in any of these ways to lighten the temptation, he will proportion their strength to their trials, so that, if there is not a way to escape, they at least "may be able to bear them." This he effects sometimes by communicating more abundant grace, 2 Corinthians 12:9, and sometimes by filling them with the consolations of his Spirit, [2 Corinthians 1:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.4-5), and giving them near prospects of the glory that awaits them, [2 Corinthians 4:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.16-17). [Romans 8:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.18). Thus will he "keep them by his power unto everlasting salvation."

***~~2. His faithfulness—~~***

No man, however eminent, could stand, if left to himself. Satan would sift us as wheat, and scatter us as chaff! [Luke 22:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.31). But God has promised:

that "he will keep the feet of his saints;"

that "sin shall not have dominion over them;"

that "none shall pluck them out of his hands;"

that "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against them."

"Nor shall one jot or tittle of his word ever fail." "He is not a man that he would lie, or the son of man that he would repent." He has exhausted all the powers of language in laboring to persuade us of this truth, that he will never forsake his people.

[Hebrews 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.5), Amplified Bible: "He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!]" Here are no less than five negatives in the Greek; and they may safely rest on him "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are conflicting with temptation—~~***

What a blessed promise is that before us! What can God himself say more for your encouragement? Dry up your tears: know that "as your day is, so shall also your strength be:" "there are more for you than against you:" trust therefore in Him who "knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation," and "is able both to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, [2 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.9) and Jude verse 24."

But do not say, "God will keep me, and therefore I will rush into temptation!" Such an abuse of his mercy as this would surely bring with it the most tremendous evils. We are to *trust*God when in trouble; but not to *tempt*God by exposing ourselves to danger without a cause.

***~~2. Those who are yielding to temptation—~~***

The generality complain, "That they cannot resist temptation," and yet they venture continually into those very scenes which most endanger their virtue! What hypocrisy is this! If flesh and blood is, as they justly acknowledge, so weak and frail, then why do they not flee from the *occasions*of sin? And why do they not cry unto God for help? Let all know that their impotency is no just excuse; that all shall receive support if they will but seek it; and that "God's strength shall be perfected in their weakness, [Hebrews 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.18); [Hebrews 4:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.15-16)." But if we will not repent of our sins and turn unto God, the power and faithfulness of God are engaged against us, and will be glorified in our everlasting destruction!

***~~#1973~~***

***~~APPEAL TO MEN OF WISDOM AND SENSIBLENESS~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 10:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.15)~~***

"I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say."

[This, and the three following Discourses, 1974, 1975, and 1976, were preached before the University of Cambridge. The Discourse on [Psalm 119:128](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.128) was delivered afterwards with a view to complete the series.]

AMONG the various systems of religion that have been promulgated, there is this remarkable difference; that, while *those systems which have been devised by man were founded on the deductions of human reason, that which has been revealed by God is founded solely on his own authority*. Every declaration, every precept, every promise, every threatening, is introduced with "Thus says the Lord!" Deliberation and discussion respecting these declarations of God, are altogether superseded: man has no alternative, he must believe and obey whatever his God has spoken.

But though revealed religion is neither founded on human reason, nor makes its appeal to it—yet it is perfectly consistent with reason, and approves itself to the judgment of every one whose mind is enlightened by the Spirit of God, and whose passions are subjugated to the higher powers of the soul.

The appeal which the Apostle makes in our text to the judgment of the Corinthian Church has respect indeed to only one particular point: the maintaining of communion with heathen in their idolatrous sacrifices and rituals. This, as he observes, was inconsistent with their professed allegiance to Christ, and with all hope of participating the blessings of his salvation: and so unquestionable was this truth, that he did not hesitate to appeal to their judgment respecting it.

We are far from saying that all the truths of Christianity are as level with the capacity of men as that which is the subject of the Apostle's appeal; but still we are persuaded, that there is no part of our religion repugnant to reason, nor any part which enlightened reason must not highly approve.

In confirmation of this sentiment we shall endeavor to show,

***~~I. That the Gospel approves itself to all who are truly wise.~~***

There is a wisdom to which the Gospel does not approve itself—I mean "the wisdom of this world," as it is called, even that which is both the root and offspring of philosophic pride. Between this wisdom of this world and the Gospel, there is as inveterate an opposition as between light and darkness; the Gospel is regarded by it as foolishness; and itself is no other than foolishness in the sight of God. The Apostle tells us, that by this wisdom the world neither knew God, nor could possibly find him out; that God has so formed his Gospel as to "destroy the wisdom of the wise, and to bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Remarkable is that triumphant language of the Apostle, "Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

If it is asked, Why this wisdom of this world is so much at variance with the Gospel? We answer, that men filled with the conceit of their own sufficiency, and wise in their own eyes, are ready to prescribe to God what he shall speak; receiving only what accords with their own preconceived opinions, and rejecting everything that is not accommodated to their carnal apprehensions. *They do not read the Scriptures to learn from God, but rather to criticize what he has revealed, and to sit in judgment upon all that he has spoken.*Is it to be wondered at, that the Gospel, which is full of mysteries, would not approve itself to them? yes, that it would be a stumbling-block and an offense to them! It is so, and it must be so, until they shall see that "God is wiser than man," and that "if any man would be wise, he must become a fool that he may be wise."

But though to such proud and self-sufficient scoffers the Gospel of God is foolishness—yet to the truly wise it is a revelation every way worthy of its great Author.

By the truly wise, we mean those persons who are sensible that they stand in need of reconciliation with their offended God, and that the Gospel is a revelation from God respecting the provision which he has made for our restoration to his favor. These persons, conscious of the insufficiency of human wisdom to discover such a plan for the salvation of mankind, receive with humility what God has revealed; and, the instant they know his mind and will, they receive his testimony with the liveliest gratitude, and make it the one ground of all their hopes. These are truly wise; they presume not to dispute with God about the *means*he has provided, or the *terms*he has offered, for their salvation; but *they accept thankfully what he has so graciously planned, and so freely offered.*

To persons of this description the Gospel does approve itself as the wisdom of God and the power of God. It approves itself both as a *revelation*, and as a *remedy*.

As a *revelation*, it appears to stand on a basis that is immoveable; and the evidence of its divine authority is considered as incomparably stronger than any that can be adduced for any other record under Heaven.

As a *remedy*, it appears exactly suited to the necessities of fallen man, providing:

*wisdom*for the ignorant,

*righteousness*for the guilty,

*sanctification*for the polluted, and

*redemption*for the slaves of sin and Satan.

It is further recommended to their approval by the honor which it brings to all the perfections of the Deity, in that justice is no more set aside than mercy, nor truth is violated any more than holiness; but *every perfection of God is harmoniously exercised and more glorified, than it could have been, if such a salvation had never been devised*.

We do not at present enter into the particulars of this Gospel, because that will be the subject of our future discourses: but we would give a general clue whereby to discover the true Gospel from everything that falsely assumes that name.

It will be generally granted, that the Gospel which the Apostle Paul preached was the true Gospel: and we find, that the foregoing marks were inseparable from his doctrines. His statements were disapproved by those who were carried away, either by "philosophy and vain deceit" on the one hand, or by superstition on the other hand: to the Jews his doctrine was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to those who were called and taught by divine grace, it was the wisdom of God and the power of God.

If therefore the Gospel which we preach is disapproved by the same persons as disapproved of his, we have so far an evidence in its favor; whereas, if our Gospel is approved by those who were averse to his, then it is evident that we do not preach the same Gospel as he did. *To worldly wisdom, the truth of God ever was, and ever must be, foolishness*; but to those who are possessed of true wisdom, it is, and ever will be, a stupendous effort of wisdom and of love for the recovery and salvation of a ruined world.

The intent of our present discourse is to bespeak your candor in reference to those which may follow it, and to show that, at least in our own judgment, *there is such a reasonableness in all our doctrines as must of necessity commend itself to every candid inquirer*. We wish not one sentiment to be embraced, without a firm conviction of its truth. We wish every word we utter to be brought to the test of Scripture and of true wisdom. We would say to every man, "Prove all things, and hold fast only that which is good, [1 Thessalonians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.21)."

To impress on our minds the importance of making for our ourselves a candid inquiry into the Gospel of Christ, we proceed to show,

***~~II. That it is the duty of every man to exercise his judgment in relation to the gospel.~~***

God himself is pleased on some occasions to make an appeal to us respecting his own dealings with mankind: "Judge, I beg you," says he, "between me and my vineyard." Again, "Are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" In truth, though he is not to be dealt with by us as if he were bound to "give an account to us of any of his matters," yet he treats us as rational creatures, and expects us to use our reason in relation to our spiritual concerns, as well as our temporal concerns. He draws us indeed, and expects that we would give ourselves up to the influence of his grace; but "he draws us with the cords of a man," that is, with such influences as are suited to our faculties as rational agents.

Still, however, we must remember, that, in forming our judgment of the truths revealed to us, we are not called to determine beforehand what it befits him to reveal; but only by a diligent attention to his written word to consider what he has revealed: and if at first we find such things as we did not expect, or such things as seem to oppose the sentiments we have imbibed, we must not hastily determine that his word is not true, but must suspect our own competency to judge of it, and must say, "What I know not now, I shall know hereafter."

***~~III. In executing this important duty we shall do well to observe the following rules; namely,~~***

***~~1. We must, in the first place, form our judgment with care.~~***

It is no easy matter to search out all the mysteries of our holy religion, and to attain a clear and just knowledge of the inspired volume. There are confessedly many passages which are difficult to be understood, and many passages which appear to have, what may be called, an opposite and contradictory aspect. To explain all these, and to reconcile them with each other, and to gather out of them one entire and consistent plan of salvation—is surely no easy work: it should be undertaken with fear and trembling; and no pains should be spared to execute it aright.

*To take one set of texts, and to wrest the opposing texts to a sense which they were never designed to bear, will save us indeed much trouble, and gratify a proud contentious spirit; but it will never bring us to a just view of the truth as it is in Jesus.*The way to solve the difficulties of Scripture, is to give to every declaration of God its proper force, and then to mark the subserviency of one truth to others which appear opposed to it.

A person, who would in an ignorant and superficial manner observe the opposite motions that are found in a great engine, would be ready to suppose that the wheels would obstruct each other: but on a closer inspection he would find, that there is a subserviency of one part to another, and that all the motions, however opposite in appearance, tend in reality to one common end.

Thus it is in the Scriptures of truth; there is no real opposition between one part and another; but every truth has its proper place in the system, and its proper use. If one truth encourages, another truth humbles. If one truth inspires confidence, another truth stimulates to activity.*True wisdom will lead us to assign to every truth that place and that measure of importance which seem to be given to it in the sacred volume.* Were this mode of investigating the Holy Scriptures more generally adopted, there would be an end of almost all the controversies which agitate and distract the Christian world. The very disposition of mind which would be exercised in such endeavors, would go far to rectify our judgment, and would divest error of more than half its evils.

If it is said, that all have not leisure or ability for such minute examination of the Holy Scriptures, we answer, That, whether we have more or less of leisure and ability, this should be our mode of proceeding: and those especially, who are to teach others, should be careful to form their judgment in this way.

1. The Scriptures should be studied diligently throughout.

2. The *design of the inspired writers*should be especially attended to.

3. The scope of every distinct passage should be ascertained by a strict examination of the *context*.

4. The general *analogy of faith*must be borne in mind, in order to regulate us in our interpretation of passages that are of more doubtful signification.

Sum: In a word, we should without prejudice or partiality attend to every part of the sacred records, and then judge, as before God, respecting the genuine import of the whole.

Whatever sentiment is brought before us as of heavenly origin and of divine authority, we must bring it to the law and to the testimony, and *give it only such weight in our minds as shall appear to be justified by the general tenor of the inspired volume*. It was by such care that the Bereans attained the knowledge of salvation; and by similar care we may confidently hope to be guided gradually into all truth.

***~~2. Having thus formed our judgment, we must, in the next place, exercise it with candor.~~***

There will to the last, whatever means he used for the regulating of our judgment, be some points whereon there will be a difference of opinion. The minds of men are differently constructed; and *there are no two men in the universe who on all points think alike*. It must be expected therefore, that some *diversity of sentiment*will remain in reference to religion, as well as on every other subject under Heaven. Aware of this, we should form our judgment with diffidence, especially on those points where men of piety have differed from each other. *We should consider ourselves as liable to err, no less than others. To imagine that we are in possession of all truth, and to take for granted that all who differ from us must of necessity be wrong, is not consistent with Christian modesty.*

Of course, if we embrace an opinion, we must of necessity do it, under the idea that the sentiment is just; but, knowing how weak and fallible we are, we should think it possible that those who differ from us may be right; or, at all events, that the truth may be partly on their side as well as on ours. But *even where we feel greater confidence as to the rectitude of our judgment, we should feel no hostility to those who differ from us; they have the same right to exercise their judgment as we have.*We should no more be offended with them for not viewing things in the same light as ourselves, than for their not resembling us in the stature of their body or the features of their countenance.

By this observation we do not mean to express an approbation of indifference respecting religious sentiments; for there are sentiments that should be dearer to us than life itself.

It is *intolerance*which we disapprove; it is a readiness to condemn others on account of their religious opinions, and to load them with all manner of obloquy. This, I say, is what we deprecate; and too much reason there is to deprecate it; since *the indulgence of this hateful intolerant disposition is the common error of all parties*.

To be fully persuaded in our own minds, after a long course of diligent inquiry, is well; but to brand persons with opprobrious names, because they see not with our eyes; and to misrepresent their sentiments, putting into their mouths statements which they never make, and loading their real statements with consequences which they disavow and abhor, is*a mode of proceeding which tends only to generate endless contentions, and to destroy that love which is the sum and substance of all true religion*.

The liberty which we use ourselves, we should concede to others; and if we think others have adopted erroneous sentiments, we should endeavor to set them right; but we would do it, not with railing accusations, but in kindness and a spirit of love.

But the third rule which we mentioned as deserving our attention, is above all things necessary to be observed:

***~~3. We must implore of God the enlightening and sanctifying influences of his Spirit, that we may be preserved from error, and be guided into all truth.~~***

We are all by nature blind to the things of God. There is a veil upon our hearts, precisely as there was in the apostolic age, and still continues to be upon the hearts of the Jews. "The natural man," says Paul, "receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Even the discourses of our blessed Lord and Savior, notwithstanding his confirmation of them by miracles unnumbered, could not convince those who did not choose to be convinced. Nor were the Apostles themselves so enlightened by his instructions during the whole time of his ministry upon earth, but that they needed after his resurrection the influences of his Spirit to "open their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures."

The same influence we need. We must have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation given to us, to discover to us the things of the Spirit; and, unless "God shines into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," we shall continue in darkness to our dying hour!

Of this blindness we should be aware; for, if we are not sensible of our need of the Holy Spirit to teach and guide us, we shall never seek his influences, nor ever be qualified to form a correct judgment of the things which are revealed to us. Even Timothy, long after he had ministered the Gospel with great success, needed not only the instructions of Paul, but the teachings of the Holy Spirit, to render them effectual: "Consider what I say," says Paul to him; "and may the Lord give you understanding in all things."

This *need of divine teaching*we are all by nature averse to acknowledge. One of the last things that we are brought to confess, is *the insufficiency of our own wisdom to understand the sublime truths of Christianity*. But, if we look around us, we see many possessing all the same privileges with ourselves, and yet so blinded by prejudice or passion, as not to discern any one truth aright:

the divinity of our blessed Lord,

his substitutionary and sin-atoning death,

the influences of his Spirit,

the necessity of a renewed heart,

together with many other truths—are boldly denied by them; or, if acknowledged as doctrines that are revealed, they are utterly disregarded as to any practical effect upon the soul. This clearly proves the great truth we are insisting on; namely, that *we must all be taught of God, and that, without his teaching, we shall know nothing as we ought to know.*

But we observed, that we need the *sanctifying*, as well as the *illuminating*, influences of the Holy Spirit: for we have many corrupt affections, which it is the very intention of the Gospel to eradicate; and under the influence of them we lean to those doctrines which tolerate, rather than to those which would mortify and subdue, our favorite sinful propensities. How then can we judge aright while we are influenced by such a bias? "Our eye being evil, we shall of necessity be in darkness. Our eye must be made single, before the whole body can be full of light." This *single eye*then must be given us by the Holy Spirit. Instead of loving darkness rather than light, we must love the light, and come to the light, on purpose that the nature and quality of our actions may be made manifest.

Let our first object then be to seek of God the gift of his Holy Spirit (for he has said, that, "if any man lacks wisdom, and asks it of him, he will give it liberally, and without upbraiding,") and then,*in dependence on the sacred guidance of the Spirit, let us examine every part of God's word*.

Let us in particular *desire to be conformed to the word*as far as we understand it; and then there is no fear but that we shall be guided into all truth, as far at least as shall be necessary for our own personal welfare, and for the transforming of our souls into the image of our God.

We cannot conclude this part of our subject with more appropriate words than those of our excellent Liturgy, "O Lord, from whom all good things do come; grant to us your humble servants, that by your holy inspiration we may think those things that are good, and by your merciful guiding may perform the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

***~~#1974~~***

***~~ON THE CORRUPTION OF HUMAN NATURE~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 10:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.15)~~***

"I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say."

IN the appeal which we have proposed to make to your judgment, we shall confine ourselves to things of primary and fundamental importance. We are little disposed to enter upon a field of doubtful disputation: for though we think that every truth in the Holy Scriptures is important, and that some of those points which are more controverted are exceeding valuable when received rightly and improved for our advancement in the divine life; yet, as the acceptance or rejection of them may consist with real and vital piety, we gladly wave all consideration of them, it being our wish, not to establish the dogmas of a party, but*to bring home to the hearts and consciences of our hearers those principles which constitute the basis of our holy religion*.

**The first fundamental principle regarding man, is that he is a fallen creature, guilty, polluted, helpless.**The knowledge of this lies at the root of all true religion. In proportion as this is seen and felt, will the provision made for our recovery by Jesus Christ be valued. And in proportion as persons either overlook, or maintain in theory only, this truth, the whole plan of salvation by Christ will be disregarded and despised.

But the views and sentiments of those who maintain the depravity of our fallen nature are frequently and greatly misrepresented. Injudicious persons, it is true, may speak unguardedly and unadvisedly on this subject, as they may well be expected to do on every subject; but as the crudities of an ill-informed and violent partisan could not properly be stated as exhibiting a just view of the principles of any government; so neither can the rash and unqualified assertions of the inexperienced be justly imputed to those who promulgate truth in its more sober and measured forms.

It were to be wished, indeed, that our opponents would content themselves with statements that may be found: but they far exceed the wildest reveries that have ever issued from any ignorant enthusiast, and represent those who maintain the total depravity of our nature as reducing men to the condition of stocks and stones.

We beg permission therefore to state with some measure of precision what we mean, when we say that *man is altogether polluted in every faculty of his soul, and destitute of all true goodness.*

**We do not mean to say that men may not be comparatively good by nature.**There is as great a difference between men's natural dispositions as between their intellectual powers. As some children are quick and lively in their apprehension—while others are dull and stupid; so some are mild, affectionate, and generous in their tempers—while others are fierce, vindictive, and selfish. The children of the same parents, who have seen only the same examples set before them, are often as different in their dispositions, as if no ground of resemblance had existed between them.

**In like manner we concede that persons may be *morally*good, not merely in comparison with others, but to a certain degree really and substantially so.** That is, a person may possess by nature such a measure of candor, and benevolence, and integrity, as almost to put to shame those who profess to have been renewed by grace. How much, indeed of these dispositions may arise from education as well as from nature, we are not anxious to inquire: we wish to give to nature as much as can with any show of reason, be claimed for her; and then to point out that kind and measure of goodness which she never communicated to any man, nor ever enabled any person to attain.

**We say then, that no man by nature is *spiritually*good, or good towards God.** No man by nature loves God, or delights himself in God. No man truly fears him. There may be a superstitious dread of him as an Almighty Being—but no real fear to offend him, and no true desire to please and glorify him. No one by nature has, what I may call, a creature-like spirit towards him. No one by nature:

feels his obligations towards him as his *Creator*,

or places implicit confidence in him as his *Preserver*,

or rejoices in him as his *Benefactor*,

or delights to execute his will as his *Governor*,

or labors to approve himself to him as his *Judge*.

A spirit of independence pervades every child of Adam, and is, perhaps beyond everything else, the great effect and evidence of our apostasy from God.

Self-will,

self-seeking,

self-confidence,

self-delight—

are but so many branches issuing from this root.

The loss of that creature-like spirit which possessed the mind of Adam in Paradise, is absolutely universal. Whatever differences there may be between men as to their moral dispositions, there is none in this: SELF has usurped the place of God, and is to every man by nature the principle and end of all his actions.

As we have no longer by nature a *creature-like*spirit—so neither have we, what, if we may be allowed the expression, we would call, a self-condemned *sinner-like*spirit. It might be supposed, that the universal fruit of our fall would be contrition, and self-loathing, and self-abhorrence; and that, a way having been revealed for our restoration to God's favor, we would be occupied day and night in the grateful contemplation of it, and in the pursuit of so inestimable a blessing.

But here again we are all upon a par: the men of finer clay and more exquisite workmanship, are here on a level with vessels of the most base materials and most degraded use. *A spirit of humiliation for sin is never found, but as it is infused into the soul by the Spirit of God.*

It might be supposed, that the desire of obtaining reconciliation with God would stimulate every man to earnest inquiries after a Savior, and to grateful thanksgivings to God for the unspeakable gift of his only dear Son. But so far are these feelings from being the natural growth of the human heart, that they are never formed in the heart but with great difficulty, nor ever preserved alive there but with constant vigilance and unremitting exertions.

We do indeed read of a Samuel, a Josiah, a Timothy, sanctified from a youthful period of life: but this was not in consequence of any natural piety in them, any more than in others; but in consequence of peculiar operations of divine grace upon their souls.

**Connected with this lack of a sinner-like spirit, is a love of sin in all its branches.** We say again, there is not in every man the same predominance of sin in all its branches; but the same propensity to it there is. The seed of every evil lies buried in our fallen nature: in some it acquires more strength than in others, and manifests itself by more hateful fruits; but in all people this love of sin lives, it festers, and, if circumstances were to arise to call it forth, would grow up to maturity in one as well as in another.

Thus we have delivered our sentiments on the corruption of man's nature; and we will add a few words respecting that which is so intimately connected with it.

***~~The second fundamental principle regarding man is: Our natural inability to do anything that is good.~~***

When a nature is so depraved, as ours from the foregoing statement appears to be, there can be no disposition to anything truly and spiritually good. On the contrary, there must be an aversion to what is good, and, in consequence of that, an *incapacity*to engage successfully in the prosecution or performance of any spiritually good thing. But here we beg to be distinctly understood, that the incapacity to do anything that is good is a spiritual, and not a physical, incapacity. A man is not under the same kind of incapacity to stop the progress of his corruptions, that he is to stop the sun in its course: it is because of *his inveterate inclination to evil, and aversion to what is good, that he cannot bring the powers of his mind to bear on the prosecution of anything that is truly and spiritually good*. If he had the inclination and the desire, his exertions would be proportioned to the extent of those desires. And though we are far from saying that those exertions would be sufficient of themselves for the accomplishment of his object, they would certainly be accompanied with power from on high, and such a power too as would render them effectual for the desired end. It is the lack of these pious inclinations that keeps us from looking unto God for his effectual aid; and consequently from attaining that strength, whereby alone we can subdue and mortify our natural corruptions.

When therefore we say, that man is by nature altogether helpless, and incapable of doing anything that is spiritually good, we wish it to be borne in mind, what the incapacity is of which we speak. Were it an incapacity that rendered all exertion nugatory, man's responsibility for his actions would, as far as relates to that point, be at an end; but *our incapacity arising altogether from the inveteracy of our love to sin, and the total alienation of our hearts from what is truly good, it ceases to be an extenuation of our guilt, and becomes rather an aggravation of it.*

We have now spoken what will be sufficient to mark our sentiments respecting the *corruption*and *spiritual inability*of fallen man.

We say of man, that he is altogether destitute of everything that is truly and spiritually good, and altogether prone to evil; though, in respect of the visible fruits of evil, there is a considerable difference between one and another.

We say too that man is incapable of doing anything that is truly and spiritually good; but that his incapacity arises, not from any lack of physical powers, but of moral and spiritual dispositions. He has the same power to exercise his mind in one thing as in another, if he has the inclination and desire so to do; the fault is in his *will*, which is averse to good, and in his *affections*, which are set on evil.

At the same time, whatever is the state of a man's will and affections, he has not in himself the *power*to do the will of God; for that end he must be strengthened by the Spirit of God: but that aid no man shall want, who seeks it from God in spirit and in truth.

And now I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say: Is there anything extravagant in this statement? Is there anything that can warrant such representations as are too often given of the sentiments of those who maintain the doctrines above considered? We speak not as to wise men only, but as to men of candor and sensibility, of truth and equity: is there anything here which is not most decidedly declared in the Holy Scriptures? Is there anything which is not sanctioned and confirmed by all the doctrines of our Church?

Let us briefly institute this inquiry, in order that the truth of our statement may yet more abundantly appear.

*What says the Scripture?*The testimony of the Most High God is this, that when he looked down from Heaven to behold the children of men, he saw "that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually! [Genesis 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.5)." Can the total corruption of our nature be stated in stronger terms than these?

But it will be more satisfactory, perhaps, to refer to a passage where an inspired Apostle is establishing the very point in question. Look then to the third chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and let us hear what he says. He is proving that all mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under sin; and in support of his assertions he brings together a whole cloud of witnesses: "It is written," says he, "What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one! [Romans 3:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.9-12)."

Have we spoken anything stronger than this? Yet, in a subsequent chapter, the Apostle speaks in stronger language still: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can*it be, [Romans 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.7)."

In another Epistle he denies the power of any man by nature even so much as to know the things of the Spirit; "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither *can*he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14)."

Nor does he confine these assertions to any particular age or nation: he says of himself and his fellow Apostles, that even they, in their unregenerate state, "fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and *were by nature children of wrath*, even as others, [Ephesians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.3)." Even after he was regenerate, be still speaks of himself, so far as he was yet unrenewed, as destitute of all good; "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing."

We think that these Scriptures will abundantly suffice for the confirmation of our sentiments from Scripture. The person that will not be convinced by these passages, would not be convinced even though we were to multiply quotations to ever so great an extent.

Turn then to what, with this assembly at least, must have considerable weight, I mean the authentic records of the doctrines of our Church.

In the 9th article, entitled "Original or Birth Sin," it is said, "Original sin is the fault and corruption of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusts always contrary to the spirit; and therefore every person born into this world deserves God's wrath and damnation."

Then, in reference to the impotency of man to do anything that is truly good, it is said in the next article, "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God. We have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ assisting us that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will."

We forbear to comment on these articles, because all of us can refer to them and examine them for ourselves: but there is an end of all certainty in language if these articles do not affirm all that we have expressed in the foregoing statement.

The *homilies*of our Church speak in numberless passages to the same effect. They say, "Man of his own nature is fleshly and carnal, corrupt and naught, sinful and disobedient to God, without any spark of goodness in him, (mark these words, "without any spark of goodness in him") without any virtuous or godly motion, only given to evil thoughts and wicked deeds."

In our *Liturgy*states, "Almighty God, who see that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves".

It would occupy too much time if we were to multiply quotations on these subjects. The Articles, the Homilies, the Liturgy, all abound with expressions to the same effect; so that no man can read them with candor, and doubt what the sentiments of our reformers were on these subjects.

But we will bring the matter still nearer home, and agree to have the point determined by every man's own experience. Let every one of us look back to the earliest period of his life, and see what have been his dispositions towards God.

Did we, in proportion as our rational powers were expanded, employ them in the contemplation of God as our Creator, our Benefactor, our Redeemer, and our Judge?

Have we felt a sincere solicitude to please him, and to glorify his name?

Has everything that is contrary to his will been hateful in our eyes, and has it been shunned by us with abhorrence?

Has it been our delight to draw near to him from day to day in the exercise of prayer and praise, and to implore help from him that we may mortify every corrupt affection, and be gradually transformed into his image in righteousness and true holiness?

Nay, we will go no farther than this very day, and ask whether such were the exercises of our minds when we rose from our beds, and whether we find it an easy matter to preserve our minds in such a frame as this? Do we not find that the things of time and sense thrust out all these holy affections, and that God, instead of being the one object before our eyes, is scarcely to be found in all our thoughts? I speak as to wise men, and to men of integrity. Declare the truth before God: Say whether or not you yourselves are fallen from God? Say whether piety is the natural produce of your souls? Say whether you find holy and heavenly thoughts, or carnal and earthly thoughts, have the readier entertainment in your minds? Say whether or not you are impotent to good; or go and try it when you leave this place: Go, and say with yourselves, 'I will bring my own mind to a state of deep humiliation for my past sins; I will exercise lively gratitude to God for his sparing mercy hitherto; I will look with steadfast faith to Christ as my only and all-sufficient Savior; and I will rejoice and delight in him as my present portion, and my eternal great reward.'

Do this; do it only for the remainder of this day; and then will we confess, that all that we have spoken is a libel upon human nature, and that man is neither so corrupt nor so helpless as the Scriptures and the writings of our reformers have represented him.

Whatever may be thought of all our preceding observations, it must surely be acknowledged fair, when we leave every man to be his own accuser, and constitute him judge in his own cause. I repeat it; this is the tribunal to which we make our appeal, and by your own impartial judgment we will venture to abide.

Anticipating your decision, (for we doubt not but that the faithful monitor within you has already pronounced it,) we ground on your own acknowledgments

***~~"A word of exhortation"—~~***

**First, if we are such corrupt and helpless creatures, let us seek to obtain a deep and abiding sense of our wretched condition.** What ought we to feel, who have lived as without God in the world, who have exalted to his throne all the vanities of time and sense, and have, in fact, been a god unto ourselves, doing our own will, finding our own pleasure, and seeking our own glory?

What, I say, ought such persons to feel? What view ought they to have of their own conduct? Is it a small measure of humiliation and contrition that befits such persons?

Take into the account also what blessings that God, whom we have so neglected, has from time to time been pouring out upon us; and let us reflect, above all, on his incomprehensible love in giving his only-begotten Son to die for us, and in following us incessantly with offers of a free and full salvation through him. Think, moreover, of the strivings of his Holy Spirit with us from time to time, and of the resistance which we have opposed to his sacred motions. Reflect, I say, on these things, and then say, Whether our eyes ought not to be a fountain of tears to run down night and day for all our iniquities and abominations.

Indeed it is not a mere sigh that the occasion calls for; nor is it a few heartless acknowledgments that will suffice: the very best of us has need to smite on his bosom with anguish of heart, and to cry from his inmost soul:*God be merciful to me a sinner!*Nothing less than this will in any respect answer the demands of our offended God: it is the broken and contrite spirit alone which he will not despise.

O let us seek to humble ourselves aright! Let us implore help from God, who alone can take away the heart of stone, and give us a heart of flesh! Let us look to Jesus our ascended Savior, who is exalted to give repentance as well as remission of sins! Let us entreat of him so to discover to us the enormity of our guilt, that we may mourn and be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.

**In the next place, if such be our guilt and helplessness, let us not only humble ourselves for it, but seek for the remission of our sins in Jesus' blood.**O, thanks be to God! "there is a fountain opened for sin and for impurity!" There is a Savior, "whose blood will cleanse from all sin," and "who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." He has made reconciliation for us through the blood of his cross; and through his sacrifice and intercession we may yet find acceptance with our offended God. In his righteousness we may be clothed; and, arrayed in that, we shall stand before God "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; yes, holy, and without blemish."

We do indeed, in the first place, urge the necessity of repentance: but no man must rest in his repentance, however deep it may be: the offender, under the law, not only confessed his sins over his sacrifice, but laid them upon the head of the victim. So must we do; we must transfer all our sins to the head of our Great Sacrifice; and he, like the scapegoat, will carry them all away to the land of oblivion!

**Lastly, let us seek to be renewed in our hearts by the influence of the Holy Spirit.** He is justly called in our Catechism, "the Sanctifier of all the elect people of God." It is he who must "give us both to will and to do;" and if we set ourselves in earnest to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," we need not fear but that he will help our infirmities, and his grace shall be sufficient for us. Polluted as we are, we would yet be sanctified throughout in body, soul, and spirit, if only we would plead in earnest for his renewing influence. And helpless as we are, we would yet be strengthened with might by his agency in our inward man, and be enabled to do all things through his gracious communications.

This is the true use of Christian principles. To acknowledge the extent of our fall, is of no use—unless we seek for a recovery through the sacrifice of our Redeemer, and through the influence of the Eternal Spirit. Let us but apply these remedies; and all aversion to see the depth of our guilt and misery will vanish instantly. We shall be in no fear of being too much depressed by a sense of our sin; but shall rather desire to know the full extent of our malady, that God may be the more glorified in our restoration to spiritual health. And if indeed we are disposed to implore help from God, then may we profitably sum up our requests in these words, "Grant to us, Lord, we beseech you, the Spirit to think, and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do anything that is good without you, may, by you, be enabled to live according to your will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

***~~#1975~~***

***~~ON THE NEW BIRTH~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 10:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.15)~~***

"I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say."

[Editor's note: The *Anglican theology*expressed in this section to be unbiblical. Simeon holds to the error of *infant baptism*,thus his arguments below are at best confusing. Please see out section on Baptism: https://www.gracegems.org/1/Baptism.htm]

THE subject to which we would now draw your attention, and which is most intimately connected with that of our fallen state, and of our depravity by nature, is the doctrine of the New Birth. It has been already shown, that we are altogether born in sin and corrupt in all our faculties; and it is obvious, that *a great change must pass upon our souls before we can be fit for the enjoyment of those heavenly mansions, where no impure thing can enter.*

In order to invalidate this doctrine, occasion has been taken from the use of the word which we translate *regeneration*, to confound this doctrine with baptism. The argument used is this: The word occurs but twice in the Scriptures, and neither time has it anything to do with that spiritual change which enthusiasts insist upon as necessary to our salvation. One of the times it is used in reference to baptism, and is expressly distinguished from the renewing of the Holy Spirit; as when it is said "God has saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, [Titus 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.5);" and the other time, it has nothing to do either with baptism or the new birth, but refers to a totally distinct subject.

Now we grant, that this particular term, "the washing of regeneration," is here used as our objector states: and we also grant, that if nothing more were said in Scripture respecting a new birth than what is expressed under that particular term, there would be very great weight in the objection.

But the doctrine of the new birth is not at all founded on the use of that particular term. The term *regeneration*, indeed, has a peculiar fitness to express being born again: and when it is so peculiarly fit for this purpose, we cannot but think that the non-application of it to the subject in the Holy Scriptures, would be a very weak argument against the doctrine itself, when that doctrine is expressed as clearly as possible by various other terms of the same import.

However, we wish not to contend about a word: it is not words, but things, that we insist upon; and therefore, waving the use of that particular term, we shall speak in the common phraseology of Scripture, of being "born again," or "born from above," or "born of God."

But that we may leave no room for misapprehension respecting our sentiments, we shall begin with **stating what we do *not*mean, when we insist upon the doctrine of the new birth.**

It is supposed by many, and indeed affirmed by some, that we require a sudden impulse of the Holy Spirit, which, without any cooperation on the part of man, is to convert the soul to God; and that we require this change to be so sensibly and perceptibly wrought, that the subject of it shall be able to specify the day and hour when it took place.

But all this we utterly disclaim. We say, indeed, that God may effect his work in any way that he pleases; and that, if he chooses to convert men now, precisely as he did the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, or as he did the persecuting Saul on his way to Damascus, he is at liberty to do it; and no man in the universe is authorised to say that he cannot, or shall not, or will not, do it. But we never require anything of the kind: we require nothing *sudden*. It may be so *gradual*, as that the growth of it, like the seed in the parable, shall at no time be particularly visible, either to the observation of others, or to the person's own mind: "it shall spring and grow up, he knows not how, [Mark 4:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 4.27)."

We deny that we ever speak of it us wrought by an irresistible impulse of the Spirit, or without the cooperation of the man himself: for that man is in all cases a free agent: he is never wrought upon as a mere machine. He is drawn, indeed, but it is with the cords of a man; that is, by considerations proper to influence a rational being, and by feelings which those considerations excite in his soul. He is influenced by hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, just as any other man is; only the Spirit of God takes away from his heart that veil which was upon it (and thereby enables the man to see both temporal and eternal things in their true light, according to their relative importance); and then inclines the heart to act agreeably to the dictates of sound judgment. How far the Spirit of God works, and how far the mind of man, is a point which no human being can determine; but that "God gives us both to will and to do," we are certain, since "every good and perfect gift comes down from him."

But at the same time we know that man does and must "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling;" and so far is the Divine agency from being a reason for neglect on man's part, that it is the great motive and encouragement which God himself affords him to activity and exertion, [Philippians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.12-13).

Thus we have endeavored to guard against the misrepresentations with which this subject is usually disguised and deformed.

***~~We now come to state what our views of the subject really are:~~***

We have before shown, that man by nature has nothing in him that is spiritually good, or good towards God. But in order to be made fit for Heaven, he must be made spiritually good; that is, he must love what God loves, and hate what God hates; and be, and do, what God commands.

Does God hate sin in all its branches? He must hate it too, and loath and abhor himself for having ever committed it.

Does God love holiness? He also must love a holy God, and holy exercises, and holy affections; and must so love holy things, as to make them the continual objects of his most earnest pursuit. In relation to everything that is holy and heavenly, "the same mind must be in him who was in Christ Jesus."

Has God required him to come as a weary and heavy-laden sinner to Jesus, and to live altogether by faith in Christ, for wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; and to boast, not in any human strength or goodness, but wholly and exclusively in the Lord Jesus Christ? The man's mind must be brought to this, and Christ must be exceeding precious to him in all these points of view. Yes, he must "determine to know nothing, and to rejoice in nothing, but Christ and him crucified."

***~~These views and these principles must not rest as mere notions in the head, but must be wrought into the heart, and exhibited in the whole of the life and conduct.~~***

Before we proceed, we will beg permission to ask: Is this, or is it not, a reasonable statement and a reasonable requirement? I speak as unto wise men; and I call upon you to judge, as in the sight of God, whether these requirements can justly be branded with *enthusiasm*, or *severity*, or any odious character whatever?

But to proceed: This change far exceeds the power of fallen man. Whatever powers you may be pleased to invest him with, they fall very far short of this. A *semblance*of these things he may put on; but he cannot form them really and truly in his heart. This is the work of the Spirit of God, who is promised to us for this very end: "A new heart will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and *cause*you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my commandments to do them [Ezekiel 36:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.26-27)."

As to the mode of effecting this great work, we have already observed, the Spirit is not restricted: but whenever it is truly effected, then we say, that the man is born again, and born of the Spirit; and *the change that has taken place within him, we call the new birth*.

Now the question is, Whether this be the new birth or not? and whether we do right in insisting upon it as necessary to man's salvation?

In answer to this, we reply, not only that the Scriptures call this a new birth, a new creation, a being born of God, and a being born of the Spirit—but that an experience of it is predicated of all who are in a state of favor with God now, or shall find admission into his kingdom hereafter. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, or a new creation," says the Apostle, "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new [2 Corinthians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.17)." And our Lord, with repeated assertions, says to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God! [John 3:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.3-5)."

These declarations of our Lord to Nicodemus are peculiarly strong; because the import of them cannot with any appearance of reason be explained away. Some indeed have endeavored to explain this of infant baptism; but I wish that those, who think it can bear that construction, would see what sense they can on that supposition make of the whole context.

Let us suppose for a moment that baptism is the new birth, and that baptism was the point which our Lord so strongly insisted on; then why would our Lord, when explaining and enforcing his first assertion, so carefully distinguish between water-baptism, and the operations of the Holy Spirit; "Truly, truly, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God?" Here, admitting that he insisted on the necessity of being born of water, he insisted also on being born of the Spirit, in order that he might convince Nicodemus that he spoke, not of an outward and carnal, but of an inward and spiritual, change.

Again, how can his subsequent explanations apply to baptism? On the supposition that he speaks of a spiritual birth, his reasons are clear and forcible; "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh:" and therefore unfit for a spiritual kingdom: but "that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," and exactly suited to that kingdom which he was about to establish.

Again, if it were baptism of which he speaks, what connection has that with the wind, which blows where it wills, and which, though inexplicable in some respects, is invariably and infallibly to be seen in its effects? If it were baptism, it would blow, not where the Spirit wills, but where the parents and the minister desire: and as for its effects, they are for the most part visible to no human being.

It were much to be wished, that those who will have baptism to be the new birth would take this passage, and try what sense they can make of it according to their interpretation.

*Prejudice doubtless is so strong as to be convinced by nothing*; but I would marvel if a person possessed of a simple and unsophisticated mind, could withstand the evidence that would arise from this one passage alone.

But as some distinguished characters are very strong and positive upon this point, we think it not improper to enter somewhat more fully into it.

That we may not be misunderstood either in relation to what we conceive to be their sentiments, or what we would maintain in opposition to them, we will state precisely what it is in their views which we disapprove, and which we conceive it is of great importance to correct.

If by the term *regeneration*they meant an introduction into a new state, in which the baptized persons have a right and title to all the blessings of salvation, we would have no controversy with them.

If they meant that all adults, who in the exercise of penitence and faith are baptized into Christ, have in that ordinance the remission of their sins sealed to them, and the Holy Spirit in a more abundant measure communicated to them, we would not disagree with them.

If they meant that infants dedicated to God in baptism may and sometimes do (though in a way not discoverable by us, except by the fruits) receive a new nature from the Spirit of God in, and with, and by that ordinance, we could cordially join with them.

But they go much farther than all this; and assert, that all persons do necessarily by a divine appointment receive the Holy Spirit in such a manner and degree as really to be changed in the spirit of their minds into the very image of God in righteousness and true holiness, and so to partake of the Divine nature, that they never need afterwards to seek so great a change again. This we are constrained to combat as a fundamental error: and respecting it, we now, in humility and a spirit of love, venture to make our appeal to you.

Is the *new birth*so identified with *baptism*as to be universally and necessarily attendant on it?

To determine this question, let us examine what is said of the new birth in Scripture, and what of baptism.

Hear what is said of the new birth: "Whoever is born of God, overcomes the world." "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

Strong as this is, the same is yet more confidently expressed in another place: "We know, that whoever is born of God, sins not; but he who is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not, [1 John 5:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.18). Now we ask, Is this true of all that are baptized? Do they invariably, from the moment of their baptism, overcome the world? Do they never (willingly and habitually) commit sin? and are they incapable of so sinning because they are baptized? Do they so keep themselves, that the wicked one touches them not? I speak as to wise and candid, yes, as to honest, men; and ask, Whether in your consciences you can affirm such things of baptism; and, Whether, if you cannot, the new birth must not be a thing very different from baptism?

I will even abide by the testimony which every individual must give of himself: you have all been baptized: but have you all overcome the world? Are you all in such a state that you cannot knowingly and habitually commit sin? And have you so kept yourselves, that the wicked one does not touch you? Was there ever such a period in your lives? If there was, when was it? How long did it last? Why did you not continue it? Why are you not panting after it, and laboring for it again? But you know in your own hearts that *there are millions of baptized persons of whom these things are not true, nor ever were true; and that consequently the new birth must be a very different thing from baptism.*

Now then let us inquire also what is said of baptism. It is said, "Our Lord baptized no man." But was he not the means of any being born to God? It is said by Paul, that "God did not send him to baptize, but to preach the Gospel," but was he not sent to beget souls to God through the Gospel? He goes further, and says, "I thank God I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius." But would he have accounted it a proper ground of thanksgiving, if he had been instrumental to the conversion of no more than these? He tells us of many whom he had begotten by the Gospel, and who were his sons in the faith: and therefore we are sure, that *there is a new birth effected by the Word and Spirit of God, that is totally distinct from baptism.*

How can we account for it, that men, in the face of all this evidence, would maintain, as they do, this fatal error? In some cases it is to be feared, that, being averse to seek the spiritual change of which the Scriptures speak, *they are glad to lay hold on any error that shall lull their consciences asleep, and sanction their continuance in an unconverted state*. But with some we hope, that there is really an error of judgment arising from the things which are spoken of baptism in the Holy Scriptures. They do not consider, that, when it is said, "Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins;" those words were addressed to adults, who had just been informed, that Jesus was the Christ, and that, if they believed in him, and became his disciples, their sins would be blotted out. Expressions of this kind were highly proper as addressed to adults; but afford *no ground for the idea, that the rite of baptism is the new birth*.

We are no more disposed to detract from the honor of that sacred ordinance than our adversaries themselves. We admit, and beg you to bear in mind our admission, that great, exceeding great, benefit accrues to the soul from baptism. In many instances, where the ordinance is really attended upon in faith, and prayer is offered up to God in faith, we do believe that God bestows a peculiar blessing on the child: and, though we cannot ascertain that he does so but by the fruits that are afterwards produced—yet are we warranted from Scripture to believe, that the effectual fervent prayer of righteous people shall not go forth in vain; and that "whatever we ask, believing, we shall receive."

But even from the ordinance itself we may consider great good as arising to the soul; since, as in the case of circumcision, the person is thereby brought into covenant with God. The Israelites, as a nation in covenant with God, were highly privileged: for "to them," as the Apostle says, "belonged the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, [Romans 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.4)." The same, I doubt not, may be justly said of all that are baptized: indeed, we doubt not, but that our Reformers had that very passage of Scripture in their eye, when in our *baptismal service*they instructed us to thank God for having regenerated the baptized person by his Holy Spirit; and, in our *Catechism*, to speak of children as by the ordinance of baptism made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven. These expressions are doubtless strong; and so are Paul's expressions respecting the benefits of circumcision: and every blessing which he asserts to have been conveyed by circumcision, we may safely and truly apply to baptism. By the very admission of persons into covenant with God, they are brought into a new state, have a right and title to all these privileges; and by the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ they come to the actual possession of them.

We hope we shall not be considered as degrading our subject, if we attempt to present it more clearly to your minds, by an easy and familiar illustration. The subject is confessedly difficult; and if we can by any means simplify it, we shall render an important service to those who wish to understand it.

Take then a well-known ordinance from the laws of our own land. A person, to whom property has been bequeathed, has a right and title to it from the moment of the testator's death: but he cannot take possession, and have the full enjoyment of it, until he has complied with the due forms and requisitions of the law. Just so, a baptized person has a right and title to all the blessings of the Christian covenant as soon as he is baptized; but he must comply with the requisitions of the Gospel, and exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, before he can have the complete enjoyment of them.

We do not mean to lay any great stress on this illustration; we are aware it is far from complete; and we particularly desire that it may not be pressed beyond the occasion for which it is used; but we conceive that, imperfect as it is, it may serve to throw some light upon a subject, which has been, and yet is, a source of perplexity to many.

But the chief source of the fore-mentioned error is, that men do not distinguish between a change of state and a change of nature. Baptism is, as we have just shown, a change of state: for by it we become entitled to all the blessings of the new covenant; but it is not a change of nature. A change of nature may be communicated at the time that the ordinance is administered; but the ordinance itself does not communicate it now, any more than in the apostolic age. Simon Magus was baptized; and yet remained in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, as much after his baptism as he was before.

And so it may be with us: And this is an infallible proof, that the change which the Scriptures call the new birth, does not always and of necessity accompany this sacred ordinance. As the circumcision of the heart did not always accompany the circumcision of the flesh—so neither does the renovation of the soul always accompany the outward rite of baptism, which shadows it forth; and if only our opponents will distinguish the sign from the thing signified, and assign to each its proper place and office, there will be an immediate end of this controversy.

But it will not be amiss to examine briefly the different tendencies of these opposite doctrines, and to ascertain their comparative worth; in point of sobriety; in point of practical efficacy; and, lastly, in reference to their final outcome.

Which has the preference in point of **sobriety**; the doctrine of a new and spiritual birth, by the operation of the Spirit of God; or that of baptism being the new birth? It is objected to the former doctrine, that it is enthusiastic, and that it is accompanied with many absurd and baneful errors; namely, that its advocates insist on sudden impulses, which irresistibly, and without any cooperation on our parts, at some particular time that may at all subsequent periods be referred to, convert the soul to God.

Now we have before denied that the advocates for the new birth give any such representation of it, or that it is in its own nature associated with any such things.

But now observe the doctrine of our adversaries; namely, of those who identify baptism with the new birth: it is curious to observe to what an extent they fall into the very errors which they impute to us. They say, that we are born again in baptism, consequently, they,

First, make our new birth sudden.

Next, they make it irresistible; for the child cannot withstand the power of the priest.

Next, they make it without any cooperation on our part; for the child is wholly passive.

Next, they make it arbitrary according to the will of man; who may hasten it, or delay it, or prevent it, exactly as he pleases: whereas it is expressly said of all Christians, that they are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, [John 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.13)."

Next, they make it so determinate in point of time, that not the person himself only, but the whole world also, may know it, by consulting the register where the ceremony is recorded.

And, lastly, they are assured of it, not only without any evidence at all, but in the very face of all imaginable evidence to the contrary.

Who, I would ask, are the enthusiasts now? I will further ask, Whether the wildest fanatic that can be found at this day in Christendom entertains notions half so fanatical as these?

The Jews laid great and unscriptural stress on circumcision: but did they ever say that the circumcision of the flesh was the same as the circumcision of the heart? Or do our advocates for baptismal regeneration give credit either to the ancient or modern Jews, as actually born again by the rite of circumcision? The Jews did indeed think that all the circumcised among them would be saved; but it was on other grounds: it was from an idea that, as children of Abraham, they could not perish, being all of necessity interested in the covenant made with him and his seed: but never, as far as we know, did they so confound the sign with the thing signified, as to imagine, that they were of necessity made new creatures by the operation of God upon their souls, at the time that man performed a painful operation on their bodies!

But let us also examine the two opinions in reference to their practical efficacy. What is the tendency of the doctrine which requires men to seek from God an entire change both of heart and life; and declares them to be incapable of entering into the kingdom of Heaven until they have experienced this change? Its tendency manifestly is to awaken men from their slumbers in the way of sin, and to stir them up to seek a conformity to God in righteousness and true holiness.

But what is the tendency of the doctrine that identifies baptism with the new birth? Is it not to lull men asleep in their evil ways; to make them think that they do not need a new nature, but only a little reformation of some things, which may easily be amended whenever they please? I ask any candid man, Are not these the true and natural tendencies of the two opposite doctrines? and do not these tendencies strongly mark which of the two is right?

Lastly, Let us view them in reference to their final outcome.

Suppose that the doctrine of *baptismal regeneration*would prove erroneous, what will be the consequence to those who, having relied upon it as true, have never sought that spiritual birth which we maintain to be necessary to salvation? According to their own principles, they must perish: for, let it be remembered, that our opponents maintain the necessity of a new birth as well as we; only they maintain that they experienced it in their baptism.

But suppose that our doctrine proves erroneous; shall we perish because we were fearful that we had not yet attained that new birth, and continued with all diligence to seek it after we had actually attained it? The worst that could in that case be said, would be, that we had given ourselves some unnecessary concern and trouble: but our very opponents must acknowledge, that by that diligence we had "made our calling and election sure;" yes, if I may be allowed such an expression, we had made it *doubly sure*.

Can any one who considers this, sit down contentedly with the doubtful notion of having been regenerated in his baptism, and not exert himself to put the matter beyond a doubt? The pains used to obtain a new and spiritual birth will injure no man: but a neglect to seek it, from the idea of its having been imparted in baptism, will, if that idea be erroneous, plunge us into irremediable and endless misery. Which alternative, then, will any man of wisdom, yes, of common prudence, choose?

I think that enough has been said to show what the new birth really is, and that it must be sought and experienced by all who would find admittance into the kingdom of Heaven.

But we will yet further confirm what has been said, by two or three passages of Scripture, which bear directly upon the question, and show us the danger of listening to such delusions as are set in opposition to the truth which we are insisting on. "All are not Israel," says Paul, "who are of Israel? [Romans 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.6);" or, in other words,*all are not true Christians who are nominally so.*

Again, "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, [Galatians 6:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.15)." Here substitute the term baptism for the corresponding rite of circumcision, and you have in one single sentence every word that we have spoken.

Once more: "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God, [Romans 2:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.28-29)." Can there be plainer language than this? O that we may not trifle with God, and our own souls!

*It is an easy matter to adopt an opinion, and to maintain it in opposition to the most convincing statements: but we cannot change the truth of God*; nor, when we have passed into the eternal world, can we come back to rectify our errors. We may laugh at the new birth, and persuade ourselves that we have no need to be alarmed at the declarations of the Lord Jesus Christ in relation to it; but we cannot make him open the kingdom of Heaven to us when once the door is shut: we may knock, and say, Lord, I thought my infant baptism was sufficient! But he will say, 'Depart, I never knew you: My words were plain enough, if you had desired to understand them; but you did not choose to let go your beloved lusts; you did not choose to give yourselves up to me in newness of heart and life; and therefore you would "believe any lie" rather than comply with my word. Depart, therefore, and reap for ever the fruit of your own delusions!'

And now let me once more appeal to you as men of wisdom and integrity, whether your own experience does not confirm every word that I have spoken? Are not many of you sensible, that, notwithstanding your infant baptism, you have never been so born again, as to be brought out of darkness into light, and to be turned from the power of Satan unto God? Are you not sensible at this very hour, that it is not the one labor of your souls to walk as Christ walked, and to obtain an entire renovation of your souls after the Divine image? In a word, *Do you not find the current of your affections still running, agreeably to the bias of your corrupt nature, after the things of time and sense—instead of flowing, contrary to nature, upwards to high and heavenly things?*If so, the point is clear: you have an evidence within yourselves where the truth lies. Notwithstanding your infant baptism, you are yet unrenewed; you are yet in your sins; and you are lost for ever, if you die in your present state. O cry mightily to God for the gift of his Holy Spirit, and for the influence of his converting grace! Pray, as David did, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Then shall you know by your own happy experience, what it is to be born again; and in due time you shall be partakers of the inheritance to which you are born, even "that inheritance, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away."

***~~#1976~~***

***~~ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 10:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.15)~~***

"I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say."

IF there is any one question of more importance than all others, it is this, "How shall a man be just with God?" Many errors in relation to other points may be entertained in the mind, and yet our final salvation not be affected by them: but an error in reference to this point undermines the foundation of our hopes, and will involve our souls in everlasting ruin. We are anxious therefore to state, with all the precision in our power, what we apprehend to be the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures respecting the grounds of a sinner's acceptance before God. And here we are peculiarly solicitous to bespeak your candor; because there are in the world so many misconceptions, not to say, misrepresentations also, of the views of those who maintain the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

It is thought by some, that we make faith to consist in a strong persuasion of the mind that we are in the favor of God: but we are far from entertaining any such opinion. *Whatever is founded on a mere persuasion of our own minds, is a baseless fabric, a fatal delusion*. The only warrant for a sinner's hope, is the written word of God: and that word is the same, whether it comes suddenly to our minds, and excite in us an assurance of our saving interest in it, or be brought more gradually to our view, and be received with fear and trembling.

The promises made to repenting and believing sinners are, I say, independent of any frames or feelings of ours; and are the only legitimate ground of our hope in God: and a simple reliance on them, and on Christ as revealed in them, we call faith.

What we mean by being justified by faith, we shall also explain in few words:

We all, as sinners, are obnoxious to the wrath of God: but the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in the Gospel, as having by his own obedience unto death obtained eternal redemption for us. To him we are commanded to look as to the only sin-atoning sacrifice: and we are assured, that, on our doing this with penitence and faith, "we shall be justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." With this command we comply: we look to God as reconciled to us in the Son of his love; and in the exercise of this faith we become interested in all that Christ has done and suffered for us. Our iniquities are blotted out as a morning cloud; the righteousness of Christ is given to us, and put upon us; and, arrayed in that spotless robe, we stand before God without spot or blemish. Thus are we accepted in the beloved, or, in other words, we are justified by faith.

We will also add a few words, to declare what we mean when we say, that we are justified by faith without works:

We do not mean that a justified person is at liberty to neglect good works; but that the person who seeks for acceptance through Christ must not bring with him any works whatever, either ceremonial or moral, as a joint ground of his hope, or as a price which he is to pay for a saving interest in Christ. *He must, in point of salvation, renounce his best works as much as the greatest sins he ever committed: his trust must be altogether in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Here it will be proper just to mention a mistake which some have fallen into, respecting the works which are so carefully excluded by Paul from the office of justifying. It is said, that wherever works are mentioned as not justifying the sinner, the expression used is, "The works of the law:" and that therefore we may conclude, that not works in general are excluded from this office, but only the works of the ceremonial law. But the truth is, that "works" are often mentioned in this view, without any notice of the law; and the inference drawn from this unfounded assertion only shows how hard the adversaries of the doctrine we are insisting upon find it to reconcile their opinions, in any plausible manner, with the statements of Paul. Let one passage suffice to settle this point. It is said (where the point in question is expressly debated), "If Abraham were justified by works, he has something whereof to glory."

But what works could the Apostle mean? Those of the ceremonial law? The ceremonial law was not promulgated until four hundred and thirty years after the time that Abraham was justified; and, consequently, the works which are spoken of as incapable of justifying him, were not those of the ceremonial law, but works generally, of any kind whatever.

To make known our views, then, in few words: We consider justification as an act of sovereign grace and mercy, given to sinners, on account of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done and suffered for them, and in no respect on account of their own merits or deserts: and it is solely through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, that we do, or ever can, obtain this mercy at God's hands.

Now, then, the question is whether this be the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, or not.

Let us then address ourselves to this important subject, and make our appeal to you, as men of wisdom and judgment, to determine, whether or not our statements be right, and whether they be of such fundamental importance as we profess them to be.

But here it may be thought that we shall merely bring forward some passages of Paul's writings, which may be differently interpreted; and that, after all, the question will remain where we found it. But this shall not be our mode of proceeding. If the point be as we maintain, we may expect that it will run, like the warp, throughout the whole Scriptures, and not depend upon any particular expressions that may here and there be interwoven with it by one favorite author. We will take then, but with all possible brevity, a comprehensive view of the subject; and will inquire—

***~~I. What is the true way of our salvation?~~***

Under the former of these heads we will distinctly examine,

What was the way of salvation dictated by the *moral*law?

What was the way of salvation dictated by the *ceremonial*law?

What was the way of salvation dictated proclaimed by the *prophets*?

What was the way of salvation dictated by our *Lord Jesus Christ*himself?

What was the way of salvation dictated maintained by his *Apostles*?

What was the way in which the most *eminent saints*of old were justified?

What is the way marked out in the authentic records of our Church?

Of course, on these several points we must be very concise; but we hope, nevertheless, to be clear and satisfactory.

**What, then, was the way of salvation to which the *moral*law directed us?**Our adversary will here exultingly reply, "by works." True, as given unto man in innocence, it did say, "Do this, and live." But what does it say to fallen man? Does it encourage him to hope for salvation by his obedience to it? Hear what it says to all who are under it: "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Does this afford us any encouragement to seek salvation by our works? Our obedience must have been absolutely perfect from the first moment to the last hour of our lives, or else the law, instead of promising any reward, denounces a curse against us; and on this account it is said by infallible authority, that "as many as are under the law, are under the curse!"

Is it asked, Why then was it promulgated in so solemn a manner on Mount Sinai? I answer, To show us how awfully sin abounded in the world, and how much we stood in need of a Savior; and thus to "shut us up to the faith that would afterwards be revealed," and to constrain us to seek for salvation by faith alone.

This is what we are expressly told by an inspired Apostle: "What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions *until*the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one. Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith, [Galatians 3:19-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.19-24)."

**Next, let us hear the *ceremonial*law.** In all the burnt-offerings, and the peace-offerings, and the sin-offerings—a fundamental part of the institution was that the person who brought the offering would put his hand on the head of the victim, in token that he transferred all his sins to it; and then, when the sacrifice was slain, and its blood sprinkled according to the commandment, the offender was liberated from the sin that he had committed, Leviticus 1. 2. 3.

But we will direct your attention to the offerings which were annually made for the sins of all Israel, on the great day of atonement. Two goats were taken: one was to be slain for a sin-offering for the whole people of Israel, and its blood was to be carried within the veil, and sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat. Then the live goat was brought forth, and the high-priest was to lay both his hands upon his head, and to confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat: and then the goat was to be led away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness, bearing upon him all their iniquities, unto a land not inhabited, [Leviticus 16:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 16.15); [Leviticus 16:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 16.21-22).

Can anything be conceived more plain and simple than this? Who does not see that *the sins of the people were expiated by the blood of the one, and carried away in consequence of their having been transferred to the other?*Who does not here see written, as with a sun-beam, the truth it typified; namely, that "Christ died for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification;" and that we are saved entirely by the exercise of faith in him; or, in other words, by transferring our guilt to him, and looking for mercy through his all-atoning sacrifice? Truly, if we make no better use of the explanations given us in the New Testament than to refine, and cavil, and obscure the truth, we had better go at once, and learn of a poor ignorant Jew: for there was no Jew so ignorant, but, when he saw that rite performed, could tell you in what way his iniquities were to be forgiven. And, if only we will bear in mind that ordinance, we may defy all the sophists upon earth: for it speaks the truth so plainly, that "he who runs may read it."

**Turn we to the prophets** They bear one uniform testimony to the truth we are proclaiming. Through fear of detaining you too long, we will wave the mention of any particular passages; because, if we believe the declaration of God himself, their testimony is all summed up in one infallible declaration: "To him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins [Acts 10:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.43)."

Our blessed Lord invariably declared, that his blood would be shed for the remission of sins, and that in no other way than by faith in him could any man be saved. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me [John 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.6)." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the Son of man be lifted up; that whoever believes in him would not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him would not perish, but have everlasting life." "He who believes on him, is not condemned; but he who believes not, is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God [John 3:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.14-16); [John 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.18)."

If it is said, that, in answer to one who inquired, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" he replied, "If you will enter into life, keep the commandments;" we answer, he did so: and we highly disapprove of that mode which some take of evading the force of his words, by saying that he spoke them ironically. We are persuaded that our Lord would not have indulged in irony or sarcasm on such an occasion, and least of all towards one whom "he loved, Compare [Matthew 19:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 19.16-17) with [Mark 10:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 10.18); [Mark 10:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 10.21)." The meaning of his answer was; "Come, and follow me in all that I command you, and you shall gradually be guided into all truth." And the command which he immediately gave the Youth, to go and sell all that he had, and to look for treasure in Heaven, put his sincerity to the trial, and showed him, that, notwithstanding the concern he professed to learn the way to life, he was more attached to his wealth than to his Savior and his God.

When our blessed Lord more explicitly declared the way of salvation, he spoke of himself as having come into the world for the express purpose of giving up his life "a ransom for many [Mark 10:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 10.45)," and of giving men his own flesh to eat, and his blood to drink, for the life of their souls [John 6:52-58](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.52-58).

**Of the views given by the Apostles**, our opponents themselves have but little doubt; and hence, for the most part, the Epistles are no very favorite part of Scripture with them: and some will go so far as to say, that they think it would have been better if the Epistles of Paul had never been written.

But let us hear *Peter*on the day of Pentecost. When three thousand persons at once were crying out with great agony of mind, "Men, and brethren, what shall we do?" his answer to them is, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins [Acts 2:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.38);" that is, 'Change your minds with respect to Him whom you have crucified as a malefactor; and, with deep contrition of heart for your rejection of him, look to him now as the only Savior of your souls, and become his open followers in token of your faith in him.' The same Apostle, addressing the whole Jewish Sanhedrin, speaks thus of that Jesus whom they had crucified: "This is the stone which was set at nothing of you builders, which is become the cornerstone: neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, [Acts 4:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.10-12)."

Of *Paul*it is scarcely needful to speak. Only let a man, desirous of knowing the truth of God, read with an unprejudiced mind the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and he could no more doubt what were Paul's sentiments, than he could doubt whether the sun shines at noonday. That a learned and ingenious man may involve the plainest subjects in obscurity, and may maintain even the most palpable absurdities with somewhat like a plausible course of argument, is well known to this audience, who are habituated to investigate theories of every kind.

But the Scriptures are written for the poor: and it is a fact, that the poor do understand them; while the vain disputers of this world are bewildered in their own mazes, and by the just judgment of God are "taken in their own craftiness, [1 Corinthians 1:18-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.18-29); [1 Corinthians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.18-19)." But, that we may not seem as if we took Paul's testimony for granted, we will bring to your remembrance that answer which he gave to the jailor, when inquiring, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He replied to the same effect as Peter had done on the day of Pentecost, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved! [Acts 16:30-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.30-31)."

We will mention also that striking reproof which he gave to Peter, for countenancing, by his dissimulation, the idea, that something besides faith in Christ was necessary to salvation: "We (we Jews, we Apostles,) knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified, [Galatians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.16)."

Here perhaps it will be urged, that the testimony of James is altogether on the opposite side; for that he says, "We are justified by works, and not by faith alone, [James 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.24)." But if only we attend to the scope of James's argument, we shall see that he does not at all contradict Paul. James is writing to some who were disposed to abuse Paul's doctrine of justification by faith only; who "said that they had faith [James 2:14-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.14-26)," but had no works to support their claim. These he tells that *their faith was dead, and no better than the faith of devils*. He declares to them, that, as it would be to no purpose to profess compassion for a fellow-creature, when at the same time we made no effort to relieve his distress; so it is in vain to profess faith in Christ, if we show not forth our faith by our works.

Abraham and Rahab were believers; but they evinced by their conduct, of what kind their faith was; namely, that it was not a dead and barren, but a lively and operative, faith. And we in like manner must give, by our works, an evidence that our faith is genuine: for in any pretensions which we make to a saving faith, it is by our works that we must be justified (or proved upright), and not by faith only. Paul, on the other hand, is arguing expressly on the subject of a sinner's justification before God; and he maintains that no man is, or can be, justified in any other way than by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Next, let us see what the *most eminent saints*of old found effectual for their salvation.** And here the path is prepared for us by Paul, so that we need little more than quote his words. In the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where he is arguing this very point, he asks, "What shall we then say, that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, has found (That is, has found effectual for his justification)? For if Abraham were justified by works, he has whereof to glory, but not before God (That is, he has nothing whereof to glory before God). For what says the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now to him who works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt: but to him who works not, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness: even as David also describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works; saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man, to whom the Lord will not impute sin [Romans 4:1-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.1-8)." We regret that we have not time to make any observations upon this passage: but whoever will read it attentively will find that every word we have uttered is confirmed by it, beyond the power of sophistry to set aside.

**To Abraham and David under the Old Testament, we will add Paul under the New** **Testament**; and methinks, if he had no righteousness of his own wherein to trust, we cannot pretend to any. Hear, then, what he says respecting the grounds of his hope: "We desire to win Christ, and to be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is by the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith, [Philippians 3:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.8-9)." Are we so much holier than he, that when he renounced all trust in his righteousness, we would make ours, either in whole or in part, the ground of our dependence? After all this, it is scarcely needful to refer to the avowed sentiments of our reformers: indeed we have no time to do it at any length: we will content ourselves therefore with reciting to you the eleventh article of our Church: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by faith; and not for our own works or deservings. Why, that we are justified by faith alone, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification."

***~~II. We now come, in the second place, to show that faith in Christ alone, is the appointed way of acceptance with God—~~***

This part of our subject being of such vast importance, we must beg permission to enter into it somewhat minutely; and to show, first, that this alone accords with the character given of the true Gospel; and, next, that this alone is suited to our condition as fallen sinners.

**As to the marks which characterize the Gospel, one of peculiar importance is, that it magnifies the grace of God.** We are told by Paul, that God gave his Gospel to us, "that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." And if we consider salvation as entirely by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the grace of God is indeed magnified beyond all the powers of language to express. The gift of God's only dear Son to die for us, the laying of all our iniquities on him, the accepting of his vicarious sacrifice in our behalf, the offering of a full salvation to all the sinners of mankind, on account of what he has done and suffered for us; a bestowing of this salvation freely, without money and without price, even upon the very chief of sinners; all this is such a stupendous work of grace, that it fills even Heaven itself with wonder!

But let man be required to purchase this salvation, either in whole or in part, by any works of his own; and who does not see how the grace of God is lowered? We will grant, for argument's sake, that the giving of salvation on any terms, would have been a wonderful display of grace; but, as compared with that which is revealed, it would have been no grace.

As the Apostle says of the Mosaic dispensation, that "notwithstanding it was made glorious, it had no glory, by reason of the glory that excels;" so we may say of such a mutilated Gospel as we are speaking of; it might be glorious, inasmuch as it would be an exercise of mercy; but it would have had no glory, by reason of the infinitely brighter display of Divine grace in the Gospel, as it is revealed to us.

Indeed, Paul tells us, that if anything were required on our part towards purchasing of salvation, salvation could be no longer of grace; because the two are contrary to, and absolutely inconsistent with, each other. "If," says he, "salvation is by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it is of works, then it is no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6)."

Hence he elsewhere says, "It is of faith, that it may be by grace:" and again, "Christ is become of no effect unto you; whoever of you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace! [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4)." This, then, is one evidence, that salvation must be by faith alone, without works.

**Another most important mark of the true Gospel is that it cuts off all occasion for boasting.** God has said, that he has made Christ the great depository of all spiritual blessings, in order "that no flesh would glory in his presence, but that all might glory in the Lord alone! [1 Corinthians 1:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.29); [1 Corinthians 1:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.31)." And it is evident, that by the Gospel, as Paul preached it, all boasting is excluded.

But suppose that our works in any measure whatever formed a ground of justification before God; would we have no occasion for boasting then? Assuredly we should: for in proportion as we had procured it by our works, we might claim it as a debt, and say, "I have procured this unto myself." It matters not in what degree this exists: if it exist in any degree whatever, boasting is not excluded. Even in Heaven itself we might say, "I owe it not *entirely*to the free grace of God that I am here, but *partly*to my own superior merit." This is declared by Paul in very express terms: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith! [Romans 3:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.27);" that is, if it were in any degree, even the smallest that can be imagined, by works, there would be room for boasting; but seeing it is solely by faith in the Lord Jesus—then all boasting is, and must for ever be, excluded.

Hence, in giving an account of the Gospel salvation, he says, "By grace you are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man would boast, [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.8-9)." Let these words be remembered, "Not of works, lest any man would boast;" and there will be an end of all further argument on this subject.

**One more mark of the Gospel salvation is, that it secures the performance of good works.** Had there been a fifth Sunday in the month, this would have been made a distinct subject: but the whole being to be comprised in four Sermons, this part could not possibly be extended or be rendered so prominent, as the Author wished. But what is here spoken is the most decided sentiment of his heart. This lack has since been supplied in a Sermon on [Psalm 119:128](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.128) entitled, "The true Test of Religion in the Soul."

The grace of God, that brings salvation, teaches us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we would live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, [Titus 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.11-12). Many are apt to imagine, that the doctrine of salvation by faith alone destroys all incentive to holiness, and tends to encourage all manner of licentiousness: this was the very objection which was urged against the Gospel in the Apostle's days, and which he set himself strongly to refute. Anticipating the objection, he says, "Shall we then continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

And again; "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! yes, we establish the law, [Romans 6:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.1-2); [Romans 3:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.31)." The fact is, that *there is nothing so operative as a living faith*. What was the spring of all those glorious actions that were performed by the long catalogue of worthies mentioned in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews? From beginning to the end, we are told that *faith was the principle by which they were actuated, and the root from which all their obedience sprang*.

Of the New Testament saints, none exceeded, or even equaled, Paul: and what was it that actuated him? He tells us: "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that those who live would not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again."

This is the effect which saving faith will, according to its measure, produce in all. It will "work by love," and "overcome the world," and "purify the heart." What if the works it produces are not to be relied on for our justification before God? Is it nothing that they will be adduced in the day of judgment as the evidences of our love to Christ, and as the measure of our everlasting reward*? Is it nothing that God is glorified by them, and that the dispositions from whence they spring constitute our fitness for the heavenly inheritance?*Surely these are motives enough for the performance of them, without making them the meritorious cause of our salvation; and, if we look to fact and experience, who are the persons at this day that are accounted righteous overmuch, and are represented as making the way to Heaven so strait that none but themselves can walk in it? Is it among the declaimers about good works, that we must look for these persons? No; but among those who renounce all dependence on their own works, and seek for salvation by Christ alone: a sure proof, that those who look for redemption solely through the blood of Christ, are by that very principle made "a peculiar people zealous of good works."

These, then, are clear evidences that the way of salvation is precisely such as we have declared it to be: for there is no other doctrine under Heaven that has these marks connected with it, or these effects proceeding from it.

***~~The second thing we mentioned as establishing our doctrine, was, that there is no other way of salvation suited to our condition as fallen sinners.~~***

Take the way of salvation by our own works—who will venture to build his hopes on such a foundation as that? Who is not sensible that in many things he has offended God? For those offenses he must answer at the judgment-seat of Christ. If throughout a great part of our life we had done all that was commanded us, we would still be unprofitable servants: our obedience to some commandments would make no atonement for our violation of others: for the sins that we had committed, we must die. But it may be said, that of those offenses we repent. Be it so: still our tears can never wash out the guilt we have already contracted.

Even in human governments, a criminal that is under sentence of death may be truly sorry that he has transgressed the laws, and may determine never to repeat his crimes any more; but these sorrows and resolutions will not avail to rescue him from death, or to repeal the sentence that is gone forth against him: much less can any repentance of ours remove the curses of God's holy law, or avert the judgments which our sins have merited.

But it may be said, *we rely not on our works alone, nor on our repentance alone, but on these things and Christ's merits united*. Go, then, and search the records of your life, and see what works you will bring forth in order to eke out the insufficient merits of your Savior; bring forth one single work; one only out of your whole life; one that has no defect, and that does not in any respect need the mercy of God to pardon its imperfection: then carry it to God, and say, 'Here, Lord, is a work in which you yourself cannot find a flaw; it is as perfect as any that my Lord and Savior himself ever performed, and is therefore worthy to be united to his infinitely meritorious obedience, as a joint ground of all my hopes: I am content to stand or fall by this one work: I am aware, that if it is imperfect, it stands in need of mercy for its own imperfection, and consequently can never purchase pardon for all my other offenses; but I ask no mercy for that, yes, rather, I claim on account of it all the glory of Heaven Let not the reader suppose that any one is exhorted to go thus to Almighty God: the whole passage is intended to show the horrible impiety of even entertaining such a thought. The Scriptures frequently put such language into the lips of sinners, in order to show what is the real language of their hearts. See [Romans 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.5); [Romans 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.7); [Romans 9:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.19).

You who will dispute against salvation by faith only, and who wish to have something of your own to found your hopes upon, do this: bring forth some work, someone work at least, that shall stand the test of the divine law, and defy the scrutiny of the heart-searching God. But if you cannot find one such work, then see how unsuitable to your state is the doctrine for which you contend.

Perhaps it will be said that God does not require of us imperfect creatures anything that is perfect, but only that we be sincere. But who will venture to make his own sincerity the ground of his salvation? If this be the law by which we are to be tried, who shall stand? Who shall say, that from the earliest period of his life he has sincerely striven in everything to please God, and to approve himself to God? *Alas! those who stand upon their own sincerity are little aware of the deceitfulness and wickedness of their own hearts; and if they would but look back throughout their whole lives, they would find, that their sincerity, like that of Saul of Tarsus, has only stimulated them to a greater measure of inveteracy against the Gospel of Christ.*

We will mention only one more refuge to which these persons will be disposed to flee, and that is, their having done as well as they could: 'I have done as well as I could, and therefore I doubt not but that God will have mercy upon me.' But in this we shall all fail, as much as in all the fallacious hopes that have preceded it. For, who has done as well as he could throughout his own life? Who will dare to appeal to God even respecting the best day in his life, that there was no one thing omitted which he might have done for him, nor any one thing done in a less perfect manner than it might have been done?

It is clear, that in all the ways of salvation which men devise for themselves, whether by good works, or repentance, or faith and works united, or sincerity, or doing as well as we can—there is not a spot of ground whereon to place our foot: we must go to the ark of God, and there only can we find rest for our weary souls.

*Permit me, then, to address you as dying persons*, and to ask, What you will think of these things when standing on the brink and precipice of eternity? Now you can speculate, and dispute, and speak with confidence about the justness of your views: now you can discuss these matters as if it were of little consequence what your sentiments are, or what is the ground of your affiance. But if you hold fast any of the foregoing delusions, you will not find them so satisfactory in a dying hour as you now imagine. Doubts like these will arise in your mind; 'What if my works would be found at last, either in number or quality, insufficient? What if my imagined goodness, which I am blending with my Redeemer's righteousness, would prove a refuge of lies?'

Among the numberless evils to which this fatal error will expose you, is, that in that hour, when you will most need divine and heavenly consolation, your soul will be trembling with uncertainty as to the ground of your hopes, of those hopes which will in a little time be blasted or realized for ever. For, who shall tell you whether you have attained that precise measure of righteousness which God will accept?

What a fearful thing will it be to be going into the presence of your Judge, uncertain what shall be his sentence upon you, and whether Heaven or Hell shall be your everlasting portion! would you but place yourselves, where you must all very shortly be, on a dying bed, we would not find it so difficult to convince you that it is better to trust in the righteousness of Christ, which is commensurate with all the demands of law and justice, and adequate to the wants of the whole world, than to be trusting in any respect to any poor defective righteousness of your own.

Methinks this argument alone were sufficient to convince any considerate man: supposing that your own righteousness were sufficient, your Lord would not condemn you for thinking too humbly of it, and for relying solely on his all-atoning sacrifice: but supposing it insufficient, *will he not condemn you for your pride and arrogance in trusting to it, and for your ingratitude in rejecting his salvation?*Here all the declarations of his word are as pointed and clear as words can make them: "He who believes on the Son has life: and he who believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him, [John 3:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.36)." "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who believes not shall be damned, [Mark 16:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.16)." Both of these declarations were uttered by our blessed Lord himself when on earth; and he will not forget them, when he shall come again to judge the world.

**May I not, then, make my appeal to you?** "I speak as to wise men; judge what I say." Is it wise to turn your back upon righteousness, which, as a rock, is able to sustain a ruined world; and to be trusting in one that is no better than a foundation of sand? Know that your God is a jealous God: he will not give his glory to another: if you will seek acceptance with him, through his only-begotten Son, "not one of you shall ever be cast out:" your sins shall be washed away in his blood; and your souls be clothed with the unspotted robe of his righteousness. Being justified by faith in him, you shall have peace with God: you shall "be kept also from falling," while in this ensnaring world; and in due time you shall be "presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for every one of you is, that you may be saved: but know assuredly, that there is no salvation for you but by faith in Christ: for "other foundation can no man lay than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ [1 Corinthians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11)." To whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be glory in the Church throughout all ages, world without end! Amen.

***~~#1977~~***

***~~TRUE WISDOM AND CHARITY~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 10:32-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.32-33); [1 Corinthians 11:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.1)~~***

[1 Corinthians 10:32-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.32-33). "Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved."

[1 Corinthians 11:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.1). "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

CHRISTIAN morals, in their sublimer parts, are far from being fully understood, or duly appreciated, even by those who are most zealous in the profession of Christian principles. The duties of Christian *forbearance*, and Christian forgiveness, and Christian *liberality*—are but very imperfectly *discerned*, and, consequently, but very imperfectly *practiced*, in the religious world.

Nor are the limits of true Christian love by any means clearly ascertained. On this subject, in particular, I must say, that I think there is scarcely a Christian upon earth that would have made the distinctions contained in this chapter; and not many that would approve of them, now they are made, if they were not forced to yield to apostolic authority. It is an easy thing to lay down broad principles; as, that "We must not do evil that good may come:" and it is easy to decry "expediency," as the refuge of time-serving and dishonest men. But it is not easy to see the different modifications of a good principle, as affected by different circumstances; or the different situations under which expediency alone can guide us.

And even the discussion of such a subject as this, however carefully conducted, would be condemned at once by many, as no better than Jesuistical sophistry and refinement. But we must not, therefore, be deterred from treading in the Apostle's steps, and marking what we believe to be the true boundaries of Christian liberty and Christian duty.

I shall take occasion, from the passage before us, to show,

***~~I. Our duty in reference to things which are indifferent—~~***

***~~There are many things on which different parties lay a great stress; which yet, in the sight of God, are altogether indifferent—~~***

In the apostolic age, the observance of the Jewish ritual was regarded by some as of primary and indispensable importance. The keeping of certain days, and the abstaining from certain foods, and the practice of circumcision, were by many insisted on as of continued obligation; notwithstanding *they were never intended but as types and shadows, which were to vanish when the substance would appear*. There were not in those rites any essential qualities, either of good or evil. They derived all their force from their having been divinely appointed; and, of course, they lost all their force when that appointment was withdrawn. If any chose to observe them, they were at liberty to do so, without any offense to God: and if any were disinclined to observe them, they were equally at liberty to follow the dictates of their own judgment. If any man thought them still obligatory, he of course was bound by them: but all who saw that they were no longer required, were free to neglect and discard them.

The same might be said of many things at this day, respecting which different parties form different opinions, according to the degree of their information, or to the particular prejudices which they have imbibed. I refer to certain rites and ceremonies in religion, on which some place an undue stress; while others, with equal vehemence, decry them. I must say the same, also, in reference to some habits of the world, respecting which men may speak in too unqualified terms; whether they justify them, or whether they condemn.

***~~But our great duty, in reference to all such things, is, to guard against giving needless offense to any party—~~***

In reference to Jewish or Gentile observances, the Apostle says, "Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God." The things about which the parties differed were really non-essential: and there was danger of giving offense to either side by a contemptuous disregard of their prejudices. It was not right to wound the feelings of a Jew, by doing in his presence what was contrary to the law, which he regarded as still in force. Nor was it right, by a free and indiscriminate use of foods offered to idols, to hurt the feelings of a Gentile brother; who, having been accustomed to feast on these foods as a religious act, would be ready to think that the person eating them did not indeed abhor idolatry in the way that he professed. At the same time, offense might easily be given to the Church of God, by producing disunion and division among her members, whom we would rather have labored to "edify in faith and love."

The same may be said in reference to all matters of indifference, in every age and in every place. There should be a tender regard to the feelings and infirmities of others; and a determination never to please ourselves at the expense of others. Self-denial, rather, should be the disposition of our minds, and the habit of our lives: and rather than wound the consciences of others, and lead them by our example to do what their own consciences condemned, we would abstain from the most innocent indulgence, as long as the world shall stand, [1 Corinthians 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.13).

The *rule*given in relation to all such matters is, "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves, [Romans 15:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.1)."

In my text, the Apostle marks,

***~~II. The object which we should keep in view, for the regulation of our conduct—~~***

***~~The salvation of our fellow-men should be an object of the deepest interest to our minds—~~***

Doubtless the salvation of a man's own soul should be his first concern. But no man should be indifferent to the eternal welfare of others; much less would he think himself at liberty to do anything which may put a stumbling-block in their way. "We are all, in fact, one body in Christ;" and are bound, every one of us, to consult the welfare of the whole. No member is authorized to act independently, and for itself alone. None but a wicked Cain would ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" For we are his keeper, as he also is ours: and *we are neither at liberty to injure each other, nor to neglect any opportunity of advancing each other's welfare*. *The duty of mutual love and mutual aid is unalterable and universal.*

***~~With a reference to that, therefore, should we act to the utmost extent of our power—~~***

We may either benefit our fellow-creatures, or injure them, according as we demean ourselves in reference to things which are in themselves indifferent. We may disgust some, by our unhallowed boldness; or grieve others, by passing an uncharitable judgment upon them; or ensnare others, by inducing them to follow our example, contrary to the convictions of their own conscience. We may, by our uncharitable disregard of the feelings and sentiments of others, produce the most fatal effects that can be imagined; not only offending many, but actually "destroying our weak brethren, for whom Christ died, [1 Corinthians 8:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.9-11)."

What a fearful thought! Can any man, who calls himself a Christian, feel himself at liberty to act without any reference to such a result as that? Can any pleasure, or any "profit" arising to himself, compensate for such a calamity as that? Methinks, on any question arising in our minds, we should instantly ask ourselves, not, What will please or profit myself? but, What will please or profit others? What will have a tendency to promote the salvation of others? If any self-denial or forbearance on my part can advance, in the remotest degree, the salvation of a weak brother—then I will die rather than gratify myself at his expense.

That this is no extravagant requirement, will appear if we consult,

***~~III. The examples which Christ and his Apostles have set us in reference to this very thing—~~***

Paul calls us to "be followers of him, even as he was of Christ."

***~~Consider how our blessed Savior acted under circumstances of this kind—~~***

He was called upon to pay a tribute levied for the support and service of the temple. From this, as being the Son of God, he might have pleaded an exemption: because it is an acknowledged fact that kings receive tribute from strangers only, and not from their own children. But he knew that the Jews would not be able to see the truth and justice of his plea, and that his acting upon it would give serious offense: he therefore waved his right; and chose rather to work a miracle for the satisfying of their demands, than give offense to them by an assertion of his rights.

Nor did he only wave his right in this particular, but gave occasion to all present to deny that he possessed any such right, or stood in any such relation to Jehovah as would have authorized him to assert it. Yet he considered not himself, but others only; and chose to submit to anything, however humiliating, rather than, by maintaining his right, to put a stumbling-block in their way, [Matthew 17:24-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 17.24-27). Thus, by his example, he taught all his followers, not to please themselves, but "to please every man his neighbor for good to edification, [Romans 15:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.2-3)."

***~~Observe, also, how Paul acted—~~***

It was not on any particular occasion that he conformed to this rule, but constantly, and in circumstances of continual occurrence. Hear his own account of his daily practice: "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. [1 Corinthians 9:19-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.19-22)."

Here you see, not only what his constant habit of life was, but the principle by which he was actuated throughout the whole; preferring the "winning" of men to Christ, and the "saving" of their souls, to any personal consideration whatever. In all this he was an example to us; and therefore says, in reference to this very thing, "Be followers of me, as I also am of Christ."

***~~In accordance with this was the conduct also of all the Apostles—~~***

The last time that Paul came to Jerusalem, the whole college of Apostles, fearing that the Jews had a wrong impression of his principles, and that, because he had represented a conformity to Jewish ceremonies as unnecessary, they would imagine he had decried them as sinful, besought him to unite himself to some persons who were about to perform their vows as Nazarites, and purify himself, according to the Mosaic law, with them. And this he did, in conformity with their advice, [Acts 21:20-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 21.20-26); thus not only illustrating the principle by which he was habitually actuated, but setting, as it were, the seal of all the Apostles to this line of conduct, as sanctioned and approved by them.

After all this evidence, nothing further need be added to confirm the statement we have made respecting the Christian's duty, or to enforce the advice which, in conformity with our text, we have presumed to give.

***~~On the ground therefore which has been established, I beg you to bear in mind,~~***

***~~1. What is the principle by which you are to be actuated, in all your fellowship with mankind—~~***

*Love to their souls must animate you at all times*: and by that must you be determined, in everything where the path of duty is not clearly determined for you. By that must you be regulated, whether in acceding to their wishes, or in resisting their solicitations. There are certainly occasions whereon a compliance with them will produce a good effect; and there are occasions whereon it will be your duty rather to withstand the importunity even of your dearest friends. But you must be careful to distinguish aright the principle from which you act. You must not give way to fear: nor must you comply from a feeling of personal friendship or regard: and, least of all, must you conform to the world, to please yourselves. You must consider, under all circumstances, how you may best advance the welfare of men's souls; and then act as in the sight of God, so as most to promote that great object.

That is what Christ did, when he left the bosom of his Father, and died upon the cross: and in so doing you will fulfill those injunctions which he has given you; "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others, [Philippians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.4);" and that also, in a few, verses before the text, "Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. [1 Corinthians 10:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.24)."

***~~2. How you may best approve yourselves to the heart-searching God—~~***

The mode of conduct which we have recommended will, to superficial observers, lay you open to the charge of inconsistency: for, if you will observe rites, or not observe them, according as others may stand affected towards them, you must of necessity appear to many to be destitute of any fixed principle. But God sees the fixed principle which men cannot see; and he will approve that which perhaps your fellow-creatures will condemn. But, for your conduct in circumstances of more than ordinary difficulty, I would suggest three rules; which, though, when separately taken, they may be insufficient for your direction, will, when taken together, effectually preserve you from any material error. Ask yourselves three questions:

**1.** What would an ungodly man do in my circumstances?

That I will not do.

**2.**Next, What would be agreeable to my own corrupt heart?

That I will not do.

**3.**Lastly, What would my Lord or the Apostle Paul do, in my circumstances?

That I will do.

Now I say again, that though no one of these, separately, will suffice, all of them together will prove an easy and a safe directory. It will be impossible for you greatly to err, if these questions are sincerely asked, and faithfully answered by you. If, in prosecuting this line of conduct, you are misunderstood and blamed, then say, with the Apostle, "I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me, [1 Corinthians 4:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.3-4)." Thus will you ensure the approbation of your God, and enjoy the testimony of your own conscience that you have pleased him.

***~~#1978~~***

***~~THE DESIGN AND IMPORTANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 11:23-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.23-26)~~***

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

THE Corinthians had shamefully profaned the Lord's supper. Paul reproves them, and rectifies their views of that ordinance.

***~~I. The design of the Lord's supper—~~***

*Our ungrateful hearts are prone to forget God's richest mercies.*To keep up "the remembrance" of his death, Christ instituted his last supper.

***~~When we celebrate that ordinance, we proclaim his death—~~***

The *Passover*was a memorial of the deliverance given to the Jews from the sword of the destroying angel. At every returning celebration of it the reason of that ordinance was declared. In reference to [Exodus 12:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 12.26-27) a custom prevailed among the Jews that a child would ask the meaning of the Passover, and that the person who presided would then give an account of its intent and origin, so that the remembrance of God's mercy might be transmitted to their latest posterity: and this was called "the declaration" or "showing forth."

Christ in his death has effected a greater deliverance for us. In partaking of the bread and wine, we proclaim his death:

We proclaim the manner of it as excruciating and bloody. The breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine seem well calculated to impress this idea.

We proclaim the end of it as a sacrifice for our sins. In this light it is represented by Paul, [1 Corinthians 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 5.7) and by our Lord himself, [Matthew 26:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.28).

We proclaim the sufficiency of it for our full salvation.

We express our affiance in his blood as the Jews did in the blood of the Paschal Lamb, when they sprinkled their door-posts with it, and eat of the flesh that had been roast with fire.

***~~We proclaim his death "until he comes"—~~***

Christ will, in due season, come again to judge the world; then his people will no longer need such memorials as these. They will incessantly enjoy the brightest vision of his person, and the richest fruits of his death; but until then the remembrance of his dying love, and the expectation of his future advent, must be thus preserved.

Such was Christ's end in instituting, and such should be our end in observing it.

To enforce the observance of this ordinance, we will proceed to show,

***~~II. The necessity of attending it—~~***

The duty of commemorating our Lord's death is much neglected; but a neglect of it involves us in the deepest guilt. It implies,

***~~1. Rebellion against the highest authority—~~***

Christ, the Supreme Governor of Heaven and earth, has said, "Do this"; yet the language of too many is, 'I will not.' But those who disregarded the Passover did not go unpunished; if a man had contracted any ceremonial defilement, or were on a journey, he might omit eating the Passover at the appointed time; only he must eat it a month afterwards. But if he forbore to eat of it without any such impediment, God said concerning him, "That soul shall be cut off, that man shall bear his sin," [Numbers 9:7-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 9.7-11). Much less shall those who slight the invitations to Christ's supper, [Luke 14:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 14.24). Surely it is no less than madness to persist in this rebellion.

***~~2. Ingratitude towards our greatest Benefactor—~~***

Christ has even "given his own life as a ransom for us;" and shall we disregard his dying command? On the same night that he was betrayed, did he institute these memorials of his death. Had he at that season such a concern for us, and can we refuse to do so small a thing in remembrance of him?

The Jews went thrice every year up to Jerusalem, from the extreme parts of Judea, to commemorate their deliverance. And shall we turn our backs on the table when it is spread before us? Shall not God visit for such ingratitude as this? Let such conduct be expressed in words; "You did indeed give your body to die for me; and only require me to eat bread, etc. in remembrance of you; but I account even that too much to do for you." Who could dare to utter such language? Or who would endure it if spoken by his servant or his child? Yet such is the language of our actions.

***~~3. Contempt of the richest mercies—~~***

To partake in the Lord's Supper, without discerning the Lord's body, can profit us nothing; but to approach the table in humility and faith is a sure means of obtaining all spiritual blessings. Christ sometimes reveals himself in the breaking of bread, to those who had not so fully discovered him in the ministration of the word, [Luke 24:30-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.30-31). And do they not manifest a contempt of these mercies, who will not use the means of procuring them? How may the Savior take up that lamentation over them, [Matthew 23:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 23.37)!

***~~We shall conclude with answering some excuses.~~***

'I am not prepared.' How then can you be prepared to die? Is not this acknowledgment the strongest reason for immediate repentance?

'I am afraid of eating and drinking my own damnation.' Are you not afraid of damnation for neglecting your duty? In neglecting duty you ensure condemnation; in practicing it as well as you can (to say the least) you may avert it.

'I am afraid of sinning afterwards, and thereby increasing my guilt.' If sins after receiving the Lord's supper were unpardonable, none would receive it until the last moment of their lives. If you really desire strength, where would you so soon obtain it? But if you determine to live in sin, your condemnation will be equally sure whether you come or not.

'The time of administering it interferes with other engagements.' To those who cannot deny themselves in anything, we say with Paul in [Romans 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.8) "whose damnation is just." But where the difficulties are insurmountable, God will accept the will for the deed [Matthew 12:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.7). They however, who are at liberty, should attend "as often" as they can; only they must be careful to communicate with reverence, humility, faith, and gratitude.

***~~#1979~~***

***~~ON EATING AND DRINKING OUR OWN DAMNATION~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 11:27-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.27-29)~~***

"Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks damnation on himself."

*THE more excellent anything is, the greater is the guilt contracted by the abuse of it.*A contempt of the law, is not as bad as a contempt of the Gospel, [Hebrews 10:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.28-29). An irreverent attendance on Divine ordinances is exceedingly sinful; but to profane the Lord's supper is worse, inasmuch as that institution is more solemn and brings us nearer to God. Hence when Paul reproved the former, he spoke mildly, [1 Corinthians 14:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 14.33); 1 Corinthians 14:40; but when he reproved the latter, he spoke with great severity.

***~~I. What is it to eat the bread, and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily—~~***

To understand this, we would inquire how the Corinthians behaved, verse 20-22. Their conduct seems at first sight to be absolutely inconsistent with a profession of Christianity. But, having been accustomed to such behavior in their feasts during their Gentile state, they were as yet too much addicted to their former habits. The abuses of which they were guilty are impracticable now: nevertheless we may imitate them in our spirit and temper. Like them we shall eat and drink unworthily if we do it,

***~~1. Ignorantly—~~***

The Corinthians did not discriminate between the common and religious use of the consecrated elements. Many at this time also partake without discerning the Lord's body: they, not remembering his death, defeat the end for which the Supper of the Lord was instituted.

***~~2. Irreverently—~~***

The customs of our country do not admit of our meeting in the tumultuous way that was practiced at Corinth, [1 Corinthians 11:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.21); but many are altogether as destitute of reverence and sacred awe. *A light, worldly, impenitent heart, is unfitting that solemnity*: such a frame, if habitual, mates us partake unworthily.

***~~3. Uncharitably—~~***

The rich did not impart of their provisions to the poor, [1 Corinthians 11:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.22). We also may be equally destitute of Christian love: we may be haughty, injurious, unforgiving, etc. Such a frame wholly unfits us for the Lord's table, [Matthew 5:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.23-24).

***~~4. Carnally—~~***

The Corinthians made it an occasion for intemperance and excess: though we cannot imitate them in this, we may be as carnal as they. A lack of spirituality and affiance in Christ makes our service carnal; nor can such a service be acceptable to Him who will be worshiped in spirit and in truth.

To attend at the Lord's table in such a manner is no slight or trivial offense.

***~~II. The consequence of so doing—~~***

The consequences mentioned in the text respect,

***~~1. The guilt we contract—~~***

They were "guilty of the body and blood of our Lord" who crucified him, as they are also who apostatize from his truth, [Hebrews 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.6). They too are involved in the same guilt who partake unworthily of the Lord's supper: they manifest a contempt of his sacrifice, [Hebrews 10:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.29). What a dreadful iniquity is this! How careful should we be to abstain from the commission of it!

***~~2. The punishment we incur—~~***

The word "damnation" imports temporal judgment. The Apostle explains his meaning in the following verse, "for, for this cause," etc and he tells us that it was a chastisement inflicted to keep them from eternal condemnation, verse 32. Eternal damnation is by no means a necessary consequence of this sin, [Matthew 12:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.31); yet if it is unrepented of, no doubt this punishment will follow; and we may expect some spiritual or temporal judgments for it here. We should therefore examine ourselves well before we attend the table of the Lord, verse 28.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who urge this as an excuse for neglecting the Lord's supper—~~***

There are many who under this pretext cover their own unwillingness to yield themselves up to God; but God will not admit their vain excuses. *The habitual neglect of their duty ensures the punishment which they desire to avoid*. Let all then devote themselves to the Lord in the use of all his instituted ordinances.

***~~2. Those who are really kept away by a fear of incurring this punishment—~~***

Many are kept from the table by a sense of their own unworthiness. But to *be*unworthy, and to *partake*unworthily, are very different things. A rebel against a kind and merciful prince is unworthy of pardon: but if he receives with gratitude the pardon offered him, and returns to his allegiance, he receives it worthily. Thus we are unworthy of the smallest mercies, and much more of the children's bread: but if we receive this bread with humility, gratitude, and an increasing devotedness of heart to God, we receive it as we ought, that is, worthily. Yet if we have partaken unworthily in past times, let us humble ourselves for it; and then may we come again with joy: this has been the experience of many, [2 Chronicles 30:15-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 30.15-23), and may be ours also.

***~~#1980~~***

***~~ON THE PREPARATION REQUISITE BEFORE THE LORD'S SUPPER~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 11:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.28)~~***

"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."

GOD is a holy and jealous God, and greatly to be feared: in all our approaches to him we would be filled with awe; but *a lack of reverence prevails among the generality of mankind; even real Christians manifest it sometimes, and that too even in the most sacred ordinances.* Paul, reproving the Corinthians for their conduct at the Lord's supper, 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, lays down a universal rule for communicants: "Let a man," etc.

***~~I. The duty of self-examination in general—~~***

***~~This is an important but much neglected duty: it is strongly recommended in the Scriptures—~~***

The Apostle expressly enjoins it to all, [2 Corinthians 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.5). This injunction is remarkably strong and energetic. In the words äïêéìÜæåôåand äüêéìïé, which latter is too harshly translated "reprobate," there seems an allusion to the trying of metals by a touchstone. The repetition also of the injunction, and the expostulation that follows it, are expressive of the Apostle's earnestness, and consequently of the importance of the duty enjoined.

***~~There is great reason for it: we cannot ascertain the state of our souls without it—~~***

*It is evident that the generality of men deceive themselves.* We also are liable to the same deception through pride and self-love; nor can we form a right conclusion without a strict investigation.

***~~A mistake respecting our state would be eternally fatal—~~***

***~~There is no repentance in the grave: as we die, so shall we continue for ever.~~***

***~~The benefits to be derived from it are exceeding great—~~***

If our state be found good, we shall rejoice in the testimony of a good conscience. If it is bad, we shall be stirred up to flee from the wrath to come.

We should therefore live in the habitual practice of this duty, [Psalm 77:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.5). But self-examination is more especially needful on certain occasions—

***~~II. The need of it before the Lord's supper in particular—~~***

This is intimated in the text; "Let a man examine himself, and so let him come." And indeed there is peculiar reason for it at that time.

***~~That ordinance is a season of remarkable solemnity—~~***

There we see Christ crucified, as it were, before our eyes:

there we contemplate the most stupendous mysteries:

there we commemorate the greatest of all mercies:

there we are admitted to most familiar fellowship with God. And does it befit us to engage lightly in such an ordinance?

***~~It is a season that calls for the exercise of all our powers—~~***

The *understanding*should be occupied in devoutest meditations: the *affections*should be engaged to the uttermost. And can we thus command our faculties without any preparation?

***~~The neglect of self-examination may rob us of all the benefit of the ordinance—~~***

Who can estimate the benefits we might receive if we came prepared? But who has not often communicated in vain? And has not our neglect been the true cause of this.

We should therefore be peculiarly attentive to it at such a season.

To assist in the discharge of this duty we shall show,

***~~III. The subjects which we would then more especially inquire into—~~***

We would examine ourselves respecting,

***~~1. Our knowledge of the ordinance—~~***

To come without a proper discernment is dangerous, verse 27. We should inquire what we know of the nature and ends of the ordinance. On a distinct view of these our profiting much depends.

***~~2. The state of our souls before God—~~***

At the Lord's table we receive "the children's bread." We would inquire therefore whether we are God's children?

***~~3. The immediate frame of our souls—~~***

We ought to have all our graces in lively exercise, Song of Solomon 4:16.

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

Begin this necessary work without delay! Yet do not set about it in a legal manner or for self-righteous ends: do not trust in your preparation, or expect acceptance on account of it; but look to Christ as the only ground of your hope towards God: neither stay away from the table because you have not spent so much time in preparation as you could wish. Whether you have used more or less diligence you must go as the tax collector, [Luke 18:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.13). Be assured however that *your profiting will for the most part be proportioned to your preparation*.

***~~#1981~~***

***~~NO KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST BUT BY THE SPIRIT~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.3)~~***

"I want you to understand that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and *no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit."*

WE trust that among us there are none so hostile to the name of Christ, as to "call Jesus accursed;" and therefore we omit from our text that part which is inapplicable to the age in which we live. There were among the Jews many, who, while they rejected Christ as an impostor, pretended to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, and, either through magic or satanic influence, wrought "signs and lying wonders" in confirmation of their word. Among believers themselves also, there were some, who made a very unfitting use of the miraculous powers with which they were endowed, priding themselves upon them, and exerting them rather for the furtherance of their own glory, than for the edification of the Church of Christ.

To rectify the views of the Corinthians on these subjects, Paul informs them, that the unbelieving Jews, whatever they might pretend to, had not the Spirit of God; since "no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calls Jesus accursed:" nor, on the other hand, had those, who possessed the miraculous influences of the Spirit, any such ground for self-preference and self-delight as they imagined; since every true believer enjoyed those influences which were infinitely the most important; for that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit."

This is a truth of infinite importance; and Paul was very anxious that it would be duly weighed and considered. We will, therefore,

***~~I. Explain the assertion in our text—~~***

It is obvious that the text is not to be understood as denying our power to make use of that particular expression; because that form of words is as easily used as any other: but it affirms, that we cannot, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, make use of that assertion,

***~~1. With a full conviction of its truth—~~***

We may easily from education give a notional assent to the whole Gospel; but when we come to reflect on the idea of our God becoming incarnate, and offering himself a sacrifice for the sins of his rebellious creatures, and reconciling them to himself through his own sufferings upon the cross, the mind revolts at the thought; and the whole plan of the Gospel appears as a cunningly-devised fable. We see not any need for such an intervention of the Deity. We are ready to ask, Why could not God pardon us without such an atonement? Why could not his mercy be extended to us on our repentance and amendment, without any such devices as those which the Gospel professes to reveal? Yes, when these mysteries are more nearly contemplated, they are "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness:" and "the natural man neither does, nor can, receive them, [1 Corinthians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.23); [1 Corinthians 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.11); [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14)."

***~~2. With a just sense of its importance—~~***

Supposing the mysterious truths of Christianity to be admitted from the force of reasoning alone, *the importance of them can never be felt, but from a deep consciousness of our guilt and helplessness before God. We must feel our disease, before we justly appreciate the remedy.*But who can ever know the desperate wickedness of his own heart, unless he is taught of God, [Jeremiah 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.9). Who can see the fullness that is in Christ, and his suitableness to our necessities, [Revelation 3:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.17-18), until the eyes of his understanding have been enlightened by the Spirit of the living God, [Ephesians 1:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17-18). We must be "brought out of darkness into marvelous light," before "Christ can become so precious to us" as he deserves to be.

***~~3. With a suitable determination to act upon it—~~***

When we truly confess Christ as our Lord and Savior, we shall of necessity feel his love constraining us to live no longer to ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again, [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14-15). But who can thus live, unless he be aided and strengthened from on high? Are the world, the flesh, and the devil so easily vanquished, that we can by any power of our own subdue them? No! it is "not by might or by power, but by the Spirit of God" alone that such victories are gained, [Zechariah 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.6) and [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.13). [2 Corinthians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.5). Grace must lay the foundation-stone; and grace must bring forth the head-stone: and to all eternity must the glory be ascribed to the grace of God alone! [2 Corinthians 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.7); [2 Corinthians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.9). [2 Corinthians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.5). [Revelation 7:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.9-10).

Thus comprehensive is the assertion contained in our text. We will now,

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

The Apostle evidently considered this declaration as of peculiar importance: "I want you to understand this," says he; and I wish you ever to bear it in remembrance, as of singular use both for the instruction of your minds, and the regulation of your lives. This one assertion, truly understood, will show you,

***~~1. What is the great office of the Holy Spirit in the economy of redemption—~~***

Among the many purposes for which our blessed Lord was sent into the world, one was, to "declare the Father to us, [John 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.18); [John 17:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.26)." But the chief end for which the Holy Spirit is sent, is, to "testify of Christ," and "to take of the things that are his, and to show them unto us, [John 15:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.26); [John 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.14)."

This then is the end for which we are to desire the gift of the Holy Spirit: we should feel sensible that:

we cannot *know*Christ, unless the Spirit reveals him to us [Matthew 11:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.27);

we cannot *come*to him, except the Spirit draw us, [John 6:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.44);

we cannot *be one*with him, unless the Spirit form him in our hearts, [Galatians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.19).

This is a point by no means considered as it ought to be. We have an idea that the Holy Spirit is to "help our infirmities;" but we have no conception of the extent to which we need that help, and especially in relation to the knowledge of Christ. But we entreat you to consider fully the declaration in our text, and to take it as a clue, which, if duly followed, "will guide you into all truth."

***~~2. How deeply we should be concerned to obtain his gracious influences—~~***

If "to know Christ be life eternal, [John 17:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.3)," and those who know him not must die in their sins, [John 8:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.24), then it is obvious, that *we never can obtain salvation but through the all-powerful agency of the Holy Spirit*. But we need not take this in a way of deduction; for the voice of inspiration has expressly said, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, [Romans 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.9)." Should it not then be a matter of serious inquiry with every one of us, whether we have received the Holy Spirit; and whether he has performed in us that great work of revealing to us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6).

Let us not be satisfied with any views which are merely obtained from books, and which may float in the mind without any influence on the heart; but let us, by prayer and supplication, seek the gift of the Holy Spirit, that through him we may be taught what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, [1 Corinthians 2:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.9-10).

***~~3. How thankful we should be for the smallest measure of his influence—~~***

If we have been taught truly and from our hearts to say that Jesus is the Lord, we then have certainly received the Holy Spirit; since it is by his gracious influence alone that we are enabled to do so. The assertion in our text establishes this truth beyond a doubt: for "no man," however learned he may be, has any advantage over the poor in this respect. "If any man will be wise," he must divest himself of all his imagined pre-eminence, and "become a fool, that he may be wise! 1 Corinthians 3:18."

On the other hand, if any man has attained a just knowledge of Christ, he has that, in comparison with which all other things are as dung and dross, [Philippians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.8).

Let not any one then be cast down because he possesses a smaller measure of earthly distinctions: for there is an infinitely greater distance between the basest believer and the most learned philosophers on earth, than can be found between any two persons that have been taught of God.*The wisdom of this world is of no account in the sight of God; and at all events it benefits men only for this present life*: but he to whom the Holy Spirit has imparted even the smallest measure of the knowledge of Christ, possesses the choicest gift that God himself can bestow, and is made "wise unto everlasting salvation!"

***~~#1982~~***

***~~THE OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 12:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.7)~~***

"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

THE Corinthian Church was richly endowed with *gifts*, but the persons so endowed were not proportionably enriched with *grace*. Hence their gifts in too many instances administered only to strife and disorder; creating pride in some, who gratified themselves with an ostentatious display of their supernatural powers; and calling forth envy in others, whose powers were only of an inferior order. To counteract and rectify these disorders, Paul directed the people's attention to the origin and use of all these gifts which had been conferred upon them. He showed that they were all imparted by the Spirit of God according to his own sovereign will and pleasure, without any reference to the merits or attainments of the people themselves; and that they were bestowed on them, not for the aggrandizement of the favored individuals, but for the benefit of the whole Church.

This is the precise import of the whole chapter, as it is also of the fourteenth chapter, wherein the subject is still further prosecuted: it is confined, I say, to the *gifts*of the Spirit, without referring to the graces. Yet we shall take occasion from our text to notice also the *graces*of the Spirit, because they will be treated of with peculiar advantage in this connection.

We will consider then the work of the Holy Spirit generally; and notice,

***~~I. His miraculous operations—~~***

***~~The powers communicated by him to the Church were extremely various—~~***

At this time it is not easy to say what was the precise difference between some of the powers specified in the preceding context, though doubtless, when the epistle was written, they were well understood.

"The word of wisdom," probably refers to a large and comprehensive view of the great mysteries of redemption.

"The word of knowledge," probably refers to to a more particular insight into the types and prophecies, with an ability to explain them for the edification of others.

"Faith," there mentioned, was such a confidence in God, as emboldened a person to go forward in the midst of all dangers undaunted and undismayed.

"The gift of healing," was a power merely confined to the healing of disorders.

While "the working of miracles" was operative on a larger scale.

The gift of "prophecy," was a power of foretelling future and contingent events.

"The power of "discerning spirits," enabled a person to estimate with certainty and precision the motives by which others were actuated.

"The gift of "divers tongues," qualified a person to speak in languages which he had never learned.

"The interpretation of tongues," was a power of instantly interpreting such discourses to other persons in a language which they understood: so that, while some of the audience were addressed in a language familiar to them, the rest might also have the benefit of the discourse, by having it interpreted to them in their vernacular tongue; by which means, a mixed assembly, belonging to different countries, might all be instructed and edified by the same discourse.

If in this brief attempt to assign to each word its proper import we would not have exactly marked the precise meaning of each, it will be of little consequence; our object being, not so much to enter into a critical examination of doubtful points, as to mark that in which all are agreed; namely, that all the miraculous gifts, of whatever kind they were, proceeded from "that one and the same Spirit," the Third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity.

Here we wish it to be distinctly noticed, how repeatedly that adorable Person is mentioned as the author of all the gifts: "To one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom;

to another, the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit;

to another, faith, by the same Spirit;

to another, the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit."

And then, after the mention of many other gifts, "All these works that one and the same Spirit." This shows what a holy jealousy the Apostle felt for the honor of that Divine Agent; and how anxious he was that the people might not for a single moment forget, to whom, and to whom alone, they were indebted for every gift that they enjoyed.

***~~By him also all the gifts were bestowed according to his own sovereign will and pleasure—~~***

Doubtless whatever God does is founded, not in a mere arbitrary will, but in the inscrutable counsels of his own wisdom. Still however, as far as we are concerned, the effect is the same as if his will alone were the ground of his actions; because the counsels by which they are regulated are known to himself alone. He has no respect to *anything in us*as the ground of his preference. He is not influenced either by our merits, or our attainments; but dispenses his gifts to whoever he will, and in the measure that he sees fit: bestowing on some the higher gifts; on others, the lower gifts.

This is beautifully illustrated by a reference to the natural body, verse 12-27. The body consists of different members, to each of which is assigned some peculiar office, together with appropriate powers for the discharge of it. The eye, the ear, the hands, the feet, all have their own peculiar structure, fitted for the uses for which they were designed by God himself. The different powers were not given to any one of them on account of its own superior goodness, or for its own use alone: but all were given for the use of the whole; "God having set every one of them in the body as it has pleased him, verse 18." In relation to these, every one sees plainly, that God alone determined what powers to create, and where to place them in the body, and what measure of influence every member would possess: and, in the whole of it, nothing is for a moment contemplated but the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of the Creator.

Never does any one entertain a thought that any one member has the least reason to glory over another, since all owe their respective powers to the same Divine Author; and *all are mutually dependent on each other for such aid as they are severally fitted to impart*. A more apt illustration could not have entered into the mind of man.

The members of the Corinthian Church composed all one body in Christ: and their respective gifts, whether of a higher or inferior order, were committed to them by the Spirit of God, not for their own use or honor, but for the good of the whole: God himself in the whole of the dispensation, having consulted only his own wisdom, and acted only according to his own sovereign will, [Hebrews 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.4).

In connection with the miraculous operations of the Spirit, we have proposed to consider also,

***~~II. His spiritual influences—~~***

***~~These also are greatly diversified—~~***

We have several mentioned by Paul: "The *fruit of the Spirit*is love, peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, [Galatians 5:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.22-23)." In truth, every holy disposition is from him, even "from that same Spirit," "from whom comes every good and perfect gift."

The *illumination*of the mind is from him; for it is he whom "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ gives to us, as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, [Ephesians 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17)."

The *sanctification*of the soul is from him: for "God has chosen us through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and [1 Peter 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.2)."

From him also is all *spiritual consolation*: for it is on this very account that He is called "The Comforter, [John 14:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.16-17)."

From the very beginning to the end of our salvation, it is He who "works all in all."

Are we born again? It is "of the Spirit, [John 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.5)."

Are we helped in our infirmities? It is "by the same Spirit, [Romans 8:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.26)."

Are we progressively changed into the Divine image from one degree of glory to another? It is "by the same Spirit, [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18)."

Have we in our souls a sure testimony of our adoption into God's family? It is "from the same Spirit, [Romans 8:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.15-16)."

Are we sealed unto the day of redemption, [Ephesians 1:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.13-14)? It is by the same Spirit, who alone "works all our works in us [Isaiah 26:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.12)."

***~~The Spirit's influences/graces are given too according to his own sovereign will and pleasure—~~***

We are expressly told, that he "works all things after the counsel of his own will, [Ephesians 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.5-6); [Ephesians 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.9); [Ephesians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.11);" and that he "works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure, [Philippians 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.13)." We see how sovereignly he dispensed his blessings in the days of old:

giving to Abraham, faith;

giving to Moses, meekness;

giving to Job, patience;

giving to Daniel, wisdom;

giving to Paul, zeal and love.

Whence was it that these were so eminent for those particular graces by which they were severally distinguished? Whence was it that a few poor fishermen were chosen to be the depositories of divine knowledge in preference to any of the Scribes and Pharisees, or any of the philosophers of Greece and Rome? Whence in every age has God "revealed to babes and sucklings the things which he has hidden from the wise and prudent?" There is but one answer to be given to it all, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight! [Matthew 11:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25-26)." "God's grace is his own, [Matthew 20:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 20.15);" and he imparts it to whoever he will, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ, [Ephesians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.7);" that is, in the time, and manner, and measure that he sees fit.

From the whole of his work human merit is absolutely excluded as the procuring cause, [Titus 3:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.5-6); as human strength is as the efficient cause, [1 Corinthians 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.10), that no flesh would glory in his presence, but all the glory be given to God alone! [1 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.7).

***~~Let us learn from hence:~~***

***~~1. What we are to think of this great Agent—~~***

Volition is inseparable from personality: and such actions, as are here ascribed to the Holy Spirit, proceed from none other than God. The enabling of men to work all kinds of miracles is beyond the power of any finite and created intelligence to effect. Here then we have a demonstration of *the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit*. This passage alone establishes this doctrine beyond a doubt. And when we recollect, that all our hope is from Him; that, as our *justification*is altogether from the Lord Jesus Christ, so our *sanctification*is altogether from the Holy Spirit. It is of infinite importance that our minds be rightly instructed in reference to this point: for as, if Christ be not God, we can have no hope from his death. Just so, if the Holy Spirit be not God, we can have no hope from his agency.

Let this truth then be settled in our minds; that He who, in the economy of redemption, has engaged to supply the place of Christ on earth [John 16:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.7), is very God. See [Acts 5:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.3-4), and able to effect for us, and in us, the whole work which he has undertaken.

***~~2. Where we are to look for all needful assistance—~~***

To this Divine Agent must we look, and not in any respect to ourselves. He it was who wrought the whole work in the days of the Apostles, and has continued to work in the Church even to the present hour. To him therefore must we look.

Let us suppose the present assembly to be in the very state in which that assembly was on the day of Pentecost; our eyes as blind, our hearts as hard, yes, our hands yet reeking with the Savior's blood! Must we despair? No! He, who converted thousands of them in one single day, can work effectually on us also, and accomplish in us all that our necessities require. Let us pray then that the Spirit may be poured out upon us as he was upon them: and then may we expect the same moral change on our hearts as was wrought on theirs. Let but "the word come to us in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," and all will be done for us that shall be necessary for our sanctification and our complete salvation.

***~~3. To whom we must give the glory of all that is good in us—~~***

"He who has wrought us to the same thing, is God:" and he must be acknowledged as the sole author of all spiritual good. As in the miraculous powers that were imparted, "he was all in all;" and as in the faculties which our different members possess, "he is all in all;" so must he be in all that is wrought in our souls, verse 6. Whatever then are our faculties of mind or body, they must be improved for him, that he may be glorified in all: and, whatever graces we possess, they must be exercised, not for our own honor, but for his, "that God in all things may be glorified through Christ Jesus!"

***~~#1983~~***

***~~CHRISTIANS ONE IN HEART~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 12:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.13)~~***

"For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

IT has been said, to the reproach of Christianity, that the professors of it have no union among themselves, either of sentiment or affection. And this charge, we must confess, is true, so far as Christianity prevails in *name only*.

But, where vital piety exists, there is found a union which obtains in no other society under Heaven. Men feel some degree of union with each other, as belonging to the same country, or town, or society, or calling in life. There are some who boast that they are brothers to all who belong to their fraternity; which relation they discover by certain signs unknown to the world at large. But theirs is a vain pretense: they may extend a little relief to one in distress, because of his standing in that relation to them (which yet is a very narrow and selfish ground of preference), but as for *union of heart*with each other, they know no more of it than other people; no more of it, than the greatest strangers in the universe.

But Christianity brings men not only into one body, but into a oneness of heart and affection; insomuch that, in their collective capacity, they bear the sacred name of Christ. The name "Christ," in, verse 12 means the Society who belong to him," as the members of the human body do of the individual to whom they belong. Of this union my text gives a very clear and accurate description. According to the Apostle, this union is,

***~~I. External and visible—~~***

***~~By baptism we are all brought into one body—~~***

Whatever may have been the former profession of any man, whether he had been a Jew (a worshiper of the true God) or an idolatrous Gentile; and whatever be his present condition in society, a freeman or a slave; he is no sooner baptized into the faith of Christ, than he becomes a member of Christ's mystical body. Let the disparity between them be ever so great, it makes no difference, as it respects their relation to Christ, or to each other. The least honorable members of the body are as much a part of the body as the eye or hand; and as much dependent on the head, by which they exist, and to which they minister. And this is precisely the connection in which the lowest as well as the most exalted Christian stands to Christ, and to the collective body of his Church and people.

***~~Whatever part in that body we sustain, we should cheerfully perform the duties of it—~~***

There should be no envying of those who occupy a higher station than we; nor any despising of those who are beneath us. Every member is useful in his place, and necessary to the good of the whole. Indeed, if all were to sustain the same office, there would be no more a body: if all were an eye, or an ear, it must soon cease to exist, for lack of such powers as the other parts of the body supply. There is nothing in the body either superfluous or defective. It needs no addition: in truth, it admits of no addition.

If one part suffers, the whole is injured: for there is no part that can say to any other, "I have no need of you." In this respect, therefore, all are honorable before God, and all have reason to discharge with pleasure the office assigned to them.

But it is the other part of our subject that demands our more particular attention. I observe, therefore, that this union is also,

***~~II. Internal and spiritual—~~***

It is surely a remarkable expression which the Apostle uses in my text: "We are all made to drink into one Spirit." What can be the meaning of this? What is its force? I apprehend, that if we accurately investigate the influence of the soul upon the human frame, we shall find a strict parallel between that and the influence of the Spirit of God upon the members of Christ's mystical body. Bearing this in mind, I would observe that the expression in my text imports,

***~~1. A participation of the same vital energies—~~***

One soul pervades the whole body, and operates alike in every part; calling into activity the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, and working by all according to their respective capacities. So, whether it be a king upon his throne, or a beggar on a dunghill, if he is truly alive to God, he is quickened by the same Spirit; the whole Church being, in its collective capacity, "the body of Christ, the fullness of him who fills all in all, [Ephesians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.23)." Without his aid we can do nothing, [John 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.5); but by him the weakest is made strong, and is "enabled to do all things" that are required at his hands, [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13).

***~~2. An accordance in the same divine principles—~~***

As one power animates, so one mind directs, the whole man: there is no schism in the body in relation to its actings, every part harmoniously concurring in the object proposed. So, especially, *in all important matters, are all the members of Christ's mystical body agreed*. In subordinate points there may be some difference among different persons, just as there is a distinctive difference of features and complexion among persons of different countries; but in all essential matters they are alike. There are some points of doctrine wherein good men are not agreed; in points, for instance, of a Calvinistic or Arminian aspect: and in points of discipline, also, they may differ; some embracing one mode of Church government, and some another. But, *in the great leading points of "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," there is a perfect similarity in every true Christian throughout the universe*. No one imagines that either of these can be dispensed with, or that, when united, they will be insufficient for the salvation of the soul. *There is not one who does not feel himself a lost sinner, deserving of God's wrath and indignation: nor is there one who does not desire "to be found in Christ*, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God, through faith in Christ [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9)."

In these respects the whole people of God, of every order and every rank, and every nation under Heaven, are altogether "of one heart and of one mind."

***~~3. A prosecution of the same heavenly pursuits—~~***

This, too, is found in every part of the corporeal frame: and this also is found in all the members of Christ's body. The worldly pursuits of men may be widely different, according to their situation in society and in the Church of God. But there is not one in all the family of God who does not account the care of the soul as the one thing needful; not one who is not laboring, as God shall help him, to flee from the wrath of God, and to lay hold on eternal life. See them wherever they are, or whatever they are doing, they never lose sight of this.

In the world or in the Church, by night or by day, they keep steadily in view the prize of their high calling, and run with all diligence in order to obtain it. To "live a life of faith in the Son of God," and a life of love towards all mankind, is their great object: and from the first moment of their conversion, to the last hour of their lives, this occupies their minds, and engages their utmost efforts.

***~~4. A sympathy with the whole body in all its parts—~~***

No member of the human frame can suffer or rejoice, but as the other members suffer or rejoice with it, verse 25, 26. Nor in Christ's mystical body can any member be indifferent to either the temporal or spiritual welfare of the rest. The conversion of men to Christ, even in the remotest quarters of the globe, is a matter of deep interest to the real saint: and the declension of any is with him a source of grief and pain. And if he can administer to the welfare of any, he accounts it a high privilege to exert his influence for that end. A true believer has no interest compared with that of the Redeemer's kingdom: and if he may be an instrument of promoting that, he accounts it a call from God to put forth all his powers, yes, and, if need be, to sacrifice his very life in so good a cause, [2 Timothy 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.10). [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24).

***~~#1984~~***

***~~GIFTS AND GRACES COMPARED~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 12:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.31)~~***

"But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way."

[Preached before the University, in King's College, on the Founder's day, March 25, 1825.]

SUCH is the weakness of human nature, that we can scarcely possess anything that distinguishes us from others, without priding ourselves in it; as though it had sprung from some efforts of our own, or at least had been given us for our superior deservings. Even miraculous powers, which could manifestly originate in nothing but God's sovereign will and pleasure, were to the Corinthians a ground of boasting and self-delight.

We, at this time, are perfectly amazed at the indecorous way in which many in the apostolic age abused their powers, and at the manner in which they conducted their religious assemblies. Paul, as might well be expected, set himself to reform those abuses, and so to regulate their proceedings, that "all things might be done decently and in order." With this view, he showed them that whatever the number or quality of "their gifts" might be, whatever "the differences of their administrations," and whatever "the diversities of their operations," they all proceeded from "the same God who wrought all in all."

He acknowledged the benefit arising from the judicious exercise of their miraculous powers; but yet told them, that there was an object far more worthy of their ambition; namely, *love, which was the sum and substance of all Christian perfection*. He does not altogether blame their desire of useful gifts: on the contrary, he says, "Covet earnestly the best gifts." But he would not have them satisfy themselves with any measure of such attainments, because *without love they were of no value whatever*: and therefore he adds, "Yet show I unto you a more excellent way."

Before I come to my subject, I would just observe, that, though some of high name would alter the translation in my text, from an idea that the Apostle, when reproving the pride and jealousy which had prevailed in reference to these gifts, could never encourage the Corinthians to covet them, I feel no doubt but that the translation is correct: for the very same word occurs again at the commencement of the 14th chapter, (the whole of the 13th being only parenthetical, as an explanation of my text,) and it is incapable of being understood in any other way than as it is translated in my text: "Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy:" where, showing the peculiar usefulness of the gift of prophecy, which was the expounding of Scripture, he recommends that they would affect that in preference to any other. Again, in, verse 12 of the same chapter, he says, "Forasmuch as you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may excel to the edifying of the Church" And again, at the close of the same chapter, he says, "Brethren, covet to prophesy; and forbid not to speak with tongues."

I have judged it expedient to dwell somewhat upon this point; because the Apostle's inculcating a desire after the best gifts will have an important bearing on my subject; which is, to show,

I. The value and importance of spiritual gifts.

II. The infinitely greater value of spiritual graces.

***~~First, I will endeavor to mark the value and importance of spiritual gifts—~~***

The miraculous powers with which many of the primitive Christians were endowed, the Apostle calls "spiritual gifts:" not because in their nature they were spiritual, as emanating from the soul, and exercised about things that were altogether heavenly, but because they were spiritual in their source and tendency; inasmuch as they were wrought in men by the Holy Spirit, and were imparted to the Church for the purpose of spreading and establishing Christianity in the world.

There was a great diversity of them, all proceeding from the same origin, and all conducing to the same end. Hence the Apostle says, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11."

These gifts, at the first establishment of Christianity, were necessary: for, unless God had imparted to the Apostles a spirit of wisdom and of knowledge, they could never have known those "mysteries which were hidden in God from the foundation of the world, [Ephesians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.9)." Nor, if they had not been endued with the gift of tongues (or languages), could they have declared to foreigners the blessed truths which they had received. Nor could they have given sufficient evidence of their divine commission to preach those truths, if they had not been enabled to work *miracles*in confirmation of their word. To have argued with heathen, or even with Jews, would have been a slow process, if they had to bear down their adversaries with the mere force of reason; and to convince them would have been a difficult undertaking: but the performing of miracles superseded, if not entirely—yet in great measure, these laborious efforts, and carried conviction at once to the minds of hundreds and of thousands, who would not have had leisure or ability to enter into long and deep discussions.

Thus it was that Christianity was established: and those to whom these divine powers were committed, were highly honored of God, in being made his instruments for the conversion and salvation of their fellow-men.

But these miraculous gifts are now no longer necessary: they have accomplished the work for which they were bestowed. The record of them remains; and to that we can appeal. That was written while multitudes were alive, and able to testify of what their eyes had seen and their ears had heard. To have had those miracles continued would have answered no good end: for they must have been wrought in every age and every place, where the doctrine needed to be confirmed: and then the commonness of them would have destroyed their efficacy upon the mind. Even when they were wrought, they did not carry conviction to the minds of all: and how much less would they have done so at this time, if they had been continued to the present day!

We may well say, that, if men believe not the records of the Old and New Testaments, neither would they be persuaded though they saw one rise from the dead.

These supernatural gifts being withdrawn, we are now left to the use of those means which are placed within our reach. I do not intend to say, that any efforts of ours can convince those who will shut their eyes against the light: for the resurrection of Lazarus, and of our Lord himself, did not effect that: but we have within our reach means, which will, as far as is necessary, subserve the interests of religion in the way that miracles once did.

Learning is now the substitute for those gifts: and by learning must we labor to attain the ends for which those spiritual gifts were formerly bestowed; namely, to acquire the knowledge of religion; to attain a facility of diffusing it; and to maintain it against all its adversaries.

By learning we must attain the knowledge of religion. Of course, I must not be understood to say, that the fundamental doctrines of Christianity cannot be understood without learning: for then I would condemn to hopeless misery all the unlearned of the earth. No! God has not so constituted his Gospel, that it would be hidden from the poor: for it is a characteristic feature of the Gospel, that it was to be preached to the poor and illiterate, and that it would commend itself to them, while it was hidden from the wise and prudent.

*The fundamental truths of our holy religion are few and simple.*The man who feels himself an undone sinner, and who looks simply to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, is truly instructed in the Gospel, though he is not able to read one word in it. And the Scriptures are so written, that even the poorest man who can read them, and who has a spiritual discernment given him from above, can comprehend all that is contained in them, so far as it is necessary for the edification and comfort of his own soul: and to keep the Bible out of the hands of the poor, from an idea that they will only receive injury from the perusal of it, is a Popish delusion, an unchristian cruelty, an impious reflection upon God himself.

But still I must say, that, *to a full and complete understanding of the sacred volume, a very considerable degree of learning is requisite*. In truth, that volume itself contains mines of learning, which many years of investigation are scarcely sufficient to explore. Numberless things at this very day are but matters of conjecture, even to the most learned men upon earth, because of the very partial information which is transmitted to us of the customs to which they refer, and the circumstances with which they were connected. And it may well be doubted, whether the inspired volume will ever be fully understood, unless a Spirit of inspiration be again given to unfold it to us.

Nor is learning at all less necessary for the diffusion of sacred knowledge. We admire and revere the memory of one favored servant of God, Henry Martyn, a Member of this University, who, possessed as he was of most transcendent talents, and with incredible zeal and industry devoted to the Lord, translated the New Testament into the Persian and Hindoostani languages. What, then, must be necessary for the translating of the whole Scriptures into all the languages of the world!

And must I not add, that learning is alike necessary for the maintaining of Christianity against its adversaries? We cannot contend even with sceptics and infidels, among ourselves, without learning: and how much less can we refute all the objections of Jewish Rabbis, and all the errors of the different religionists upon the face of the globe? They will not bow to the authority of our Scriptures: nor can we work miracles to convince them. We must search out all their refuges of lies, and expose all their sophistry, and establish our own religion upon the ruins of theirs. But can this be done without learning?

I think, then, we may say, that learning must supply the place of miracles, unless God would be pleased to restore to his Church those powers which for so many centuries have been withdrawn.

Nevertheless, while, as befits me, I exalt among you the importance of learning, it is proper that I proceed to point out, in

***~~The second place, The infinitely greater value of spiritual graces.~~***

"But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way."

That which is here proposed to them as more excellent than any gifts, is the grace of love; the character and offices of which are fully described in the chapter which follows. Now, in looking into that chapter, we see that the direct tendency of love is to mortify all those evil dispositions which had been exercised in the Corinthian Church, and to call forth into action all those holy tempers which had been trodden under foot. The Apostle, therefore, may be considered as saying to the Corinthian Church, 'You, instead of improving your gifts aright, have made them an occasion of pride, and envy, and jealousy: and I recommend you rather to set your hearts on the attainment of that heavenly principle, which will rectify your disorders, and unite all your souls in love.'

Still, however, we must observe, that the Apostle did not confine himself to this idea; but launched forth into a general view of the *excellencies of love*, in order that he might the more powerfully excite them to the cultivation of it. And, therefore, I will so far follow him, as to show you the superiority of love to all gifts whatever; first, for our own personal benefit; next, for the benefit of the world at large; and lastly, for the honor of our God.

Love, then, is more excellent than learning.

First, for our own personal benefit. I would by no means be thought to undervalue learning: it is, beyond all doubt, of immense importance: it expands the mind, and enlarges the heart; and contributes, more than can be well conceived, to raise man above his fellows; insomuch, that all are ready to bow down to him who stands high in repute for the attainment of it.

But, then, learning does nothing towards the sanctifying of the heart, or the improvement of the soul in heavenly dispositions: on the contrary, it is too often found to operate precisely as the spiritual gifts did at Corinth, to the engendering of pride and envy, of conceit and jealousy, of hatred and malignity, in the very circle where it most abounds.

But love elevates the mind, and purifies it from all these hateful dispositions. It raises the soul to God, and calls forth all our energies in behalf of man. It even transforms us into the very image of God himself, whose name and nature is love. It also greatly tranquillizes the mind, and cuts off all occasion for those painful feelings which agitate the bosoms of the generality of men, and kindle animosities between man and man. I may go further, and say, as the Apostle does, that, whatever we may possess of such attainments, they will soon vanish away, and leave us as little benefitted as if we had never possessed them. But love constitutes our fitness for the heavenly inheritance, and is indeed the commencement of Heaven in the soul: and *it will exist within us, in full activity, when all other things shall have ceased for ever.*

Secondly, love is more excellent than learning, for the benefit of the world at large. Learning, as I have said, confers extensive good upon mankind: but it is also frequently a vehicle of incalculable evil. To a vast extent has it been employed in the service of infidelity and profaneness; insomuch, that, even in Christian lands, some of the most distinguished historians, poets, and philosophers, have put forth all their energies for the subversion, rather than the establishment, of our holy religion!

But love is never employed, but for the good of mankind. Gladly would it drive from the world every noxious sentiment and feeling, and contribute, as far as possible, to the happiness of all. To benefit the souls of men, is its highest aim: and not so much as one would it allow to perish, if by any means it could induce him to embrace the offered salvation. We need only see the difference between the *learned Saul*and the *pious Paul*, and we shall behold this matter in its true light.

I may here add, that learning, however beneficial it may be to some, has but few objects, comparatively, with whom it can come in contact. The learned only can appreciate its worth, or make a due improvement of its stores. But love extends to every man; and is capable of its fullest exercise, in every place, and under every circumstance that can occur. It is like the *sun*which shines alike upon the evil and upon the good; or the *rain* which descends alike on the just and on the unjust.

Thirdly, I must add that love is more excellent than learning, as contributing more to the honor of our God. Though learning is indeed to be traced to God as its true source—yet his agency in it is almost always overlooked; and the honor of it is ascribed to its possessor, who employs it only for his own glory. Even when it is used in support of religion, still, unless under the influence of love, it aims only at the advancement of its possessor in wealth or honor. But love bears upon it the very stamp of Heaven; and shows to all that it proceeds from God. Love is "an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men." And in all it does, it seeks to honor God. Love would be ashamed to arrogate anything to itself. Love gives to God the glory of its every motion and its every act: and, if only God be honored, it regards not what portion is assigned to its possessor.

I will only add, that learning will sit at ease, and please itself, without any concern for God; while love will travel to the ends of the earth, and encounter all imaginable perils, if only man may be benefitted, and God be glorified.

Allow me now, then, to address you in the words of my text; and, in conformity with the Apostle's direction to the Corinthians, to say, in the first place—"But eagerly desire the greater gifts.

It will be remembered, that I have stated this to be the just translation of the word; and that, instead of being a reproof, saying, "You do covet" (and covet improperly) the best gifts, it is a concession. "Covet earnestly the best gifts;" for that is an ambition, which, if duly exercised, I cordially approve. I observed, that this view of the word had an important bearing on my subject: and that bearing I shall now point out.

There are religious persons who undervalue learning; and therefore *undervalue it, because they lack either the talent or the industry to attain it.*But I must bear my decided testimony against all such persons; and must declare, that their notions are erroneous, their conduct evil, their example pernicious.

It is an error to suppose that religion discountenances attainments of any kind: and those who are sent hither (to this university, I mean) for instruction, and neglect to improve their talents according to the plan of study here prescribed, are highly criminal before God and man: nor can they conceive how great a stumbling-block they lay in the way of others, or what injury they do to religion, which is condemned for their sakes. I therefore would say to all, "Covet earnestly the best gifts;" and not only "covet them earnestly," but pursue them diligently.

If I may be permitted to address myself more particularly to those with whom, as a partaker of the same benefits with them in our early education and our present means of prosecuting our studies, I am more immediately connected, I would say, 'Inasmuch as your advantages have been greater than perhaps those of any other persons, your proficiency ought to be proportionably great: and, inasmuch as the lines in which you have an opportunity to distinguish yourselves are, through accidental circumstances, more contracted than those of others—then you are doubly bound to excel in those lines, where the scope for competition is open to you.'

Yet I must go on, with the Apostle, to say, as good as this way is, "I have shown you a more excellent way," and would most earnestly exhort you to walk in it. The way of love is indeed a more excellent way; and it may well regulate you, even in the prosecution of your studies. You will remember that the Apostle says, "Covet earnestly the best gifts." And he tells us plainly what the best gifts are: "God has set some in the Church; first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then, gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues, [1 Corinthians 12:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.28)."

Here you will notice, that his judgment was in direct opposition to that of the Corinthians in general. They put the speaking with tongues in the first place, because that was the gift which excited the most admiration, and attracted the most applause: and they accounted the prophets, that is, the expounders of God's blessed word, as low in comparison with them. But the Apostle inverted that order altogether: he put the prophets and teachers next in order to the Apostles; and placed the diversities of tongues the very lowest of all. He estimated these gifts by a very different standard from that which prevailed among the vain ostentatious Corinthians. *He judged of gifts by their usefulness to the souls of men.*And this is the judgment which I would recommend to you. Let not your time be so occupied with things curious, or entertaining, or calculated to excite the admiration of men—as to neglect, or keep in the back-ground, those things which are of practical utility to the Church of God. Learn to estimate these things, not by the world's standard, but by God's: and lay out your time and strength most in those things which will most conduce to the benefit of God's Church and people.

And this you will do, if you cultivate the grace of love. You will act to please God, and not to please man. You will seek the edification of your own souls, in everything that is amiable and praiseworthy; and you will move in the sphere appointed to you, so as most to advance the welfare of men and the honor of your God. *You will not consider it sufficient to attain gifts, however great and splendid, when you recollect how empty and worthless they are without love*. The Apostle says, "If I speak in the *tongues*of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of *prophecy*and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a *faith*that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I *give*all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing, [1 Corinthians 13:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.1-3)."

After such declarations as these, so strong, so authoritative, so decisive, I may well be excused if I urge upon you a practical attention to them, and entreat you, while pursuing, as you ought to do, the best attainments in learning—not to be unmindful of that more excellent way; but to "add to your knowledge godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness, Christian love, [2 Peter 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.6-7)."

***~~#1985~~***

***~~THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 13:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.1-3)~~***

"If I speak in the *tongues*of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of *prophecy*and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a *faith*that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I *give*all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing!"

IN the apostolic age, the Church enjoyed some advantages, to which we of this day are strangers. The vast variety of gifts which were given to the primitive believers, tended greatly to fix their attention on the truths that were delivered, and to confirm the faith of those who heard them.

On the other hand, these gifts were attended with some disadvantages; inasmuch as they gave rise to an unholy jealousy in the persons who possessed them, and an undue partiality in those for whose benefit they were exercised. On the whole, we need not envy them their distinctions, since their gifts, however exalted they might be, were nothing in comparison with that which we, as well as they, are privileged to possess. *Love is of more value than them all*. Gifts might edify others; but love benefits ourselves: and, *without love, all the gifts that men ever possessed were of no value*. This is asserted by Paul in our text. But, as his assertions are of a very extraordinary kind, we shall endeavor to *explain*and *vindicate*them to your satisfaction.

***~~I. To explain—~~***

In order to place the passage in its true point of view, we shall explain,

***~~1. The principle itself—~~***

The Corinthians possessed many miraculous powers, which, though given them only for the edification of the Church, were exerted by them principally for vain-glorious and selfish ends. Hence the Apostle tells them, that they defeated the very ends for which these powers had been imparted, and trampled upon that principle of Christian love, which was of more value than all the powers that either men or angels could possess. All the properties which in this chapter are ascribed to love, show it to have man, and man alone, for its object. And those who interpret the word as including love to God also, make the import of the whole chapter obscure and unintelligible.

Yet we must bear in mind, that it is Christian love which is here spoken of; namely, love founded on a regard to the authority of God who has enjoined it, and on a regard to Christ also, in and through whom all the human race may be considered as united in one great family. His example is no less binding upon us than the command of God: and therefore, though we confine the term to the love of man only, we understand by it such a love, as is founded altogether on Christian principles, and is combined with all other gracious affections.

***~~2. The assertions respecting it—~~***

Such in the Apostle's judgment is the value and importance of Christian love, that, without it all that we can *possess*is of no value, and all that we can *do*is of no value.

Without love, all that we can *possess*is of no value.

It is here supposed that a man may be able to *speak*with all the *wisdom*and eloquence both of men and angels; that he may possess a gift of *prophecy*so as to foretell future events; that he may have a perfect insight into all the most hidden *mysteries*of our religion, and an ability to solve all its difficulties; yes, that he may possess a *faith*whereby he may be able to remove mountains—and yet be destitute of this principle of universal love. And certain it is that all these miraculous powers are independent of gracious affections, and have been more or less exercised by men, who, like Balaam, were altogether destitute of the grace of God.

Supposing then a man to possess all these powers in their highest possible degree, and at the same time to be destitute of the principle of true love, he should, as the Apostle says, be only "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal"—the most harsh and monotonous of all the instruments from whence anything like music can be elicited.

Moreover, without this principle of love, all that we can *do*is of no value. It is supposed here that a person may have such a fit of *liberality*as to give all his goods to feed the poor; and such a fit of *zeal*as to give his body to be burned; and yet be destitute of this principle. And certain it is, that there are principles in our fallen nature capable of producing these effects in men who have never received one atom of the grace of God, or felt one spark of true love. Many thousands of our fellow-subjects in India are solemn examples of this truth; men reducing themselves to the most wretched state of poverty and misery, and women voluntarily burning themselves upon the funeral piles of their deceased husbands; and this from no better principle than pride and vain-glory.

Similar effects are produced also by a self-righteous principle; the unhappy devotees accounting nothing too much to do or suffer in order to recommend themselves to their senseless deities. Supposing then a man to do all this, and yet to be devoid of love, "it would profit him nothing," literally "nothing." Not one of his sins would ever be removed by it; nor would he be advanced one single step towards the favor of God: he would be as spiritually poor, and wretched, and miserable as before.

Now these, it must be confessed, are very strong assertions: and the idea of a man going from the flames of martyrdom to the flames of Hell, is so shocking, that we scarcely know how to admit it for one moment. Yet it is really true that this may be the case; as is abundantly evident from the Apostle's assertions; which now we will proceed,

***~~II. To vindicate—~~***

Let it be remembered that the principle, which is here supposed to be lacking, is that of universal "love." And well may it be said, that, in the absence of that, all other things are of no value; for,

***~~1. Where Christian love is lacking, there can be no true love to God—~~***

Here John will prove to us an infallible instructor. His words are plain and decisive: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love, [1 John 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.7)" "If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he who loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen? [1 John 4:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.20)." Here the apostle John not only declares the vanity and falsehood of all pretensions of love to God, while we are destitute of love to man; but he appeals to us respecting it, as a matter that is self-evident and incontrovertible. *For a man to pretend to obey the first table of the law, while he tramples habitually on all the duties of the second table, is an absurdity too glaring for any one seriously to maintain. If we are destitute of love to man, we cannot possibly be possessed of love to God.*

Now then, we would ask, in what light must that man be viewed who has no love to God? Of what value are his gifts, how great or manifold soever they may be? Or of what value are his actions, however glorious they may be in the eyes of man? Can the man please God, when he does not love him? Can the man enjoy God, when he does not love him? Could he enjoy God even in Heaven itself, if he did not love him? No! If it is only a fellow-creature whom we do not love, we have no pleasure in his presence, even though he himself is not the only source from whence our comfort might be drawn: how then could we be happy in God's presence, when he would be the only spring from whence even one drop of pleasure could flow? Truly, to such a man, even Heaven itself would be no Heaven; or rather, it would be to him as the precincts of Hell.

***~~2. Where Christian love is lacking, there can be no~~***

***~~true faith in Christ—~~***

Love is properly the fruit of faith. Mere carnal affection, or party-spirit, may exist without any knowledge of Christ: but Christian love must spring from faith in Christ, even from that faith, which, as the Apostle says, "works by love, [Galatians 5:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.6)."

But here again the Apostle John shall be our guide. In immediate connection with the fore-cited passages, he says, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loves him who begat, loves him also that is begotten of him, [1 John 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.1)." Here the argument is plain: every one who believes in Christ, loves God; and every one that loves God, loves those also who are begotten of him: consequently, if we love not those who are begotten of him, we have no love to God, nor any faith in Christ.

And what is the state of a man that has no faith in Christ? Can there be any value in anything which he either has or does? He has no saving interest in Christ, no pardon of sin, no title to Heaven, no hope beyond the grave: what then do his pre-eminent talents, or his specious virtues signify? He may benefit others; but he cannot benefit himself: he may even "save others; but he himself will be a cast-away." Yes, at this moment "he is in a state of condemnation, and the wrath of God abides on him, [John 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.18); [John 3:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.36)."

***~~3. Where Christian love is lacking, there can be no~~***

***~~real holiness of heart and life—~~***

The man that is destitute of love tramples alike on both tables of the law. For, "the very end of the commandment, (the very end for which the law was given, and which it was principally intended to effect,) is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of a sincere faith, [1 Timothy 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.5);" and this end not being answered, the whole law is made void.

Again; Paul says, that "all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, [Galatians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.14);" therefore, if this one grace is so connected with every part of the law as to fulfill it all, the lack of this one grace must violate it all.

Once more, it is said, "Put on love, which is the bond of perfectness, [Colossians 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.14);" it is that by which all the graces that constitute perfection are bound together, just as the armor was by the belt that enclosed it. This therefore being lacking, no grace whatever is found in its proper place: they are altogether scattered to the winds.

What then, we would again ask, is the state of such a man—a man that defeats the one end for which the law was given; that violates it in all its parts; and leaves at the disposal of every gust of passion all the graces which it was intended to combine? We think that nothing more is lacking to confirm all the strong assertions of the Apostle, or to show that, whatever a man may either possess or do, without love he is nothing but a tinkling cymbal; *he will be nothing to all eternity, but a miserable, self-deceiving, self-ruined hypocrite!*

***~~From this view of Christian love, learn the importance,~~***

***~~1. Of understanding clearly its nature—~~***

Certain it is that the nature of Christian love is but little known. In truth, had it not been so fully opened in the chapter before us, it may well be doubted whether any man upon the face of the earth would have fully understood it: or rather, it may be doubted, whether any man on the face of the earth does fully understand it even now. *No part of it can be understood any farther that it is experienced in the soul*: and the defects of men in the practice of it show how defective must be their views of its extent and obligations. But, it is only in proportion as we understand it, that we can have any just standard whereby to estimate our own character, or any sure directory for our conduct.

But God will judge us by his perfect law, whether we understand it or not. He does not reduce his demands to the measure which we choose to fix; but requires us diligently to learn his will, and then to do it "without partiality and without hypocrisy." Our first object then must be to *get a thorough insight into the requirements of his law, and then to set ourselves with all diligence to the performance of it.*

***~~2. Of ascertaining our state in relation to it—~~***

Often should we bring ourselves to the touchstone, to try what our state is before God. We have seen *how high we may be in the estimation of men, while yet we are nothing in the sight of God*. Perhaps there are no persons more eminent in their own eyes, than those who attract great attention by their talents, or by liberality and zeal have high credit for their attainments. But such persons often fearfully deceive their own souls, [Galatians 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.3). If we would form a right judgment of our character, let us study this chapter thoroughly, and apply to our hearts and consciences every one of those properties by which Christian love is there distinguished.

Let us further study the character of the Apostle Paul, and of our blessed Lord himself: and thus shall we know, with some considerable measure of certainty, what is God's estimate of us, and what his sentence will be upon us in the great and solemn judgement day.

***~~3. Of cultivating the growth of it in our souls—~~***

There is no measure of Christian love with which we are to rest satisfied: we are always to be pressing forward for higher and higher attainments. Paul commends the Thessalonians, because "their *faith*grew exceedingly, and the *love*of every one of them towards each other abounded, [2 Thessalonians 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.3)." Let us seek to merit that commendation. It is in that way only that we can make our profiting to appear, or give evidence that we are growing from babes to young men, and from young men to fathers. Love is the image of God; and the more we increase in it, the more we adorn our Christian profession, and attain "a fitness for the heavenly inheritance." Let us all then "follow earnestly this best of gifts;" and however much any of you may have attained, "we beseech you to abound more and more! [1 Thessalonians 4:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 4.9-10)."

***~~#1986~~***

***~~A DESCRIPTION OF CHRISTIAN LOVE~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 13:4-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.4-7)~~***

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

OF all the subjects proposed to us in the Holy Scriptures, there is not one that deserves a deeper attention than that before us. If only we consider what is said of love in the preceding verses, and reflect on the indispensable necessity of it to our acceptance with God—we shall be led to inquire diligently into its characteristic features, and its inseparable properties. We shall not satisfy ourselves with any specious appearances, or outward acts; but shall examine, whether, and how far, this divine principle exists in our hearts. To assist you in this inquiry, we shall enter minutely into the description here given of it; and endeavor to hold up a *mirror*, in which every one may behold his own face.

It is but too common, when subjects of this kind are discussed, to apply them to others, rather than ourselves. But, if we would hear with profit, we must think of ourselves only; and implore of God the influences of his Spirit, that "the word may come, not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," to our souls.

There are here no less than fifteen particulars by which the principle of love is distinguished. But we apprehend, that the first two are designed to give a general view of the subject; and that those which follow are the particulars comprehended under it.

The suffering patiently all kinds of evil, and doing cheerfully all kinds of good—are the constituent parts of true love: and these are expressed by those two words, "love is patient, and is kind." Paul elsewhere sums up the whole of love in these two things; "Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good, [Romans 12:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.21)."

In fact, it is by these two terms that love is depicted as existing and operating in the bosom of God himself: "Do you despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" Here the words "goodness and long-suffering" are, in the original, the very same with those in the beginning of our text, "love is patient, and is kind:" from whence we may see that love in us is of the same nature with love in God; or, in other words, that it is a conformity of heart to God, whose name and character is love, [1 John 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.16).

Descending thus to the consideration of the different particulars, we notice, that there is a marked difference also in the statement of them, in the former part, as compared with the latter part; the former consisting wholly of *negations*; and the latter, of *affirmations*: and thus presenting to our view,

***~~I. The evils it excludes—~~***

These may fitly be distributed under five heads:

**1. Envy:** "love does not envy"—

Envy is a repining at another's prosperity, or good, which we ourselves desire to possess: and it is a principle deeply rooted in our fallen nature, insomuch that it may be seen to operate with great force even in children at the bosom; so true is that testimony of the Apostle, "The spirit that dwells in us, lusts to envy, [James 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.5)."

But how contrary is this to true love! Can we conceive a mother to envy her own child any perfection it possessed, or any benefit that has been conferred upon it? or if there were such a mother, would she not, by the common consent of all, be thought an unnatural monster, rather than a loving parent? Real love would lead her to rejoice in all the good that accrued to her child, though she herself were not a partaker of it: and this is the invariable operation of love, wherever it exists.

Know then, that, whatever distinctions or benefits any other person may attain, while we ourselves have failed in the pursuit of them, we should feel only pleasure in his success; and if we grudge it him, and are disposed to detract from his merits, and to reduce him to a level with ourselves, we are actuated by the hateful principle of envy, and, in that instance at least, are destitute of the sublimer principle of love.

**2. Pride:** "Love does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude"—

These three may properly be classed under the head of pride. The words import that love is not inconsiderate, insolent, and over-bearing. This is nearly allied with a conceit of one's own attainment, and naturally leads to a violation of all that respect which is due to age, and station, and legitimate authority.

Yet to what an extent do these evils exist! How headstrong, how self-opinionated, how presumptuous are youth in general, especially where they can give vent to their dispositions without restraint! But love is modest, sober, temperate: it pays a just deference to the sentiments of others; and willingly submits to the dictates of maturer age, and riper judgment.

If then we speak and act without a due consideration of what others may think, or a proper regard to what others may feel, or in any way that does not befit our age, our rank, our character—then we violate the duties of love; which teaches us to "esteem others better than ourselves, [Philippians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.3)," and to guard with all possible care against everything that may give just offense, [1 Corinthians 10:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.32), or weaken the influence of our exertions for the good of others. In a word, real love will lead us to "prefer others in honor before ourselves, [Romans 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.10)," and to take on all occasions the lowest place, [Luke 14:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 14.10).

**3. Selfishness:** "Love is not self-seeking"—

Throughout the whole of this description, the Apostle seems to have had in his eye some of those particular evils which abounded in the Church at Corinth. This more especially he had occasion to reprove, both in the preceding and subsequent context. Many of them possessed gifts, which they used chiefly for the advancement of their own honor, when they should have improved them solely for the Church's good. And this disposition fearfully predominates in our fallen nature, "All men seek their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ, [Philippians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.21)."

But true love triumphs over all these narrow and contracted feelings: it teaches us not to seek our own ease, honor, and profit, but in entire subserviency to the good of others, [1 Corinthians 10:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.33); and to become the servants of all for Christ's sake, [1 Corinthians 9:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.19), sacrificing our just rights, [1 Corinthians 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.15), abridging our unquestionable liberty, [1 Corinthians 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.13), and accommodating ourselves either to the wishes or the prejudice of others, [Acts 16:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.3); [Acts 21:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 21.26), for the better promotion of their welfare.

This is Christian love: but wherever self predominates, so as to turn us from this blessed path, we are destitute of that heavenly principle, whose direction is, "Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others." [1 Corinthians 10:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.24) and [Philippians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.4).

**4. Anger:** "Love is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs"—

It frequently happens in a family, that, in the estimation of him who is at the head of it, one member can do nothing that is good; and another member, nothing that is wrong. But whence arises this partiality? Is it that the one is so perfect as never to err; and the other so depraved, as never to do right? No! the actions of the two are seen through a different medium; the one through the medium of prejudice, and the other of love.

Now such a measure of partiality as can find no fault, is far from being desirable; nor is it any part of true love. But love keeps us from breaking forth into anger against an offending brother; and suffers us not to impute evil intentions to him, to aggravate his offense.

Where there is a continual disposition to find fault, and a readiness to fly into a rage on trifling occasions—where there is a proneness to *put an unkind construction on everything*, and to judge persons with severity—there is no love.

Let us but observe how ready we are to find excuses for any one we greatly love, or even for a favorite animal that has committed a fault, and we shall see immediately what should be our conduct towards our brethren, if we had real love to them in our hearts.

How ingenious are we in finding excuses for ourselves, when we have done anything amiss! If self-love operate so towards ourselves, would not the love of our brethren prescribe somewhat of a similar measure towards them? Yes assuredly: we would "be slow to get angry," as we find we are, comparatively at least, towards those whom we love; and ready to extenuate, rather than aggravate, what we cannot fully approve.

**5. Malice:** "Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices in the truth"—

To find pleasure in the fall or disgrace of another is the very essence of malice—the counterpart of Satan himself! Yet how universally prevalent is this malignant disposition. Has any person, especially one whom we have regarded as a superior or a rival, done anything whereby he has lowered himself in the estimation of mankind? With what pleasure do we listen to the tale! What gratification do we feel in circulating the report! What a satisfaction do we take, even while we profess to pity him, in the fall and degradation of our brother!

If afterwards we find that the report was not true, or that there were circumstances which materially altered the real character of the action, do we feel the same pleasure in having our own judgment rectified, and in rectifying the misapprehensions of others? No! There is not the same gratification to our corrupt nature in believing and circulating the one, as in crediting and spreading the other: and therefore, while we are ready enough to propagate the evil, we leave truth to find its way as it can.

But this is not the way in which love will show itself: love finds no pleasure in that which causes pain to another, or dishonor to God: but it is delighted with everything which may tend to the advancement of God's honor and our brethren's good.

In this copious description of love, we see yet further,

***~~II. The habits it keeps in exercise—~~***

**1. Love "*bears*****all things."**Or, as the word rather means, "*covers*, all things"—

Where love does not exist, there will be a readiness to spy out evil, and to spread the report of it far and wide. But where love reigns, there will be a disposition rather to cast a veil over our brother's faults, yes and over his sins too; according as it is written, "love will cover a multitude of sins, [1 Peter 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.8)." Where the revealing of what we know is necessary for the maintenance of public justice, there love to the community will supersede the obligation of which we are now speaking: but where no necessity exists for exposing the shame of our brother, we ought as far as possible to conceal it, and to cast over it the mantle of love.

This is what a man does towards those with whom he stands most intimately connected by the ties of kinship or friendship: and he will deal the same measure to all, in proportion as the general principle of Christian love prevails in his soul.

**2.** **"Love *believes*all things"—**

This must of course be restricted to good: for to believe hastily all manner of evil would be directly contrary to love. In the things which we either see or hear, there must of necessity be a great deal which cannot come under our observation. *Acts*are visible; but the *motives*which lead to them are hidden from us. *Results*too may be visible; but all the circumstances that led to them, and the precise manner in which they were brought about, may be very imperfectly known by us: and yet on these depends the innocence or criminality of the persons engaged in them.

Now love will not judge from outward appearances, or from partial information; but will *suppose and believe that there are many things connected with the event, which, if fully known, would in some measure, if not altogether, justify the person condemned*.

In our courts of law, the judge always considers himself as, in some degree, counsel for the person accused. Now this is what we would all be, in our daily conduct: a person accused is, as it were, brought to our bar for trial: and, instead of pronouncing a sentence of condemnation upon him instantly on the statement of his accuser, we should suspend our judgment until we know what he has to say in vindication of himself. And if we are not likely to gain that fuller information, we would take for granted that there are some circumstances, though unknown to us, that would give a different color to the transaction, and constrain us to give a sentence in his favor.

***~~3. "Love hopes all things"—~~***

The reports we hear may be so full and circumstantial, and be corroborated by such a weight of evidence, that we can scarcely withhold our assent to the statement. Yet, if we cannot altogether believe that the accused person is less guilty than he is represented, we should "hope" it. We would not so definitively pass judgment on him, as if it were impossible for us to err; or as if more information might not give us a more favorable view of his conduct.

If we are compelled to condemn him for an evil act, we should hope that the act was not formed into a habit: or, if we are constrained to lament that his iniquities have become a habit, still we would hope that he is not altogether incorrigible. We should not despair of seeing a change in his favor, or give him over as altogether reprobate. This is the way in which a loving parent acts towards his son; and it is the way in which we should act towards all the human race: we should believe, where we cannot see; and hope, where we cannot believe; and cherish desire, where we can scarcely entertain a hope.

***~~4. "Love endures all things"—~~***

Much will we bear from a beloved object, many unkindnesses, and many injuries: and, especially if we have a prospect of ultimately benefitting his soul, we can bear up under his ill treatment with much long-suffering and forbearance. This at least is the proper effect of love; as we see in Paul, who says, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

It is not a slight provocation or two, that love will overlook, but a long-continuance of provocations: it will forgive, not once, or seven times, but seventy times seven. It will continue to bless even the man that loads us with curses, and to accumulate benefits on him who seeks only to do us evil.

Love so endures evil, as "not to be overcome by it;" and makes such returns for it, as to "overcome it with good." Its great aim is, so to "heap coals of fire on the head of an adversary, as to melt him into love."

In this consists the triumphs of the God of love; and in this will every one who is born of God endeavor to resemble his heavenly Father.

***~~Hence we may see,~~***

***~~1. How different is true religion from what men generally apprehend!~~***

Far be it from us to undervalue gifts of any kind, especially of those which have a favorable aspect on religion: and still less would we speak lightly of those alternations of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow, which many experience in their religious course.

But still we must say, that vital religion is different from them all, as a building is from the scaffold that is used for its erection. True religion is a conformity to the Divine image. True religion is the law of God written in the heart. True religion is love; love in all its bearings, and in all its exercises. Happy would it be if this matter were better understood by those who profess religion.

But, with too many, religion has its seat in the *ear*and in the *tongue*, rather than in the *heart*; and operates rather in a way of conceit and talkativeness, and uncharitable censures of those who differ from us, than in meekness and modesty, benevolence and beneficence, forbearance and forgiveness. But let no man deceive himself: just so much as we have of real, active, and habitual love—just so much we have of true religion, and no more.

***~~2. How little true religion there is in the world!~~***

Look into the world, and see what are the dispositions and habits of all around us. What do we see, but pride and envy, wrath and malice, self-seeking and self-indulgence? The whole world is full of uncharitableness: nothing is to be seen or heard but mutual censures and bitter animosities. The real actings of love are as little prevalent, I had almost said, as in Hell itself. The laws of the land, and the habits of society, keep many from those violent breaches of love which would disturb the public peace. But their secret heart-burnings, towards those who have injured or insulted them, show sufficiently how little there is of true love in their hearts.

Would to God that this were not the case also in the Church of God! But it is a lamentable truth, that in Christian societies there is much of this unkind feeling in one towards another; brethren alienated from each other by some trifling differences, and even harder to be reconciled to each other than the ungodly world. "O tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ascalon, lest the uncircumcised triumph."

But let *professors*look well to this matter, for they shall be judged, not by their profession, but by their practice: and, however eminent they may be in the estimation of men, they will receive their doom from God, according to the actings of this principle in their hearts and lives.

***~~3. How thankful should we be for the rich provisions of the Gospel!~~***

Who among us could stand, if we were to be justified only by our obedience to this law? Who would venture his salvation upon it, even for one single day? Alas! "in many things we all offend:" there is not a human being who does not come very short of the requirements of perfect love. We need then, all of us, to wash in "the fountain opened for sin and for impurity;" and to seek a saving interest in that Savior, who alone fulfilled the law in all its full extent.

Nor can we obey this law at all, any farther than we are assisted by divine grace. *We need the influences of the Holy Spirit, to mortify and subdue the risings of uncharitableness within us.*Whatever we may have attained, "the flesh still lusts against the Spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we should." But, blessed be God! the Holy Spirit is promised unto all who desire his gracious influences, and his operation shall be effectual for the ends and purposes for which he is given.

While then we strive to be holy as God is holy, let us seek all our help from above, and "live by faith in the Son of God, who has loved us, and given himself for us!"

***~~#1987~~***

***~~THE SAINTS' VIEWS IN HEAVEN~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 13:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.9-12)~~***

"For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

IN the chapter before us, the Apostle expatiates upon the nature of true love; developing it in all its properties, and in all its operations. And, having done this with a singular felicity of thought and expression, he declares the superiority of this grace above everything else, whether gifts or graces; and that too, not only on account of its own intrinsic excellence, but on account of its duration; because, when all other things shall have passed away, love will endure through eternal ages.

To enter fully into the Apostle's views, we must notice, in succession,

***~~I. His statement of the subject—~~***

***~~Whatever we possess here on earth, we have it only "in part"—~~***

God, in his mercy, has given us a revelation: but this revelation contains but a very small part of what God might have revealed, if it had pleased him to do so. And the knowledge which we have of what he has revealed, is extremely partial and superficial. What do we know:

of *God*, and his perfections?

of *Christ*, and his offices?

of the *Holy Spirit*, and his operations, [Matthew 11:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.27)?

What do we know of the *human heart*, and its unsearchable depravity [Jeremiah 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.9).

What do we know of the "riches of Christ, [Ephesians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.8)," and of all the wonders of redemption, "the length and breadth, and depth and height, of which surpass" all finite comprehension, [Ephesians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18-19)?

***~~And even what knowledge we do possess now, shall in the eternal world "be done away"—~~***

We shall have no need of the written word to teach us, when once we are brought into the presence of God; nor will our present imperfect conceptions of it abide with us. The word, which at present is to us as the polar star, will then vanish from our sight; and the views which we now have of it, like those of the early dawn, will be dispelled; both the one and the other giving way, as darkness before the noon-day sun! To what purpose would a man carry a candle in the day-time? Even so the light within us, and the light without, will add nothing to the brightness of the objects in Heaven, or to the clearness of our perception of them, when once we shall behold them in their "perfect" state.

But this will receive additional light from,

***~~II. His illustration of it—~~***

We all know how imperfect the conceptions of a child are, in comparison with what he possesses when he is become a man—

A child speaks without reflection, chooses without judgment, and reasons without solidity. But, when he becomes a man he exercises all his faculties in a more appropriate and befitting manner. He no longer utters the unmeaning and senseless sounds which emanated from him in his infant state, or makes the trifling observations that befitted him when he first began to speak. Nor does he set his mind on things which are of no value, in preference to those that are of real and important use. Nor, though he still may err in his reasonings, does he any longer found his conclusions on premises which have no apparent connection with them. His intellectual powers being expanded by use and exercise, he dismisses, as unworthy of him, the puerilities which he once desired.

***~~Just so, more imperfect are our present views of eternal things, in comparison with what they will be in a future state—~~***

Now "we see them all as in a mirror, darkly:" they appear to us as a riddle or enigma, which we cannot without great difficulty comprehend.

The incarnation of God's only dear Son,

his substitution in the place of sinful man,

the atonement offered by him for sin,

his intercession for us at the right hand of God,

his appointment to be the Head of vital influence to his Church and people,

our union with him by faith

—what do we know of these, and ten thousand other mysteries of our holy religion? The darkest riddle that ever was propounded is more level with our apprehension than these mysterious truths.

And what do we know of the felicity of Heaven? What conception can we form of the soul's exercises in its disembodied state; or of the glory of the Godhead, as shining forth to the view of the glorified saints and angels? Even the resurrection of the body, what do we know about it? or what notion have we of a spiritual body? We must all confess, that our present views are so indistinct, as scarcely to deserve the name of knowledge.

But when we shall behold God "face to face," and "see the Lord Jesus Christ as he is," then will our faculties be wonderfully enlarged, and our perceptions be infinitely more clear. O what views shall we then have of our own sinfulness, and of the Redeemer's love! What an apprehension shall we then have of the perfections of our God, as united and harmonizing in the great work of redemption!

Our knowledge will then arise, not, as now, from a variety of ideas communicated in succession to the mind, but from one intuitive perception: we shall see God, and the things of God, in some measure as God himself sees us: he sees the whole of us, even the inmost recesses of our souls, all at once, with equal clearness in every part: and somewhat of the same kind will be our knowledge of him, though, of course, in an infinitely lower degree: for "then shall we know even as also we are known."

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

***~~1. In what light we should regard death—~~***

To an ungodly man, indeed, death will be terrible, beyond all conception; because it will introduce him to a perfect knowledge of all those terrors, which, in this world, he would not believe.

But *to the true Christian, death is the door of entrance into glory*. It is the friendly messenger sent to us by God, in answer to that prayer of our blessed Savior; "Father, I will that they whom you have given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which you have given me, [John 17:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.24)." Who, then, would deprecate death? Who would not account it as gain, and number it among his treasures 1 Corinthians 3:22. Who would not desire to depart, that he may be with Christ [Philippians 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.21); [Philippians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.23)." Methinks it is a shame to Christians to be wedded to life in this poor world, except for the purpose of honoring God, and advancing in a fitness for the heavenly inheritance.

***~~2. In what light we should regard this present life—~~***

This is a state of childhood; and, as children are educated for the purpose of acting their part as men upon earth, so would we be preparing daily to act our part in Heaven. We would now be searching into all those truths which will be more fully revealed to us in Heaven, and be obtaining those dispositions which will qualify us for the enjoyment of them. And here let me say, that the great and learned will do well to remember what they are; and the poor and unlearned will do well to look forward to what they will be.

Our felicity above will be proportioned, not to our intellectual, but moral, attainments: and as, even in this world, "God often reveals to babes and sucklings what he has hidden from the wise and prudent," so much more, in the eternal world, will he most largely impart both knowledge and happiness to those who, in the present state, evince most fully the teachableness and humility of little children, [Matthew 18:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.1); [Matthew 18:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.4).

To all then I say, If you will be men indeed, "put away childish things." Put away your foolish communications, your corrupt affections, and your vain reasonings. Form your judgment, and exercise your inclinations, in accordance with the word of God. Begin to view things, here, as you will view them hereafter.

Be no longer children, but men. If you look at the world around you, what are they but children of a larger growth? The dispositions and habits of those most advanced in life are, for the most part, not at all different from what they were in the earlier stages of their existence: earthly vanities still retain their ascendant over their minds; and the realities of the eternal world have as little influence over them as ever. Let it not be so, my brethren; but now begin to obtain those *views*, to cherish those *desires*, and to follow those *pursuits*, which a more enlightened judgment will dictate, and which will approve themselves as wise in the eternal world.

***~~#1988~~***

***~~FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE, COMPARED~~***

**[1 Corinthians 13:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.13)**

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love!"

THE scope of the whole chapter is, to show the superiority of Christian *love*to all the *gifts*that were so erroneously estimated, and so ostentatiously displayed, in the Church of Corinth. In the course of his argument, the Apostle enumerates the principal offices of love, and marks with singular accuracy and minuteness its proper qualities. The last of the properties which he mentions is, that love "never fails;" while all miraculous powers, of whatever kind they be, are but for the short period of this present life. They, he observes, will soon vanish; but this, instead of disappearing, will endure in uninterrupted exercise, and be continued in undeviating perfection for evermore.

Thus incidentally he is led to speak of the whole experience of Christians in relation to the objects of their faith and hope: they view them all but indistinctly, and know them very imperfectly; having little better conception of them than of a riddle, or enigma.

In short, Christians, not excepting the Apostle himself, are but children, in relation to the deep things of God; and, when they shall be exalted to Heaven, they will discard all their puerile notions respecting them, just as they now do the weaknesses of childhood on their arrival at man's estate, verse 11.

The Apostle having thus, unintentionally as it were, been drawn from the consideration of miraculous *gifts*to the mention of Christian *graces*, proceeds to assert *the superiority of love among the sister graces of faith and hope*, as he had before shown its superiority to all the miraculous powers that ever were possessed: "There now remain" (for constant use and exercise) "faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

To confirm this declaration, we will show,

***~~I. The distinguishing excellencies of faith and hope—~~***

These, with love, form the cardinal graces of a Christian: and they are indispensable to his happiness, both in this world and in the world to come. That we may know how to appreciate their value, we will distinctly notice the excellencies,

***~~1. Of FAITH—~~***

Faith, when infused into the soul by the Spirit of God, and called forth into exercise according to the will of God, is a truly wonderful principle.

Faith beholds things that are invisible; and presents to the eye of the mind all the perfections and purposes of God himself.

Faith is conversant with all that God has ever revealed; and especially with that stupendous mystery, the *redemption*of the world by God's only dear Son, and the *restoration*of men to the Divine image by the influence and operation of the Holy Spirit.

Faith goes farther still; and apprehends all that God has ever promised, and appropriates to itself all the blessings of his everlasting covenant.

Faith seizes by a holy violence, [Matthew 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.12), all that God is, and all that God has—even all his glory; and invests the soul with all of it, as its present and everlasting portion.

Faith:

brings Christ himself down into the soul, [Ephesians 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.17);

fills it with his love, and

enriches it with all his fullness, [Ephesians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18-19).

As for *difficulties*, they all vanish, and are dispelled by the power of faith. There is a kind of omnipotence in faith. No enemy can withstand it: "All things are possible to him who believes." The more dark our way is, the more scope there is for the exercise of this grace, and the more it triumphs.

In this point of view, faith, far beyond any other grace, reflects honor on God. Faith fixes on the Divine perfections, and calls every one of them to its aid. Faith presses even *justice*itself into its service; and never will let go its claims upon God's mercy and truth. Faith finds quite sufficient encouragement in a single promise.

See *Abraham's*faith: he assured himself, that though Isaac would be slain and reduced to ashes, he would be raised again from the dead, and the promises would be fulfilled in him. And thus does faith operate in the hearts of all; and, in proportion as it operates, secures to us a victory over all the enemies of our salvation.

***~~2. Of HOPE—~~***

This is a less comprehensive grace than faith: for faith has respect to everything that is revealed, whether past, present, or future; and to things evil, as well as good: whereas hope respects futurity only, and only that which is either really, or in its own conception, good. Hope is also a less honorable grace than faith: for its existence is derived from faith, and altogether dependent on it; and it has respect only to our own personal happiness, while faith rises above self, and seeks to advance the glory of God!

Still however hope is a grace of vast importance; and the entire absence of it is the most striking character of Hell, where all are immersed in darkness and despair.

Hope is the grace which encourages and supports the soul in all its conflicts with sin and Satan. In the panoply of God it holds a most conspicuous place: it is the helmet that protects the head, and the breast-plate that defends the heart: so that, where hope is kept in exercise, Satan cannot inflict any deadly wound. True, he may raise storms and tempests around the soul, and menace it with instant destruction: but hope casts "its anchor within the veil;" and, deriving thence "a sure and steadfast" support, defies the utmost efforts of our great adversary [Hebrews 6:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.19). How often would the strongest believer have failed, if he had not received support from this grace! "I would have fainted," says David, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living [Psalm 27:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 27.13)."

It was no less by this grace, than by faith itself, that the saints of old were enabled to endure the great fight of afflictions which they were called to sustain, [Hebrews 11:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.26); [Hebrews 11:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.35). On this account hope is said to save us, no less than faith, [Romans 8:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.24-25); for though faith brings us into the way of salvation, it is hope that enables us to endure unto the end, [1 Corinthians 15:58](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.58). [Galatians 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.9).

After such a view of faith and hope, it will almost be thought, that no higher commendation can be bestowed on any other grace: but there is abundant scope yet left for showing,

***~~II. The superior excellence of LOVE—~~***

Of the three graces, the Apostle expressly asserts, that "the greatest is love." And its superiority will be found,

***~~1. In its nature—~~***

Faith and hope, however excellent they be, derive all their value from the objects on which they terminate. If they had respect only to human testimony, and temporal objects, they would be of little worth: it is their connection with God and with eternity, that so elevates them in the scale of Christian graces. But love has an essential goodness in itself, irrespective of any objects toward whom it may be exercised. If we could suppose that the whole human race both in Heaven and earth were swept away, so that we could never find a being towards whom the grace of love could be exercised, still would the disposition itself be good. As God himself would have been good, even though no creature had ever existed towards whom his goodness would be displayed; so would the grace of love be good, though there never would be found any scope for its exercise.

Love is the image of God upon the soul. God himself has no higher character than love: and, if in this character we resemble him, we have the highest excellence of which our nature is capable.

Only let us consider what the existence of love in the soul supposes. It supposes the subjugation of all the evils that are opposed to love; as pride, envy, hatred, wrath, selfishness; and the presence of all the virtues which were in Christ Jesus. They were all comprehended in this single word, love; and consequently, the existence of LOVE in the soul most assimilates us to Christ, "in whom was no sin, and in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

Nor should it be overlooked, that the production of love in the soul was the end for which all God's other mercies were given: for that even faith and hope were given; nor have they any value, any farther than they are conducive to this end: and consequently love, for which alone they are given, must be greater than they; just as health, for which alone medicine is given, is better than medicine, which is valuable only as it is subservient to the preservation, or re-establishment, of health. The end must of necessity be greater than the means.

***~~2. In its duration—~~***

Faith and hope must soon cease; faith terminating in sight, and *hope*being consummated in fruition. But not so the grace of *love*—that will endure to all eternity; the exercise of it being the one employment and blessedness of Heaven. The other graces which have been instrumental to the formation of this, will be no longer needed, when this is perfected in the soul: they will therefore be dismissed, as having no longer any scope for exercise.

But when the scaffolding is removed, the building will appear in all its glory, as the most wonderful monument of the power and grace of Christ. Then indeed will Christ "be glorified in his saints, and admired by all them that believe;" for every one of them will then "be fully like him, when they shall see him as he is."

Thus, however excellent the graces of faith and hope may be, that of love far excels them both: for those will find no place in Heaven; but this will remain an everlasting source of blessedness to man, and an eternal theme of honor to our God.

***~~Seeing, however, that during this present life "these three remain," and are to be cultivated with incessant care, we will close the subject with some directions for the exercise of them:~~***

***~~1. Keep them ever united in your hearts—~~***

No one of them can be dispensed with: if one be lacking, we must perish. We must indeed keep each of them in its place, and assign to each its proper office. We must not think that faith can save us, if it does not "work by love;" or that hope can benefit us, if it does not "purify us as Christ is pure;" or that love can supersede the necessity of faith in the work of our justification before God. We can be justified by faith only: but by love we must prove the truth of our faith.

We must not imagine, that, because love is greater than faith, we are therefore to be saved by love. The eye is more excellent than the ear; but it cannot on that account perform the office of the ear, nor supersede the necessity of hearing, in order to the perfection of our present state: faith, hope, and love, have all their distinct offices, and must all be exercised for their respective ends:

Faith, to justify our souls;

Hope, to keep us steadfast in our spiritual course;

Love, to form our fitness for the heavenly inheritance.

Let all then be sought, and all be exercised, that God may be glorified in all.

***~~2. Let them all be held fast, whatever trials you may have to encounter in the exercise of them—~~***

No one of them can be maintained without much difficulty. Your great adversary will assault them all in their turn. In Adam he succeeded to destroy them all: and he would succeed to root them out of our hearts also, if the Lord Jesus did not secure, by his continual intercession, the establishment of them in our souls [Luke 22:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.31-32). Not that they can be maintained without strenuous and unintermitted exertions on our part. We must "watch and pray that we enter not into temptation:" and when temptation comes, we must "not stagger at the promises through unbelief, but be strong in faith, giving glory to God." We must also "hold fast the rejoicing of our *hope*firm unto the end, [Hebrews 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 3.6)."

Under the influence of love too, we must "let patience have its perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." Thus shall we "grow up into Christ as our living Head;" thus shall we attain "the full measure of the stature" which he has ordained for us; and thus shall we be fitted for those regions of love, where we shall completely resemble Christ, and participate, with all the myriads of his redeemed, the glory and felicity of the God of love.

***~~#1989~~***

***~~CHRIST A DYING AND A RISEN SAVIOR~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 15:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.1-2)~~***

"Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain."

SCARCELY had the good seed of the Gospel been sown in the world, before Satan, by his agents, scattered tares, which in the earlier stages of their growth could not easily be distinguished from them, and from which the field will never be wholly freed until the harvest. The resurrection itself, that most fundamental doctrine of Christianity, on which every other doctrine rests, was denied by many. A Sadducean spirit of infidelity was imported into the Church from among the Jewish converts, as a vain philosophy was from among the Gentiles; and both concurred to bring into doubt the resurrection from the dead; the one denying that it ever could take place, and the other asserting that it was only a mystical change which had taken place already: and between them both "the faith of many was overthrown." Paul therefore, in the close of this epistle, set himself to counteract these errors, and to establish, for the benefit of the Church in all future ages, the truth which he had invariably maintained. He first shows that Christ had risen; and from thence he proceeds to prove that we also shall rise in like manner. But it is with the former position alone that we are concerned at present, that alone being referred to in the words before us; from which we shall be led to show you,

**I.** What was the Gospel which Paul preached—

This is told us more fully in the words following our text.

The Apostle preached, that Christ had both died and risen according to the Scriptures—

The Scriptures of the Old Testament had invariably asserted that Christ would suffer, and that he would rise again on the third day. Both these things were in some degree intimated in the first promise, that "the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head;" but they were more plainly revealed in the institutions of the Mosaic law, especially in the ordinance of the two birds; the one of which was killed, and the other, when dipped in the blood of the one that had been killed, being allowed to fly away [Leviticus 14:49-53](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 14.49-53); as also in the appointment of the scape-goat, which carried into the wilderness all the sins which had been previously expiated by the blood of another goat that had been slain [Leviticus 16:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 16.8-10). Both the one and the other had also been subjects of prophecy; his death being foretold in all its minutest circumstances: and his resurrection being fixed to a precise time after it, even the third day, before any change towards corruption would have taken place upon his body [Jonah 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jonah 1.17). [Psalm 16:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.9-10).

What the Scriptures had thus plainly foretold, was in due time accomplished. The death of Christ was known to the whole Jewish nation, thousands of whom were spectators of it: nor was his resurrection less clearly ascertained; as even the falsehood invented to conceal it fully attests. The variety of occasions on which our Lord appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, once to above five hundred brethren at once, left no possibility of doubt respecting it, verse 5-8; and to testify of this was the great work committed, in the first instance to the the twelve Apostles, and afterwards to the Apostle Paul, to whom Jesus appeared in a vision, on purpose that he might be, in that respect, on a par with all the other Apostles.

This he calls the Gospel—

This, in truth, is the Gospel: and it comprehends all that is necessary for us to know. That "Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification," is the sum and substance of that mystery, which God from all eternity devised for the redemption of fallen man, and which is unfolded to us in the writings of the New Testament. We may expatiate upon the various parts of this mystery, so as to exhibit them more clearly and fully to your view; but we can never add to it: to attempt to add anything to it, were to destroy it utterly. There is no redemption but through the death of Christ; no salvation, but through his renovated life [Romans 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.10).

Paul having stated what the Gospel is, proceeds to show—

**II.** In what manner it would be regarded by us—

The Corinthians "had received it into their hearts." and were at that time "standing in it;" and this shows us what we also must do—

**1.** We must "receive it" into our hearts by faith—

We must "receive it" as true. There must be no doubt in our minds respecting it. We must have no more doubt of Christ expiating our guilt by his death, or of his

rising to carry on in Heaven the work he began on earth, than of our own existence. We must be thoroughly established in these great and fundamental truths. To question either the one or the other of them in any degree, were little better than to renounce Christianity altogether.

We must receive it also as suitable, yes, as exactly suited to our necessities. We must feel that we need precisely such an atonement as he offered for us; and that we also need a living Savior, who shall make continual intercession for us with the Father, and communicate to us, out of his own inexhaustible fullness, all those supplies of grace and strength as our necessities require. It is this view of the correspondence between the offices of Christ and our necessities, and a consequent affiance in him for the supply of our wants, that constitutes the very essence of saving faith.

We must receive it also as sufficient for us. This great mystery of godliness is absolutely perfect. Nothing can be added to it. And of this we would be fully convinced. We would see that there is in his death a sufficient "atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world:" and that there is in him such a fullness of all spiritual gifts, that "he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him."

In this way is his Gospel to be received, and thus it is that "with the heart man believes unto righteousness."

**2.** We must "stand fast in it" even to the end—

Nothing must be allowed to turn us away from this faith. We must brave all persecutions, and rather lay down our life than deny the Savior in any manner. "It is he only who will lose his life for Christ's sake, that shall find it unto life eternal." Nor must we yield to the influence of temptations of any kind, so as to be drawn aside by them. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," if enjoyed in ever so great a degree, will but ill repay us for the loss which we shall sustain by allowing them them to choke the good seed of Gospel truth: for "if any man draw back, my soul," says God, "shall have no pleasure in him." Neither must Satan, that subtle adversary, prevail against us by his devices. In ten thousand ways will he endeavor to "turn us from the simplicity that is in Christ:" but with "the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith" we must resist him until we are crowned with victory, and see him "bruised under our feet." We shall then, and then only, "be partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end [Hebrews 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 3.14)."

In the Corinthians themselves we see,

**III.** The benefits that will accrue to those who duly receive it—

Paul says of them, that "they were saved by it:" and this benefit we confidently assure to all who embrace the Gospel with their whole hearts.

**1.** They shall be brought into a state of acceptance with God—

When our Lord gave his disciples their commission to preach his Gospel, he expressly authorized them to declare, that "all who believed it would be saved." And in all the book of God there is not to be found so much as one single word against a penitent believer. "All who believe," says Paul, "are justified from all things:" even sins of a crimson dye are so washed as to be made "white as snow."

**2.** They shall have the earnest and foretaste of the heavenly glory—

There is no limit to the blessings promised to the true believer. The Spirit of God shall be poured out upon him, to reveal all the Father's love, and all the glory of Christ, to the soul. "He will glorify Christ, and take of the things that are his, and show them unto us." He will be in us "a Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry, Abba, Father:" He "will witness to our spirits that we are the children of God:" He will give us "a pledge of our eternal inheritance," and "seal us unto the day of complete redemption."

**3.** They shall be brought in safety to the full possession of their everlasting inheritance—

It is here supposed that they "stand fast in the faith;" for if they "make shipwreck of the faith," they cannot hope for the blessings which are promised to those only who "endure unto the end." Hence is that caution given in our text; "You are saved, if you keep in memory (and hold fast to the end) what I have preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain." If our faith be only a dead faith, it will be in vain: for in this sense even "the devils believe and tremble." But, if our faith be living and lively, we need not fear. That never shall be exercised in vain. That shall overcome everything that is opposed to it, and shall remove all the mountains that oppose our spiritual progress. Only live truly by faith in the Son of God as having loved you and given himself for you, and God pledges himself that "none shall ever pluck you out of his hands," and that "you shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life." By the exercise of this "faith you shall be kept by the power of God to a full and everlasting salvation;" for the Gospel still is, no less than in the Apostolic age, "the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes."

We would improve this subject,

**1.** In a way of inquiry—

Have you received this Gospel as you ought? We ask not whether you have a mere notional and speculative belief of it; for that is common to all who bear the Christian name: but have you such a faith in Christ as enables you to rejoice in all that he has done, and is yet doing, for you? Do you glory in him, and renounce every other ground of hope, and "cleave to him with full purpose of heart?" Do not deceive yourselves in relation to these things; for no faith is saving but that which brings you daily to the foot of his cross, and causes you to receive daily out of his fullness all the blessings which you stand in need of.

**2.** In a way of caution—

Those who are fettered by human systems pass over such cautions as are given in our text: but we dare not act thus. We are persuaded that cautions against apostasy are as necessary in their place as promises of perseverance. Attend then to the caution about "holding fast" what has been preached to you. Innumerable are the cautions given us in the Scriptures upon this head: and it is by a beneficial fear of apostasy that God will keep us [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.27). "Beware then lest, being led away with the error of the wicked, you fall from your own steadfastness [2 Peter 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.17)." Know where your strength is, even in your risen and exalted Savior; and live altogether by faith in him, "holding fast your confidence, and the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end [Hebrews 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 3.6)."

**3.** In a way of encouragement—

Cleave thus unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and "you shall be saved." However numerous or powerful your enemies may be, they shall not prevail against you: for "greater is he who is in you, than he who is in the world." If indeed Christ be not able to keep you, then you may well give way to fears: but, if his death be a sufficient atonement for the sins of the world, and all power in Heaven and in earth be committed to him for the use of his Church and people, then you may dismiss all fear: for, though only a worm in yourselves, you shall "thresh the mountains." Be strong then, you fearful and faint-hearted: for "he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, but will bring forth judgment unto victory." He has said that "of those who have been given him he will lose none;" and he is faithful who has promised. "Fear not; only believe: and according to your faith it shall be unto you."

***~~#1990~~***

***~~ALL OF GRACE!~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.10)~~***

"By the grace of God I am what I am!"

EVERY person, however exalted, may find points of comparison in which he is inferior to others; and, instead of envying the superiority of others in those respects, it befits him contentedly to acquiesce in the Divine appointments, and thankfully to adore God for whatever blessings he enjoys.

Paul, in descanting upon the resurrection of our Lord, has occasion to mention the different manifestations of himself which Christ had given to his Apostles after he had risen from the dead. And in these respects, as well as in the advantages which the other Apostles had enjoyed from the instructions and example of their Divine Master, during the whole period of his ministry on earth, he acknowledged his inferiority to them: for though at a subsequent period Christ had honored him also with an immediate sight of his person, he considered himself as far less honored by this than the other Apostles had been; and, having been himself a persecutor, while they were the faithful servants of their Lord, he regarded himself as no better than an abortion in comparison with the children. But still he was not without many grounds of thankfulness, which he was most ready to acknowledge: "I am not worthy to be called an Apostle," says he; "but by the grace of God I am what I am!"

This declaration of his we propose to consider in a two-fold point of view:

***~~I. As a Scripture truth—~~***

***~~1. This assertion was true in the Apostle Paul's case—~~***

View him in his first conversion, and there can be no doubt but that the saving mercy given to him was all of grace. He was a bitter persecutor of the Church of Christ. He was a volunteer in this bloody service: and, of his own accord, sought from the Jewish Sanhedrin a commission to search out, even in a foreign country, all who professed the Christian faith, and to bring them indiscriminately, whether men or women, bound to Jerusalem. In this very employment he was actually engaged, and was come near to the very city where he hoped to seize the victims of his cruel bigotry, when the Lord Jesus Christ arrested him in his mad career, and by his special grace converted him to the faith which he was laboring to destroy, [Acts 22:4-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 22.4-8). It is further observable, that he alone of all the party heard distinctly the voice that spoke to him, though they beheld the light which shined with supernatural splendor round about them, [Acts 9:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.7) with 22:9; and he alone of all the party, as far as we know, was converted unto God.

What was there in his spirit and conduct that *merited*such a merciful distinction? *To what can we refer this mercy but to the free and sovereign grace of God?*Here we are compelled to acknowledge an election altogether of grace: and in this interpretation of the event we are fully justified by the assertion of Paul, who traces it to a determination of the Deity long previous to the period when it took place, even to a fore-ordained "separation of him from his mother's womb, [Galatians 1:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.15)."

Through the whole of his subsequent life, the mercies given to him must be traced to the same source. All of his eminent attainments, and all his super-abundant labors—were fruits of the same electing love, and the same effectual grace. This he confessed to the last hour of his life: he declared, that "in him, that is, in his flesh, dwelt no good thing! [Romans 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.18);" and that his sufficiency even for so much as a good thought was altogether of God alone, [2 Corinthians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.5). And in reference to this truth he displayed in the passage before us a peculiar jealousy: for being, in vindication of himself, constrained to say, that he had labored more abundantly than any other of the Apostles, he adds with holy jealousy for the honor of his God, "Yet, not I, but the grace of God that was with me! verse 10."

Thus, to say the least, respecting the Apostle Paul the assertion in our text was true, "By the grace of God he was what he was." But,

***~~2. It is true with respect to us also—~~***

What is the state of every man previous to his conversion? Are we not all "dead in trespasses and sins?" Have we not a "carnal mind that is enmity against God?" Do we not "walk according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind?" Are we not all "children of wrath, even as others?" What then is there in us that can operate as a motive with God to bestow his grace upon us rather than upon others? It is clear enough, that *the same word which operates effectually on some to the conversion of their souls, produces on others no other effect than that of exciting greater hostility against the Gospel!*[Acts 18:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 18.6-8). To what can this be ascribed but to the sovereign grace of God, whose gifts are his own, and who divides to every man severally as he will?

It is also plain, that many under less advantageous circumstances are turned from the power of Satan unto God, while others, with far greater advantages, are left still in bondage to sin and Satan. What other account can be given of this, than that which our Lord himself supplies, "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in your sight! [Matthew 11:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25-26)."

During the whole remainder of our lives it is the same grace which operates even to the end. Demas apostatizes; and Luke perseveres. Compare [Colossians 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 4.14) with [2 Timothy 4:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 4.10-11). Peter repents; and Judas commits suicide. Blessed Savior, who would not prove chaff, if you left him to be sifted by his great adversary? and whose faith would not fail, if you did not intercede for him in the hour of trial, [Luke 22:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.31-32). If any one of us be kept unto salvation, it is by your power and grace alone, [1 Peter 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.5); you, who have been "the Author of our faith, must also be the Finisher! [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)." And, when the head-stone of your spiritual temple shall be brought forth, we must cry, "Grace, grace unto it! [Zechariah 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.7)."

Thus in our own case, as well as in the Apostle's, *the glory of all that is good must be given to God alone*; who "has *loved*us with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness has he *drawn*us, [Jeremiah 31:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.3)."

But from the speculative view of the Apostle's assertion, let us proceed to notice it,

***~~II. As a practical acknowledgment—~~***

*Scripture truth has no further value, than as it leads to practical results.*But the aforementioned truth is discarded by many under the idea of its being replete with injury to the souls of men. In its source, it is supposed to spring from pride; and in its tendency to lead to a total disregard of all moral virtue. Let us then inquire into,

***~~1. The SOURCE of Paul's assertion—~~***

Does Paul's assertion indeed proceed from pride? Those who cannot endure the thought of God's sovereignty, will affirm confidently that it does: and in reference to all who maintain the doctrine of election, they will exclaim, "These men imagine themselves the special favorites of Heaven."

But let me ask, Who are the proud? Those who acknowledge themselves to be only as parts of one vast mass of clay, of which the potter, agreeably to his own sovereign will, and for the praise of the glory of his own grace, has taken a part, to form of it a vessel of honor for his own use? [Romans 9:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.21). Or those who assert that they were selected because they were of a finer quality than the mass that was left behind?

Who are the proud? Those who say with the Apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am;" or those who say, "By my own strength, and on account of my own superior goodness, I am what I am?"

Who, I say, are the proud? Those who accept Heaven solely as the free gift of God in Christ Jesus; or those who expect to purchase it at a price which they themselves shall pay?

The belief of the doctrines of predestination and election is not founded in pride, but in humility, and in a deep conviction that we are nothing, and have nothing, and can do nothing, but what of itself deserves God's wrath and indignation. It is the denial of these doctrines that proceeds from pride; because it argues a conceit that we have something in ourselves which merits the distinction that we hope for in a future world, and to which our ultimate salvation must, in part at least, if not altogether, be ascribed.

Will any man say that Paul was actuated by pride, when he said, "Those whom God *predestined*, he also *called*. Those whom he called, he also *justified*. Those whom he justified, he also *glorified*." [Romans 8:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.30). See also [Ephesians 1:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4-6); [Ephesians 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.9); [Ephesians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.11) and [2 Timothy 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.9).

No man ever had a higher sense of the dignity conferred upon him, than Paul had: nor had ever man a deeper sense of his own unworthiness: "I am *less than the least*of all saints:" "I am *nothing*,[Ephesians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.8). [2 Corinthians 12:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.11)."

The more deeply *we*feel our unworthiness, the more cordially shall we acquiesce in his humiliating statements of the freeness and sovereignty of divine grace!

***~~2. The TENDENCY of Paul's assertion—~~***

It is supposed that a belief in these doctrines will produce a laxness in morals. But was the Apostle regardless of morality? Is a deeper sense of obligation to God likely to produce in any mind a less disposition to fulfill his will? Surely its proper tendency is the very reverse of this, even to foster in us every holy disposition towards both God and man.

Towards GOD—a sense of our entire dependence on his sovereign will, and of our obligation to his sovereign grace in diving us, will excite a feeling of gratitude, such as Paul speaks of, when he says, "The love of Christ constrains me!" "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" is the question which every one will ask, when once he sees, that "not according to any works of righteousness which we have done, but by his own mercy God has saved us! [Titus 3:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.4-5)."

If once we have a good hope, that we are of "the chosen generation, and of God's peculiar people," then we shall exert ourselves to "show forth in every possible way the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light! [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9)."

Towards MAN also will these sentiments operate in the most favorable way that can be imagined. A sense of God's electing love will fill us with compassion towards those who are ignorant and out of the way. We shall not, like the proud Pharisee, despise others, but pity them. We shall not say, "Stand aside, I am holier than you;" but shall bear in mind, who it is that has made us to differ even from the most abandoned of mankind, [1 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.7). And, if a brother falls, we shall not exult over him, but shall endeavor rather to restore him in meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted, [Galatians 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.1).

We will readily grant that there are many truly pious, and even eminent, Christians, who do not embrace systematically, and in profession, the doctrines of predestination and election. But no truly pious man will ever arrogate merit to himself, or make himself the first moving cause of his own salvation. There is not a saint either in Heaven or earth who will not cordially and from his inmost soul confess, "By the grace of God I am what I am!"

If only the whole glory of our salvation be given to God alone, we are not anxious to press the matter farther, or to insist on terms which they are not willing to admit: if only from their souls they unite in the practical acknowledgment of our text, we will be content to leave the speculative points deduced from it to the judgment of the great day.

***~~Before we close the subject, we will yet farther notice what it contains—~~***

***~~1. For our instruction—~~***

The Apostle ascribed his privileges and attainments to the grace of God: "By the grace of God I am what I am." What then must they do who are yet afar off from God, and have no part with the Apostle either in his privileges or attainments? Let them seek grace from God. Let them not trust in their own goodness or strength, but look simply to the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom "they may both obtain mercy, and find grace to help them in the time of need." If only they will renounce all dependence on themselves, they shall receive from the God of all grace a sufficiency for all their necessities.

***~~2. For our encouragement—~~***

Who is it that utters the acknowledgment in our text? What, Saul? Saul the blasphemer! Saul the persecutor? Yes, it is even so. But tell us, Paul, what you did to obtain this grace? Did you not *earn*it? No!

Did you not *merit*it? No!

Did you not even *seek*it? No!

And yet it was *given*to you? Yes, when I was in the very act of fighting against God with all my might.

Then who shall despair? Who shall say, The grace of God can never reach *me.* Or, if given, the grace of God can never operate effectually in me?

Truly, no man on this side the grave has any reason to despair. Hear what the Apostle says: he tells us that God's particular design in so converting him was to keep all others from despair; and to make him a pattern and example of his patience to all future generations, 1 Timothy 1:16.

Hear this, you who are ready to entertain desponding fears; and know assuredly, that God's grace is his own; that he may give it to whoever he will; and that there is not a creature in the universe for whom it shall not be effectual, if he will but seek it in sincerity and truth!

***~~#1991~~***

***~~THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 15:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.17-18)~~***

"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost!"

THE wisest among the heathen philosophers could not speak with any certainty respecting the future existence of the soul: they could only form conjectures respecting it; so little could *unassisted reason*do towards the ascertaining of this most important point. As for the resurrection of the body, they deemed it ridiculous and absurd; and considered it as impossible that atoms, so widely dispersed and so variously combined, could ever be reduced to their original form. The Gospel, however, has brought life and immortality to light; and assured us, not only that every soul shall exist in a future world, but that the bodies of men also shall rise out of their graves, and be re-united each to that very soul that once inhabited it.

Nevertheless, some, who made a profession of Christianity, were still blinded by the prejudices which they had formerly imbibed. Hence they explained the doctrine of the resurrection in a figurative manner; and said, that it was passed already. The Apostle, therefore, set himself to counteract this dangerous delusion, by proving that there would indeed be a resurrection of the body. This he proved from what was fully believed among them, the resurrection of Christ: he showed, that, if Christ was actually risen, there could be no reason why we would not rise in like manner; but that, on the contrary, his resurrection was a pattern and a pledge of ours.

In order to give additional weight to this argument, he proves incontestibly that Christ himself had risen; he proves it, I say, by an appeal to many living witnesses who had seen him: and then he sets before them three most tremendous consequences which would follow, on a supposition that he was not risen: "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost!"

This argument of the Apostle's being of the greatest importance, we will endeavor,

I. To confirm it.

II. To improve it.

***~~I. To CONFIRM his argument—~~***

It consists of three parts, which he mentions as consequences that will follow from a denial of Christ's resurrection—

***~~1. If Christ has not been raised, then our faith is futile—~~***

The Christian, as long as he is in the world, is called to the exercise of faith: he *walks*by faith, and not by sight: he *lives*upon a Savior whom he has never seen with his bodily eyes, and receives a *supply*of every need out of his fullness. By faith we view Jesus as a surety: we consider him as having discharged our debt: this is the ground on which we hope that our sins shall never be put to our account. We believe what the Scripture says, that "it was exacted of him and he was made answerable;" and that his death was a sufficient compensation for the debt which we had incurred.

But what proof have we that he has paid the debt, if he has not risen? We may suppose that he undertook to pay it; and that he laid down his life in order to pay it; but this will by no means prove that he has fully satisfied the demands of divine law and justice. If a man that has become our SURETY remains in prison, it is a sign that he has not made good the payment which he had taken upon himself; but if he is set free, we then conclude that the creditors have been satisfied.

Just so, if Christ had yet been confined in the prison of the grave, we might have concluded that the debt was yet unpaid; and consequently, our faith in him as our surety would have been vain and delusive: for, notwithstanding all which Jesus might have done for us, there would yet have remained some part of the debt to be discharged by us, and we must therefore have despaired of ever obtaining happiness in the eternal world.

Again: By faith we view Jesus as an ADVOCATE. We are still offending daily in many things; so that, notwithstanding we have been reconciled to God, we would soon provoke him to withdraw his mercy from us, and to shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure. But the Scripture says, that, "if any man sins, we have an *advocate*with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

By faith, we look to him to intercede for us; to plead our cause; and to maintain our peace with God. But what ground have we for such a hope, if Christ has not risen? Instead of being in Heaven to plead our cause, he still lies buried in the earth. Instead of living to promote our eternal interests, he is no better than a senseless and inanimate corpse!

How vain therefore must be our expectations, when we indulge the thought of his prevailing intercessions! We are but buoying up ourselves with groundless hopes, and weaving a web which shall soon be swept away by the broom of destruction!

Once more: By faith we view Jesus as a HEAD of all vital spiritual influences. The Scripture speaks of him as the vine, and us as the branches; and represents him as "Head over all things to the Church." We look therefore to him that we may receive out of his fullness. We expect grace and peace from him to be communicated to us in the hour of need. We consider ourselves as withered branches, when separated from him, and as no longer having a capacity to bring forth any fruit than while we are united to him, and derive sap and nourishment from him.

But what a delusion must this be, if Christ has not risen! If he has not risen, he is still dead; how can that which is destitute of life impart life to us? What can we possibly receive from him if he be still imprisoned in the grave? We see, then, that whether we regard him as our *Surety*, our *Advocate*, or our *Head*—our faith is vain if he has not risen; yes, we are left under the most deplorable error and delusion that ever engrossed the mind of man!

***~~2. If Christ has not been raised, then we would be yet in our sins!~~***

It is the believer's privilege to be free from sin's penalty, and to stand in the presence of God without spot or blemish. But this removal of his sins depends upon various circumstances, which are grounded upon the resurrection of Christ.

In the first place, the removal of our sins depends on the truth of our Lord's mission: and the truth of his mission stands or falls with his resurrection. Our Lord constantly spoke of his resurrection on the third day as the grand proof which would be given of his Divine mission. Whether he spoke to friends or enemies, still this he proposed as the test whereby to try the truth of all he said; insomuch that his enemies were peculiarly solicitous to prevent, if possible, the accomplishment of these predictions; knowing that, if they would be fulfilled, the authority of his mission would be fully established.

Now let us suppose for a moment that Christ had not risen, what must we have concluded? Surely, that he was an impostor; that he had deceived his followers by specious pretenses; and that, so far from being able to remove our guilt, he perished under the weight of his own most accumulated wickedness.

Secondly, The removal of our sins depends on the the Father's acceptance of his sacrifice. He offered himself as a sacrifice to God, in order that he might expiate our offenses; and on the acceptance of this, our eternal happiness depends. If God receives it as an offering of a sweet-smelling savor, we may hope he will be propitious to us on account of it; but if he does not declare himself well-pleased with it, we are left altogether without a remedy for our sinfulness!

Now how shall it be known whether God has accepted it or not? If we are to judge by the circumstances of our Lord's death, we would rather conclude that the Father took no pleasure in him, since our Lord himself so bitterly complained of the neglect which he experienced in the very hour of his extremity: "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?"

We must judge therefore by his resurrection: and that this was to be the test is evident from the sacrifices which were under the law. It was not consistent with the Divine will that the beasts that were sacrificed would be restored to life; but yet this was done in a figure: for one *goat*was slain to expiate sin by his blood, and another goat was sent away into the wilderness, laden with the iniquities of all the people.

Just so, when *birds*were offered; one was slain, and another was dipped in the blood of that which was slain, and then let loose into the air.

These were types of our Savior, who was first to be slain, and then to be raised from the dead, and ascend into the highest heavens; and if he had not risen, we would have had no proof whatever that his sacrifice was accepted. Yet on the acceptance of this sacrifice the removal of our sins entirely depended; so that if Christ has not risen, we must be yet in our sins!

Thirdly, The removal of our sins depends on our Lord's execution of his offices. Our Lord undertook the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; and though he did in part fulfill these offices on earth—yet he fulfilled them only in part; the principal accomplishment of them remained to take place after he would be seated in Heaven.

He was then, as the great PROPHET of the Church, to reveal the will of God more fully, and teach by his Spirit those, who, for lack of a divine illumination, could not comprehend the truths he had delivered.

As the great High PRIEST, he was to enter within the veil: it was not sufficient that the high priest offered the sacrifice on the day of atonement; he was also to carry the blood into the holy of holies, to sprinkle it on the mercy-seat, to offer incense, and then to come out and bless the people. So, our Lord was under a necessity of rising again, that he might enter into Heaven with his own blood, that he might there present it before the mercy-seat; and that, after offering the incense of his continual intercession, he might, in due time, come forth to bless the people.

As a KING, also, he had only as yet asserted his kingly office and authority; it was necessary therefore that he would go to the right hand of God, and there sit until all his enemies would be made his footstool.

Now, if he did not rise, then he cannot execute any of these offices; and yet upon the execution of them depends the removal of our sins. So then, if he has not risen, we are yet in our sins.

We see therefore, that, as the removal of our sins depends on:

the truth of his mission,

the acceptance of his sacrifice,

and the execution of his offices;

and as all these depend on his resurrection, we must, if he has not risen, be yet in our sins!

***~~3. If Christ has not been raised, then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are eternally lost!~~***

Death to the believer is only as a sleep; death has lost its sting: and as he commends himself to the Divine protection when he lies down upon his bed, so he commits his departing spirit into his Savior's hands, and falls asleep in Christ. While his *body*lies moldering in the dust, his *soul*is carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. But if Christ has not risen, all who from the beginning of the world have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. Either their souls have been annihilated at their separation from the body; or rather they have become the monuments of God's wrath and indignation.

For, in the first place, all who have fallen asleep in Christ, have, on a supposition that Christ is not risen, built their hopes on a sandy foundation. They have relied wholly on the merit of Christ's blood, and expected justification only through his obedience unto death: and, as they have trusted in his righteousness, so have they gloried in his strength; not going forth against any enemy, but in his name, and in reliance upon his grace.

Nor have they trusted in anything but in his continual intercession for maintaining their peace with God. In short, they have made Christ their only foundation, on whom they have built all their hopes. Now if Christ has not risen, that foundation has failed them, and consequently all the superstructure must fall to the ground! So that, notwithstanding all their affiance in him, they are perished; yes, though they committed their departing spirits into his hands, they were not saved: for he could not help them; he could not hear their prayers. In trusting to him they trusted only to a broken reed, which now pierces them through with unutterable and everlasting anguish.

Secondly, If Christ has not risen, then they are lost; because, however zealous they were of good works, their works were not sufficient to justify them before God. We cannot indeed conceive more eminent piety than *Abraham*discovered in leaving his country and sacrificing his own son; or than *David*manifested in his incessant praises and thanksgivings; or than *Stephen*showed when laying down his life for Christ, and praying for his murderers. And yet behold what the text asserts; "they all have perished if Christ has not risen." The reason is plain: they were transgressors of God's law; as transgressors, they were subject to the curse and condemnation of the law; nor could anything less than an infinitely valuable atonement remove that curse. In vain they prayed. In vain they strove. In vain they endeavored to do the will of God. In vain they laid down their lives for his sake. They were under the curse; and cursed they must be—*if*Christ did not become their Savior.

But he could not become a Savior to them if he did not rise; and therefore, if he has not risen, they are all, without exception, perished. They are perished; first, because their foundation failed them; and next, because, that having failed, no hope remained to them from anything which they themselves could do.

It is now plain, I trust, that the consequences which the Apostle states as following a denial of our Lord's resurrection are true, and that his argument is strictly just. Having therefore confirmed his argument, we proceed,

***~~II. To IMPROVE it—~~***

It will be to little purpose to know the force of the Apostle's reasoning, unless we deduce from it those practical inferences which may bring it home to our hearts and consciences!

***~~1. We may see from hence how ignorant they are that seek salvation by works!~~***

The generality of mankind are hoping to be saved for something which they have done, or something which they intend to do. Indeed even those who have lived in all manner of evil tempers and sensual indulgences are yet often so blind, as to be the most strenuous in contending for the merit of good works, and in crying out against those who speak of salvation by faith.

But do these people imagine themselves wiser and better than all the saints of old? Will any one say that *Stephen*was not an eminently pious man? Was he not chosen out by the people, because he was full of faith and the Holy Spirit? Was he not endued with peculiar gifts, insomuch that his adversaries could not resist the spirit and wisdom with which he spoke? Did he not also manifest a peculiar excellence of disposition? Did he not with all fidelity charge the people's sins upon them? And, when they were in the very act of stoning him, did he not, after the example of our Lord, pray for his murderers? Did he not willingly seal the truth with his blood? Was he not so highly honored by God that his face was made to shine like the face of an angel? And was he not, even while in the body, favored with a sight of God, and of Christ, as standing at the right hand of God?

Say now, Where shall we find a man that bids more fair to be saved by his works than Stephen? Yet was he saved by his works? or could he be saved by his works? No! Notwithstanding all his works, he needed the blood of Christ to cleanse him from sin: he needed Christ, as his Advocate and Strength, his Savior and his all; and if Christ is not in a capacity to save him, he has perished. Nor have his works availed him anything more than to lessen in some degree the condemnation he would otherwise have endured.

Who then are you that seek to be justified by your works? Are you as eminent as Stephen? if not, how can you hope to be saved, when even he, if he had no better ground of confidence than his own works, must have perished?

Or suppose that you were as good as he, still you must meet with the same fate; you must perish, and that eternally—if you rely on anything but the crucified and exalted Savior.

Oh, then, blush at your ignorance, you proud, self-justifying sinners! See how Satan has blinded your eyes! See how far you are from the way of salvation! Oh, let me beseech you for Christ's sake, and for your soul's sake, to renounce all your self-righteous hopes and endeavors, and to rely on him who alone can save you, and who is able to save you to the uttermost!

***~~2. We may see from hence, how miserable is the state of unbelievers!~~***

By unbelievers, we mean, not only those who deliberately reject Christ, but all who do not actually have a saving interest in him. Now these persons, whatever they may think of themselves, and however they may bless themselves because of the abundance of earthly things which they possess, are in as miserable a state as can well be conceived: for, as they have no saving interest in Christ, it is eventually the same to them as if he had never risen: only with this difference, that their guilt is much greater by neglecting the Savior, than it could have been without such an aggravation.

What then is their state? Precisely that mentioned in the text; "their faith, as far as they have any, is all vain:" even though they *notionally assent*to all which is spoken concerning Christ, 'tis all in vain! "They are yet in their sins;" all the load of their iniquities lies upon them, and the curse of God hangs over their condemned head. They will also "perish" whenever they die; there cannot possibly be any admission for them into Heaven. Perish they must; and remain for ever the monuments of God's eternal displeasure!

And now say, is not this a miserable state? What though a man have a large estate, can that make him eternally happy? What though he have a form of godliness, can that make him eternally happy! No! he must have a saving interest in Christ, or he will be a poor miserable wretch forever.

Oh! my brethren, seek a saving interest in this risen Savior: think of him, not only as dying for your offenses, but as risen again for your justification. Be assured, that, as you shall be reconciled to God by the death of his Son, so, much more, being reconciled, you shall be saved by his life. Do not conclude too hastily that you have a saving interest in the Savior: see whether you are "risen with him through a faith of the operation of God?" and never rest until you can say, "I know in whom I have believed."

***~~3. We see from hence how happy is the state of true believers!~~***

The resurrection of Christ, which is the foundation of all their hopes, is proved beyond a possibility of doubt: the very means taken to conceal it are among the most convincing proofs of its reality. On the very same basis, your eternal hopes are founded: he has said, "Because I live, then you shall live also." Think then with yourselves, that at this moment, your faith, so far from being in vain, avails for all the purposes for which it is exercised: it secures your saving interest in Christ as your Surety, Advocate, and Head; and brings in an abundance of all spiritual blessings to your soul. Instead of being in your sins, they are put away from you as far as the east is from the west; nor shall they evermore be remembered against you. God has already said concerning every such soul, as he did concerning Joshua, "Take away the filthy garments from him: behold, I have caused your iniquity to pass from you, and I will clothe you with change of clothing."

Further, when you die, you will not perish with the ungodly world, but will go to take possession of a "kingdom." You will have a crown of glory on your head, and a golden harp in your hand: you will be seated on your Savior's throne; and shall sing his praises for evermore. Happy soul! "What manner of love is this with which the Father has loved you!" Hail, you that are highly favored of the Lord! Rejoice, rejoice, you servant of the Most High God! Your Savior, possessed of all power in Heaven and in earth, watches over you continually! He gives his angels charge over you. He gives you everything that is for your good: and though perhaps he deals with you not exactly as you might wish, he is daily preparing you for glory, and making you fit for your eternal inheritance.

Oh, then, love and serve this *risen*Savior; and set your affections on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Let it be your endeavor to keep your conduct in Heaven: and while you are living upon the Savior's fullness, oh, strive to live to the glory of his name. Thus will you adorn your holy profession; and when he shall come again to receive you to himself, he will welcome you with these delightful words, "Come, you who are blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world!"

***~~#1992~~***

***~~ADAM A TYPE OF CHRIST~~***

**[1 Corinthians 15:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.22)**

"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

THE *fall*of man in Adam, and his *recovery*in Christ, comprehend the whole circle of Divine truth. Every part of the revealed will of God is so connected with these two doctrines, that all must stand or fall together. Our *death*implies the former of them; and our *resurrection*the latter. Hence Paul, proving the doctrine of the resurrection, adverts to our fall in Adam as an acknowledged truth, and draws a parallel between that and our recovery in Christ.

We shall,

***~~I. Establish the points mentioned in the text—~~***

***~~Nothing can be more certain than that "in Adam all die"—~~***

The penalty of eating the forbidden fruit was death—death temporal, spiritual, eternal: and, on the very day that Adam fell, the threatened punishment was inflicted on him, so far, at least, as could consist with God's purposes towards the world at large: the seeds of *physical*death were implanted in his body; a *spiritual*death seized upon his soul; and *everlasting*death awaited him—*unless* divine mercy would interpose to deliver him from it. Nor was this a matter which concerned him alone; it involved both him and all his posterity, insomuch that all the human race fell in him, and became liable to temporal, spiritual, eternal death. The very words of the text prove this; yes, they prove it more strongly than any mere assertion could do; because they state it as an allowed fact; and make it the foundation of a most important comparison.

We see it plainly before our eyes. We see that all in successive generations are swept away by *physical*death. And as to *spiritual*death, who does not see how awfully the whole world is "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, and because of the hardness of their hearts?" As to the *eternal*death, we see it not: but if we believe the word of God, we can have no doubt, but that thousands are descending daily into those dread abodes, where not so much as one ray of hope can ever enter!

***~~Nor is it less clear that "in Christ shall all be made alive"—~~***

Christ was sent into the world to repair the ruins of the fall. By his Spirit he "quickens the souls that were dead in trespasses and sins;" and by his obedience unto death he reconciles them to their offended God. This also is as visible as the former. Look around and see whether some be not endued with a new and heavenly life, whereby they are enabled to live wholly unto God.

It is true, that the death of the body is still inflicted upon all: but this ceases to be a punishment to God's people, and must rather be considered as a blessing: "To all whom to live is Christ—it is unfathomable gain to die! [Philippians 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.21);" and the body which is consigned for a while to its native dust, shall at last be raised again "in the likeness of Christ's glorious body," to participate in the blessedness of its kindred soul. All this, I say, is restored to us in and through Christ, who on this very account calls himself "the resurrection and the life, [John 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.25)."

But both these points will be yet further confirmed, while we,

***~~II. Show the correspondence between them—~~***

If it is asked, How did we die in Adam? and, How do we live in Christ? we answer;

***~~1. By means of a federal relation to them—~~***

Neither Adam nor Christ are to be regarded as private individuals, but as the representatives of mankind. Adamwas the covenant head of the whole world: the covenant was made with him for himself and them. Had he fulfilled the conditions imposed upon him, there is reason to believe, that the benefits of his obedience would have descended to his latest posterity. For beyond a doubt they are involved in the punishment of his disobedience, and consequently, we may infer that they would have been comprehended in the recompense of his obedience.

The *death of infants*is a decisive evidence that the sin of Adam is imputed to them; for death is the punishment of sin; and a righteous God will not inflict punishment, where it is not in some way or other merited. Therefore infants, who have never committed *actual*sin, and yet are punished—must have guilt imputed to them in some other way, or, in other words, must be chargeable with Adam's guilt. This is the Apostle's own statement; and his conclusion is irresistible [Romans 5:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.12); [Romans 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.14).

Christin the same manner was the head and representative of the *elect*world: what he did and suffered, he did and suffered in our place and stead; "he, who knew no sin, became sin for us, that we, who had no righteousness, might become the righteousness of God in him, [2 Corinthians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.21)." Paul himself not only asserts this, but draws at considerable length, this very parallel comparison between Adam and Christ, in order to evince, that, so far from being injured by this constitution of things, we have our loss in Adam far overbalanced by the remedy which God has given us in Christ, [Romans 5:15-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.15-21).

***~~2. By the communication of their nature to us—~~***

Adam was formed after God's image, pure and holy; but he begat children in his own fallen image, corrupt and sinful, [Genesis 1:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 1.26-27); [Genesis 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 5.3). Nor could he do otherwise; for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing, [Job 14:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 14.4)." The *fountain*being polluted, the *streams*that issued from it could not but participate of its malignant qualities. Hence it is that we are conceived in sin and born in iniquity, [Psalm 51:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.5); and that all, the Apostles themselves not excepted, "are by nature children of wrath, [Ephesians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.3)."

Thus Christ also imparts his nature to those whom he has chosen to save. He makes them "partakers of a divine nature, [2 Peter 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.4)," and transforms them into "the Divine image in righteousness and true holiness, [Ephesians 4:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.24);" "He himself lives in them, [Galatians 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.20);" and thus renders them fit for eternal life, even for the inheritance of the saints in light, [Colossians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.12).

It is, however, proper to observe, that though all are said to die in Adam, and to be made alive in Christ, the benefits received from Christ do not extend to all that are affected by Adam's fall; the word "all" must, in the latter clause, be taken in a more limited sense. *Those who are represented by Adam, and are partakers of his nature, die in him. Just so, those who are represented by Christ, and are partakers of his nature, shall live in him.*

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How much of Christ may be seen even in the character of Adam himself!~~***

Adam is expressly said to be "a figure of him who was to come, [Romans 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.14)." Christ, in reference to him, is called the second Adam, [1 Corinthians 15:45-47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.45-47). Both of them were the representatives of their respective seeds; but, blessed be God! not with the same outcomes. The one destroyed, the other saves, the souls committed to him. Let us then renounce, as far as possible, our connection with him who has brought condemnation upon us, and seek a union with him, "through whose obedience we may be made righteous."

***~~2. Of what importance is it to understand and receive the Gospel!~~***

It is only by the Gospel that we can be acquainted with the work of Christ, and obtain a saving interest in him: if we know him not, we remain under all the disadvantages of the fall. It is this Gospel which gives to the least and basest of us so great an advantage over all the *philosophers*of Greece and Rome. They saw in what a fallen state the world was: but how it became so, or how it could be remedied, they had no conception. We however know both the one and the other: we know that in Adam we died, and that in Christ we all may be made alive.

True, this does not accord well with the dictates of corrupt reason. But to dispute about this doctrine is to no purpose: We are dead in Adam, whether we will believe it or not; nor can we obtain eternal life, but in and through Christ. Let us then not reject the gracious overtures of Christ, but turn to him in this our time of acceptance, this day of our salvation.

***~~3. How thankful should we be for God's distinguishing mercy to the sinners of mankind!~~***

When *angels*fell, there was no Savior provided for them: they were punished for the first offense, and will remain monuments of God's indignation to all eternity. But we are spared, yes, are saved by the mediation of God's co-equal Son [Hebrews 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.16). Let Heaven and earth praise him! and let every tongue now, as surely we shall hereafter, adore him for such unmerited, incomprehensible love!

***~~#1993~~***

***~~DYING DAILY~~***

**[1 Corinthians 15:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.31)**

"I die every day; I mean that, brothers—just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord."

THERE were many in the apostolic age who denied the resurrection of the dead, verse 12. Paul, in opposition to them, maintained the truth of that doctrine. In confirmation of his word, he asserted that he himself, no less than the other Apostles, had seen the Lord Jesus Christ in his risen state; and that, consequently, there must be a resurrection of the dead; more especially because the Lord Jesus did not rise as a mere individual, but as the head and forerunner of his people, even as the first-fruits before the harvest.

Paul then appeals to his adversaries themselves, whether, upon any other hypothesis than that of a resurrection to a future life of blessedness and glory, it would be possible to account for the conduct of himself and all his fellow Apostles and fellow Christians; all of whom so readily encountered the severest trials that men could endure in this world, in the hope and prospect of approving themselves to God, and of being approved by Him in the day of judgment.

"What shall they do who are baptized for the dead," that is, in the room of the dead, like soldiers filling up the ranks of those who have been cut off, if the "dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead? and why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" Then, for their conviction, he protests most solemnly before God, that this was his own experience, and that "he died daily."

In considering these words, I will notice,

***~~I. The Apostle's experience—~~***

He here declares the daily habit of his mind,

***~~1. As the fruit and consequence of the persecutions he suffered—~~***

The Apostle preached the Gospel "with great plainness of speech." By this he gave offense to multitudes, both of Jews and Gentiles, who with implacable animosity sought his life. He had not preached the Gospel many days before his enemies conspired to destroy him; and necessitated him, for the preservation of his life, to be let down in a basket from the battlements of a walled city. From that time he was in continual danger, never knowing but that the address he was delivering would prove his last. Truly, he was "in deaths often, [2 Corinthians 11:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.23);" and "like a sheep appointed for the slaughter, [Romans 8:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.36);" or like the gladiators, who were to engage in renewed combats until they died, 1 Corinthians 4:9.

In truth, he was regarded only as "the filth of the world, and as the off-scouring of all things;" fit only to be sacrificed for the pacifying of a demon, or for the removal of a common plague, 1 Corinthians 4:13. Thus "he was in jeopardy every hour of his life, verse 30;" and, as he expresses it in my text, "he died daily."

***~~2. As wrought and cherished in his own soul—~~***

It is plain that this also is included in the expression before us; and that it forms, in fact, the very core of his argument. 'I protest,' says he 'that, as I am daily exposed to death for my ministrations, so I willingly submit to it in an assured prospect that I shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.' He knew that, independently of his persecutions, his life was very uncertain, and that he could not call a day or an hour his own: and the murderous cruelty of his enemies rendered his continuance in life still more precarious.

But he was willing to die at any time, and in any way, for his Master's sake, [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24); [Acts 21:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 21.13); yes, "he desired to depart, and to be with Christ, as far better" than anything he could attain in this life, [Philippians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.23). He accounted every moment of his continuance in the body as a privation of blessedness in the immediate presence of his Lord! 2 Corinthians 5:6-8. He knew, that, at the very instant of his departure from the body, he would "behold his Lord face to face! [1 Corinthians 13:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.12);" and, that, at the day of judgment, his body also would be raised to "meet the Lord in the air, and to be for ever with the Lord, [1 Thessalonians 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 4.17)." Under this conviction, he looked upon martyrdom itself as a ground of and joy, [Philippians 2:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.17-18).

This subject derives peculiar importance from,

***~~II. The solemn manner in which he affirmed it—~~***

He takes for granted that those whom he addressed, rejoiced in Christ Jesus even as he did, and that this was indeed his experience from day to day. And from this we learn,

***~~1. That this experience is not common—~~***

No, in truth, it is very rare even among "those who profess godliness." That there is no such persecution now, as existed in the apostolic age, is certain; and, consequently, the preachers of the Gospel exercise not their ministry so much at the peril of their life: but there is as much need of zeal now as ever: and the servants of God are as much bound to be faithful in the discharge of their duty as ever; and they must be as ready to sacrifice their lives in the cause of their Divine Master as ever. There is to be no difference in these respects between the Apostles and us. If not called to endure the same trials as they, we must be willing to endure them, if called to it. And if we love our lives greater, in comparison with Him and his glory, we shall lose our souls for ever.

As to looking forward to a longer stay on earth, we are no more entitled to indulge such a conceit than the Apostles were; for "we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth." And it is our privilege to be anticipating the blessedness of Heaven as much as it was theirs. *We should count death among our treasures*: and be "looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of Christ," quite as much as they did in their devoutest frames.

But is this a common attainment? Would to God it were! But the generality of Christians put the day of death far from them, as though it were to be dreaded, rather than desired: and even the more godly among us live far below their privileges in this respect.

***~~2. That, however, it ought to be found in all who believe in Christ—~~***

He takes for granted, that all true Christians "rejoice in Christ." And truly this is a distinctive character of them: and the man who has not in himself this evidence of his relation to Christ, has no sufficient reason to think that he belongs to Christ, [Philippians 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.3).

But supposing that we are really Christ's, then should the Apostle's experience be ours: and so palpably would it be ours, that we would be able to join in the asseveration of Paul, and say, "I protest, by my rejoicing in Christ, and as I hope to rejoice in him in the eternal world, I am dying daily." "I am crucified to the world," and to all things in it: and I am, in the constant habit of my mind, like a dying man, expecting and preparing for my speedy dissolution, and anticipating with joy the blessedness that awaits me.'

Beloved brethren, if you are Christians indeed, this is the experience which you are to aspire after; this is the experience which you are bound to attain.

***~~3. That the existence of this mind set in the Lord's people, is a strong presumptive proof of a future resurrection—~~***

A few enthusiasts may be supposed to be carried forward to strange excesses of zeal, even in a bad cause. But to act and suffer as the Apostles did, could not be general among pious Christians, if they were not animated by a hope beyond the grave: and their conduct in this world, if it proves not the certainty of a future resurrection, proves, beyond a doubt, the full persuasion of their minds respecting it. In truth, nothing but this expectation could carry persons on to such high spiritual attainments: and, on the other hand, there is nothing which those who are persuaded of it will not gladly do and suffer in the prospect of such happiness and glory.

Certify then yourselves, brethren, that there is indeed a future state; and labor by the conformity of your lives to that of the holy Apostle, to show that you are borne up, by the hope of it, far above all that the world can give, and above all that the most inveterate enemy can inflict!

***~~Tell me now, whether the Christian is not,~~***

***~~1. A happy man?~~***

As "rejoicing in Christ," he must of necessity be happy. Nor is he less so in his superiority to all the things of time and sense. *In truth, the only way to live happily is to "die daily."*Be it so: he is an object of hatred and persecution among men. But he is beloved of God, and enjoys God; and is even led to anticipate more the blessedness of Heaven by the very sufferings which he endures on earth. "When God therefore gives him such quietness, who can make trouble?" Truly "none can harm him, seeing that he is thus a follower of that which is good."

***~~2. A man worthy to be imitated by all around him?~~***

*The poor, wretched, ignorant worldling runs from vanity to vanity in pursuit of pleasure—and never finds it!* The Christian follows after righteousness; and happiness waits on him, even as the shadow of his body. To him everything is a source of good: *adversity itself comes to him as a blessing in disguise*; and in his afflictions he tastes nothing but divine love. Seek then, my brethren, to rejoice in Christ; and then shall all the Christian's blessedness be yours!

***~~#1994~~***

***~~THE SHAMEFULNESS OF BEING IGNORANT OF GOD~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 15:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.34)~~***

"Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame."

*KNOWLEDGE is the foundation of all acceptable obedience*. We must know whom we are to serve; and why we are to serve him; and what are the services that he requires at our hands. Hence the Scriptures represent us first as "renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created us, [Colossians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.10)."

On the other hand, *ignorance is the root of all sin*. It was to this, as its proper source, that our Savior and his Apostles traced the wickedness of the Jews in crucifying the Lord of glory, and in persecuting his followers, [John 16:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.3). [Acts 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 3.17). [1 Corinthians 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.8). To this also Paul referred the conduct of those at Corinth who taught, that "there was no resurrection of the dead." From their erroneous views of this fundamental doctrine, and the consequent sinfulness of their conduct, he was sure that they were ignorant of God himself; and therefore he declared it to their shame.

The same may be said in reference to ourselves, if we err in any other fundamental point of faith or practice. In order therefore to bring it home to ourselves, we shall show,

***~~I. What is that knowledge of God, which, as Christians, we are supposed to possess—~~***

God has revealed himself to us in his blessed word; and we ought to know him,

***~~1. In his essential perfections—~~***

These perfections he proclaimed by an audible voice to Moses, in answer to that prayer of his highly favored servant, "I beseech you, show me your glory, [Exodus 33:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 33.18)." The Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty, [Exodus 34:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 34.6-7)." Yet it is not a mere *speculative knowledge*of God that we ought to possess, but such as produces *experimental knowledge*in our minds and hearts. The devils could say to our Savior, "We know who You are!" as they were acquainted with all the perfections of Jehovah; but *their knowledge was unattended with any sanctifying influence*:

they know God, but they despise him;

they understand his holiness, and hate it;

they understand his justice, and tremble at it;

they understand his power, and lament it;

they understand his mercy, and despair of it;

they understand his grace, and oppose it;

they understand his wisdom, and endeavor to counteract it.

A true saving knowledge of God must always fill us with wonder, and love, and gratitude, and trust.

***~~2. As reconciled to us in the Son of his love—~~***

This more particularly characterizes us as Christians, because in this view he is fully exhibited to us in the Gospel. It is our happy privilege not only to have "the day-star from on high risen upon us," but to have God himself "shining into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In the cross of Christ we should see all the perfections of God united, and harmonizing, and glorified. Or, as the Psalmist expresses it, we should see "mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissing each other! [Psalm 85:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 85.10)." We should realize every perfection of the Deity in this view: We should see his *wisdom*as providing a plan for the redemption of a ruined world, and as opening a way for the exercise of mercy, without infringing upon the rights of justice, or holiness, or truth.

We should see even *justice*itself become our friend, and beaming upon us with the same benignity as love or mercy, seeing that its utmost demands have been satisfied in the atonement of Christ, and all the glory of Heaven has been purchased for us by his obedience unto death.

In a word, the language of David should be the language of our hearts: "Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep. O LORD, you preserve both man and beast. How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights! [Psalm 36:5-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.5-9)."

Such is the knowledge of God which every Christian ought to possess. I proceed to show,

***~~II. Why it is a shame not to possess it—~~***

Of many things we may all be ignorant without any harm to ourselves. But to be destitute of the true knowledge of God is a shame to all, because it is,

***~~1. The most excellent of all knowledge—~~***

The knowledge of science is a very valuable acquisition: but it is not to be compared with the knowledge of God, since that infinitely surpasses everything that can occupy the human mind.

How glorious it is for a worm of the earth to see the perfections of the invisible God! to behold them all shining forth in the face of Jesus Christ! and, above all, to see them all working in his salvation! How glorious it is for a helpless sinner to know that he has omnipotence for his support, and unbounded mercy for his refuge! How glorious it is for such an unworthy creature to survey:

the justice and holiness,

the power and wisdom,

the love and mercy,

the truth and faithfulness of God

—and then to say, "This God is my God forever and ever! [Psalm 48:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 48.14)."

Surely everything else in comparison with this is lighter than vanity itself. And whoever seeks any other knowledge in preference to this, has reason to blush for his stupidity, and to be ashamed of his choice.

***~~2. The most needful of all knowledge—~~***

The knowledge of trade, and of politics, is necessary for the welfare of a state: but a statesman need not be conversant with the lowest branches of trade; nor need a tradesman know how to govern a state. But the knowledge of God is every man's business; it is that for which God has brought him into existence, and for which the ordinances of the Gospel are continued to him. Every man is more interested in this, than even in providing bread for his body: for he may have food supplied to him by the benevolence of others; but who can supply the lack of this knowledge, or what substitute can be found for it? Without that, a man can have no happiness; because, until he has it, he is exposed to the wrath of Almighty God. Without that he can have no holiness; because holiness is the fruit that springs from it, and therefore cannot exist without it. Without that he can have no salvation; for "to know God and Christ is eternal life, [John 17:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.3);" and when Christ shall come to judgment, it will be for the express purpose of "taking vengeance on those who know not God, [2 Thessalonians 1:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.7-8)." If then it is a shame to be destitute of all good, and to be a miserable outcast from Heaven, it is a shame to be ignorant of God.

***~~3. The most easy to be obtained of all knowledge—~~***

There are many things which men have not a capacity to learn. But even the weakest of men may attain the knowledge of God, if they will seek it in God's appointed way. Our Lord returns thanks to his heavenly Father on this very account, "because the things which he has hidden from the wise and prudent, are revealed unto babes! [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25)." Nor is this expression merely figurative; for Samuel, Josiah, Timothy, and John, are standing monuments to the Church, that "God will ordain strength in the mouths of babes and sucklings, [Psalm 8:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 8.2) with [Matthew 21:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 21.16)."

In reference to this knowledge then, no man has any excuse for his ignorance; no man can say, "I am no scholar, and therefore have no reason to be ashamed;" for all may know the Lord, if they will seek the enlightening influences of his Spirit, since God has pledged himself, that "if any man lacks wisdom, and asks it of him, he will give it liberally, and without upbraiding [James 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.5)."

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

Let those who know not God as reconciled to them in Christ Jesus, begin to seek that knowledge without delay. And let those who do know him, give God the glory: for though an ignorance of him is to our shame, the honor arising from this distinction, belongs to God alone; since it is "he who has given us an understanding to know him, [1 John 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.20)."

[Jeremiah 9:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 9.23-24), This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

***~~#1995~~***

***~~DEATH A CONQUERED ENEMY~~***

**[1 Corinthians 15:51-57](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.51-57)**

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE doctrine of the resurrection was altogether unknown to the heathen world, and but imperfectly known even to the Jews themselves. The idea of bodies, once moldered into dust and scattered over the face of the earth, being ever restored, and reunited to their kindred souls, appeared so visionary, as to be wholly inadmissible and incredible. But Paul shows, that the resurrection of our blessed Lord was a fact established beyond the possibility of doubt; and that he had risen "as the first-fruits," which would assuredly be followed by a universal harvest, verse 20, 23.

True it was that a great change would take place in the body, such as was necessary to fit it for its future state of existence: but still it would be the same body in reality, just as the wheat, which, when sown in the ground, first dies, and then rises substantially the same, though in a very different form, verse 35-38.

To the question, What shall be done with those who shall be living upon the earth at the last day? He answers, That they shall undergo a change equivalent to death and resurrection: and the manner in which this shall be effected he represents as a mystery, which in former ages had been wholly unknown, but which from inspiration he was now enabled to proclaim. However death had seemed hitherto to triumph over the many successive generations that had existed upon earth, there would at last be an end of his reign, and he himself would be triumphed over by all who belong to Christ.

That we may all have a fuller view of this mystery, we will endeavor to show,

***~~I. The victory that awaits the Christian—~~***

***~~Christians, like others, appear to be overcome by death—~~***

They, as well as others, yield to the stroke of death. Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles—all have died: two only of all the children of men have been exempted from the common lot: and the time is quickly coming when every one of us must die; (for "the body is dead because of sin, [Romans 8:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.10);") and must "return to the dust" from whence we sprang, [Genesis 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.19).

***~~But in due time they shall assuredly triumph over it—~~***

It is the body only that death can reach: it cannot affect the believer's soul: and it is for a time only that it can affect the body. When once the last day shall arrive, there will be an end of that empire which death has so widely extended. The bodies of the saints, of whom alone the Apostle here speaks, shall then be raised up, and with varied degrees of splendor shine forth anew, verse 41. They were sown in corruption, weakness, and dishonor, and they shall be raised in incorruption, power, and glory: from natural bodies, they shall be transformed to spiritual, verse 42-44, each one shining forth, as our Savior himself at his transfiguration, like the sun in the firmament for ever and ever. Compare [Matthew 13:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.43) with 17:2.

Thenceforth shall "death have no more dominion over them," any more than it has over our Lord himself, [Romans 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.9) with [Revelation 21:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.4); on the contrary, it shall itself "be swallowed up in victory," as the prophet has said in [Isaiah 25:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.8), and, as the Apostle elsewhere speaks, "Mortality shall be swallowed up in life, [2 Corinthians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.4)."

By those also who shall be living at the time of our Lord's advent, shall the same triumph be enjoyed. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye shall they be changed, as soon as ever the last trumpet shall sound," as, in the case of those who have died, "corruptible shall put on incorruption," so, in those who shall be found alive, "their mortal shall put on immortality, verse 52, 53," and "their vile body shall in an instant be made like unto Christ's glorious body! [Philippians 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.21)," even to that very body in which he now sits enthroned in glory, the blessed object of adoration to all the hosts of Heaven.

That the Christian may be encouraged the more confidently to look forward to that victory, we proceed to show,

***~~II. How it is, that he is assured of it—~~***

***~~It is sin that gives death its power—~~***

*If sin had never entered into the world, death would never have existed, or would have been only a translation from earth to Heaven*. This is plainly told us by Paul; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, even upon those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, [Romans 5:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.12); [Romans 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.14) with, verse 21, 22." The law which passed the sentence of death on Adam, [Genesis 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 2.17), still says to every child of man, "The soul that sins, it shall die." And this law cannot be set aside: it is as immutable as God himself: and hence it is that sin is itself so powerful, and invests death also with such power over our fallen race.

***~~But the Lord Jesus Christ has taken away our sin—~~***

He has put himself in our place and stead, and, as our Surety, has satisfied all the demands of the law.

Did the law require the death of the offender? Jesus has put himself in the place of sinners, and has borne the penalty for them.

Would sin yet prevail to destroy the soul? Jesus has expiated its guilt, and put "away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Must every one have a perfect righteousness before he can appear in the presence of a holy God? Christ has not only "made an end of sin, but by his obedience unto death has brought in an everlasting righteousness, [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24)," which "he imputes to all those who believe, [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22)."

Thus is death disarmed of its sting: for sin, which was its sting, is cancelled; and the law, from which sin derived its strength, is fulfilled: and the sentence denounced against us is reversed, so far at least as it is penal; insomuch that "God may now be just, and yet the justifier of sinful men, [Romans 3:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.26)."

***~~Thus is death disarmed of its power—~~***

*Death, no longer envenomed by sin, is to be regarded only as a sleep*, "a falling asleep in Jesus." This "enemy," this "king of terrors," is turned into a friend, and may now be numbered among the richest treasures of the Christian! [1 Corinthians 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.22). If we view death aright, it is only a friend who comes to draw aside the veil that hides the Savior and all his glory from our eyes. What a blessed thought!

O Christian, what joy would this thought impart unto your soul! with what transport would you exclaim, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Come forward, Christian; put your foot upon the neck of this conquered enemy, deatg: exult over him, as God himself instructs you, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" Where are now your boasted triumphs? Instead of swallowing up me, you shall be swallowed up; and instead of casting me into the lake of fire, you yourself shall have that for your only and unchangeable abode! [Revelation 20:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 20.14).

Such is the victory that awaits you! Think then,

***~~III. What exertions the prospect of it would call forth—~~***

Let the expectation of this triumph stimulate you to prepare for it. Prepare for it by,

***~~1. A steadfast adherence to the faith—~~***

Much will your faith be tried: temptations from without and from within will assuredly assault you. Perhaps even the glorious truths contained in our text may be wrested from you by your great adversary, so that you shall be led to question the reality of them, or your saving interest in them. But "be steadfast and immoveable;" "holding fast the profession of your faith without wavering." "Fight the good fight of faith!" Whoever would "move you from the hope of the Gospel," withstand him: whoever would turn you aside from the right path, or discourage you in running your heavenly race, regard him not; but "run on with patience, looking unto Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of your faith."

***~~2. A diligent performance of your duty—~~***

The Lord has given you a work to do: O engage in it with, all your heart. Has he assigned you any ministry whereby you may be useful in advancing his kingdom in the world? "Give yourself wholly to it." Do the interests of your own soul call for your attention? "Forget all that is behind, and press forward for that which is ahead." Be not content with small measures of service; but seek to "abound in the work of the Lord;" and this, not on some particular occasions only, but "always," from day to day, and from year to year, "never being weary in well-doing," but exerting yourselves the more, in proportion as your time for performing it is cut short. Think what is that work where you may best serve and glorify your Lord; and "make it your food and drink to do it." Yes, "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."

***~~3. An assured expectation of your reward—~~***

Moses himself "looked to the recompense of the reward," as did also the martyrs of old, who "refused to accept deliverance from their tortures, that they might obtain a better resurrection." If you had no prospect of future happiness, there would be some reason for that Epicurean maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." But when you consider how short your present trials are, and how rich will be the recompense for all your labors, it were madness to draw back.

Look at those who have already entered into their rest, and ask, Whether they repent of their former labors. Or look at the glory that awaits you, and then think whether the possession of it will not richly compensate all that you can do or suffer for your Lord. "The Lord is not unrighteous, that he will forget your works and labors of love." No! he has said, that "you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the dead;" and he will with his own hand bestow the recompense: "nor shall even a cup of cold water given for his sake lose its reward."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

Happy should we be, if death had this aspect upon all, and we had no occasion to change our voice in relation to it. But to the ungodly death is still an enemy: and over the unbelieving it will retain its dominion to all eternity. Yes, brethren; if we have not sought refuge in Christ from the curses of the broken law—we are yet in our sins, and must perish under the guilt of them for evermore. Is this *your*case? How terrible then must the thought of death be to you! To you, it will be as the opening of the prison doors to a criminal, that he may be led forth to eternal punishment. For a season indeed, your body shall sleep in the dust: but in what image shall it rise in the last day? What will be its feelings, when it shall be re-occupied by the soul, that now claims it as the partner of its former sins, and of all its future sorrows! How glad would it be, if it could take its position under rocks and mountains!

Even now, the thought of death is terrible to the unbelieving soul, and the contemplation of eternity is distressing. But let it not be always thus; let what you have heard of the Christian's privileges stir you up to seek a participation of them.

Remember how it is that death must be disarmed of its sting: it is altogether by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as having fulfilled the law for you, and taken away your sins by the blood of his cross. Only look to him as dying for your sins, and rising again for your justification, and all shall yet be well: your souls shall live before him; "because he lives, you shall live also:" and when he who is your life shall appear, "you also shall appear with him in glory."

But to those who *profess*to believe in Christ, we would also suggest a beneficial caution. If the prospect of a glorious resurrection produces not its due effect upon you, you have reason to doubt whether you have indeed an inheritance beyond the grave. *It is only in proportion as your faith is operative, that you can have any evidence of its being the "faith of God's elect."*

How painful will it be, when on the verge of eternity, to have your soul harassed with doubts and fears about your eternal state! Do not, I beseech you, walk so carelessly as to endanger your final acceptance with God, or to make it doubtful to your own mind. What can be the effect of sin, but to fill your dying pillow with thorns?

Never then trifle either with sin or duty: let the one be put away from you with all care, and the other be practiced with all diligence: and seek of God the aid of his Spirit, that you may so live as to enjoy the testimony of your own conscience, and so walk, "that you may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless."

***~~#1996~~***

***~~CHRISTIAN COUNSEL~~***

***~~[1 Corinthians 16:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 16.13-14)~~***

"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love."

OF all the apostolic Churches, none seems to have been so corrupt as that at Corinth: at least, Paul reproves more evils there than in any other church. In this epistle to that Church he addresses himself to the consideration of several abuses which had crept in among them: and now, in the close of it, he gives them, in few words, his pastoral advice; but evidently, I think, with a special view to all his preceding remarks.

They were in the midst of manifold temptations; and therefore he bids them "Be on your guard."

They had among them false teachers, who, under a specious garb of sanctity and superior illumination, sought to turn them from the truth; and therefore he tells them to "stand fast in the faith."

They had trials of various kinds to encounter; and therefore he says to them, "be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love."

At the same time, there were great contentions among them; and therefore he adds, "Do everything in love." Now, as these subjects are worthy of universal concern, we will adopt the same line of instruction as was pursued by him; and, just changing the words, in order to convey more clearly what I conceive to be the meaning of them, I will say,

***~~I. Guard against temptations of every kind—~~***

Of course, every Christian must watch against all the more open assaults of his three great enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. I must therefore, in the first place put you on your guard against them. But, as the caution was given to persons who might he considered as on the whole pious, it may be proper rather to advert to *such temptations as are peculiar to Christians*, whether in their collective capacity as a Church, or in their personal experience as saints.

Now Christians, as collected into a society, have many things in their temper and deportment against which it befits them to guard with all vigilance. Pride, envy, prejudice, uncharitableness, are very apt to disturb the harmony of those who ought to be united in the bonds of brotherly love. These things should be checked, by all, in their very first risings in the soul. And not only in ourselves should we watch against them, but in others also, so as to arrest their progress before they have had an opportunity of spreading to any great extent their malignant influence; ever bearing in mind, that "a little leaven, if allowed to spread, will soon leaven the whole lump!"

Against *secret evils*, too, must every Christian be on his guard; yes, and against the means and occasions of evil. There are many things that, when kept under proper restrictions, are innocent; which yet, through unwatchfulness or excess, are productive of great evil. The exercises of Christian affection may degenerate into feelings of a very unhallowed character; and *lawful indulgences may gain an undue ascendant over the mind*. It is not easy to draw the precise line between good and evil, especially when the quality of an action depends on its accidental circumstances. We should therefore scrupulously, and as before God, examine our whole deportment, and try it with severity by the test of his holy word. And against every deviation from right, and every declension from what is good, we should guard with the utmost vigilance; well knowing, that Satan will take advantage of our unwatchfulness, to ensnare and defile our souls!

As materially assistant to you in the discharge of that first duty, I would say,

***~~II. Hold fast your principles—~~***

It is by the adoption of Christian principles that any one is brought to the performance of Christian duties: and any dereliction of the one will infallibly introduce a relaxation of the other. God himself asks, "Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, [1 John 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.5)." The high standard of Christian morals and of Christian piety is observed by no other person under Heaven. *Nothing but love to the Savior ever did, or ever can, lead to an entire surrender of the soul to God*.

But let a person be drawn aside by vain philosophy or Jewish superstition, and he will soon lose the ardor of his soul in divine exercises, and the delight attendant on close fellowship with God; and a correspondent change in the whole tone and temper of his mind will soon follow.

In proportion as the eyes are turned from the Lord Jesus Christ to any matters of doubtful disputation, will a stop be put to a progressive transformation of the soul into his blessed image, [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18).

To every one, therefore, I would say, "Hold fast the Head," the Lord Jesus Christ, and "live entirely by faith in him;" "receiving continually, out of his fullness," additional supplies of grace. This is the very advice which Peter, by his own bitter experience, learned to give to the Christian Church, as the only effectual means of overcoming their great adversary: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith! [1 Peter 5:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.8-9)."

In this course, however, you will meet with opposition; against which you must,

***~~III. Act with courage—~~***

"All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." You may "watch" as much as you please, and yet suffer no persecution, provided you will relax, as it respects your giving honor to Christ. Or you may exalt Christ as much as you please, provided you will relax in your watchfulness against the evils of our ensnaring world. But if you will "live godly in Christ Jesus," giving all the glory to him, while you are serving him with fidelity to the utmost of your power, you will be sure to offend the lovers of the world, and the haters of Christ: and you may assuredly expect to feel, in a greater or less degree, the effects of their enmity.

But whether assaulted by ridicule or menace, you must be alike prepared to act a manly part, withstanding every effort that men or devils can make against you. You are not, as children, to be either allured or awed to a deviation from anything which your better judgment directs. As "men," you should examine well whatever is proposed to you, and compare it with the word of God. And, as "men," you should determine for yourselves, and resolutely adopt the line of conduct which the word of God prescribes.

If "men" in the service of an earthly monarch meet with opposition, they consider it as an occasion for summoning and putting forth all their energies with augmented zeal. Just so, this is the way in which you are to "play the man," and to approve yourselves to Him, under whose banner you are called to fight.

And, in this resolute conduct, you must,

***~~IV. Persevere with constancy—~~***

This I conceive to be the precise distinction which the Apostle intends between those nearly parallel expressions, "Act like men; be strong." We are not to suppose that the opposition made to us will be of short continuance. We shall experience it more or less to the very end of life; and we must be prepared to meet it in its most terrific forms. Never are we to give way to fear or discouragement. Never are we to "be weary or faint in our minds." No past trials, no impending calamities, should dishearten us. We should be prepared to say, as well in the prospect of future evils as in the remembrance of past, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may but finish my course with joy!"

When we read the long catalogue of sufferings which the Apostle underwent, we are amazed at his fortitude and perseverance, 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. But the same firmness is required of us: for "if any man turns back, my soul," says God, "shall have no pleasure in him." It is "he alone who endures unto the end, that shall be eventually and eternally saved." "Be strong," therefore; and especially "be strong, not in yourselves, but in the Lord, and in the power of his might:" and you need not fear but that "his grace shall be sufficient for you," and "your strength be augmented according to your day" of trial.

But,

***~~V. Let all be done under the influence of love—~~***

Christians are very prone to err in relation to this matter: they are ready to think, that zeal and courage constitute the whole of their duty; and, in consequence of this mistake, they too frequently overlook the frame of their own minds, and indulge, without being aware of it, a spirit most offensive to God. Acrimony in opponents often begets a similar disposition in those who are opposed: and it may be hard to say, who are most in error, the bitter persecutors, or the indignant sufferers.

Beloved brethren, I wish you to be particularly on your guard in relation to this matter, "The Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, [2 Timothy 2:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.24-25);" "not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but, rather a blessing."

Our blessed Lord, and the first martyr, Stephen, prayed for their murderers, at the very moment that they were suffering all imaginable cruelties at their hands: and this is what you are to do; as our Lord has said; "Love your enemies: bless those who curse you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

To young persons, in particular, I would give this caution. You will probably find your greatest enemies among those of your own household: and as you must, of necessity, "obey God rather than man," you will be called to show your fidelity to God in this respect: but do not, under the idea of "acting like men," indulge a petulant and unfitting spirit: (persons, so acting, "know not what spirit they are of.") Nor are you to indulge a querulous spirit behind the backs of your enemies; but to *take up your cross meekly, and to bear it patiently, and to bless God that you are counted worthy to bear it for Jesus' sake*. Remember, that "love is the very bond of perfectness;" and that "without it, though you give your body to be burned, you are no better than sounding brass and tinkling cymbals."

***~~#1997~~***

***~~THE GUILT AND DANGER OF NOT LOVING CHRIST~~***

**[1 Corinthians 16:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 16.22)**

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema (accursed)! Maranatha."

EVERY religion has some characteristic mark whereby it may be distinguished from all others. *The leading feature of Christianity is, that it requires a resolute adherence, and an inviolable attachment to Jesus Christ*. Though it includes both morality and a regard to God, it does not stop there; but leads us to Jesus Christ as the only mediator through whom divine blessings can flow down to us, and for our services go up with acceptance before God.

Whatever difference may exist between Christians with respect to other points, all are agreed in love to Christ. Paul did not hesitate to denounce the severest curse against all who would be lacking in this most essential point. He had finished this epistle by the hand of an amanuensis, and was going, as his manner was in every epistle, to write his blessing with his own hand; but deeply solicitous for the welfare of the Church, as well as for the glory of his Divine Master, he inserted between his salutation and his blessing these ever memorable words; "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema (accursed)! Maranatha." These are in the form of a judicial sentence, which we shall,

***~~I. Explain—~~***

The solemnity with which this sentence is delivered surely bespeaks our most candid attention: but how shall we, in drawing the line between nominal and real Christians, speak with such precision, as neither to discourage the weak, nor to confirm hypocrites or formalists in their delusions? Let us explain,

***~~1. What it is to love the Lord Jesus Christ—~~***

Love, whatever be its object, implies such an esteem of that object, such a desire after it, and such a delight in it, as the object itself deserves. What would be an idolatrous fondness when placed on one object, would fall very far short of the affection that might be justly claimed by another. Now *Christ being incomparably more worthy of our love than any created being, our love to him ought to be unrivaled and supreme*. To compliment him with honorable titles, while we feel no real regard for him in our souls, is no better than an impious mockery.

We must entertain high and exalted thoughts of him as the only Savior; and have learned with Paul to "count all things but dross and dung in comparison with him." We must also feel such need of him in his mediatorial office and character, as to say with David, "My soul longs for you even as the deer pants for the water-brooks!" "Whom have I in Heaven but you, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you!" Our fellowship with him, moreover, must be sweet: nor must we find less pleasure in doing his will than in enjoying his presence. This is the criterion whereby he himself has taught us to judge of our love to him, [John 14:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.21); [John 15:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.14).

***~~2. What is the judgment denounced against those who are destitute of this love?~~***

"Anathema" is a term often used to signify only an ecclesiastical censure, or an excommunication from the Church; but the addition of the word "Maranatha" necessities us to understand it in reference to the judgment at the last day.

Under the Jewish law there were many crimes that were to be punished with death; and, when a person was convicted of one of these, he was executed according to the divine command: but when the Jews were brought into subjection to the Romans, they lost the power of life and death, [John 18:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 18.31); when therefore a person committed any crime that would have been punished with death by the Jewish law, the Jews excommunicated the offender, and expected that God would visit him in some signal manner; or at least inflict an adequate punishment upon him at the last day.

In reference to this, it would seem the Apostle used the word "Maranatha," which in the Syriac language means, "The Lord comes."

The import therefore of the denunciation in the text is, That, as they, who did not love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, deserved to be blotted out of the list of true Christians, and to be punished with everlasting destruction, so there was no doubt but that, although man could not take cognizance of that offense, God would; and execute signal vengeance on all those who would live and die under the guilt of it.

Severe as this sentence is, it is such as we may undertake to,

***~~II. Vindicate—~~***

***~~It may not be improper first, to vindicate the Apostle himself—~~***

To consign to everlasting destruction those who are free from any gross sin, and who perhaps abound in "the form of religion, while they are only destitute of its power," may seem harsh; but we shall in vain attempt to put any milder interpretation on the words of the text.

Shall we then censure the Apostle as uncharitable and severe? If we do, we must involve all the other inspired writers and Christ himself in the same censure. Moses, by God's command, denounced similar vengeance on persons of various descriptions, and required the people to confirm his word by an express declaration of their own consent and approbation twelve times, [Deuteronomy 27:15-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 27.15-26). Jeremiah and Malachi repeatedly spoke to the same effect, [Jeremiah 11:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 11.3); [Jeremiah 17:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.5); [Jeremiah 48:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 48.10). [Malachi 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 1.14).

Nor was this peculiar to those who lived under the legal dispensation: Paul repeatedly denounced a curse even against any angel from Heaven that would presume to publish any other Gospel than that which he had preached, [Galatians 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.8-9). Yes, the meek and compassionate Jesus declared that God would not be a father to those who did not love him, [John 8:42](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.42); and that he himself would in the last day summon before him all that had refused his yoke, and order them to be slain without mercy, [Luke 19:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.27). Such examples as these may well screen the Apostle from any imputation of needless severity.

***~~Next we will vindicate the sentence he denounced—~~***

As awful as it is, it will appear both just and reasonable, if we only consider *the exceeding sinfulness of not loving the Lord Jesus*. This sin implies,

***~~1. Rebellion against the highest authority—~~***

God has by an audible voice from Heaven commanded us to "hear" his Son, that is, to regard him with attention, love, and obedience. He has enjoined all the great and noble of the earth to "kiss the Son" in token of their affection and homage, [Psalm 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.12). He has required all men to honor the Son even as they honor the Father, [John 5:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.23). And are we at liberty to set at naught this authority?

Do we feel indignant, if our child or our servant refuse obedience to our just commands, and shall not the Most High God express his indignation against us for resisting and despising the most reasonable command that could possibly be given to us? If man forbears to notice this iniquity, shall God also? shall he give us reason for that atheistical reflection, "You God will not regard it?"

***~~2. A contempt of the highest excellency—~~***

In the Lord Jesus Christ is every possible excellency combined. Whether we view him in his divine, his human, or his mediatorial character, he is "altogether lovely." There is nothing lacking in him which can in any way conduce to the glory of God or the good of men. What shall we say then of those who love not such a glorious Being? Surely they pour contempt upon him. This is the construction which God himself puts upon their conduct: "him who honors me, I will honor; but he who despises me, shall be lightly esteemed, [1 Samuel 2:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.30)."

And is not this a sin of the deepest die? To despise him who is the fountain of all excellency! To despise him whom all the angels adore! What must not such iniquity as this deserve? Surely to be despised and abhorred of him is the least that such offenders can expect.

***~~3. Ingratitude towards the greatest Benefactor—~~***

Can we reflect a moment on what Christ has done and suffered for us, and not stand amazed that there would be a creature upon earth that does not love him? Can we contemplate his mysterious incarnation, his laborious life, his painful death, his continual intercession, and all the other wonders of his love—and feel no emotions of gratitude towards him? Or shall ingratitude to earthly benefactors be deemed the greatest possible aggravation of a fault, and shall such horrid ingratitude of ours be thought light and trivial? No! it stamps an inexpressible baseness on our character; nor can any punishment short of that denounced in the text, be adequate to such impiety.

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

Let us seriously examine into the evidences of our love to Christ; that if he would ask us, as he did Peter, "Do you love me?" we may be able to reply with him, "Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you."

Let us tremble at the thought of subjecting ourselves to the judgments here denounced, and instead of presuming to speak against them as too severe, let us make it our constant endeavor to escape them. So shall death and judgment be divested of all their terrors; and Christ, whom we love, be the eternal portion of our souls!

***~~The Book of 2 CORINTHIANS~~***

***~~#1998~~***

***~~THE TRIALS AND CONSOLATIONS OF MINISTERS USEFUL TO THEIR PEOPLE~~***

**[2 Corinthians 1:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.3-4)**

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

THE former Epistle to the Corinthians abounded with reproofs, for which indeed there was in that Church but too much occasion. This epistle is altogether of a different kind, and contains a rich fund of paternal and most affectionate instruction. In the opening of it, Paul quite forgets all the pain and sorrow which they had occasioned him, and blesses God for the consolations he enjoyed, especially in the view of those blessed effects which had been produced upon their minds by his former letter, 1 Corinthians 7:4-7.

How "full of comfort" he was, we may judge from the frequent repetition of the word "comfort;" he knew not how to leave the subject, or to vary his expression: his whole soul appears to have been swallowed up in the contemplation of the comfort which he had received from God, and which he hoped to be the means of communicating to them also.

That we may enter into the spirit of his words, let us notice—

***~~I. His representation of the Deity—~~***

In the Old Testament, Jehovah was known as "the God of Abraham;" but in the New Testament, he is exhibited under a yet more endearing character, as "the *Father*of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." Observe here,

***~~1. His relation to Christ—~~***

There is in the Godhead a distinction between the Three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity; the first Person is called the Father; the second Person, the Son; and the third Person is called the Holy Spirit.

The *Son*is said to be "the only-begotten of the Father:" but of this inscrutable mystery it were in vain to speak, since we would only "darken counsel by words without knowledge." It is sufficient for us to know, that such a distinction in the Godhead does exist, and that, in this sense, God was, from all eternity, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Of the *manhood*of Christ, formed as it was by Omnipotence without the intervention of man, God may in a more definite sense he said to have been the Father: and in reference to this, his miraculous conception in a virgin's womb, Jesus was especially designated "the Son of God, [Luke 1:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.35)."

In his *mediatorial*capacity also, as "Emmanuel, God with us," our Lord Jesus Christ stands in covenant relation to God, as a Son to a Father; agreeably to what he himself says, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God, [John 20:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 20.17). [Acts 13:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.33)."

Now, as all the children of Israel claimed a special interest in Jehovah as being the seed of Abraham whose God he was, so we, who look to Jesus as our common Head and Savior, are entitled to consider his God as our God, since we are in him as members of his mystical body, and are altogether "one spirit with him." And, as Jesus is infinitely greater in himself, and more dear to God, than ever Abraham was, our interest in God, by virtue of our union with Jesus, is proportionably greater and more endeared.

***~~2. His relation to us—~~***

To us, who are involved in the deepest guilt and misery, he is revealed as "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." What remarkable expressions are these! There is not a mercy which we enjoy, but it must be traced to him as its proper source; nor is there a mercy which we want, but it may be found in him to the utmost extent of our necessities. Nothing but mercy properly flows from him: "judgment is his strange act," which is never called forth, until mercy has been as it were exhausted. Judgments are his servants; but mercies are his children, in whom is all his delight, [Micah 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 7.18).

As for comfort, he is the God of it, "the God of all comfort." Were his will complied with, there would be nothing but comfort in the whole universe: it would flow from him as light from the sun; so free, so rich, so abundant would be his communications of it to every soul. Let the afflicted, of every name and every class, only go to him, and he will show himself as "the comforter of all those who are cast down," and "the God of that particular comfort" which they need; as if all his perfections and all his powers centered in that point alone, and were exerted to their utmost extent for the relief of their particular wants.

Such is the view which we should at all times have of the Deity. If we regard him only as a Lawgiver and a Judge, we have no better apprehensions of him than Satan himself has. It is our privilege to know him, not merely in the terrors of his majesty, but in all the endearments of his love and mercy.

With this beautiful description of the Deity the Apostle combines,

***~~II. His thanksgiving to him—~~***

***~~Great and manifold were the tribulations which he was called to sustain—~~***

The whole world, both of Jews and Gentiles, seemed to be confederate against him. Every man, with the exception of those who were converted by his ministry, was his enemy, and sought his destruction; insomuch that he was in daily, and hourly, expectation of a violent death, 1 Corinthians 15:30-31.

From the Church itself too he endured much. The false brethren, who labored incessantly to undermine his influence, and to create dissensions in the Church, were a source of continual sorrow to his mind.

Nor was he free from internal trials also, which caused him great uneasiness. What "the thorn in his flesh" was, we do not exactly know: but he regarded it as a "messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him;" nor could he find any relief from the anguish it occasioned, until he was assured, in answer to his repeated and earnest cries, "that a sufficiency of grace" would be imparted to him, and that "Christ's strength would be perfected in his weakness."

Not that these trials were peculiar to him: he felt them indeed in a more abundant measure than others; but every faithful minister in his measure experiences the same. Who that is zealous for his God does not incur the hatred of an ungodly world? Who that has long ministered in holy things has not had occasion to deplore the fall of some, the apostasy of others, and the little progress of almost all; insomuch that with many he is made to "travail, as it were, in birth a second time, until Christ is formed in them!" Some perhaps, who would once have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him, are now "become his enemies, because he has told them the truth," and reproved them for their reigning and besetting sins. And in himself also every minister will find abundant occasion to sigh and mourn, especially when he reflects on his great insufficiency for the work assigned him, and the effects of his unprofitableness upon the souls of others.

***~~But he had rich consolations to counterbalance his afflictions—~~***

It was no small comfort to the Apostle that his trials were endured in so good a cause. The cross he bore was the cause of Christ; and his afflictions were but the filling up of the measure of Christ's afflictions, [Colossians 1:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.24). Moreover they were so many testimonies to him of his fidelity; and of God's acceptance of him in his work, [Luke 21:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 21.12-13). He was sure also that in due time they would all be richly recompensed, agreeably to that blessed promise, that "if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him," and "be glorified together with him" for evermore! 2 Timothy 2:12. [Romans 8:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.17).

But besides these consolations of faith and hope, he had, as every faithful minister shall have, special manifestations of God to his soul, sufficient to make him "exceedingly joyful in all his tribulations." What but a sense of redeeming love carried him forward with such zeal and steadfastness in all his course? What but this enabled him, when his back was torn with scourges, and his feet were made fast in the stocks, to fill his prison, not with mournings and complaints, but with songs of praise and thanksgiving! In like manner shall all who serve the Lord with fidelity be supported under their trials, and be favored with consolations proportioned to their afflictions.

To enter into his feelings aright, it will be proper to notice yet further—

***~~III. The more particular grounds of his thanksgiving—~~***

The design of God in these dispensations was in a more especial manner an occasion of gratitude to his soul. He felt that by his diversified experience, he was better fitted for the discharge of his high office, and better qualified to comfort his afflicted brethren. By it,

***~~1. He was better qualified to comfort others—~~***

*None but those who have been in deep waters are capable of entering into the feelings of a tempest-tossed soul.*It was from his "having been in all points tempted like as we are, that Jesus himself was so tenderly touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and that he acquired, so to speak, "a power to support his tempted people [Hebrews 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.18); [Hebrews 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.15)." Thus Paul learned to participate with others both in their joys and sorrows. Were they assaulted either by men or devils, he knew both the extent of the trial, and the consolations proper to be suggested for the mitigation of it. He could delineate the workings of the afflicted mind: he could state its various discouragements, and the devices by which Satan labored to aggravate its sorrows. He needed only to report his own experience, and to apply to others the remedies he had found effectual for his own soul. In a word, *the lessons which he himself had learned in the school of adversity, he was enabled to teach others, and thus eventually to "comfort others*with the same comfort where-with he himself had been comforted by God."

Now this very consideration constituted no small part of that comfort for which he so gratefully adored his God. He saw that, whether he was afflicted or comforted, his experience was designed to promote, and did actually promote, "the consolation and salvation of others, verse 6;" and there he did rejoice, and determined, even though his trials would proceed to the utmost possible extremity, to rejoice, and to bless and magnify his God, [Philippians 2:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.17-18).

In this view will every faithful minister rejoice, thankful alike either for joys or sorrows, if only they may fit him for a more profitable exercise of his ministry, and ultimately advance that for which alone he deserves to live, the consolation and salvation of those committed to his charge.

***~~2. He was made to edify others by his example—~~***

The supports which Paul experienced under his accumulated trials, were a source of great encouragement to others. His imprisonment at Rome, which he was apprehensive might intimidate many, and impede the success of his ministry, "turned out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel: for his bonds in Christ being manifest in all the imperial palace, and in all other places, many of his brethren, waxing confident by his bonds, were so much the more bold to speak the word without fear, [Philippians 1:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.12-14)."

Thus, though he was bound, "the word of God was not bound;" on the contrary, "it had free course and was glorified:" and the tidings which he received respecting the steadfastness of his converts, far overbalanced all his pains and sorrows.

Hear how he speaks of this in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians: "When Timothy came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and love, we were comforted over you, brethren, in all our affliction and distress by your faith: for now we really live, if you stand fast in the Lord, [1 Thessalonians 3:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 3.6-8)."

And who that loves his people will not gladly lead them in the van of the battle, if he may but encourage them to "fight the good fight of faith?" Surely no good soldier of Jesus Christ will regret the wounds he receives in this holy conflict, if others be animated by his example to "be courageous like men" until they have gained the victory.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are afraid of suffering for Christ's sake—~~***

Let it not be thought that the cross of Christ is so heavy as it appears to be. Were we indeed left to bear it alone, or were there no consolations afforded by him to his suffering people, we might well be terrified at the idea of being called to sustain it. But the Lord himself will lighten it by his almighty power, and will support us with such preternatural strength, that, instead of sinking under the weight, we shall rejoice that we are counted worthy to bear it, and shall account our very sufferings an inestimable gift bestowed upon us for his sake, [Philippians 1:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.29).

And if here we are enabled so to "glory in the cross of Christ," what shall we do hereafter? Do any of those who once "came out of great tribulation," now regret anything that they ever endured for Christ's sake? Are not their present joys an abundant recompense for all their past sorrows, [Revelation 7:13-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.13-17). Fear not then to follow Christ, though you would have to take up the heaviest cross that can be laid upon you: for, if you will but bear it after him, you shall find that "his yoke is easy, and his burden is light."

***~~2. Those who have experienced the consolations of the Gospel—~~***

Make the improvement of them which the Apostle did; Bless God for them; and improve them for the good of others. Have you by your own experience found God to be "a Father of mercies, and a God of all comfort?" Then acknowledge him under this blessed character, and commend him to all for the instruction and comfort of their souls. Your consolations are not given you for yourselves merely, but for others also; that you may be channels of communication between God and them. Many there are who need your friendly offices; many with weak "hands, and feeble knees, and fearful hearts," whom, with God's blessing, you may support and comfort. O remember, that it is a god-like office to "comfort those who are cast down," "to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness!" And in thus improving your diversified experiences, you will enrich both yourselves and others: I may add too, you will have the best evidence, that they are wrought in you by the Spirit of God: for it is in this improvement of them that "pure and undefiled religion" very principally consists, [James 1:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.27).

You may be assured also, that, in thus drawing out your soul to the hungry, and satisfying the afflicted soul, "your own souls shall become like a watered garden, and like springs of water, whose waters never fail, [Isaiah 58:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.10-11).

***~~#1999~~***

***~~THE TESTIMONY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.12).~~***

"Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience; that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conduct in the world."

GREATLY as the Apostle merited the admiration of all, there was nothing which he did that was not made an occasion of complaint against him. His enemies at Corinth were numerous and powerful: and so grievous had been their influence in producing divisions and contentions among his converts, that he was constrained to menace them with a speedy visit, in case his remonstrances with them would not be duly regarded, 1 Corinthians 4:18-21. Had he proceeded thither immediately, they would have represented him as a man, who could not endure the least contradiction, but tyrannized over his followers in a most despotic manner: but when a few months elapsed without their seeing him, they spoke of him as a weak man, who did not know his own mind, or dared not to execute his own purpose.

But against these accusations he answered, that the delay of his journey had been not at all owing to any versatility of mind in him, but partly to outward impediments which he could not easily have removed, and partly to the unwillingness he had felt to exercise the severity which their misconduct called for, verses 8 and 23.

Under all their misrepresentations, however, he had felt much peace of mind: because he had the testimony of his own conscience, that, in his ministrations in general, and in his whole conduct towards them in particular, he had acted to God, without any corrupt bias whatever. This he asserts in our text; from whence we shall take occasion to show,

***~~I. Of what kind our conduct in the world should be—~~***

That our actions would be consonant with all the strictest rules of morality, is a truth so obvious, that we need not at present insist upon it. It is not so much of *actions*, as of *principles*, that we are now called to speak. The Christian should have respect to God in all that he does, and should approve himself to God,

***~~1. In his ends and designs—~~***

There would be no leaning to *self*in anything that we do; no view to the advancement of our own interest, or reputation, or influence, but a single desire to do only what we truly believe to be the will of God, and what shall most conduce to his glory. This principle is to be carried into everything, the most minute, as well as the most important: "Whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do—we should do all to the glory of God [1 Corinthians 10:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.31)." By this principle, the Apostle had regulated his conduct towards the Corinthian Church. Whether he had exercised authority or forbearance, he had had this only in view. And we in like manner, whether we proceed in an uniform tenor, or diversify our conduct according to existing circumstances, would exclude every other consideration from our minds: "we should choose only the things that will please, [Isaiah 56:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 56.4)." and glorify our God.

***~~2. In the means by which he prosecutes his ends—~~***

Here the utmost simplicity of mind would always prevail. We should not listen to the dictates of "fleshly wisdom," but with "godly sincerity" proceed in a plain straight-forward way. Not that we are to discard human wisdom: for we are told to "walk in wisdom towards those who are without." But, though we are to be "wise concerning that which is good, we are to be simple concerning evil, [Romans 16:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.19)," and are to combine the "wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove, [Matthew 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.16)." In no respect are we ever "to do evil that good may come." Here, however, many fail.

On two different occasions do we find even *Abraham*himself grievously erring in this particular, and reproved for it by a heathen prince, [Genesis 12:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 12.13); [Genesis 12:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 12.18-19); [Genesis 20:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 20.2); [Genesis 20:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 20.5); [Genesis 20:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 20.9-10).

And *Isaac*also was faulty in the very same thing, denying his wife, lest for her sake he would be put to death, [Genesis 26:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 26.7-10).

It was to the same weakness that we must ascribe the conduct of *Peter*, when, through fear of Judaizing teachers, he constrained the Gentiles to conform to the Jewish rites. He thought he would in that way remove a stumbling-block from the Jews: and so far he was right, in wishing to remove a stumbling-block out of their way; but he was wrong in the means he adopted for that end: he knew that the Gentiles were not bound by the Jewish law; and therefore he had no right to impose this yoke upon them: and he was justly blamed by Paul as "not walking uprightly" in this particular, [Galatians 2:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.11-14).

Whatever our end may be, we must do nothing to accomplish it which will not bear the light, and stand the test of the severest scrutiny. We must act simply under the influence of "the grace of God," and never in a way of carnal policy. *Our ends, and our means, must be alike regulated by the word of God, and alike conducive to the glory of his name.*

Such then is to be our conduct in the world; it must not only be moral, but pious, having respect in all things to God's word as the rule, and his honor as the end; while all selfish ends and human policy must be utterly discarded.

But as internal principles are difficult to be discerned, we proceed to show,

***~~II. What evidence we should have, that it is such as God requires—~~***

Men can judge only of acts, and can ascertain principles no farther than they are illustrated by the outward fruits produced by them. *The inward motives and dispositions of the mind can be discerned only by ourselves, and by God, who searches the heart*. Nor can they be discovered even by ourselves without great care and watchfulness. We are very apt to mistake our own motives and principles, just as the disciples did, when they would have called fire from Heaven to consume a Samaritan village: "they knew not what spirit they were of." But we ought not to be so deceived respecting our conduct:

***~~We ought to have "the testimony of our conscience" respecting it—~~***

We should have a consciousness, that we do indeed desire to do the will of God, and that we would not willingly either go beyond it, or fall short of it, in anything. We should be able to make the same appeal to our God and Savior as Peter did, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you," and that I am seeking nothing but the glory of your name: 'you know that, in order to find out your will, I study your blessed word, and seek instruction from your Spirit, and commit my ways to your guidance: you know that, though I often have doubts and misgivings whether I do really adopt the most perfect line of conduct, I do not intentionally deviate from anything which I believe to be pleasing and acceptable to you. I can appeal to you, that I do continually exercise myself to keep a conscience void of offense both towards God and man.'

***~~Such a testimony may be enjoyed by every one of us—~~***

It is not the result of pride, as some would imagine; but the voice of God's blessed "Spirit bearing witness with our spirits."

When *Job*was accused of harboring some hidden iniquity, which had brought down such signal judgments upon him, he made his appeal to God in these energetic terms, "You know that I am not wicked, [Job 10:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 10.7)."

The Apostle *Paul*frequently appealed in like manner to the heart-searching God. In the very chapter before us he says, "I call God for a record upon my soul, that, to spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth, verse 23."

But in the Epistle to the Romans we have a more remarkable instance. It was supposed by the Jews, that the Apostle's love to the Gentiles necessarily argued a lack of love towards his brethren of the Jewish nation: and he, in order to silence for ever such an accusation, says, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, [Romans 9:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.1-2)."

What forbids then that we should have the same testimony respecting our principles, and that we would be able to make the same appeal to Almighty God? If we have really walked as before him, we "have the same witness of it in ourselves, [1 John 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.10)," and may say with Job, "He knows the way that I take: when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held his steps: his way have I kept, and not declined, [Job 23:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 23.10-11)."

Blessed is that man who has such an evidence within him! but no words can adequately describe,

***~~III. The comfort which such a testimony will produce—~~***

It was a matter of no small comfort to the Apostle that he had this testimony. And to every one who possesses it, it is a solid ground of joy and triumph. It is of unspeakable comfort,

***~~1. Under the reproaches and calumnies of men—~~***

The servants of God will always be hated and calumniated by an ungodly world: and, generally speaking, the more zealous they are in the discharge of their duty, the more virulent will be the opposition made to them. We have seen already the construction which the Apostle's enemies at Corinth put on the delay of his journey thither: and in other parts of this epistle we are told, that he was represented by them as "walking after the flesh, [2 Corinthians 10:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.2-3)," and as "craftily endeavoring to catch men with deceit, [2 Corinthians 12:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.16)."

It is highly probable that those who did not understand the principles on which he acted, would speak of him as the most changeable and inconsistent of men; sometimes observing days and ceremonies, and at other times violently opposing the observance of them. But he cared little for their censures, when he had the testimony of his own conscience that he was acting right.

Thus it is that pious men are judged at this day. People are glad to find fault with them. Everything they do is made an occasion of reproach to them. Whether they more affect the austerity of John, or the ease and familiarity of Jesus, whether they dance or mourn, they are equally condemned, [Matthew 11:17-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.17-19).

As for the reasons of their conduct, or the truth of the reports that are circulated respecting them, no one will take the trouble to make the least inquiry. Sometimes it happens, as in the case of Joseph, that appearances are against them, and that they have no means of clearing their own character. O what a satisfaction is it to them under such circumstances, that God knows their hearts, and will vindicate them in the last day from the aspersions that are cast upon them!

Doubtless that pure and conscientious man had much sweeter composure of mind in prison, even while "the iron of the stocks entered into his soul," than had the adulterous queen, at whose instance these pains were inflicted on him. And every man who enjoys the testimony of his own conscience, is out of the reach of those shafts by which ungodly men endeavor to wound his reputation, and destroy his peace.

***~~2. In the prospect of death and judgment—~~***

No man who knows his own sinfulness will presume to justify himself before God: but, in relation to particular accusations, or to the general desire of his soul to please God—every man, who is truly upright, may enjoy the richest consolation in the prospect of that day when the truth shall be brought to light, and every man who has served God in sincerity and truth shall have a sentence of approbation from the lips of his Judge.

It was in the view of this day, that *Paul*made so light of the obloquy that was cast upon him, [1 Corinthians 4:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.3-5). And in the near approach of death, *Hezekiah*found in the records of his own conscience a most consolatory reflection. For his country, and for the cause of God in the land, "he wept sorely:" but for his own departure he had no reason to mourn, [Isaiah 38:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 38.3); he had approved himself faithful in the discharge of his duty; and he had no ground to dread the judgment that would be pronounced upon him.

But should the same confidence befit us? Yes, in proportion as the same grounds exist for it: for "if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things: but, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, and may assure our hearts before him! [1 John 3:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.19-21)."

***~~Advice—~~***

***~~1. Seek to have your conscience duly enlightened—~~***

If conscience itself be not enlightened by the word and Spirit of God, its testimony will be extremely fallacious: it may give a sentence of approbation where the severest condemnation is due, [Acts 26:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.9). If not itself regulated according to the Scriptures of truth, conscience will be a false guide and a deceitful comforter.

***~~2. Consult conscience daily as in the presence of God—~~***

Inquire into its records of the past, and seek its direction for the future. Consult it in reference to even part of your duty, and especially in reference to the end for which you live, and the means you are using to attain it. If you will listen to the voice of conscience, it will tell you whether you are living to yourselves, or to your God; and whether you are exercising that care and watchfulness, that labor and self-denial, that zeal and love, which are necessary to bear out a testimony in your favor. The more diligently you consult it in your hours of leisure and retirement, especially if you take care to implore earnestly from God the influences of his Spirit, the more beneficial will be its warnings, and the more consoling its testimonies in your favor.

***~~3. Endeavor to keep conscience pure—~~***

Excellent was that resolution of Job, "My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live, [Job 27:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 27.6)." True it is, that while you are in this ensnaring world, exposed as you are to temptations without and to corruptions within, there will be frequent occasion to lament the defilements you contract. But go from day to day, and from hour to hour, to the fountain of Christ's blood, which is "able to cleanse you from all sin," and "from an evil conscience." Let not any sin, however small it may in appearance be, continue unrepented of, or unmortified.

***~~4. Aim at the highest attainments—~~***

It is not at a course of moral actions only that you must aim, but at a life entirely and unreservedly devoted to God. "The single eye" is that after which you must aspire; and "the simplicity that is in Christ," is that which you must hold fast under all possible circumstances. Every action, every word, every thought, must, if possible, be under the influence of Divine grace, and be "brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Strive for this with all your might; and then we will venture to say, that in you shall that word be fulfilled; "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace [Psalm 37:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 37.37)."

***~~#2000~~***

***~~THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFESSION~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.13)~~***

"For we write no other things unto you, than what you read or acknowledge; and I trust you shall acknowledge even to the end."

AS the testimony of one's own conscience is the strongest support under false accusations, so *an appeal to the consciences of others is the most effectual means of refuting the charges that are brought against us.*To this species of argument God himself condescended to have recourse, in order to convince his people that the evils which they imputed to him originated wholly in their own folly and wickedness:

"Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? [Isaiah 5:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.3-4)."

"Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? why do my people say, We are lords, we will come no more unto you! [Jeremiah 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.5); [Jeremiah 2:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.31)."

"You say, the way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? [Ezekiel 18:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 18.25)."

The inspired writers also infrequently vindicate themselves in a similar manner. Paul, for instance, had been represented by some at Corinth as fickle and inconstant, because he had not come to them at the time they had expected him. To clear himself from this imputation, he informs them, that he had met with insuperable obstacles in Asia, which had prevented him from prosecuting his intended journey; and that in the whole of his conduct towards them he had been actuated, not by temporizing motives and carnal policy, but by the most strict unblemished integrity. He declares, that he had "the testimony of his own conscience" respecting this, [2 Corinthians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.12); and that he had a further testimony in their consciences also, respecting the truth of what he said; that, in asserting these things, "he wrote no other things than what they read in his former epistle, and were constrained to acknowledge; and he trusted they would acknowledge even to the end."

The faithful minister of Christ derives great advantage from being able to appeal to records, the authority of which is acknowledged by his hearers. *By referring them to the Holy Scriptures in proof of all that he advances, he establishes his word upon the most unquestionable authority, and fixes conviction upon their minds*.

The ministers of the Church of England have yet further advantage, because, in addition to the Scriptures, they have other authorities to which they may refer in confirmation of the truths they utter. It is true, we are not to put any human compositions on a level with the inspired volume: *the Scriptures alone are the proper standard of truth*; but the Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy of the Church of England are an authorized exposition of the sense in which all her members profess to understand the Scriptures. To these therefore we appeal as well as to the sacred records.

But because it would occupy more time than can reasonably be allowed for one discourse to appeal to all at once, we shall content ourselves with calling your attention to the Liturgy, and especially to that part of it which we call the General Confession. We will briefly state what doctrines we insist upon as necessary to be received; and under each we will compare our statements with what we "read" in the Scriptures, and "acknowledge" in our prayers. And we trust that, after having done this, we shall be able to adopt the language of the text, and say, "We write no other things unto you than what you read and acknowledge."

There are three things, which, as it is our duty, so also it is our continual labor, to make known; namely,

Our lost estate.

The means of our recovery.

The path of duty.

Permit me then to state what we declare respecting the first of these points,

***~~I. Our lost estate.~~***

We declare, that every man is a sinner before God: that both the actions and the hearts of men are depraved: that whatever difference there may be between one and another with respect to open sin, there is no difference with respect to our alienation from God, or our radical aversion to his holy will. We affirm, that, on account of our defection from God, we deserve his heavy displeasure: that the most moral and sober, as well as the base and profligate, are under condemnation on account of sin: and that all of us without exception must perish, if we do not turn to God in the way that he has prescribed.

We are sure that we have abundant proof of these things in the Holy Scriptures. The **universality**of our depravity and departure from God, and of our danger in consequence of it, is declared in the strongest terms by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, "There is none righteous," says he, "no not one: there is none that understands; there is none that seeks after God: they are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no not one." To this he adds, "that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God [Romans 3:10-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.10-19)."

We wish you particularly to notice what an accumulation of words there is in this short passage to prove the universality of our guilt and misery. Of *righteous*persons, there is "none," "none," "none," "no not one," "no not one:" "all" are guilty, all "together," even "every" person, and "all the world." Will anyone, after reading this passage, presume to think himself an exception?

Nor is the **depth**of our depravity less clear than its universality. "The heart," says *Jeremiah*, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked! Who can know it! [Jeremiah 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.9)." This is spoken, not of some particular person or age or country, but of mankind at large, even of our whole race.

*Solomon*affirms the same when he says, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead, [Ecclesiastes 9:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 9.3)."

And to the same effect is that declaration of *Paul*, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be! [Romans 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.7)."

To these general affirmations of Scripture, we may add the confessions of the most eminent saints.

*Job*, who was the most perfect man on earth in his day, no sooner attained the knowledge of his real character, than he exclaimed, "Behold I am vile! [Job 40:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 40.4)."

*Paul*also, speaking of himself and of all the other Apostles, says, "We all had our conduct in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as all others! [Ephesians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.3) and [Titus 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.3)."

In laboring to establish these solemn truths, we are often considered as libeling human nature, and as representing men in such a humiliating and distressed state as to fill them with melancholy, or drive them to despair. Let us then, in vindication both of ourselves and of our doctrines, compare these assertions with our public acknowledgments.

We begin our *Confession*with saying, "We have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep." This is a peculiar expression that must not be overlooked. We apprehend it does not mean merely that we have departed from God, but also that we have never sought to return to him: for other animals will find their way back when they have wandered from their home; but it is rarely, if ever, known that the sheep traces back its footsteps to the fold from whence it has strayed. If it returns at all, it is not by any foresight of its own.

How just a picture does this exhibit of our fallen race! That we have departed from God is too plain to be denied: but in how few do we behold any solicitude to return to him! How few are there who search the Scriptures daily, in order to find their way back! How few who implore help and direction from their God with an earnestness at all proportioned to the urgency of their case!

Is it inquired, wherein we have so greatly erred? Our own acknowledgments contain the most satisfactory reply: "We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts." How true is this! Look at all mankind; see them from infancy to youth, and from youth to old age. What are they all following? are they unreservedly obeying the commands of God? are they, in compliance with his will, mortifying every evil propensity, and doing the things which are pleasing in his sight?

Alas! nothing is further from their minds than this. Their pursuits indeed vary according to their age, their circumstances, their habits; but whatever they be, they are no other than the selfish devices and desires of their own hearts: if in anything they appear to do the will of God, they do not act from a principle of love to him, but from a desire to conform to the customs of their country, and to lay a foundation for self-applause.

The whole tenor of our lives is but too justly marked in those following acknowledgments, "We have offended against your holy laws: we have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and have done those things which we ought not to have done."

Permit me to ask, which of the laws of God have we not violated times without number? Shall we say, We have not committed murder or adultery? How vain the boast, if we interpret the commandments in their full latitude, and call to mind the declarations of our Lord, that an angry word is murder, and a wanton look is adultery! [Matthew 5:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.27-28).

To go into all our sins of omission and commission, would be an endless task. Suffice it to say, that in ten thousand instances "we have sinned, in thought, word, and deed, against the Divine Majesty;" and have habitually neglected the interests of our souls.

Perhaps it may be said, "Our *actions*indeed have been evil, but our *hearts*are good." But how does this accord with that which in our confession forms the summit of the doctrine, "There is no health in us!" Here our Church has taught us *to trace all the evils of our life to the fountain-head—a corrupt and wicked heart*. In this expression she evidently refers, either to that confession of the Apostle, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing! [Romans 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.18)." Or rather to that most humiliating declaration of the prophet, "From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores [Isaiah 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.5-6)."

The import of the words is plain: we confess before our God, that we are altogether depraved; that we are disordered in every member of our body, and in every faculty of our soul:  
our *understanding*is darkened,  
our *will*is perverse,  
our *affections*are sensual,  
our *memory*istreacherous,  
our *conscience*is seared,  
and all our "*members*are instruments of unrighteousness and sin."

Thus far then we are fully vindicated, vindicated too, we trust, in your consciences, in all that we have affirmed respecting the lost estate of man. The scriptures do indeed represent the whole human race as in a most deplorable condition: but no member of our establishment can controvert our positions without denying the plainest asseverations of Holy Writ, and contradicting his own most solemn acknowledgments.

Let us now turn our attention to the second point which we proposed to notice, namely,

***~~II. The means of our RECOVERY from this state.~~***

We affirm that, in order to obtain salvation, two things are necessary; "*Repentance*towards God, and *faith*in our Lord Jesus Christ, [Acts 20:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.21)."

By REPENTANCE, we do not mean that superficial work which consists in saying, 'I am sorry for what I have done;' but in such a deep sense of our guilt and danger, as leads us with all humility of mind to God, and stirs us up to a most earnest application to him for mercy. We must feel sin to be a burden to our souls. We must be made to tremble at the wrath of God which we have merited. We must cry to him for deliverance from it, as Peter cried for preservation from the waves, "Save me, Lord, or I perish!" And this must be our experience, not merely after some flagrant transgression, or on some particular occasion, but at all times: it must be, as it were, the daily habit of our minds.

Is it needful to confirm this from the Holy Scriptures? Surely we need not be reminded of what our Lord has repeatedly affirmed; "Unless you repent, you shall all perish! [Luke 13:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.3); [Luke 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.5)." We need not be told that it is "the weary and heavy laden" whom Christ invites, [Matthew 11:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.28); that it is "the broken and contrite heart which God will not despise, [Psalm 51:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.17);" that we must "loath ourselves for all our abominations, [Ezekiel 36:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.31);" that we must "sow in tears, and go on our way weeping, [Psalm 126:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 126.5-6);" that we must cry with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me! [Romans 7:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.24):" and with Job, "I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes! [Job 42:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 42.6)."

Yet, when this is insisted on, and pressed upon the conscience as of universal, absolute, and indispensable necessity, we are told that we carry matters to excess: that however such bitter contrition may suit the profligate and abandoned, it is unnecessary in the case of the more moral and decent—they have never done anything that requires such deep humiliation; they have no such cause to fear and tremble; they have indeed sinned, but are in no danger of perishing; nor have they ever merited the wrath of God.

But is it not astonishing that any member of the established Church would be so ignorant as to make these vain assertions? What are the terms in which we address the Divine Majesty every time that we attend his worship? "O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders. Spare them, O God, who confess their faults. Restore those who are penitent."

Have we then been dissembling with God all our days; calling ourselves "miserable offenders," when we feel no misery at all; and when, instead of bewailing our offenses, we think ourselves almost, if not altogether, as good as we need to be?

In this prayer we do not presume even to expect mercy, except as persons deeply penitent and contrite. And let it be remembered, that these petitions are put into the mouths of all the congregation; there is not one form for one class of persons, and another for another; but all profess to approach God as the repenting tax collector, "smiting upon their bosoms, and crying, God be merciful to me a sinner! [Luke 18:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.13)."

We mean not to say, that no person can hope for mercy, who does not feel such a measure of contrition (for all who pray in sincerity may hope for acceptance, though their hearts be not so contrite as they could wish), but to show, that all members of the Church of England acknowledge that penitence is highly suited to their miserable state.

But, besides their repentance, we observed, that FAITH also was necessary, even faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This we invariably and inflexibly affirm. As it is not our good works and meritorious life that will save us, so neither will our repentance save us. *If we could shed rivers of tears, they would never avail to cleanse us from one single sin!*It is the blood of Christ, and that alone, that can atone for our guilt: That is "the fountain that was opened for sin and for impurity! [Zechariah 13:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 13.1);" and as long as the world shall stand, we must require of sinners to wash in it, in order that they may be clean.

And, forasmuch as men are with great difficulty turned from endeavoring "to establish their own righteousness, [Romans 10:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.3)," or to unite their own *imagined*merits with the merits of Christ, we guard them strongly against this fatal error; we declare to them, that, if they do this, they will invalidate the whole Gospel; and that, *if ever they are saved at all, it must be by a humble, simple reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ*.

That there are blessings promised to the penitent, and to the obedient, we very willingly allow: and on proper occasions we are glad to bring forward those promises, in order to encourage men to repent and obey: but that men are justified by their repentance or obedience, or in any other way than by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—we utterly deny. We declare that, if men seek to be justified in any other way, "Christ shall profit them nothing! [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2)."

And do we, in affirming these things, deviate at all from what we read in the Holy Scriptures? Does not our blessed Lord expressly say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me! [John 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.6)." He tells us plainly, that "he who believes on him, has everlasting life; and that he who believes not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him! [John 3:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.36);" and again, "He who believes, shall be saved; and he who believes not, shall be damned! [Mark 16:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.16)."

To the same effect also is the testimony of his Apostles: we find them invariably directing penitents to believe in him as the only effectual means of obtaining acceptance with God. When the jailor came in to Paul and Silas, trembling, and crying, "Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?" the answer given him was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved! [Acts 16:30-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.30-31)." Instead of varying their directions according to the different characters they addressed, they affirm, in the strongest manner, that "there is no other foundation whereon any man can build, 1 Corinthians 3:11," "nor any other name whereby any man can be saved, [Acts 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.12)."

And when they saw in any a disposition to unite the observance of some ceremonial or moral duties as a joint ground of their hope, they warned them plainly that their salvation must be "wholly of grace or wholly of works, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6);" and that, if they relied in any measure upon their works, "they had fallen from grace," they had "become debtors to do the whole law," and that "Christ was become of no effect unto them, [Galatians 5:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.3-4);" with respect to them "he was dead in vain [Galatians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.21)."

As offensive as these statements are, and as reprobated as being of a licentious tendency, wherein do they differ from our own acknowledgments? We pray that God would "restore to his favor them that are penitent;" but how, and in what manner, do we expect that restoration to be accomplished? Is it uncovenanted mercy that we ask? Or is it according to our own good works that we desire to find acceptance? No; we profess that our reliance is altogether on God's promises as they are revealed in the Gospel; "Restore us, according to your promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Among the promises to which we may be supposed to refer, the following must certainly be numbered: "Look unto me, and be saved! [Isaiah 45:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.22)." "Come unto me, and I will give you rest, [Matthew 11:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.28)." "The one who comes unto me, I will never cast out, [John 6:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.37)." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin! [1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.7)." "All who believe, shall be justified from all things, [Acts 13:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.39)." "Though your sins be as crimson, they shall be white as snow! [Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.18)."

But whatever the promises are, whether their reference to Christ be more or less plain, we are assured, that it is in him, and in him alone, that the promises are confirmed to us; for the Apostle says, "All the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him amen! [2 Corinthians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.20)." It is in Christ alone that God can "be just, and at the same time the justifier of sinners, [Romans 3:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.26);" and therefore when we plead that promise, that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness! [1 John 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.9)," we can expect its accomplishment in no other way than through faith in Christ.

Thus under this head also may be seen a perfect harmony between those things which we have affirmed, and those which you "read" in the Scriptures, and "acknowledge" in your prayers.

Nor do we doubt a similar outcome to our inquiries, while, under the last head of our discourse, we state to you,

***~~III. The path of duty.~~***

We inculcate the practice of every personal and relative duty. But *we are not satisfied with that standard of holiness which is current in the world*. We require a higher tone of morals. In addition to sobriety and honesty*, we insist upon a life entirely devoted to God*. We affirm that it is every man's duty to delight himself in God, [Job 26:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 26.10) and [Psalm 37:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 37.4);" to have such a lively sense of Christ's love to him, as shall constrain him to an unreserved surrender of all his faculties and powers to the service of his Lord! [2 Corinthians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14). We must live for God. We must be like a faithful servant, who inquires from day today what his master's will is; and inquires, in order that he may *do*it.

As a servant who had neglected all his duties through the day, should feel ashamed and afraid of his master's displeasure, so should we feel ashamed and afraid, if any day pass without having executed to the utmost of our power the duties of it. We should walk as on the confines of the eternal world, and act as persons who must shortly give account of every talent that has been committed to them! To be "dead unto the world, [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14)," and "alive unto God, [Romans 6:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.11);"  
to attain more and more of the Divine image, [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18);  
to grow up into Christ in all things, [Ephesians 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.15);  
to enjoy fellowship with God, [1 John 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.3), and to anticipate the enjoyments of Heaven, [Ephesians 1:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.13-14);  
this is our duty, and should be our daily study and delight!

In requiring so much, we are supposed to require what is altogether impractical, or, at least, what, if practiced, would unfit us for all the common offices of life. But what do we read in the Holy Scriptures? Do they require of us less than this? Do they not teach us to "yield ourselves living sacrifices to God, as our most reasonable service! [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1)." Do they not enjoin us to "live henceforth not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again! [2 Corinthians 5:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.15)." Do they not require that "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God! [1 Corinthians 10:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.31)." And is not the Holy Spirit (through whose Divine agency alone we can do anything that is good) promised to us for this very end, to renew us after the Divine image in righteousness and true holiness?

And wherein do our own acknowledgments differ from this? Let us attend to the supplications which we offer before God: "Grant, O most merciful Father, for Christ's sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of your holy name."

Here, so far from putting godliness out of our thoughts, we profess to desire it in the *first*place; and justly do we ask that first, because, without that, all our acts of righteousness and sobriety would be no better than *splendid sins*; they would lack the motives and principles which alone distinguish them from heathen virtues.

Mark also, the measure and degree in which we desire these virtues: we are not satisfied with that which shall gain us a name among men; we ask, (and let it ever be remembered that *without the influences of God's Spirit all our own efforts will be in vain*,) that we may be enabled to attain such a degree of piety, as that God may be glorified in us, and that the transcendent excellence of Christianity may be visibly exhibited in our lives.

We appeal then to all: What do we, or what can we, ask of you more than this? And if these high attainments are not necessary, why do you ask of God for Christ's sake to give them to you? If, on the other hand, they are necessary, why are we deemed enthusiastic and over-righteous for requiring them at your hands? If in your prayers you mean what you say, you justify us; and, if you do not mean what you say, you condemn yourselves; you confess yourselves to be hypocrites and dissemblers with God.

We have now finished our consideration of that truly scriptural prayer: and we will conclude with commending it to you as a test in a two-fold view.

First. Take it as a test whereby to try the discourses which you hear. As members of the Church of England, we have a right to expect that the discourses of ministers shall correspond with the Liturgy of our Church. Certainly, *in the first instance, the Holy Scriptures are to be our guide*: but, as all profess to have the Scriptures on their side, let us bring to our aid that excellent compendium of religion which we have been considering.

Are there any who descant upon the dignity of our nature, the goodness of our hearts, and the rectitude of our lives? What appearance do such sentiments make when brought to the touchstone of this prayer? Are they not as opposite as darkness is to light? and should we not regard such statements as the effusions of pride and ignorance? Should we not tremble for those who hear them, lest, being "blind followers of the blind, they all together would fall into the ditch! [Matthew 15:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 15.14)."

Are there others who tell us that we are to be saved by our works, and who would thereby lull us asleep in impenitence, and divert our attention from the Savior of the world? Let us not be deluded by the syren song. Let us turn to our own confessions, to refute such anti-Christian doctrines: let us learn from them the necessity of humiliation and contrition, and of "fleeing to Christ, as to the refuge that is set before us."

As for the idea, that the founding of our hopes upon Christ, and upon the promises made to us in him, will lead to a neglect of good works—let us see what the compilers of our Liturgy thought of that, and what they have put in the mouths of all believing penitents. Do not the very same persons who seek for mercy through Christ, entreat of God that they may be enabled to "live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of his holy name?"

And is it not notorious, that the very persons who maintain most steadfastly the doctrines of faith, are uniformly condemned for the excessive and unnecessary strictness of their lives?

In the same manner, if there be any who pleads for a conformity to the world, and decries all vital godliness as enthusiasm, we may see what judgment is to be formed of them also. They may *call*themselves Christians; but they have nothing of Christianity, except the name!

Secondly. If there are any who separate the different parts of religion, inculcating some to the neglect of others; magnifying works to the exclusion of faith, or establishing faith to the destruction of good works; or confounding faith and works, instead of distinguishing them as the fruit from the root; if such, I say, there be, let their statements be contrasted with the order, the fullness, and the harmony of this prayer; and the erroneousness of them will instantly appear.

We do not wish to produce critical hearers; but it is the duty of every man to "prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good, [1 Thessalonians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.21);" and as we have the advantage of an authorized standard of divine truth, we invite all to search that, as well as the Holy Scriptures: and we do not hesitate to say of this prayer in particular, what the prophet speaks of the inspired volume, "To the law, and to the testimony; if ministers speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them! [Isaiah 8:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.20)."

Next, let us take this prayer as a test whereby to try our own experience. We may now discard from our minds all that this or that minister may lay down as necessary to our salvation. We have here, what no man can reasonably dispute, our own acknowledgments. We have here as beautiful, as just, as scriptural a summary of experimental religion, as ever was penned from the foundation of the world. The man, that from his inmost soul can utter this prayer, is a real Christian. Whatever be his views with respect to some particular doctrines (those I mean which are distinguished by the name of Calvinism,) his heart is right with God. Whether he admit or reject those more abstruse points, he is accepted of God; and if he were to die this moment, he would be in Heaven the next: the termination of his warfare would be to him the commencement of everlasting felicity.

But is this the experience of us all? would to God it were! All will *repeat*the words: but it is one thing to repeat, and another to *feel*, them. Let us then bring ourselves to this test; and never imagine that we are in a Christian state, until we can appeal to God, that this prayer is the very language of our hearts.

In examining ourselves respecting it, let us inquire, whether from our inmost souls we lament the numberless transgressions of our lives, and the unsearchable depravity of our hearts? When we cry to God for mercy as miserable offenders, do we abhor ourselves for our guilt, and tremble for our danger? Do we indeed feel that we deserve the wrath of Almighty God? Do we feel this, not only on some particular occasions, but, as it were, daily and hourly? Is the consciousness of it wrought into us, and become the habit of our minds, so that we can find no peace but in crying unto God, and pleading with him the merits of his dear Son?

Is Christ, in this view, "precious" to our souls? [1 Peter 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.7). Is he "our wisdom, he our righteousness, he our sanctification, he our complete redemption? [1 Corinthians 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30)." Having nothing in ourselves, do we make him our "all in all? [Colossians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.11)."

Are we at the same time "renewed in the spirit of our minds?" Do we hate sin, not merely as it is *destructive*, but as it is *defiling*, to the soul? Do we account "the service of God to be perfect freedom;" and instead of wishing his law reduced to the standard of our practice, do we desire to have our practice raised to the standard of his law? Is it our labor to "shine as lights in a dark world," and "to show forth in our own conduct the virtues of him who has called us? [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9)."

Let us all put these questions to ourselves; and they will soon show us what we are. If this is not the state of our souls, we are in an awful condition indeed. *Our very best services have been nothing but a solemn mockery! In our prayers, we have insulted, rather than worshiped the Majesty of Heaven!* We have come before our God "with a lie in our right hand! [Isaiah 44:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.20)." O that it might please God to discover to us the heinousness of our guilt; and that we might all be "pierced to the heart," before it be too late! Let us, the very next time we attempt to use this prayer, take notice of the frame of our minds. Let us mark the awful incongruity between our professions, and our actual experience: and let a sense of our hypocrisy lead us to repentance. Thus shall the returning seasons of worship be attended with a double advantage to our souls: in praying for what we ought to seek, we shall be stirred up to seek it in good earnest: and, through the tender mercy of our God, we shall attain the experience of those things, which too many of us, it is to be feared, have hitherto hypocritically asked, and ignorantly condemned.

***~~#2001~~***

***~~THE STABILITY OF THE PROMISES~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.20)~~***

"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

MANKIND in general reveal much fickleness in their spirit and conduct. They form purposes and rescind them according as they are influenced by carnal hopes or fears; but the Gospel teaches us to lay our plans with wisdom, and to execute them with firmness. A light, fickle, wavering mind, if not incompatible with, is at least unworthy of, the Christian character.

Paul had been accused of "lightness" for not paying his intended visit to Corinth. It is probable too (as appears by his apology) that his enemies had thrown out insinuations against his doctrine also, as though it could not be depended upon. He thought such charges extremely injurious to his person and ministry: he therefore first affirms that his doctrines had been uniform, and next appeals to God, that there had been the same uniformity in his conduct also, verse 23. He assures them that he had delayed his journey, not from fickleness of mind, but from tenderness to them. In speaking of his doctrine he digresses a little from his subject; but, what he says of the *promises*, is worthy of peculiar attention. It suggests to us the following important observations:

***~~I. All the promises of God are made to us in Christ Jesus—~~***

***~~God has "given to us exceeding great and precious promises"—~~***

He has engaged to bestow all which can conduce to our temporal welfare: all too, which can promote our spiritual advancement. To this he has added all the glory and felicity of Heaven itself. Such are the benefits annexed by God himself to genuine godliness, [1 Timothy 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 4.8).

***~~But all these promises are given to us only in Christ Jesus—~~***

Man, the instant he had sinned, was exposed to the wrath of God; nor could he any longer have a claim on the promises made to him in his state of innocence; but Christ became the head and representative of God's elect: with him God was pleased to enter into covenant for us, [Hebrews 8:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.6), and to give us a promise of eternal life in him, [2 Timothy 1:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.1). Our original *election*of God, our *adoption*into his family, with every blessing consequent upon these, were confirmed to us in him, [Ephesians 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.3) to [Ephesians 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.11). Hence, in the text, it is twice said, that the promises are in him; and, in another place, that they were made before the existence of any human being, [Titus 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 1.2); even when the covenant was apparently made with Abraham, Christ was the true seed in whom alone it was confirmed, [Galatians 3:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.16-17).

From this circumstance they derive all their stability.

***~~II. In Christ all the promises are firm and immutable—~~***

The terms "Yes and Amen" import steadfastness and immutability. Now the promises cannot fail unless they be either revoked by God, or forfeited by man; but God will not allow them to fail by either of these means.

***~~He himself will not revoke them—~~***

Some of his promises are absolute and others are conditional. The *conditional*promises are suspended on the performance of something by man. The *absolute*promises are made without respect to anything to he done by us. Such are the declarations respecting the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, together with the consequent calling of the Gentiles, and the salvation of all who from eternity were given to Christ, [John 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.6).

If the *conditional*promises fail, it is not so properly a breach of promise, as an execution of a threatening implied in it. This is the true import of what God says, [Numbers 14:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 14.34).

The *absolute*promises have never failed in any one instance; nor can one jot or tittle of them ever fail to all eternity. This is declared in various passages of Holy Scripture. [1 Samuel 12:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 12.22). [Isaiah 54:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.10). [Jeremiah 31:35-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.35-37); [Jeremiah 33:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 33.25-26). God's word, like his nature, has "no variableness or shadow of turning." He confirmed his promises with an oath, in order that we might he more assured of the immutability of his counsel, [Hebrews 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.17); hence it is expressly said, that "the promise is sure to all of Abraham's offspring, [Romans 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.16)."

***~~Nor will he allow his people to forfeit their saving interest in the promises—~~***

Doubtless his people, as free agents, are capable of apostatizing from the truth: yes, they are even bent to backslide from him [Hosea 11:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 11.7); and, if left to themselves, they would inevitably fall and perish, [Isaiah 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.4); hence they are bidden to take heed lest they come short of the promised blessings, [Hebrews 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.1). Paul himself felt the need of much labor and self-denial to prevent his becoming a cast-away, [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.27). Nevertheless these truths are not at all inconsistent with the doctrine insisted on. It is by the fear of falling, that God keeps us from falling, [Philippians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.12-13); and he will keep us by his own power unto final salvation, [1 Peter 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.5). Of this Paul was as confident as of any truth whatever, [Philippians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.6); nor is there any other truth more abundantly confirmed in Scripture, [Romans 11:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.29). [John 10:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28-29).

God will indeed punish his people for their declensions [Psalm 89:30-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.30-32); but, instead of casting them off, he will reclaim them from their errors, [Psalm 89:33-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.33-35). If it were not thus, not one only, but all of those, who had been given to Christ, might perish. God however will effectually prevent this, [Matthew 18:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.14). [Jeremiah 32:38-41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.38-41); and the weakest of his people may join in the Apostle's triumph in [Romans 8:38-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.38-39).

This doctrine is far from being a matter of speculation only:

***~~III. In the accomplishment of the promises, God is glorified, and the ends of our ministry are answered—~~***

The promises, as recorded in the Scriptures, are the foundation of our hopes: but it is by their accomplishment alone that the effects attributed to them are produced. In that,

***~~1. God is glorified—~~***

Every perfection of the Deity is interested in the accomplishment of his word:  
the *mercy*and *love*of God have given us the promises;  
his *truth*and *faithfulness*are pledged to fulfill them;  
his *almighty power*is engaged to execute whatever his goodness has given us reason to expect.

Were his promises to fail of accomplishment, these perfections of God would be all dishonored; but when they are fulfilled, these perfections are all glorified. Justice itself is made to harmonize with truth and mercy, [Psalm 85:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 85.10), and matter is furnished for endless praise and adoration.

***~~2. The ends of our ministry are answered—~~***

The great ends of our ministry are to convert, edify, and comfort immortal souls. In pursuance of these, we set before men those promises which are most suited to their respective conditions; and assure them that their affiance in those promises shall bring them the blessings they desire. When therefore the contrite are brought to experience rest in Jesus, when the afflicted are comforted, the backsliding reclaimed, or the wavering established; then the great ends of our ministry are so far answered with respect to them. The truth of God in his promises is then made to appear; the benefits contained in them are enjoyed by our fellow-creatures; and our labors receive their richest recompense.

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

The Scripture speaks of some as "heirs of promise," and others as "strangers from the covenant of promise." Let us inquire to which of these characters *we*belong. Have we renounced every other hope, and rested simply on the promises made to us in Christ? Are we living in the earnest expectation of their full accomplishment? Have we so embraced them as to show that we are seeking another country? [Hebrews 11:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.13-14).

Let us not mistake our true and proper character. If we are strangers from the covenant of promise, we are without Christ, and without hope, [Ephesians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.12). The threatenings, and not the promises, belong to us, and they will infallibly be executed upon us in due season. O that we might now flee for refuge to the hope set before us!

But if we are "heirs of promise," happy are we beyond all expression. Every promise of God, temporal, spiritual, or eternal, is made to us. Let every one then of this description be filled with consolation, [Hebrews 6:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.18); let them also be followers of those, who now inherit the promises, [Hebrews 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.12).

May it never be said of them, that they glorify God by their faith, but dishonor him by their works! The promises are given, not merely to save, but to sanctify, the soul, [2 Peter 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.4). Treasure up then, brethren, those inestimable pledges of God's love, and let them operate according to the direction given to you, [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.1).

***~~#2002~~***

***~~THE DIFFERENT OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 1:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.21-22)~~***

"Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

IT is a property of saving grace to make us jealous for the honor of God, and studious to promote it to the utmost of our power.

Paul, when accused of instability, vindicated his own character, because it was connected with his usefulness in the ministry; but instantly ascribed to God the glory of whatever steadfastness he had been enabled to maintain.

His words naturally point out to our consideration,

***~~I. The blessings which all true Christians enjoy—~~***

Though all Christians do not attain the same measure either of holiness or of comfort—yet there are blessings common to all who are born of God.

***~~1. They are established in Christ—~~***

All who believe in Christ are united to him as "branches of the true vine." At first indeed they are but as babes, or children, liable to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, [Ephesians 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.14); but by experience they become more rooted and grounded in Christ, [Colossians 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.7). As their views of *their own weakness*and of *his all-sufficiency*are enlarged, they grow more and more; nor was this peculiar to the Apostle, but the common privilege of all the Church at Corinth. Indeed, it is the great end for which all other blessings are communicated; and, in attaining it, the believer becomes immoveable as Mount Zion, [Psalm 125:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 125.1).

***~~2. They are anointed with a heavenly unction—~~***

It is the communication of the Holy Spirit that first enables them to believe in Christ, [1 John 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.20); but, as the lamps in the sanctuary, they have *daily supplies*of the holy oil. By means of these they obtain more abundant knowledge and grace, [Isaiah 2:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 2.2-3), and are progressively renewed after the image of their God, [2 Corinthians 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.16). Not that all, even of true Christians, are alike favored; but every one receives according to the measure of the gift of Christ, [Ephesians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.7).

***~~3. They are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise—~~***

A seal is for the purpose of both marking and securing property; and with both these views the Holy Spirit seals the people of God. He stamps the very image of God himself upon their souls, [Ephesians 4:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.23-24); he thus marks them as his peculiar, his "purchased possession;" he secures them also to the day of complete redemption, [Ephesians 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.14); [Ephesians 4:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.30).

***~~4. They have the pledge of the Spirit in their hearts—~~***

This pledge is both a part of a payment, and a pledge of the remainder; and such is the Spirit to us, not in one only, but in all his operations. In illuminating, quickening, sanctifying, or comforting the soul, he is a pledge of that light and life, that purity and joy, which will be more richly communicated to us in the future world. As a *seal*, the Spirit assures us of our right to Heaven; as a *pledge*, he gives us a foretaste of it.

The consideration of such inestimable blessings may well lead us to inquire after,

***~~II. The source from whence our blessings flow—~~***

It appears needless, at first sight, to enter minutely into this part of our subject: but the very construction of the sentence shows that there is something particularly emphatic in it. It implies,

***~~1. That these blessings are purely the gift of God—~~***

They are not the creatures of a vain and heated imagination; nor are they the offspring of man's will and power, [John 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.13); nor, though imparted in the use of means, do they necessarily flow from the means themselves. They are purely and entirely the gift of God, [James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.17), and are bestowed by Him according to his sovereign will and pleasure, 1 Corinthians 12:6; [1 Corinthians 12:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.11).

***~~2. That they evidently bear the Divine stamp and character upon them—~~***

The visible creation manifestly approves itself to be of Divine workmanship, [Psalm 19:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 19.1), and in the same manner do these blessings evidently appear to proceed from God. The very effects which they produce upon the soul reveal this: but the conviction, which those who possess these blessings, feel of their Divine original, is inexpressibly clear and strong, [Isaiah 41:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.20); without the smallest hesitation they ascribe them to God as their only source, [2 Corinthians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.5).

***~~3. That God is glorified by means of them—~~***

It is the Apostle's express design to glorify God on account of them: and surely we cannot fail of admiring his power and goodness in them; or experience them, without an increased desire to devote ourselves to him; and most of all shall we adore him for these beginnings of his grace, when we shall have received their full completion.

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How little is true religion known and experienced in the world!~~***

Christianity is in general viewed as a system of *restraints*, rather than as a source of *enjoyments*; but none can have a just view of it who do not experience a measure of these blessings. Let not any one then rest in false notions, or uninteresting professions. Let all seek rather such a religion as will make them holy and happy, and pray, with the Apostle, that God would fulfill in them all his good pleasure, [2 Thessalonians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.11).

***~~2. How much do many true Christians live below their privileges—~~***

Many, instead of *enjoying a Heaven upon earth*, are filled with doubts and fears: yet even these have the image of God manifestly enstamped upon them, and the hope which they possess is more precious to them than the whole world: but we may well say to them, "Why are you lean, seeing you are a king's son?" Let them be ashamed of giving such occasion to the enemies of religion to triumph; and let them seek that full liberty which God will grant to all his children.

***~~3. How astonishing are our obligations to each person in the Sacred Trinity!~~***

The *Father*is the great source and fountain of all our blessings.

*Christ*is the procurer of them, and the medium through whom they come.

The *Holy Spirit*is the agent, by whom they are conveyed to us.

Let us hold fellowship with each in his distinct office and character, [1 John 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.3), and acknowledge with gratitude their united exertions; and let every blessing received from them quicken us to the service, and lead us to the enjoyment of our triune God.

***~~#2003~~***

***~~THE DEVICES OF SATAN EXPOSED~~***

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

"So that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil devices."

MEN in general think but little of Satan and his agency: yet is he the most formidable adversary that we have to contend with. Great was the grief which he occasioned to the Apostle Paul; and imminent was the danger to which he reduced many of the Church at Corinth.

When one of the members of that Church had been guilty of the crime of incest, Satan stirred up many to support his cause, and to protect him from the censures he had merited. Again, when, at the Apostle's instigation, the Church had inflicted punishment on the offender, and the correction had produced the desired effect, the same subtle enemy prompted many to harden their hearts against him, and, notwithstanding his acknowledged penitence, to refuse him a re-admission to communion with them.

In both of these ways, he labored equally to undermine the interests of true religion; and, if Paul had not authoritatively interposed to regulate the conduct of that Church by the Gospel-standard, Satan would soon have prevailed to root out of it all vital godliness.

The Apostle's interposition was extremely painful to him. It was "with much anguish of heart and many tears" that he had written the former epistle: and the thought of having, however reluctantly, occasioned grief to those whom he had reproved, was so painful to him, that nothing but an assurance of good having accrued from it to them, and a consequent restoration of peace to their souls, could compose his mind, verse 2-4.

Still however he was bound to proceed in the discharge of his high office, and to urge upon them that duty which they were so backward to perform. And this he does, requesting them to "confirm their love towards the offender, (whose name from delicacy he forbears to mention,) lest Satan would get a further advantage over them;" for, adds he, "we are not ignorant of his evil devices." This was a weighty argument: and, that we may enter more fully into it, I propose to show,

***~~I. The evil devices of Satan—~~***

It is but little that we know of them: yet, as far as we do know them, it will be profitable to consider,

***~~1. Their number—~~***

This is great beyond all that we are able to conceive. I doubt whether the sands upon the sea-shore form such a countless multitude as do the devices of this great adversary. There is not a person of any age, or any condition, or under any circumstances, for whom he has not devices peculiarly fitted, as a key to the wards of a most ingenious and complicated lock. *For every successive variation in their circumstances, he can in an instant adapt his temptations, and so modify them to the occasion, as to give them the greatest possible influence over the mind of his victim.*

It must not be forgotten, that, though we speak of Satan as one, he has millions of other evil spirits at his command, all cooperating with him with an activity inconceivable, and an energy incessant. All of these were once bright and glorious angels around the throne of God: but "they kept not their first estate;" and, for their wickedness, were cast down to the regions of darkness; whence however for a season they are permitted to emerge, in order that they may exert their powers, and subserve unwittingly the counsels of the Most High.

Of these there are distinct orders, called principalities and powers, all under Satan as their head and leader, whose will they execute, and whose designs they promote. Hence, though Satan is limited both as to space and knowledge, he is, by his agents, in every part of the globe, receiving information from them, and exercising rule by means of them: and hence his devices, founded on such a combination of wisdom, and carried into effect by such a union of power, become so manifold as to exceed what on any other supposition would have been within the power of any finite creature to devise and execute. In a word, they are to any but God himself altogether unsearchable and without number.

***~~2. Their subtlety—~~***

We have already said, that Satan knows how to adapt his temptations to all different persons and occasions. But the subtlety of Satan is yet farther discoverable in this, that he puts such a specious appearance on his temptations, as removes from us all suspicion from whence they come. "He transforms himself into an angel of light! [2 Corinthians 11:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.14)," so that his suggestions seem rather to bear the character of Heaven than the stamp of Hell. Who would think that he would pretend a zeal for God's honor, and make use of the very perfections of God to countenance and confirm his impious suggestions? Yet so he did, both in his assaults on the first Adam in Paradise, and on the second Adam in the wilderness. When he sought to prevail over our first parents, he asked "Has God said, you shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" that is, You surely must have made a mistake: it cannot be that so good and bountiful a God would have laid upon you any such unkind restriction.

Then again, when Eve replied, that God had not only forbidden the use of that tree, but had enforced the prohibition by the sanction of death, he answered, "You shall not surely die;" you may be perfectly assured that God is too good ever to inflict such an awful penalty for so trivial a transgression.

In like manner, when he took our Lord to a pinnacle of the temple, and advised him to cast himself down, for that God had engaged to preserve him from all evil, and had given his angels charge over him for that very purpose; his argument was, in fact, You may safely cast yourself down, for God, who cannot lie, has pledged his truth and faithfulness for your preservation. Perhaps there is no one device in which his subtlety more appears than this: for it is by a pretended zeal for God's honor more than by any other thing whatever, that he leads men to sin, and lulls them asleep in sin.

To one, he suggests, that God is too merciful to consign over any man to everlasting torments; to another, that God is too holy and too just ever to pardon such iniquities as he has committed; and then to another, that God, as a mighty Sovereign, has ordained men to life, and will save them without any trouble or efforts of their own. In all these instances he employs the very name and character of God, in order to subvert God's influence in the world.

Another point wherein his subtlety appears is, in his choice of *instruments*whereby to operate the more forcibly upon our minds. He will be sure to employ such as will have most influence, and such as we would be least likely to suspect. Whom would he employ to seduce Adam from his allegiance, but Eve, whom God had given him to be his comfort and support?

It was most probably with the hope of using her influence to tempt her husband, that Satan spared Job's wife, whom he might have destroyed, together with his children: and how readily she concurred with Satan, appears from the advice she gave Job in his extremity, "Curse God and die!"

When he wanted to instigate Ahab to his destruction, whose agency did he employ but that of the four hundred and fifty prophets, whose united testimony Ahab could not withstand?

When he sought to divert even Jesus himself from the great work of redeeming a ruined world, by whom did he endeavor to accomplish his purpose, but by Peter, a favorite disciple, and that too under a semblance of love, [Matthew 16:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.22-23).

Well is he called "that old serpent," for, in truth, he is "a deceitful serpent," whose windings are only equaled by his venom.

***~~3. Their power—~~***

But who can estimate this, seeing that "he deceives the whole world! [Revelation 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 12.9)." It is on this account that he is called "the god of this world," for he "works in all the children of disobedience, 2 Corinthians 4:4. [Ephesians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.2)," and "leads them captive at his will 2 Timothy 2:26."

What he would effect, if allowed to execute all his own pleasure, we may see in Peter, whom he sifted as wheat, and would soon have reduced to chaff, if the Savior himself had not interceded for him that his faith might not fail, [Luke 22:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.31-32).

When expelled from the demoniac, he entered into a herd of swine, who all ran immediately down the mountain, and perished in the sea. And thus it would be with all of us, if God gave us over to his uncontrolled dominion; we would precipitate ourselves speedily into irrecoverable and endless ruin. In the hands of that "great dragon," we would be no more than as a lamb in the jaws of a roaring lion.

But though in all their extent they cannot be known by us, yet, as far as they can be known, we are anxious to mark,

***~~II. The importance of being thoroughly acquainted with them—~~***

It is of unspeakable importance to us all,

***~~1. Individually—~~***

There is not an individual among us, "at whose right hand he does not stand, [Joshua 3:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 3.1-2)," and whom he is not seeking to destroy. "As a roaring lion, he is going about continually for this very end," seeking to find someone off his guard, that he may prevail the more easily against him. He notices particularly the dispositions of our mind, and is *constantly on the watch that he may ensnare us by means of our besetting sin*.

Does he see *David*inclining to pride and vain confidence? he puts it into his heart to give an order for the numbering of the people; well knowing that by means of that act God would be provoked to execute upon him and on his people some heavy judgment, [1 Chronicles 21:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Chron 21.1).

Did he see in *Judas*the love of money? by that he draws him to betray his Lord.

Did he behold in *Peter*the fear of man? he instigates several to accuse him as a follower of Christ, and thereby causes him to deny his Lord with oaths and curses.

Did he see *Ananias*and *Sapphira*affecting man's applause? he puts it into their heart to appear liberal at a cheap rate; and then, for the preservation of their character, to lie unto the Holy Spirit.

Thus he will watch the motions of *our*hearts; and, by means of some evil propensity in us, drive us to the commission of some heinous sin.

Nor is he inattentive even to the state and temperament of our bodies; since from that also he can derive much advantage against us. If he perceives that our bodies are enervated by heavy afflictions, or such disorders as induce both bodily and mental debility, he will be sure to assault the soul, in order to drive it to despondency. The whole system being weakened, he hopes that he shall the more easily prevail against us to destroy us. In a word, he knows the weak side of all, and will be sure to assault us there.

Hence arises a particular necessity for watching against him with all possible care. Whatever there be, either in our minds or bodies, that seems to favor his temptations, it is only with our own concurrence that he can effect anything: against our will he can do nothing. "If we resist him, he is constrained to flee from us." But the difficulty is to know when, and where, and how he will assault us.

Could the *bird*certainly know that the fowler was laying a snare for him, he would take care not to run into the net; and could the *fish*be fully aware of the hook, he would never be induced to swallow the bait!

Thus, if we knew beforehand what the devices were whereby Satan was studying to deceive us, we would stand on our guard against him. But it requires a very deep knowledge of "his wiles," and a constant watchfulness over every motion of our hearts, to effectually resist him.

***~~2. In our collective capacity—~~***

Whole Churches are often grievously distracted by this powerful adversary. Where Christ is sowing wheat, Satan will be active in sowing tares. It was thus at Corinth: he had prevailed to a great extent, first in setting the people against all discipline, and then in urging them to carry their discipline beyond all reasonable bounds. The latter device would have been attended with incalculable evil, if it had not been exposed and counteracted by Paul: the offender himself might have been driven to despair, and constrained to go back for happiness to the ungodly world. The weak in the Church would have been greatly discouraged: and unbelievers would have been led to think of Christianity as the most odious system that had ever been professed in the world.

In like manner, there are in every Church some circumstances which Satan would over-rule for the dishonor of God and the injury of immortal souls. Against these therefore, whatever they may be, both minister and people should be much upon their guard. In matters of *doctrine*, our subtle adversary may easily lead us astray; and in matters of *discipline*, he may easily succeed in stirring up contentions and divisions among us. If we neglect to purge out the old leaven, the whole lump will soon be leavened: and if with too indiscriminate a hand we attempt to pluck up the tares, we may root up also much of the wheat along with it.

We are in danger on every side: and if we do not, with the utmost possible care, guard against his evil devices, he will, in some way or other, "get advantage of us," to the weakening of our hands, and the great discouragement of our hearts.

***~~As an improvement of the subject, we will briefly show how most effectually to counteract his evil devices—~~***

***~~1. Be ever on your guard against them—~~***

You have to contend, "not against flesh and blood only, but against principalities and powers:" and therefore must be continually on your guard. This is the advice which *Peter*gives, and gives from bitter experience. He had been warned by his Lord to watch and pray, and especially because Satan was peculiarly anxious to destroy him. But he slept, yes slept repeatedly, though repeatedly awakened by his Lord: and the consequence was, that he "fell into the snare of the devil." Hence he warns others to "be sober and vigilant, because the devil as a roaring lion goes about seeking whom he may devour."

Moreover, it was in consequence of the Savior "praying for him that his faith might not fail," that he did not ultimately perish, like Judas, in deep despair. Hence he adds this further direction, "whom resist, steadfast in the faith, [1 Peter 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.8)."

It is scarcely to be hoped, however vigilant you may be, that Satan shall never get any advantage over you; but you must not on that account despond, as if he were invincible: for your God has pledged himself that "he will bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Rely therefore on his word; and in the strength of it go forth again and again to the spiritual combat; praying always, that God would either "not lead you into temptation," or, if he does, that he would "deliver you from the evil one."

It is said of young men in Christ, "that the word of God abides in them, and they have overcome the wicked one." Let it abide in you also; and success is yours. The Lord Jesus Christ drew all his arrows from that quiver: "It is written," was the reply with which he vanquished every temptation: and with "that sword of the Spirit, the Word of God," you shall speedily and eternally prevail.

***~~2. Look to the Lord Jesus Christ as your Protector and Deliverer—~~***

He is "stronger than the strong man armed:" and, while he yet hung upon the cross, he bruised the serpent's head; yes, "by death he overcame him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." On the *cross*"he spoiled all the principalities and powers of Hell, triumphing over them in it:" and in his *ascension*"he led captivity itself captive." Then was the god of this world vanquished: "then was the prince of this world cast out." It is therefore only with a vanquished foe that we have to contend; for "the prince of this world is judged."

Go forth then "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Our *almighty Joshua*calls you to come and put your feet on the necks of your vanquished enemies. Do it; and assure yourselves, that through him you shall be "more than conquerors over all." For a little time this subtle adversary will yet continue his assaults. It was only "for a season" that he suspended his efforts even against the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Depend upon it, therefore, that you shall have some "thorn in the flesh, some messenger of Satan, still to buffet you." But "be strong and very courageous." "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." "Gird on the whole armor" provided for you in the Gospel; and "behave like men."

If you say, "True, but I am weak;" know that, "when you are weak, then are you strong;" and "the strength of Christ shall be perfected in your weakness." The palm of victory, and the victor's robe, are already provided for you: and, after a few more conflicts, your triumph shall be complete. Already may you "behold Satan fallen from Heaven, like lightning, [Luke 10:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 10.18)." Hallelujah! hallelujah!

***~~#2004~~***

***~~THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.15-16)~~***

"For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

THE difficulties which faithful ministers have to encounter, are great and numerous. Through the goodness of God, the flames of persecution are not permitted to rage against them, as in the apostolic age; but the embers are by no means extinguished; hatred and contempt are yet the portion of all who will bear their testimony for God, and reprove the wickedness of an ungodly world. But if "their *afflictions*abound, their *consolations*abound also." They are sustained by the providence and grace of God, and have reason to "thank him for causing them always to triumph in Christ." They have also the satisfaction of seeing, that God, by their instrumentality, "makes manifest the savor of his knowledge in every place." And though they are unhappily the occasion of deeper condemnation to those who reject their message—yet are they accepted and approved of God, as well in their ineffectual, as in their successful, labors.

This is the consolation expressed in the text; from whence we shall take occasion to show,

***~~I. In what way the ministry of the Gospel is regarded by God—~~***

***~~God is pleased to speak of himself as delighting in the ministry of his Gospel—~~***

That which his servants labor to diffuse, is the knowledge of Christ. They set forth incessantly his *name*, his *work*, and *offices*: and exalt him as the only Savior of the world. This, like the sacrifice which Noah, [Genesis 8:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 8.21), and which Christ himself, offered, [Ephesians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.2), is to God "a fragrance of a sweet smell." It is to him "as ointment poured forth, [Song of Solomon 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 1.3)."

***~~And good reason there is why he would be so delighted with it—~~***

*The Gospel of Christ is that wherein all the glory of God is concentrated and made manifest.* We may behold the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God in the works of creation and providence; but *in the work of redemption we see a united display of all his perfections.* "Mercy and truth meet together; and righteousness and peace kiss each other! [Psalm 85:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 85.10)." No wonder therefore that his ministers, who proclaim this Gospel, are considered as rendering to him an acceptable service.

***~~Nor does his approbation of it at all depend on the success with which it is attended—~~***

God is certainly well pleased when any "are saved" by his Gospel: for then all his gracious purposes respecting them are accomplished: Then is his dear Son honored, and, as it were, rewarded "for the travail of his soul, [Isaiah 53:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.11)." Then "mercy," his darling attribute, "in which he chiefly delights," has free and full scope for exercise.

But God is no less glorified "in those who perish:" for they must to all eternity acknowledge the goodness of God towards them; and confess his justice in the judgments inflicted on them.

To us the punishment of the wicked is a ground of lamentation only: but we must not "imagine that God is such a one as ourselves:" whatever tends to his glory, is pleasing in his sight.

Our pleasure, however, in ministering the Gospel, is mixed with pain, when we reflect on,

***~~II. The effects which it produces upon men—~~***

***~~To some we are an occasion of deeper condemnation—~~***

It had been foretold by the prophet, that Christ would be, not merely for a sanctuary, but also for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense! [Isaiah 8:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.14). The holy patriarch, who embraced our Savior in his arms, declared, that he was set for the *fall*, as well as for the *rising*, of many in Israel, [Luke 2:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.34). Our Lord himself also attests, that the design of his coming was, to shut the eyes of those who proudly imagined that they saw aright, as well as to open the eyes of those who were sensible of their blindness, [John 9:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 9.39). And the ministrations of his Apostles were actually attended with these contrary effects, [1 Peter 2:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.7-8) with [Acts 28:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 28.25-27).

Thus we also find it at this time: we are, however unwillingly, the unhappy occasion of increasing the misery of many whom we labor to save. Some hear our word, and disregard it—others despise it—others abuse it, to encourage themselves in their evil ways. For all such persons it would have been better never to have heard the word at all! [John 15:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.22). [Matthew 11:20-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.20-24).

***~~To others, we are the means and instruments of their salvation—~~***

As odors which are most offensive to some, are most pleasing and refreshing to others, so are we in the discharge of our ministry. Some hear our word, and receive it with joy and gratitude. The name of Jesus becomes truly precious to them: they trust in him for salvation: they are brought by him into a state of reconciliation with God: they receive out of his fullness all the grace which they stand in need of: they are enabled by him to live a new and heavenly life; and, finally, they are exalted by him to a state of everlasting happiness and glory. In effecting this blessed work, we are his highly-honored instruments: by our word he quickens them from the dead; by our word he gives them life more abundantly; by our word he carries on, and perfects, the work he has begun. And thus, while to some we are "a savor of death to their death" and condemnation, we are to others "a savor of life to their eternal life" and salvation.

Well might Paul, in contemplating these effects of his ministry, express his sense of,

***~~III. Its arduousness and importance—~~***

Let it only be considered what a sacred trust is committed to us: on the one hand the glory of God, and on the other hand the salvation of man—is entrusted to our care! What a treasure is this to be deposited in such earthen vessels as we are! "Who is sufficient for these things?" Who is sufficient,

***~~1. In wisdom and knowledge—~~***

To discharge the ministerial office aright, we should understand in all its bearings that mystery which was hidden from ages—the redemption of man by the incarnation and sin-atoning death of God's only-begotten Son. We should be acquainted also with all the devices of Satan, whereby he is continually laboring to defeat the gracious purposes of our God. We should be able also to discriminate between all the shades of Christian experience, so as to administer suitable advice to all who are under our care. The effects of ignorance would be most fatal: we would be "blind leaders of the blind;" and thus, together with our deluded hearers, we would "fall into the ditch." Alas! alas! Who has not reason to lament his utter insufficiency for so great a work?

***~~2. In zeal and love—~~***

If we duly considered the importance of our work, we would find neither time nor inclination to think of anything else. We would scarcely allow ourselves the necessary refreshments of food and sleep. Persons who see us a little earnest are ready to give us credit for our zeal, or perhaps to condemn us for it: but we would not minister in the way we do, if we *justly appreciated the value of a soul, or the glory of our God*. No, truly; we would never think of you but with the tenderest compassion, nor even speak to you but with floods of tears. Whether we spoke to you in public or in private, we would take no denial: and, in our addresses to God in your behalf, we would "give him no rest, until he arose, and made our Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

Inquire: What improvement you have made of our ministry? We ask, not merely whether you approve of what you hear? but whether you find it a sweet fragrance unto your souls? Does it endear to you the Lord Jesus Christ? Does it bring you into closer and more habitual communion with him? Does it stir you up to live more to his glory? Let not our labors of love be the means of augmenting your guilt and misery. Force us not to be "swift witnesses against you" in the day of judgment: but rather seek, that we may have you as our joy and crown of rejoicing in that day.

In the meantime, "pray for us." Our responsibility is great and fearful. It is no light matter to answer for our own souls: but to have your souls also required at our hands, is formidable in the extreme! May God pity our infirmities, and pardon our insufficiency! Yes, may he so "perfect his own strength in our weakness," that, through our feeble ministrations, his name may be glorified, and your souls be saved!

***~~#2005~~***

***~~CHRISTIANS ARE EPISTLES OF CHRIST~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 3:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.2-3)~~***

"You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are an epistle from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."

As hateful and detestable as boasting is, there are occasions whereon it may be proper, and even necessary. As far as a man's own reputation merely is concerned, he need not be forward to vindicate himself from false accusations: if he is a holy and consistent character, he may safely leave himself in God's hands, indifferent about the censures of an ungodly world: but where the honor of the Gospel is at stake, and there is danger of its influence being undermined by the falsehoods that are circulated, it is by no means unworthy even of an Apostle to refute the calumnies that are raised against him.

There were at Corinth false teachers, who sought by all possible means to destroy the character of the Apostle Paul, and who even denied his claim to apostolic authority. In answer to their malignant accusations, Paul, in his former Epistle to the Corinthians, says, "Am I not an Apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not you my work in the Lord? If I am not an Apostle unto others—yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of my apostleship are you in the Lord, [1 Corinthians 9:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.1-2)."

Thus, in this epistle also he vindicates himself as ministering, not like the false teachers, who corrupted the word of God, but with a holy integrity befitting his high office, [2 Corinthians 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.17). Yet apprehensive lest he would be misunderstood, as though he felt a need of such commendations either from himself or others—he appealed to his converts themselves as proofs sufficient of his apostleship, even such proofs as carried, to the most thoughtless beholder, their own evidence along with them: "You are our epistle, etc. etc;" that is, 'I need not epistles from men, since you yourselves are epistles from the Lord Jesus Christ, testifying that I am his servant, and that the Gospel which I preach is the very truth of God."

In further considering these words, we may notice from them,

***~~I. The character of all true converts—~~***

Christians are epistles of Christ, written for the instruction of the whole world. Epistles from man to man, such as were those which the false teachers carried with them as letters of recommendation from Church to Church, were written with ink; but Christ's epistles are written with the Spirit of the living God; and not, as the law of the ten commandments was, in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart; to which God alone can have access, and on which God alone can make any valuable impressions.

Ministers indeed are used by him as *instruments*, as the word also is; but these can effect no more than a pen or ink can without the hand of a writer: "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water; but it is God alone who can give the increase, [1 Corinthians 3:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.5-7)."

By these epistles the Lord Jesus Christ teaches men,

***~~1. What is that change that must be wrought on every man—~~***

Christians once walked after the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were children of wrath, even as others, [Ephesians 2:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.2-3). But a great change has been wrought in them: they have been "turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." They have become "new creatures:" their *views*, their *desires*, their *pursuits*—are all new. The change that has taken place in them is somewhat like that of a river, which, from flowing rapidly towards the ocean, is arrested in its course, and made by the refluent tide to return with equal rapidity towards the fountain-head. Thus are these turned "in the spirit of their minds," the whole bent of which was formerly after the things of time and sense, but is now directed to the service of the living God, [1 Thessalonians 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 1.9).

These being still in the world, though not of it, are living instructors to all around them: they are epistles "known and read by all men." From the *Scriptures*men will turn their eyes; but from these *epistles*they cannot. They are constrained to see the truths recorded in them: and, however they may hate the change which they behold, they are compelled to acknowledge it: and they are admonished by it, that, without such a change, they themselves can never be partakers of the kingdom of Heaven.

In a word, by every true convert, Christ speaks to all, as once he did to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of Heaven."

***~~2. By what means that change is to be effected—~~***

However the followers of Christ may differ from each other in minor points, they all agree in founding their hopes of salvation entirely on his atoning blood, and on the effectual operation of his Spirit within them: the declaration of every one among them is, "Surely in the Lord, and in him alone, have I righteousness and strength, [Isaiah 45:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.24)."

These things then does the Lord Jesus Christ proclaim to the world by them. By them he says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me." "There is no other name but mine given under Heaven whereby men may be saved;" "nor is there any other foundation whereon any man can build" his hopes for eternal life. 'And, as they look to me for their acceptance with God, so must they also do for the gift of my Spirit, who alone can begin, or carry on, or perfect, a work of grace in their souls.'

It is in reality this testimony which so offends the world. If they were taught to rely on their own merits, or to depend on their own strength—they would extol the persons who thus distinguished themselves by their superior attainments in holiness: but, when they are told that all their hope must be in the righteousness of another, and in strength communicated from above—they pour contempt upon it all as foolishness. Nevertheless such are the lessons which Christians teach to all around them; and such are the instructions which Christ conveys by them to a benighted world.

While they thus speak from Christ they give us just occasion also to notice,

***~~II. The honor they reflect on the Gospel of Christ—~~***

They are all not merely epistles from Christ, but witnesses also for him. As the Jews were witnesses for God to all nations of the earth, since no other God could ever have effected what he had wrought for them, [Isaiah 43:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.10-12), and as all the persons whom Jesus healed were witnesses for him as the true Messiah, [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25)—so are all true converts witnesses,

***~~1. Of the truth of the Gospel—~~***

What other system ever wrought as that has done? Look at all the means which men have devised for obtaining reconciliation with God; and see if they have ever operated so powerfully, and so beneficially, on the souls of those who have embraced them, as has the simple doctrine of the cross? No! by no other doctrine *did*God ever work, nor by any other doctrine *will*he ever work, for the sanctification and salvation of a ruined world. Go to any place under Heaven where Christ is not exalted as the only Savior of the world, or where the Spirit of the living God is not honored as the only source of all real holiness of heart and life—and see what the state is of those who are so taught: will there be found among them any work like that on the day of Pentecost? Will the word preached there be quick, and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword? Will "the weapons used there be found mighty to pull down the strongholds" of sin and Satan, and to "bring men's thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ?"

No! God does not, and will not, work by anything but a simple exhibition of Christ crucified. It is the Gospel alone that is "the rod of his strength," or that will ever prove "the power of God to the salvation of the soul."

But where that is preached, these effects are wrought: multitudes are "brought out of darkness into marvelous light," and are enabled to show by their works the reality of their faith; and thus they give undoubted evidence, that the Gospel which is ministered unto them is the true Gospel. As Christ said of the people whom he had healed, "The works that I do, the same bear witness of me," so may we say of these persons, that they are "seals," whereby God himself attests the mission of his servants, and the truth of the doctrine which they deliver.

***~~2. Of the efficacy of the Gospel—~~***

It is not a mere external change which the Gospel effects, but *a change of the whole soul—from sin and sorrow to holiness and joy.*The "peace" which it introduces into the troubled mind, "passes all understanding:" and the "joy" to which it elevates the repenting sinner, is "unspeakable and full of glory."

In respect of sanctification, it does not produce *absolute*perfection; for "there is not a man on earth that lives and sins not;" but it transforms the soul in a very wonderful manner, and changes it progressively, if not perfectly, "into the very image of God, in righteousness and true holiness."

In short, it brings the Lord Jesus Christ and the believer into so near a union with each other, that they are one body, [Ephesians 5:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.30), and "one spirit, [1 Corinthians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.17)," partakers of the same blessings in this world, [John 17:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.13); [John 17:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.22-23); [John 17:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.26), and heirs of the same glory in the world to come, [Romans 8:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.17).

What other doctrine ever did, or can, effect such a change as this? Not even God's law, which he wrote in tables of stone, could operate to such an extent as this: the Gospel alone is competent to such a task: as Paul has said; "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, did; that is, he condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, [Romans 8:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.3-4)." Moreover, it is not on those only who are of a better and more pliant frame of mind, that the Gospel thus operates, but on the vilest of the human race; as indisputably appeared in the Corinthian Church, [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.9-11).

The instances of such efficacy are not rare, but frequent. On one day were three thousand such converts made; and in every age from that period to the present has the same power been exerted to change the lion into a lamb, and "a desert into the garden of the Lord."

Such converts "shine as lights in a dark world," and, by "holding forth the word of life" as epistles from Christ, they show that "the minister has not run in vain, nor labored in vain, [Philippians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15-16)."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Seek to have the mind of Christ more fully inscribed upon your hearts—~~***

Beloved brethren, let not a day pass without your having some divine lesson written more clearly and more legibly upon your souls. Bring your hearts daily to the Lord Jesus Christ, and present them as a tablet to him, that he may write upon them something which they have not hitherto contained. And when you come up to the house of God, come, not to gratify curiosity, or to perform a duty merely, but to spread your hearts again before the Lord, that, by the instrumentality of his minister, and the operation of his word and Spirit, he may inscribe on them some further lesson, which shall attract the notice of an ungodly world, and constrain them to acknowledge that God is with you of a truth.

If there is a sinful blot upon your hearts, entreat him to erase it. And whatever good is but indistinctly written, entreat him to trace it over again and again, until it shall appear in characters worthy of the Divine Author, and convey to all who behold it a decisive proof of its divine original.

And, at the close of every day, examine the contents of the epistle, to see what progress has been made, and what yet remains to be added for its perfection. Nor ever forget by whom the characters must be inscribed: it is "by the Spirit of the living God," and by the Lord Jesus Christ through him. If you look to any other quarter, you will be disappointed: but, if you go to Christ for the gift of his Spirit, and desire really to have his whole mind and will written upon your hearts—it shall be done; until you are "changed into his image from glory to glory by the Spirit of our God!"

***~~2. Endeavor to exhibit the whole mind of Christ to a careless and ungodly world—~~***

Let there not be seen in you those tempers and dispositions which dishonor the Christian profession, and make the Gospel a stumbling-block to the world. In too many professors of religion there is little seen but pride, and forwardness, and self-confidence, and loquacity, and uncharitableness, and a disputatious temper, and a party spirit.

But are *these*the characters inscribed by Christ? No! but by that wicked one, who counterfeits the hand of Christ, on purpose to bring him and his Gospel into general contempt. Whatever there is of such dispositions within you, get them obliterated without delay; and all the graces of humility, and meekness, and love, inscribed in their place, [Colossians 3:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.12-13).

*People will judge of our ministry by the lives of those who attend it; and will impute to our doctrines every evil which they can find in you.*This is unreasonable indeed: but they will do so; and we cannot prevent it; and if they see in you what is odious, they will represent it as the necessary fruit of the beliefs which you profess. Take care then that "the way of truth be not evil spoken of through you." Endeavor rather so to "make your light shine before men, that all who behold it may glorify your Father who is in Heaven." Yes, "let it shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."

***~~#2006~~***

***~~THE EXTENT OF MAN'S IMPOTENCY~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.5)~~***

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God"

As commonly as these words are cited, they are not easy to be satisfactorily explained. There is an evident abruptness in them: and they appear to go far beyond what the context requires. The Apostle had spoken of the success of his ministry: and "thanked God for making manifest the savor of the knowledge of Christ by him in every place, [2 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.14)." He had appealed to the Corinthians, as living witnesses of the power of Christ in his ministry; seeing that they were, in fact, "epistles of Christ, known and read of all men, verse 2, 3." And he trusted that God would yet further manifest his power, in carrying on among them, and in other places, the work of men's salvation, through the instrumentality of his ministry, verse 4. But while he spoke thus, did he arrogate anything to himself, as though these effects were produced by any powers of his own! No! he utterly disclaimed all such pretensions; and declared, that, so far from being able to convert others by any powers of his own, he had not of himself a sufficiency even to think a good thought: his sufficiency even for that, and much more for all his ministerial success, was from God alone.

The word which we here translate "think anything," means also to *reason*: and if it could have borne the sense of convincing by reasoning, that is the sense we would have preferred; because that would have been the precise idea which the subject called for. But, as no such construction can be put upon it, we are convinced that the version given to it in our translation is right; and that the Apostle must be understood as going designedly beyond what the occasion called for, and as intending to intimate, not only that he could not convert others by any power of his own, but not even excite any good thought within his own bosom, unless he were strengthened for it from above.

He had before said, "Who is sufficient for these things? [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.16)," and here he ascribes all his sufficiency, for every part of his ministry, to God alone.

To mark fully the meaning of the Apostle, I will endeavor to show whence all our sufficiency arises,

***~~I. For the communicating of good to the souls of others—~~***

Whatever force there may be in the *reasonings*of men, or whatever fascination in their *eloquence*, it is certain that neither the one nor the other have any power to convert a soul to God—

Our blessed Lord *spoke*to most, in vain. Though he spoke as never any man spoke either before or since—yet did he not convince all his hearers. If "some said, He is a good man; others said, Nay, but he deceives the people, [John 7:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.12)."

Nor did his *miracles*produce the same effect on all. The poor man, whose eyes he had opened, argued with the Pharisees in vain, because their minds were not open to conviction: "Herein is a marvelous thing," said he, "that you know not from whence this Jesus is, and yet he has opened my eyes. Since the world began, it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." And what was the effect of this reasoning? It only incensed them the more; and caused them to pass on the poor man a sentence of excommunication, [John 9:30-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 9.30-34).

One would have thought that the raising of Lazarus from the grave, after he had been dead four days, would have carried conviction to all: but the chief priests, instead of being duly influenced by it themselves, sought to put Lazarus to death, in order to obstruct the influence of this miracle on the minds of others, [John 12:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.10-11).

Thus it was also with the *Apostles*. When, in consequence of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost, they were enabled to address persons of different countries, each in their own particular language, some, who beheld this stupendous miracle, only "mocked at it, and said that the Apostles were full of new wine," and in a state of intoxication at nine o'clock in the morning, [Acts 2:11-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.11-15).

So when *Paul*pleaded the Savior's cause before Festus and Agrippa, Festus, who was full of prejudice, cried out, "Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning has made you mad!" while Agrippa, who was more intelligent and more candid, said, "you almost persuade me to be a Christian! [Acts 26:24-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.24-28)." In fact, *truth has no force with those who have not eyes to see it.*

***~~Whatever good, therefore, is done to any man, it must be ascribed to God alone—~~***

It was "the Lord who opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things that were spoken by Paul, [Acts 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.14)." And to a lack of such a divine operation did he ascribe the obstinacy of the Jews whom he addressed at Rome. After expounding the Scriptures from morning to evening to many of them in vain, he said, "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: "'Go to this people and say, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving." For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' [Acts 28:23-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 28.23-27)."

So true is that declaration of Solomon, "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye—the Lord has made even both of them, [Proverbs 20:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 20.12)."

And most important is this truth for the instruction of all who minister in holy things, that they may know where to look for the success of their labors for "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow, [1 Corinthians 3:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.6-7)."

From the same divine source must be derived all our sufficiency,

***~~II. For the exercising of spiritual good in our own souls—~~***

The foregoing observations illustrate the Apostle's argument. What I shall now adduce is for the illustration of his particular assertion, that "of himself he could not even think a good thought."

***~~There is not, in any man unassisted by the Spirit, an inclination to entertain a holy spiritual thought—~~***

"The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, [Ecclesiastes 9:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 9.3)." Yes, "every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is evil, only evil, continually, [Genesis 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.5)." What is morally good may arise in the hearts of many: but what is spiritually good must be put there by the special agency of the Holy Spirit. Kindness, benevolence, compassion, though certainly referable to God as their prime Author, exist in the minds of many who are not partakers of saving grace. But hatred of sin, and love to God and Christ, and holiness, find no place in the bosom of an unconverted man: there is between him and them as great a difference as between "light and darkness, or Christ and Belial." They have not, they cannot have, communion with each other, [2 Corinthians 6:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.14-15). As well might a stone ascend of itself, or a spark descend—as an ungodly man give birth to that which is so foreign to his nature, as spiritual good is to a carnal heart.

***~~Nor is there in any man unassisted by the Spirit, a capacity to cherish what is truly spiritually good—~~***

We are told, from unquestionable authority, that "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned! [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14)."

This may be illustrated by the metaphor which Paul makes use of in the preceding context. He has spoken of "spreading the savor of the knowledge of Christ;" and has stated, that, in his ministry, he was to some "a savor of death unto death, and to others a savor of life unto life, [1 Corinthians 2:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14-16)." Now we know that odors have very different effects on different persons: the very same odor which to one may be grateful and reviving, to another may be offensive and injurious: and none but God could reverse these tendencies. So, to some, the sublimest truths of the Gospel appear only as "foolishness, while to others they are the wisdom of God and the power of God."

And why is this, but because a spiritual discernment has been given to the one, while the other possesses only that natural intellect which is conversant with earthly things? In a word, "to the one it is *given*to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven; but to the other it is not given, [Matthew 13:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.11)." Nor, until "God, of his own good pleasure, has given us to will and to do what is pleasing in his sight, [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.13)," shall we ever do it, or ever so much as will it. Our sufficiency for the one, as well as for the other, must come from God alone: for "without Christ we can do nothing! [John 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.5)."

***~~See, then, in this subject,~~***

***~~1. What matter there is for humiliation—~~***

It is scarcely possible to conceive anything more humiliating than the declaration in my text. And if any man doubts the truth of it, let him look back and see, even in the space of the longest life, who ever, by the force of his own natural powers, entertained so much as one thought that was truly in accordance with God's perfect law, or fully consonant with his Gospel?

I have said before, that things *morally*good are attainable by the natural man; but things *spiritually*good are altogether out of his reach. Only keep in mind this important distinction, and no language that can be used can be too strong to declare our destitution of all good, and our dependence upon God for every good disposition or desire.

***~~2. What matter there is for encouragement—~~***

Was Paul's sufficiency derived from God alone? Then *I* also may obtain all that I need. Since the same source and fountain is open for me also, why need I be discouraged at the thought of my own impotency? If God, in instances without number, "has revealed unto babes what he has hidden from the wise and prudent, [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25)," and "by things which are not, has brought to nothing things that are, [1 Corinthians 1:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.28);" what need have I to be discouraged? Whatever are my duties, whether personal or official, God can strengthen me for them; yes, and "he will perfect his own strength in my weakness, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9)." "I will be strong then in the Lord, and in the power of his might, [Ephesians 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.10)," and address myself to every duty in dependence on him. Then shall I not fail in anything that I undertake: for "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13)."

***~~#2007~~***

***~~THE LETTER THAT KILLS, AND THE SPIRIT THAT GIVES LIFE~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.6)~~***

"He has made us competent as ministers of a New Covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

IN the Holy Scriptures there is often incidentally introduced some information of the deepest and most important nature, where the subject did not immediately appear to call for it. In a parenthesis, as it were, a world of instruction is often conveyed. The fact is that the inspired writers, and especially Paul, had so full an insight into the mysteries of our holy religion, that they spoke of them as persons familiar with the truths they uttered, and scarcely conscious, as it were, of the depths into which they so abruptly led the minds of their readers.

Paul, vindicating himself against a supposed charge of egotism and of boasting, here acknowledges "all his sufficiency, for every part of his ministerial duty. This is the precise idea, not of the context only, but of the text itself. He here gives, in few words, his entire view of the Gospel which he preached, and of the effects which he expected to follow from his labors. To set before you the precise import of his words, I will show,

***~~I. What is that Gospel which we minister—~~***

Paul calls himself "a minister of the New Covenant:" and, for the purpose of explaining himself more clearly, he contrasts that New Covenant with the Old Covenant, which was superseded by it.

***~~His view of the Gospel may be thus explained—~~***

The Old Covenant, as published by Moses, was written in ten commandments, upon tables of stone. The substance of those ten commandments is by our Lord comprised in two commandments: the one of which is, "You shall love God with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength;" and the other, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." For the performance of these commandments the law afforded no strength, while yet it made no allowance whatever for the smallest defect in our obedience. The terms it prescribed were plain and positive, "Do this, and live." On the other hand, it said, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Hence the Apostle calls this law, "The letter that kills:" for though as given originally to Adam, "it was ordained to life," to his fallen descendants it has been found only "to death, [Romans 7:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.10)." Hence he calls it also "a ministry of death and of condemnation, verse 7, 9," because nothing but condemnation and death can result from it to fallen man. So true is that declaration of his, that "as many as are under the law, are under the curse! [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10)."

In opposition to this, the Gospel is set forth as "a New Covenant," given to us to remedy the defects of the former covenant. In this New Covenant a Savior is provided for us; and the Holy Spirit also is promised to us, to effect in our hearts all that our necessities require.

Are we blind? this blessed Spirit will enlighten us.

Are we weak? He will give us strength.

Are we polluted? He will sanctify us throughout.

And thus will he impart to us all that the Savior has obtained for us, even peace, and righteousness, and life. Hence the Apostle calls the Gospel, "the Spirit who gives life;" and represents the ministry of it as "a ministry of the Spirit, and of righteousness, verse 8, 9."

In the Epistle to the Hebrews this contrast is more fully opened: "But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more,

[Hebrews 8:8-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.8-12)."

In the New Covenant, then, the defects of the former covenant are completely supplied. The law issued commands without aid, and punishments without hope. But the Gospel offers a free pardon of all sin, and communicates strength for future obedience. Thus the one is "a letter which kills;" the other is "a spirit, which gives life."

***~~This is the Gospel which we also preach—~~***

We are careful to distinguish between the two covenants; well knowing, that all who remain under the former covenant must perish; and that there is no salvation for any man, but on the terms prescribed in the New Covenant, the covenant of grace. In accordance with this, it is our constant labor to mark the danger of trusting to any works of righteousness which we can perform, and to show the indispensable necessity of looking to Christ as "all our salvation and all our desire."

In a word, Paul's views, as declared by himself, are those which we endeavor both to adopt and follow. He says, "Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that is by faith says: "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." [Romans 10:5-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.5-11).

Having thus declared what the Gospel is which we preach, let me also declare,

***~~II. What we look for as the fruit of our ministrations—~~***

Paul had spoken of himself "as a savor of life unto life" and salvation to many, [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.16). And this is what we also hope to be, and what we aim at in all our ministrations. We hope, and, so far as God shall render our word effectual, expect,

***~~1. To deliver you from all legal bondage—~~***

Every man by nature is under the law, and expects to be saved by his obedience to it. Hence arise those self-denying efforts which unenlightened heathen make to commend themselves to their deities; and hence also spring those laborious exertions which professing Christians of a Pharisaic cast put forth to purchase the favor of the Most High.

But, however much they labor, they cannot attain solid peace. There always remains upon their mind, as well there may, a doubt, whether they have done enough to purchase the remission of their sins, and enough also to secure a title to Heaven. Hence they spend their days in a state of bondage, laboring incessantly to acquire such a measure of righteousness as shall serve as a foundation of hope, and yet are unable so to satisfy their conscience as to find peace in their souls.

But, in bringing before you the New Covenant, we show that you may dismiss all your fears, and indulge a better hope; since the Lord Jesus Christ has suffered for your sins, and has wrought out a righteousness wherein you may stand accepted before God. Thus you may be brought at once into the condition of a prisoner, who, having been long shut up under a state of condemnation, has at last had his pardon sealed, and is permitted to live free from all fear or painful restraint.

***~~2. To bring you into perfect liberty—~~***

A mere hope of pardon is by no means the full extent of the mercy accorded to us under the New Covenant. There is a perfect peace, into which they are introduced who believe in Christ; yes, they possess "a joy unspeakable and full of glory." The Spirit of God is to the believer a Comforter, who "sheds abroad the love of God in his heart," and "seals him unto the day of his final redemption." O, who can declare the full liberty of the children of God; the sweet confidence which they have in God; and the exquisite delight they feel in communion with him? Who can adequately declare the foretastes which they enjoy of their heavenly inheritance?

Now, to these blessings we hope to introduce you: nor do we ever consider our ministry as fully answering the ends which God has ordained, until we see you "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God;" and longing to die, that you may be with Christ. "Wherever the Gospel has its proper work, there is the liberty" which I have here described, verse 17.

***~~3. To effect in you such a change as shall commend our doctrine to the whole world by your life and conduct—~~***

No other "commendation" do we desire either to you or from you, verse 1. Applaud us as much as you please, and we shall regard that as, at best, a very doubtful evidence of our real usefulness. But let us see you changed both in heart and life; let us see you so changed, as to be "epistles of Christ, known and read of all men;" and we shall desire no better testimony, either from God or man. If we see "you crucified to the world by the cross of Christ;" if we behold you dedicating yourselves to the service of your God, and "renewed after his image in righteousness and true holiness;" if your spirit and temper in your families; your meekness, your gentleness, your patience, your forbearance, and your conformity to "the mind that was in Christ Jesus," is visible to all around you—that, that is the object which we aim at; that so, if our doctrine be condemned, we may challenge the world to produce such effects wrought by any other means than those which we use—an exhibition of "Christ crucified," and an unqualified offer of salvation to all who will believe in him.

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~1. Inquire, then, I beg you, what reception you have given to this Gospel—~~***

It is *not a mere outward approbation of the Gospel*that will suffice. You must embrace it with your whole souls. You must "be delivered into it, as into a mold, [Romans 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.17)," and assume the features of it, in every part of your character and conduct.

There is found in many a very considerable change, as wrought by legal doctrines. The Pharisees of old were very abundant in outward acts of righteousness: but their services were altogether performed on self-righteous principles, and not from love; and were wrought for their own glory, and not for the glory of their God.

But you must render a far higher obedience: for you "are delivered from the law; that being dead wherein you were held;" and therefore you are expected to "serve God in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, [Romans 7:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.6)."

The works which proceed from self-righteous principles, are such as please men. But those which are expected from you, will please God only: they proceed from the heart; and they alone prove you to be Christians indeed: as God has said, "He is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God, [Romans 2:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.29)."

***~~2. Beg of God a blessing on our ministrations—~~***

It is God alone who can instruct ministers to proclaim his Gospel; as Paul has said in my text: "Our sufficiency is of God, who has made us able ministers of the new testament." Hence Paul so often entreated his brethren to "pray for him, that utterance might be given him to speak truly and faithfully, as he ought to speak." And *it is God alone who can render the word effectual*for the good of those who hear it. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, to no purpose, unless God himself shall give an increase."

Pray, then, that the word may come to you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance:" for only then will it be profitable to your souls, when "it comes to you in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

***~~#2008~~***

***~~THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL COMPARED~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.6)~~***

"The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

*THE Gospel is that weapon whereby God subdues rebellious sinners to the obedience of faith*. The Apostle Paul, when his commission to preach it was called in question, appealed to the effects wrought by it on the hearts of his hearers, as a decisive evidence that he was sent of God to proclaim it, and that the word he preached was the true Gospel. But, though constrained thus to vindicate his apostolic character, he would not arrogate to himself any praise, as though the work had been wrought by any wisdom or power of his own. He disclaimed "all power even to think a good thought," and much more to produce such a wonderful change on the hearts of others: this change was effected by a simple exhibition of Gospel truth; yet not by the mere promulgation of it as a record, but by a representation of it as God's appointed instrument to save the world.

In this respect, his ministry differed widely from that of the priests under the Law, and from that of the false teachers under the Gospel: for both the one and the other of those, resting in externals, betrayed their hearers to their ruin. Whereas he, by setting forth the true Gospel according to its spiritual import, was instrumental to their salvation: "He was a minister of the New Covenant," not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for, says he, "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

How any revelation from God would have the effect of "killing" those to whom it was given, and, more especially, how the New Covenant would be attended with any such consequences, does, it must he confessed, at first sight appear strange and incredible. But the Apostle's declaration is true: "the letter does kill; and the Spirit alone makes alive." This will be seen,

***~~I. By contrasting the New Covenant with the Old Covenant—~~***

***~~The Old Covenant dispensation had no power to give life—~~***

The Law, as given to man in Paradise, was undoubtedly "ordained unto life:" and was capable of giving him life, if he had continued obedient to it. But to fallen man it never has been, or can be, a source of life.

Its commands are such as fallen man cannot obey. It requires us to "love God with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our soul, and all our strength; and our neighbor as ourselves." But who can do this? Who, except the Lord Jesus Christ himself, has not failed in some particular?

At the same time that its *commands*are so difficult, it affords no *strength*whatever for the performance of them. It simply says, "Do this, and live!" but it contains no promise of assistance for the doing of it, nor any intimation of pardon for one single act of disobedience.

It moreover enforces its commands with a most solemn sanction, denouncing "a curse against every man who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them:" so that if there be in our obedience no absolute dereliction of duty, but only a defect; and if that defect be of the slightest kind, and occurs only once in the whole course of our lives; the penalty instantly attaches to us, and is irreversibly denounced against us! [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10).

Thus, in itself, the law is, as the Apostle justly calls it, "a ministry only of death and of condemnation, verse 7, 9."

But, in the manner in which it is promulgated, it has yet a further tendency to "kill." For it is promulgated now exactly as it was in Paradise: and there is no notice given in the decalogue that we are not to trust in it for acceptance: so that a person who does not inquire diligently into the design of God in giving it, is but too likely to misapprehend its real use, and to rest in it, instead of looking out for some other law in which he may rest.

Further, the ceremonial law also has, through the ignorance of man, the same tendency to "kill" those who are placed under it. For, while it prescribes certain observances, as means of expiating transgression, it gives no direct information concerning the precise nature and extent of the remission obtained by them: so that a person performing the appointed ordinances would be likely to conceive that his sins were actually pardoned in the sight of God; while, in reality, the annual repetition of the same sacrifices might teach him that they were not completely and finally forgiven, [Hebrews 10:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.1-4).

The truth is, that neither the *moral*nor *ceremonial*law was given for the purpose of enabling any one to obtain, by means of it, a justifying righteousness. They were both given with a view to prepare men for that better dispensation which was in due time to be introduced; the *moral*law shutting them up under condemnation; and the *ceremonial*law opening to them a door, whereby they might find access to that better dispensation, which would in due time be revealed, [Galatians 3:21-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.21-24).

It will naturally, then, be asked, 'Did the legal dispensation actually "kill" all who lived under it?' I answer, God forbid. There were multitudes saved under that dispensation; not, however, through any influence of the law itself, but by looking forward to the Gospel, and by apprehending that Savior who was held forth to them in their types and shadows. "Abraham by faith beheld the day of Christ, and rejoiced;" and so did thousands of his believing posterity. The giving of the law made no difference in that respect. The use of the law was to show men their need of a better dispensation, and to prepare them for it; that, when the time for the full manifestation of the Gospel would arrive, the Savior might be welcomed by his own people, and the whole world be made partakers of his salvation [Galatians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.19).

***~~The office of giving life was reserved for the Gospel—~~***

The Gospel contains the substance, of which the law was the shadow. The commands of the Gospel are different: the law says, "Do!" The Gospel says, "Believe! [Romans 10:5-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.5-13)." The promises of the Gospel are different. Under the law no mention was made of spiritual assistance to anyone: but under the Gospel, the Spirit is promised to every believer, [Acts 2:38-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.38-39); and "grace sufficient for him," however great his necessities may be, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9). In fact, the Gospel provides a remedy for every need of man.

Is he guilty? it provides a righteousness wherein he may stand faultless in the presence of his God, even the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Is he a polluted creature? it provides, that through the operations of the Holy Spirit he shall "be sanctified wholly in body, soul, and spirit."

However weak he may be in himself, "God's strength shall be perfected in his weakness;" so that he may boldly say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Is he deserving of the lowest Hell? by embracing this Gospel he shall obtain all the glory and felicity of Heaven!

If it is asked, Whether the Gospel produces this effect on all to whom it is sent, I must answer, No! and this will lead me to make distinctions in reference to the Gospel itself,

***~~II. By contrasting the New Covenant as externally administered, with the same as internally and spiritually received—~~***

***~~The New Covenant itself, as a letter, has no other effect than that of "killing" those to whom it is proclaimed—~~***

The New Covenant dispensation is, in its very nature, calculated to offend the pride of man, and to prove a stumbling-block to the unhumbled spirit. It was declared, by the Prophet Isaiah, that it would be so: "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; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare. Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured. [Isaiah 8:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.13-15)."

And when the Savior came into the world, the holy man, who took him up in his arms, declared, that "he was set no less for the fall than for the rising again of many in Israel, [Luke 2:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.34)." And did not the event correspond with these predictions? Peter tells us, that, while "to some he was precious, to others he was a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, even to those who stumbled at the word, being disobedient, [1 Peter 2:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.7-8)."

It was from foreseeing these effects, that our blessed Lord gave that solemn caution to his hearers, "Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me, [Matthew 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.6)." If it is thought that this offense arose only from his person, as appearing in a low and degraded state, I answer, that it arose from the entire constitution of the Gospel altogether.

The whole doctrine of salvation by "the cross of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness! 1 Corinthians 1:23." The *Jews*could not conceive how the Mosaic law would be superseded, and how they would be required to look for salvation otherwise than by their obedience to it. The *Greeks*thought it perfectly absurd to expect salvation from one, who, in appearance, Was not able to save himself.

Just so, at this day, thousands who hear the Gospel are offended at being told that they must renounce all dependence on their own works, and be saved simply by faith in Christ. They cannot comprehend how we are to be dead to the law as a covenant, and yet alive to it as a rule of life: and the being saved entirely by the righteousness of another appears to supersede all occasion for any righteousness of their own. They can see no more suitableness or sufficiency in such a Gospel, than Naaman could see in the direction given him to wash in Jordan in order to cure his leprosy.

Thus, in the very constitution of the Gospel, there is much which has a tendency to kill those who are not of a humble mind.

But the Gospel is thus fatal, not only to those who reject it, but to many, also, who imagine that they have received it. For, *through the corruption of the human heart, the very principles of the Gospel are themselves often perverted*; so that even "the grace of God is turned into a license to sin," and "Christ himself is made a minister of sin."

This was the case with some in the apostolic age: and it is the case with some at this time also. There are at the present day some who so embrace the letter of the Gospel, as altogether to overlook its spirit; and who so glory in a salvation finished for them, as to disregard the salvation that remains to be accomplished in them: and thus they take occasion, from the freeness and fullness of the Gospel salvation, to represent all demands of labor and watchfulness on their part as legal. And because God has undertaken to work in them both to will and to do his will, they cannot see any necessity for them to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Thus, I say, some take occasion, even from the promises, to rest satisfied without attaining the things promised.

But, besides these, there are others, who take occasion from the *precepts*of the Gospel, to make their obedience to them a joint ground of their hope. They see rewards promised to obedience; and they know not how to distinguish between a reward of *grace*, and a reward of *debt*; or between that which forms their justifying righteousness before God, and that which shall be approved in those who are already justified. Thus, *by uniting their own righteousness with that of Christ, they make void all that Christ has done, and perish without any interest in his salvation.*

Thus even the New Covenant, as externally administered, but not rightly and vitally apprehended, may "kill," no less than the law itself. And so Paul has told us, that the word which he preached, while "to some it was made a savor of life unto life, became to others a savor of death unto death, [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.16)."

***~~But, when internally and spiritually received, the Gospel "gives life"—~~***

To some "the word comes, not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:" and to them it is a source of eternal life. *It conveys to them a new and vital principle, whereby they are enabled to live unto God*: or, as the Scripture expresses it, "they, by means of it, are made partakers of a divine nature," and "have all things given them that pertain unto life and godliness." They now, from their own experience, know the meaning of that declaration of our Lord, "I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in me, though he were dead—yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die! [John 11:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.25-26)." *Their whole conduct now evinces the change that has been wrought in them*. Being quickened from the dead, they henceforth "live no more unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again." And now they can look forward to the eternal state with sweet assured confidence, that, "because their Savior lives, they shall live also;" and that "when He, who is their life, shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory!"

***~~Learn, then, from hence,~~***

***~~1. What the hearers of the Gospel should more especially guard against—~~***

Of those who hear the Gospel, many think, that if they receive the truths of Christianity into their *minds*, so as to be orthodox in their *sentiments*, then they have no need of anything further to make them partakers of its benefits. But God forbid that any of you, brethren, would be left under any such delusion! You must not be satisfied with merely hearing the truth, but must consider "how you hear it;" *whether you give merely a speculative assent to it; or whether you receive it into your hearts, as the ground of all your hopes, and as the well-spring of all your joys*.

Dearly beloved, it is for this end that, as "a minister of the New Covenant," I would impress on your minds the truths which I declare. And, if at any time I manifest a jealousy over you in relation to these matters; know that it is not an uncharitable, but "a godly, jealousy;" which I am bound to exercise over you for your good. I am bound to "stand in doubt of you, until I can see Christ formed in your hearts," the hope of glory.

Concur then with me in this important work. Bear in mind that you are in danger, even from the Gospel itself; in danger of deceiving your own souls by means of it; and of causing "that which is ordained to life, to be found at last unto death." You may possibly delight in the ministry of the word, like Ezekiel's hearers; who came to him, just as those who were truly pious did, "My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice! [Ezekiel 33:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.31-32)."

Beware, lest by any means the Gospel proves to be but a dead letter: for if it bring not your whole soul into captivity to Christ, it will be preached, as it respects you, in vain. Beware, I say, of this: for our Lord himself gives you this very caution; "It is the Spirit," says he, "who quickens: the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life! [John 6:63](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.63)."

***~~2. What fruit a minister expects to find from his labors—~~***

The Apostle spoke of the Corinthians themselves as bearing the best testimony to his ministrations: and that is the return which we hope to receive from you. Beloved brethren, you yourselves are to be as "epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." Let it be seen that you are such indeed; that you are "epistles, written, not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, verse 2, 3."

The Gospel, while it saves you from *condemnation*, must save you also from *sin*; and, while you are "delivered by it from the law, as a covenant of works, you are to be serving God, in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, [Romans 7:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.6)."

Let us, then, behold this change in you: let us see that "the Son of God has made you free indeed;" free from worldly desires; free from legal hopes or fears; free to run, with enlarged hearts, the way of God's commandments. Then shall we know that we have not labored in vain; and that God has set his seal to our ministry for your good: for "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God! [Romans 2:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.28-29)."

***~~#2009~~***

***~~THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL ABOVE THAT OF THE LAW~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 3:7-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.7-11)~~***

"Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!"

THE Apostle, in vindicating his claim to apostolic authority against the false teachers at Corinth who disputed it, appeals to the Corinthians themselves as proofs and evidences of his divine mission; since the work of God upon their hearts abundantly manifested that his ministrations among them had been attended with a power more than human, verse 2, 3, 5 with [1 Corinthians 9:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.2).

In thus substantiating his title to apostolic authority, he is led, incidentally as it were, to mention the excellency of that Gospel which he was sent to preach; and from thence to show, that the deference due to him was the greater, in proportion to the excellency of the Gospel which he ministered unto them.

Honorable as the state of the Levitical priesthood was, it was not to be compared with that of those who preached the Gospel; because the law, as ministered in the "letter" of it, proved fatal to all who trusted in it; whereas the Gospel was a source of "life" to all who cordially embraced it: the one, as a mere "letter, killed;" the other, as a quickening" spirit, gave life, verse 6."

The Apostle, having touched upon this point, proceeds to open it more fully in the words which we have just read: for the fuller understanding of which we shall consider,

***~~I. The different terms by which the law and the Gospel are here designated—~~***

***~~The law is called "the ministry of death and of condemnation."~~***

The law as given to Adam in Paradise "was ordained to life," and would have entitled him to life if he had continued obedient to it, [Romans 7:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.10); but, as republished by Moses, it was never intended to give man any title to life; nor could it possibly give life, because every human being is corrupt, and incapable of rendering to it a perfect obedience, [Galatians 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.21) with [Romans 8:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.3).

The law is a perfect transcript of God's mind and will. It makes known to man the whole extent of his duty; and requires a perfect obedience to every one of its commands. If transgressed in any one particular, it denounces death: it says to every soul of man, "The soul that sins, it shall die!"

At the same time that it thus rigorously exacts a perfect obedience, it neither imparts to man any *strength*for obedience, nor provides any *remedy*for one single act of disobedience: and hence it is called in our text, "a ministry of death and of condemnation." Its voice to all is, "Do this and live; transgress, and perish." But as every man has transgressed it, and consequently can never do all that it commands, it consigns to death every child of man, according as Paul has said; "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written Cursed is every one that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them, [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10)." We must not *desire*to do them, but "do" them; not *some*, but "all;" not for a *time*, but for a "continuance," from the first to the last moment of our lives: nor is there any exception in favor of any child of man; for "every one" must stand or fall, be saved or "cursed," according to this law; and consequently, every man being of necessity born under this law, "every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God! [Romans 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.19)."

***~~The Gospel is called "a ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit."~~***

The law condemning all, the Gospel applies a remedy: it reveals a Savior, who, by his own obedience unto death, has "made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness! [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24)." This righteousness is revealed to us in the Gospel to be apprehended by faith, [Romans 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.17); and it is actually given "unto," and put "upon," "all who believe" in Jesus Romans, 3:21-22. His righteousness is totally independent of any obedience to the law on our part: it exists in Christ alone, and is imputed unto us by faith, [Romans 4:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.5-6); and, so far from being augmented by any works of ours, it would be made void by the smallest dependence on our own works, [Galatians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.21); [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4); and we must renounce all hope in ourselves, before we can have any part or lot in the righteousness of Christ, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9).

Hence the Gospel is called "a ministry of righteousness," because it reveals a righteousness commensurate with all the demands of the law, and offers that righteousness to every man who will believe in Christ. It declares that "Christ himself is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes, [Romans 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.4);" and that the law was given as a ministry of death on purpose to shut men up to this righteousness, and to constrain them to seek salvation in the way provided for them, [Galatians 3:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.22-23).

The Gospel is also "the ministry of the Spirit." In the first ages, the Spirit was given in his miraculous powers to attest the truth and Divine authority of the Gospel. That end having been fully answered, his miraculous powers are no longer exercised: but his gracious influences still continue, and will continue to the end of time.

Still is he sent "to convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."

Still it is his office "to glorify Christ," and to "take of the things that are Christ's, and to show them unto us."

Still does he enlighten the minds, and sanctify the souls, of those who believe."

Still does he, as the Comforter promised to the Church, operate in the saints as "a Spirit of adoption," "witnessing with their spirits that they are the children of God," and "sealing them unto the day of redemption."

To none is he imparted for these ends but through the Gospel of Christ; and, wherever the Gospel is faithfully ministered, he does accompany it with these blessed influences; producing holiness and comfort in all who truly receive it.

Thus the Gospel supplies what the law knew nothing of. We have before said, that the law spoke nothing of *pardon*to the guilty, or of *strength*to the weak: but the Gospel administers both; and that too in such an abundant measure, as is adequate to the necessities of the whole world. It ministers *righteousness*sufficient to justify the most guilty sinner upon earth; and imparts the *Spirit*, so that the weakest may be more than conqueror over all the enemies of his soul.

Corresponding with this description of the law and of the Gospel were,

***~~II. The different degrees of glory pertaining to each—~~***

***~~The law was truly glorious—~~***

It was proclaimed by God himself with an audible voice in the midst of such displays of glory as had never been seen from the foundation of the world: and, that it might never be forgotten, it was written also by the finger of God in tables of stone. Moreover, the person through whom it was given to Israel, had such glory imparted to him, that the people of Israel were no more able to look steadfastly upon his face, than upon the face of the meridian sun. While this reflected a very high degree of glory upon the law itself, it was especially intended to intimate to all Israel, that they were unable to apprehend the full scope and meaning of the law, verse 13. They thought it a covenant whereby they were to obtain acceptance with God; whereas it had an infinitely higher office, even that of "a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith, [Galatians 3:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.24)." But this, which was its chief glory, they were not able to discern: and, in consequence of their ignorance of its true meaning, they supposed it to be of everlasting obligation; whereas it was, together with all its attendant rites and ceremonies, to continue only until Christ would come, and then to give way to a more perfect dispensation. Still, however, when all the circumstances attending its promulgation are considered, it was certainly exceeding glorious.

***~~But the Gospel was far more glorious—~~***

As imparting life, it must of necessity be far more glorious than that which only occasioned death. For the law did really occasion death; inasmuch as, if there had been no law, there would have been no transgression, and consequently neither sin nor death, [Romans 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.15); [Romans 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.13) and [1 John 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.4).

In revealing such a way of salvation too, it is inconceivably glorious. How mysterious is that record, "that God has given unto us eternal life; and this life is in his Son: that whoever has the Son, has life; and he who has not the Son of God, has not life, [1 John 5:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.11-12)."

And finally, that "he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we, who had no righteousness, might be made the righteousness of God in him! [2 Corinthians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.21)."

Well is this called, "The glorious Gospel of the blessed God!" for in it are "riches" of love that are altogether "unsearchable," and heights and depths that can never be explored!

That the *Gospel too transforms the soul into the Divine image*is another ground of excellence, which exalts it infinitely above the law. The law rather irritates and inflames the corrupt principle within us, than tends at all to the subjugation of it, [Romans 7:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.5); [Romans 7:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.8); but the Gospel both frees us from the dominion of sin, and liberates us from all its penal consequences: "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death [Romans 8:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.2)."

The Gospel too, as being God's last dispensation, will endure for ever; while *the law, which was only introductory to it, is altogether abolished*. So that in this respect also its superiority to the law is great and indisputable.

Compare the two then, and see the difference between them:

The luster imparted by the Law was external, on the face of Moses; the change wrought by the Gospel is internal, in the heart and in the soul.

In the Law, the radiance shone from one only; in the Gospel, it is conferred on all who believe.

In the Law, the radiance passed away quickly; in the Gospel, the radiance is abiding, even to the end of life, and through eternal ages.

In the Law, it was to be veiled from the sight of all; in the Gospel, it is to be displayed for the instruction of all, that all may see in it the hand of God, verse 2, 3, and learn to glorify its Divine Author, [Matthew 5:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.16).

Well then may it be said, that "If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!" For in truth, though the law shone like the starry heavens in the brightest night, the Gospel, like the meridian sun, has eclipsed its splendor, and cast a veil over all its glory!

Let not this however be with us a matter of speculation only: let us consider,

***~~III. The conduct which our superior dispensation demands—~~***

***~~1. Of ministers—~~***

The influence which these considerations had upon the Apostle was, to make him "use great plainness of speech." He would not, like Moses, "put a veil upon his face," to conceal any part of the splendor of this Gospel, verse 12, 13; but would preach it with all fidelity, and, by the fullest possible "manifestation of it, commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, [2 Corinthians 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.2)."

This then is what we must do; and what, through grace, it is our delight to do. Yes, brethren, we declare to you freely that the law, as a covenant of works, is abrogated; and a New Covenant, with a better Mediator, and with better promises, is proposed to you in the Gospel. This New Covenant provides, as you have heard, righteousness for the guilty, and strength for the weak; and authorizes every believer to say, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength [Isaiah 45:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.24)."

O that we might be instrumental to the bringing you into a near and full acquaintance with this better dispensation! Never would we forget that our one great office is to make the Gospel known to you, and to bring you to the enjoyment of all its blessings. We would go up to the holy mount ourselves to receive it from God, and we would come down with it in our hands and in our hearts to proclaim it to you! [1 Corinthians 15:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.3). 1 [John 1:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.1-3).

We proclaim it to you at this moment: we declare to you, that *the most guilty sinner in the universe may now find acceptance with God through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ*: and we declare also, that a new heart shall be given to you, and a new spirit shall be put within you, and the whole law of God be written in your hearts—if only you will believe in him: for he will send down his Holy Spirit upon you, according to his promise, and, by his gracious influences upon your souls, will "cause you to keep his statutes and his judgments [Ezekiel 36:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.25-27)." All this shall be "ministered unto you abundantly through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," if only you will come unto him; and it shall be given you "freely, without money and without price".

***~~2. Of the Church at large—~~***

Your minds should be intent on this great subject: you should seek to grow daily in the knowledge of it: you should come up to the house of God with the same preparation of heart to receive the word of God from your ministers, as the Israelites did to receive the law from the hands of Moses: your state of mind should be like to that of Cornelius and his company, when Peter came to preach the tidings of salvation to them, "Now are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded you of God, [Acts 10:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.33)."

And as there is no veil put before our face, so you should beg of God that no veil may remain on your hearts. The law was hidden from Israel without involving them in any guilt or danger, if only they complied with it as far as it was revealed to them: but "if the Gospel is hidden from you—then you must eternally perish [2 Corinthians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.4);" because it is *the only possible way of salvation, and can save only by operating effectually both on the understanding and the heart!*[1 Thessalonians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.13).

O then beg of God to counteract the devices of Satan, who strives continually to hide this Gospel from you; and entreat him "to shine into your hearts to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! [2 Corinthians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.4); [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6)."

At the same time you must remember, that in this respect the *obedience*you pay must correspond with the *privileges*you enjoy. Being liberated from the law, you are released also from all servile hopes and fears: and your service must be no longer that of a slave, but of a child. You must serve God, not in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of the spirit, [Romans 7:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.6); and in this way you will attain all the blessings which the Gospel is intended to impart.

*The intent of this Gospel is, to assimilate you to that Savior*who proclaims it to you. While you receive it from him, a portion of his splendor must cleave unto you, so that all who behold you may see of a truth that you have been with Jesus. You must be "his epistles" to an ungodly world: and so plain must be the characters written on your heart and life, that they may be "known and read of all men." Daily must this writing be more visible; and daily shall the radiance around you increase, if you live near to the Lord, contemplating continually the wonders of his love: for, "if with unveiled face you behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, you shall be *changed into the same image*from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord! verse 18."

***~~#2010~~***

***~~THE FUTURE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 3:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.15-16)~~***

"Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away."

An equally good text for this would be [Exodus 34:33-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 34.33-34), "When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out."

THERE is confessedly much obscurity in different parts of the sacred volume: even in Paul's writings there are, as Peter tells us, "some things hard to be understood." And this is no more than might well be expected, considering the depth of the subjects treated of—even all the hidden counsels of the Almighty, and the necessary ambiguity of prophetic language, in order to conceal the purposes of the Deity, until the prophecies would be unraveled by subsequent events.

After all, the chief source of obscurity is, the veil that is on the heart of man, (the veil of *prejudice*, and *ignorance*, and *unbelief*,) which conceals from unconverted men even the plainest truths. To intimate the existence of such a veil, was one of the reasons for Moses putting a veil over his face when he came down from the holy mount with the tables of the law in his hands. He intimated thereby, that the children of Israel could not look to the end of that which was to be abolished; that is, that they could not comprehend the nature of the dispensation which he was commissioned to establish; seeing that there was a veil upon their hearts, "by which their minds were blinded, verse 13, 14."

That veil remained on their hearts during the whole of that dispensation; and, notwithstanding "it is done away in Christ," so that, if they were disposed to avail themselves of the light which Christianity reflects on their inspired writings, they might now acquire a clear insight into them, "the veil yet remains on their hearts even unto this day." But it shall not be always so: there is a time coming, "when that blind nation shall turn unto the Lord; and then the veil shall be taken away."

To enter fully into this subject, we must distinctly mark what was intimated by his putting on the veil to speak with them, and his putting off the veil to speak with the Lord.

***~~I. His putting on the veil was designed to show their present blindness—~~***

Truly there is a veil, a thick veil, upon their hearts; so that to this day they cannot see,

***~~1. The scope and intent of the Mosaic dispensation—~~***

The Mosaic dispensation was partly legal, partly evangelical, and *partly a national covenant, relating only to the temporal state of the Jewish people*. The law of the ten commandments was a re-publication of the law originally written upon the heart of man, by an obedience to which our first parents were to obtain eternal life.

The *ceremonial*observances were appointed to shadow forth the salvation offered to us in the Gospel, and to prepare the minds of the Jews for the Messiah, who would in due time be sent to fulfill all that was required by the moral law, and all that was shadowed forth in the ceremonial law.

The moral law was not given to them in order that they might seek justification by it; but in order to show them was impossible for fallen man ever to be justified by it, and that, as transgressors, they must look for salvation solely by faith in the promised Messiah.

But of these things they had no idea: they could see nothing in the whole dispensation but a covenant made with them as God's peculiar people; by an obedience to which, according to the mere letter of it, they supposed that they would obtain all the blessings both of time and eternity. This is the notion which has been entertained by them in all successive ages even to the present day. Notwithstanding it is impossible for them now, by reason of their dispersion, to obey their ceremonial law, they still suppose that they are to be saved by their own obedience. They have no idea of the atonement that has been offered for them, or of the righteousness that has been wrought out for them, by Christ's obedience unto death: they cannot raise their minds above a compliance with certain rites (many of them appointed by man only, and substituted in the place of those which were appointed of God), and an external conformity with the mere letter of the moral law. Like Paul, in his unconverted state, if they have been kept from any gross violations of their law, they account themselves "blameless;" and if they have transgressed their law in ever so great a degree, they have no conception of anything but their repentance and reformation to re-instate them in the Divine favor. They will indeed speak of their Messiah whom they expect, and in whom they profess a kind of confidence; but they have no definite idea of what he is to do for them, or in what way he is to recommend them to God. They know nothing of "the law as a ministry of death and of condemnation" nor do they know anything of "Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe in him."

In a word, they know nothing of their ceremonial law as completed in him, nor of their moral law as shutting them up to him: but they stand fully on their own obedience, interpreting the promises, which related only to their continuance in Canaan, as the ground on which they look for eternal life.

Thus, though following after righteousness, and in some instances with considerable zeal, they neither do, nor can, attain to it, because they cleave to the law as the ground of their hopes, and make a stumbling-block of that stone, which is the only foundation on which a sinner can ever stand before God! [Romans 9:31-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.31-33); [Romans 10:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.2-3).

***~~2. The true meaning of their prophecies—~~***

They do not see that chain of prophecy, commencing with the promise of "the Seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head," and gradually proceeding through all successive ages, with ever increasing clearness and precision, until it terminated in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

In this respect the Jews of later ages are blinder than their forefathers. The Jews previous to the coming of Christ did so far understand the prophecies, that they knew of what tribe the Messiah was to be born, and what was to be the place of his nativity. They knew also, that the various prophecies which were cited by our Lord and his Apostles were cited according to their true import: for we do not find them on any one occasion controverting the application of those passages to the promised Messiah.

But Jews of later ages, seeing how demonstrably those passages prove the Messiahship of Jesus, have resorted to other interpretations, in order to weaken the force of the arguments with which they are pressed. Even the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which seems to defy the ingenuity of man to pervert it, is explained away by them as not relating to the Messiah. The idea of a *suffering*Messiah they cannot bear: and they, who are constrained to confess that such a one is indisputably predicted in the prophecies, say that they shall have two Messiahs, one a suffering, and the other a triumphant, Messiah.

As for all the prophecies that determined the time for the Messiah's advent, as to be before the departure of the scepter from Judah, and during the existence of the second temple, they get over them by saying that God did indeed intend to send the Messiah at that time; but that he has deferred it these eighteen hundred years, and still defers it, on account of the wickedness of their nation. The Messiah whom they expect is to be a mere *temporal*Prince, who shall subdue all their enemies, and make them in a temporal view the head of all nations.

Thus is there an impenetrable veil upon their hearts, as thick as that which was on the hearts of those who crucified the Lord of glory. We are told, that "their rulers at that time, not knowing the voices of the prophets which were read every Sabbath-day, fulfilled them in condemning him, [Acts 13:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.27);" and the same is true of all the Rabbis at the present day.

Even the Apostles themselves, after they had been instructed by their Divine Master for above three years, were still so blinded by the prejudices of their nation, that they could not admit the thought of a suffering Messiah, even when they were told of it by our Lord himself in the plainest terms, [Luke 18:31-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.31-34); yes, even after his resurrection, they still dreamed of only a temporal Messiah, [Luke 24:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.21) and [Acts 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 1.6). From them, through the tender mercy of their Lord, this veil was at length removed, [Luke 24:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.25-27); [Luke 24:44-46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.44-46); but on their unhappy countrymen it still remains, according to the predictions of the Prophet Isaiah, [Isaiah 29:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 29.9-10), as cited and explained by the Apostle Paul, [Romans 11:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.7-8); [Romans 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.25). And it is remarkable that, at particular seasons, the Jews, not excepting children of ten or twelve years of age, at this hour wear veils in their synagogues; a sad emblem of the veil which yet remains upon their hearts!

But let us turn from this painful subject to observe, that,

***~~II. His putting off the veil was designed to show the manifestations that await them—~~***

When Moses spoke with the children of Israel, he put the veil on his face; but when he went in to speak with the Lord he took off the veil, [Exodus 34:33-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 34.33-34). However this, so far as his own feelings were concerned, might mark his humility, it covertly intimated to the Jews, that while they would converse only with men, and hearken to nothing but their own superstitions, the veil would remain on their hearts: but, "when once they would turn to the Lord their God," to converse with him, and to seek instruction from him, "the veil that was on their hearts would be taken away."

So God promised them by Moses, at the very time that he foretold their present dispersion, [Deuteronomy 4:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 4.26-27); [Deuteronomy 4:30-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 4.30-31); and so it shall assuredly be in due season. In this respect their conversion will differ widely from the conversion of the heathen. The heathen, for lack of previous instruction, will have their eyes gradually opened: the removal of the veil from their heart will do no more than give them a suitable disposition to receive the great truths of Christianity, which shall be subsequently set before them. But the Jews, being previously acquainted with their own law and with the writings of their prophets, will at once behold them all as centering in the Lord Jesus! Their sight will be like that of a man, who, having been long conversant with the different wheels and springs of some complicated machine, (a steam-engine or a watch,) but never having had any notion of their relation to each other, and their harmonious adaptation to one common end, beholds them at once combined, and in full activity. They will have glorious views of the Gospel salvation: they will behold, with an evidence brighter than the meridian sun!

***~~1. Its truth and certainty—~~***

Being already to a certain degree conversant with their types and prophecies, though ignorant as to their true import, they will, as soon as the veil is removed from their hearts, be astonished to see how every particle of them is fulfilled in Christ: and such will be their conviction of his Messiahship, that they can no more doubt of it than Paul did, after the revelation which he received on his way to Damascus.

The Scriptures will then appear to them like the impression of a seal on which are engraved ten thousand figures; so clear and manifest will be the correspondence between the shadow and the substance, the type and the antitype. Their views of this will be incomparably clearer than those of Christians in general at this day: "The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the LORD binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted, [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.26)."

***~~2. Its mysteriousness and sublimity—~~***

How "great will that mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," appear to them, when they shall see, that that very Jesus, whom their fathers crucified, was indeed "the Lord of glory," "Jehovah's fellow," "Emmanuel, God with us!"

Then they will see, that every part of their ceremonial law was fulfilled and realized in him.

They will see that he was the true Temple, "in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

They will see that he was the altar, which sanctifies all our gifts.

They will see that he was the sacrifice, who takes away the sins of the world.

They will see that he was the priest, who offered that sacrifice, and has gone with his own blood within the veil, and ever lives there to make intercession for us.

Then they will see why God repeatedly gave that particular command to Moses, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown to you in the mount."

Every the minutest point that was revealed to Moses, portrayed something in the character of Christ; so that, if anything had been omitted, or added, or altered in any respect, the resemblance between the type and antitype would have failed, and God's work would have been imperfect; the edifice and the model would not have been alike.

All the *offices*of Christ, as Prophet, Priest, and King, together with all that he would do in the execution of them, was there delineated. And when the completion and concentration of them all shall be made manifest to them, with what wonder and admiration will they exclaim, "O the depths both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

***~~3. Its fullness and excellency—~~***

The contrast between the imperfection of their law, and the perfect efficacy of the Gospel, will in this respect be to them most delightful:

Their law was burdensome in the extreme; a yoke which they were not able to bear: but "Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden light."

Their observance of the appointed ceremonies brought them no solid peace: the very repetition of the same sacrifices showed that their sins were not fully removed: for indeed "it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats would take away sin." Their sacrifices were, in fact, no more than a remembrance of sins yet unforgiven.

But the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin; "it purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Thus they will see, that, though "the law made nothing perfect, the bringing in of a better hope does," "it perfects for ever all those who are sanctified."

Now the veil of the temple (the body of the Lord Jesus) being rent in twain, they will find access into the holiest of all, every one for himself, and be emboldened to "cry, Abba, Father!"

Now they will see that they, without exception, are all kings and priests unto God and the Father, and are entitled to "an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and never-fading."

O what joy will they experience, when they see the fullness of the provision made for them in Christ Jesus, and the freeness with which it is offered, even "without money and without price!"

Truly when they are brought to look on him whom they have pierced, they will mourn and be in bitterness, as one that mourns for his first-born; and the very instant they believe in him, they will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

***~~Here then we may see,~~***

***~~1. What we should seek for ourselves—~~***

We must not imagine that there is a veil on the heart of Jews only; for there is one on the heart of Gentiles also—even of every child of man. Yes, we who call ourselves professing Christians, are by nature blind as the Jews themselves. The veil that is upon the Mosaic dispensation, is indeed "done away in Christ, verse 14." But the veil that is on our hearts is not done away: on the contrary, it is as visible upon us as upon any others of the human race. Look around and see how few are there who with unveiled face behold "the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ!" How few are so affected with a sight of Christ, as to be "changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord, verse 18."

Are there not on every side myriads, who, like the Jews themselves, are looking for acceptance with God by a superstitious observance of ordinances, or, at best, by their own repentance and reformation; and who have no higher views of Christ than as purchasing for them a right and title to be their own saviors?

Yes, such is the state of the generality among us: and those who glory in the cross of Christ, and walk faithfully in his steps, are at this day "for signs and for wonders," almost as much as they were in the days of the Prophet Isaiah, [Isaiah 8:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.18). In every age, and in every place, they are but "a little flock," a small "remnant," and it is only by the removal of the veil from their hearts that any can become of their happy number. Whatever advantages we may enjoy, it is "not flesh and blood that can reveal Christ unto us, but only our Father that is in Heaven, [Matthew 16:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.16-17)." If we have not "a spirit of wisdom and revelation given to us for the enlightening of the eyes of our understanding," we shall continue in darkness, notwithstanding the true light shines all around us, [Ephesians 1:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17-18). The Lord must open our hearts; or they will continue closed, even to our dying hour, [Acts 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.14). Let us seek then to have the veil removed from our hearts, that the Gospel may not be hidden from us. This is a blessing which God has promised to us, yes, to us Gentile sinners, [Isaiah 25:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.7); and, if we will turn to him, and seek him with our whole hearts, he will grant it unto us; and "bring us out of darkness into the marvelous light of his Gospel."

***~~2. What we should seek in behalf of our Jewish brethren.~~***

The removal of this veil is all that is lacking on their behalf. But many think it in vain to labor for this end: they seem to imagine that nothing but a miracle can effect so great a work. But why would it be more difficult with them than with others? Are not the Gentiles as blind as ever the Jews can be? Look at the worshipers of Mahomet, of Brahma, and Confucius, and see if they are not as blind and bigoted as the Jews themselves. What were our forefathers, when first the Gospel was preached to them? Were not they as far off from God as the Jews are at this day? Yet see what has been wrought by the Gospel in this happy land. People do not despair of the conversion of the most savage tribes of Africa and America: why then would we despair of seeing "the scales fall from the eyes" of Jews? Is not God as able to engraft the Jews on their own stock again, as he was to engraft in us? "If we who were cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, were engrafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree, then how much more shall those who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive-tree, [Romans 11:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.23-24)."

It is impious to despair; because God himself has engaged to take the veil from them, the very moment they turn unto him. Let us then exhort them to turn to him, and to look to him for that direction which alone can prove effectual. Surely this is not such a hopeless task! We may not perhaps succeed as rapidly as we could wish in the first instance: but did the prophets suspend their labors because Isaiah and Hosea had labored so long almost in vain? Or did the Apostles decline speaking to the Jews, because their Divine Master had succeeded with so few?

Let us do our duty, and leave to God to bless our endeavors as he shall see fit. If we would run in vain, as it respects the Jews, our labors shall at least "be recompensed into our own bosom," nor shall so much as a cup of cold water given to them for the Lord's sake be forgotten.

As for the idea that the time is not yet come; who is authorized to declare that? To whom has the Lord revealed that? A similar objection was made by those who had no mind to incur the expense and trouble of building the second temple: they could build ceiled houses for themselves, but lay out nothing for the Lord, [Haggai 1:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Haggai 1.2-4); and this is the true secret of all such objections at this day: they are only so many *excuses*to veil our own lack of faith and love. Let us arise and build without delay; and God will be with us. We have never yet tried to take the veil from their hearts: or the exertions that have been made, have been made too much in our own strength.

Now there is a way adopted, which, we hope and trust, God will make effectual for the conversion of many; I mean, the giving to them their own Scriptures, together with the New Testament also in their own language, and both of them in other languages which they better understand. This, in concurrence with the other means that we are using, will, we hope, be the means of removing the veil from the hearts of many, and of hastening forward the happy day, when the "children of Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, [Hosea 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 3.5);" and so "all Israel shall be saved, [Romans 11:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.26)."

And here let me observe, that to impart to them the light which we ourselves have received, is a duty of the first importance, because it has been committed to us for the express purpose of communicating it to them; God having especially ordained, that "through our mercy (or the mercy given to us) they (the unbelieving Jews) would obtain mercy [Romans 11:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.31)."

Now, what would we say of any person to whom the care of a lighthouse had been committed, if, through his neglect to exhibit the light, the very fleet which he was appointed to preserve would suffer shipwreck, and ten thousand mariners be drowned? Would not the whole nation charge him with the guilt of their destruction? Yes, and visit him too with condign punishment for his offense? Yet he would be innocent in comparison with us, who have been accessory not to the loss of the bodily life of a few thousands; but to the *eternal perdition of millions*, in that we have neglected to set before them that light by which alone they could be saved.

O let us not blame the Jews for the veil that is upon their hearts, but cast the blame where it is more justly due—on the Christian world, who have used no efforts to rend it from them, and to give them the light of life. And, as our neglect has been of long continuance, let us now exert ourselves with an energy that shall at once evince the depth of our repentance for our neglect of them, and the sincerity of our gratitude for the mercies given to us.

***~~#2011~~***

***~~CHRIST THE SOUL OF THE ENTIRE SCRIPTURES~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.17)~~***

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

THE Scriptures are not sufficiently viewed as a whole. We are apt to take detached parts only, and to form opinions from them, when we ought rather to regard every part in its connection with the rest; and so to get a comprehensive view of religion, in all its parts, and in all its bearings. The truth is, that revelation is the same from the beginning, and constitutes one great whole; it is a body having many parts that are visible and tangible: but it is penetrated by a soul, which, though invisible, really pervades every part; and that soul is Christ.

The Apostle, in the preceding context, is comparing the Law and the Gospel; which, if disjoined, may be considered, the one as a "mere letter," a ministry of death; the other, as a Spirit, a "ministry of righteousness and life, verse 6-9;" but if they are viewed in their relation to each other, then the one is the *shadow*, whereof the other is the *substance*; the one is the *body*, whereof the other is the *soul*.

This seems to be the import of the passage which I have just read. The Apostle is speaking of glorious truths veiled under the law, verse 13, 14; which, though in itself carnal, was full of "life and spirit, [John 6:63](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.63)." Now, says he, "the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" that is, *where the true spiritual import of the Scriptures is understood, and Christ is clearly seen in them, and received into the heart through them*, "there is that very liberty" which they were designed to impart.

The words thus explained will give me occasion to take a view of the whole revelation of God:

***~~I. In its substance, the Scriptures are an exhibition of Christ—~~***

The Old Testament, comprehending the law and the prophets, is one great body: but Christ is the soul that animates it throughout. He is the substance of,

***~~1. The law—~~***

The *moral*law may seem to consist only of prohibitions and injunctions; enforced with promises to obedience, and threatenings to disobedience. But it is, in fact, a revelation of Christ, inasmuch as it "shuts us up to Christ, and is a schoolmaster to bring us to him, [Galatians 3:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.22-24);" for, in reality, every command, while it shows us how defective our obedience is, directs us to Christ; who has fulfilled it in its utmost extent, and has thereby wrought out a perfect righteousness for his believing people. This is the account given of it by an inspired Apostle, who says, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes, [Romans 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.4)."

The *ceremonial*law was nothing but a mass of "carnal ordinances," which had no force or value in themselves; but, as representations of Christ and his perfect work, were of infinite value. In them "the Gospel was preached, precisely the same Gospel as is now preached unto us, [Hebrews 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.2)." Christ was contained in every part of them, 1 Corinthians 10:3-4; and was, in fact, the substance of which they were the shadow, [Hebrews 10:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.1). [Colossians 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.17). This may be seen in all its sacrifices, etc. etc.

***~~2. The prophets—~~***

These confessedly, with one voice, spoke of Christ: so that, from the first promise of "the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head," to the last that was uttered respecting "the Sun of Righteousness that would arise with healing in his wings," all spoke of him; all directed to him; and he was the life and soul of all.

To those who thus enter into the full scope of revelation, it will be made known,

***~~II. In its effects, the Scriptures are a ministry of liberty—~~***

The whole of it, altogether, is "that truth which will make us free [John 8:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.32)."

It will impart liberty,

***~~1. From all legal obligations—~~***

As for the ordinances of the ceremonial law, they were all intended to be "abolished, verse 11," and are abolished, [Colossians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.14); [Colossians 2:20-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.20-22). [Hebrews 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 7.18). But even the moral law itself, so far as it was a covenant of life and death, is abolished. We are brought under "a better covenant." a covenant of grace! [Hebrews 8:6-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.6-13). We therefore hear the curses of the law without any emotion, except of love and gratitude. The thunders of Mount Sinai have no terror for us: "there is no condemnation to us," because we believe in Christ, [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1), and have in him a righteousness fully commensurate with its strictest demands, [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22). He has borne its curse for us; and left for us nothing but unalloyed and everlasting blessings, [Galatians 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.13).

***~~2. From all legal exertions—~~***

We no longer abstain from anything through the fear of Hell, nor engage in anything to purchase Heaven. As far as we are animated by the spirit of the Gospel, we can adopt those words of David, "I esteem all your precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way! [Psalm 119:128](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.128)." That is, I view your ways as so excellent, that I would walk in them though there were no reward annexed to such a line of conduct: and I view sin as so odious, that I would not live in it, though I might do so with impunity. Indeed, were the Christian penetrated with any other spirit than this, he would render all his obedience worthless in the sight of God; who, though he tells us to buy the blessings, of salvation, tells us that we must buy them "without money, and without price, [Isaiah 55:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.1)."

Any attempt to obtain his favor by our own works will make void his whole Gospel, and infallibly disappoint our hopes, [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2); [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4); for nothing but perdition awaits such ignorant and ill-advised zeal, [Romans 9:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.31-32); [Romans 10:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.2-3).

***~~3. From all legal views and dispositions—~~***

Those who have truly received Christ into their hearts are "not his servants, but his friends, [John 15:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.15);" yes, they are "sons of God, [John 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.12)," and, with "a spirit of adoption, are enabled to call him, Abba, Father, [Romans 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.15)." They go in and out before him with the liberty of endeared children: for "the Lord Jesus has made them free; and they are free indeed, [John 8:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.36)." Formerly they were, as all men by nature are, in a servile spirit, doing everything rather by constraint than choice: but now, "having no more the spirit of bondage to fear, they have received the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, [2 Timothy 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.7);" and, under the influence of this spirit, they "walk at liberty, [Psalm 119:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.45)," and account the service of their God to be perfect freedom.

***~~4. From the power of sin altogether—~~***

This is the most blessed part of their inheritance. A freedom from "the bondage of corruption is the most glorious part of the liberty of the children of God! [Romans 8:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.21)." And that this is possessed by them, the whole Scriptures bear witness. Let the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans be read throughout, and this matter will appear in the clearest light. A believer is dead with Christ; and therefore cannot possibly live in sin, [Romans 6:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.1-2). The being under the covenant of grace ensures to him a victory over sin of every kind, [Romans 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.14). From the moment that he embraced this better covenant, he was made free from sin (from its dominion); and being "become a servant of God, he has his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life! [Romans 6:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.22)."

The whole of this matter is placed, if possible, in a stronger point of view in the eighth chapter of the same epistle; where the Apostle gives precisely the same view of the whole of revelation as we have done, and ascribes to it precisely the same efficacy: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, (has done; that is, he has) condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, [Romans 8:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.2-4)." Thus does the whole revelation of God, whether Law or Gospel, when rightly viewed, appear to be, as it is beautifully designated by James, "a perfect law of liberty, [James 1:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.25);" and thus it is found to be, by all who embrace it "in spirit and in truth."

***~~In conclusion, let me urge you,~~***

***~~1. To enter with all diligence into the true spirit of the Scriptures—~~***

They are in themselves "a sealed book:" nor can any but the adorable Lamb of God open them to our view. But beg of him to take away the veil from them; and from your hearts also, when you read them, verse 14. Then will there be found a glory in them, even all the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. Be not contented with anything short of this: for this alone will produce those glorious effects which are here ascribed to it, verse 18.

***~~2. To make a right use of the liberty which the Scriptures impart to you—~~***

There are some who profess godliness, and yet would "promise you liberty, while they themselves are servants of corruption! 2 Peter 2:19." But it is not a liberty *in*sin that Jesus gives; but a liberty *from*sin, [Matthew 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 1.21). Paul carefully guards us on this head; saying, "You, brethren, have been called unto liberty: only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, [Galatians 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.13)." Your liberty is, to "run the way of God's commandments with an enlarged heart, [Psalm 119:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.22)." "Stand fast, therefore, in that liberty with which Christ has made you free; and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage, [Galatians 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.1)." Use, I say, your liberty aright for a little while; and soon you shall be as free and happy as the very angels of God around his throne!

***~~#2012~~***

***~~THE EXCELLENCY AND EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18)~~***

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a looking-glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

THE Jews, when compared with the heathen world, were highly privileged; but the dispensation under which they lived was in every respect inferior to that of the Gospel. Of this we are fully informed in the chapter before us. The Apostle, in vindicating his own character, incidentally mentions the blessings which the Corinthians had experienced by means of his ministry: hence he takes occasion to set forth the superior excellency of the Gospel above the law. In confirmation of this point, we will show,

***~~I. The excellency of the Gospel—~~***

In the context the law is spoken of as a ministry of death and condemnation; whereas the Gospel is a ministry of the Spirit, and of life, and of righteousness. Of the Gospel it may be said,

**1. The Gospel** **is a revelation of the "glory of the Lord"—**

The *law*was in some degree a manifestation of the Divine glory; it displayed, however, chiefly the majesty and holiness of the Deity. But the *Gospel*displays the love and mercy of God; it exhibits all the perfections of God harmonizing and glorified in the work of redemption. Thus it is a revelation of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6)."

***~~2. The Gospel manifests this glory to the soul—~~***

Moses veiled the Divine luster which shined in his face. This was an intimation to the Jews that they could not comprehend the full scope of the law which he published, verse 13; but this veil is taken away by Christ, verse 14. The Gospel reflects Christ's glory as a mirror reflects the sun. We behold that glory "with open, that is, unveiled face." This is the common privilege of "all" who believe.

Nor is it more excellent in its discoveries than in its effects:

***~~II. The efficacy of the Gospel—~~***

The Apostle ascribes a wonderful efficacy to the Gospel. Experience attests the truth of his declarations.

***~~The Gospel transforms the soul into the Divine image—~~***

A view of Jehovah's glory caused the face of Moses to shine; but a view of Christ's glory in the Gospel changes our hearts. It renews us after the very image of our Lord and Savior. It does this in every person who truly beholds it.

***~~Every fresh discovery which the Gospel makes to us of Christ's glory, increases that effect—~~***

The first exercise of faith in Christ makes a great change, but subsequent views of his glory advance the work of sanctification. In this way is our progress in holiness carried on to perfection.

***~~This power, however, the Gospel derives wholly from "the Spirit of the Lord"—~~***

The Gospel has not that power in itself. Were its power inherent, it would operate uniformly on all: but its operation is dependent on the will of God, [1 Corinthians 12:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.11). The word is called "the sword of the Spirit." *It is the Spirit's instrument whereby he subdues souls to the obedience of faith*. Every fresh effect produced by it arises from the concurring operation of the Spirit: yet as it is the great instrument whereby the Spirit works, the effects are properly ascribed to it.

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How great a blessing it is to have the Gospel preached to us—~~***

Nothing else will produce the effects here ascribed to the Gospel. The terrors of the law may alarm, but will not sanctify the heart; but the mild accents of the Gospel will win the soul. A manifestation of Christ's glory constrains us to obedience. Let all rejoice therefore in hearing the glad tidings. Let all endeavor to experience these glorious effects.

***~~2. Whence it is that many make so small a proficiency in holiness—~~***

Many truly desire to advance in holiness, but they seek it in dependence on their own strength. Hence they make but a small progress in the divine life. They would rather use the means prescribed in the text. They would be often occupied in surveying the glory of Christ. The discoveries of his glory would do more than all their legal exertions: Let every eye therefore be fixed on him, until the effects appear both in our hearts and lives. Our views of him before long shall be incomparably brighter, [1 Corinthians 13:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.12); then the effects also shall be proportionably increased! [1 John 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.2).

***~~#2013~~***

***~~THE CONTEST BETWEEN GOD AND SATAN~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 4:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.4-6)~~***

"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

THE office of the ministry, if conscientiously discharged, is the most *honorable*and *useful*that a human being can execute. But, if perverted to carnal ends and purposes, it debases a man's character, and renders him more injurious to society than a raging pestilence. A minister, if he is upright before God, will not seek his own honor or interest, but the salvation of his people: he will be the servant of men for Christ's sake: he will employ all his time and talents in the line of his own peculiar profession; and will gladly sacrifice, not his reputation only or his interests, but his very life, if need be, in the service of his fellow-creatures: feeling the importance of his work, he will never *degrade the pulpit by making it a theater whereon to display his own abilities*; but will commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and exert himself to the utmost to rescue sinners from the jaws of the devouring lion.

Paul, in the passage before us, labors to impress this thought on our minds. Speaking of the blindness of men, not only under the law, but even under the clearer light of the Gospel, and having ascribed it to the agency of Satan, he affirms, that his one employment as a minister was, to co-operate with God in defeating the purposes of that wicked fiend.

Not content with having declared this sentiment in the, verses preceding the text, he interrupts, as it were, the thread of his discourse, to repeat it; intimating thereby, that as he could not repeat it too often, so those who would follow him in the ministerial office could never dwell upon it too much; "We preach not ourselves," says he, "but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake!"

It is however to the other parts of the text that we wish to draw your attention at this time: they exhibit in a contrasted view,

***~~I. The great powers that interest themselves about the souls of men—~~***

***~~Satan is more earnestly occupied respecting us than we are aware of—~~***

The power here called "the god of this world" is most assuredly the devil. His character is put in direct opposition to that of Jehovah; and therefore, however august the title may appear, it must be understood in reference to him, who has shown himself from the beginning to be the great enemy both of God and man. He is called the god of this world, because the whole world lies under his dominion. Not that he is the rightful governor; he is a vile usurper, that has reduced our fallen race under his power, and exercises over them the most despotic sway. Repeatedly is he called by Christ himself, "the prince of this world;" and by the Apostle, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience."

It is by blinding their minds that he retains his power, and makes them account that liberty, which is, in fact, the sorest bondage. Is it asked, How does he blind their minds? We answer, he has a multitude of devices, which cannot be discovered without much deep experience, and much divine instruction. He puffs us up with a conceit that we know enough already; and thereby keeps us from seeking information. *He stimulates us to the gratification of our corrupt propensities, that we may have neither leisure nor inclination to attend to our spiritual concerns.* He fills us with prejudice against the doctrines of the Gospel as erroneous, and against the ministers and people of God as hypocrites or enthusiasts; and thus confirms us in our natural enmity against God himself. Sometimes he represents God as*too merciful*to punish; and, at other times, as *too inexorable*to forgive; and thus either lulls us asleep in carnal security, or enervates us by despondency. By these and other wiles too numerous to recount, he keeps men in his snares, and "leads them captive at his will."

***~~Jehovah also condescends to interest himself in our behalf—~~***

The God of Heaven is here opposed to the god of this world; and is described by an expression of his omnipotence no less wonderful than the creation of the universe out of nothing; "he commanded the light to shine out of darkness." *While Satan is endeavoring to blind men, Jehovah exerts himself to enlighten their minds*. He could indeed effect his purpose in an instant; but he is pleased to make use of means, and to form his new creation in a gradual manner. He sends his ministers to declare his truth, and his Spirit to seal it on our hearts. Thus, by fixing our attention to it, by making us to see its correspondence with our experience and our needs, and, finally, by giving us to taste its sweetness and excellency, he shines into our hearts, and dissipates the darkness wherein we were enveloped.

The contrasted representation of these great powers exhibits to us also,

***~~II. The ends and purposes they are endeavoring to accomplish—~~***

***~~Satan strives as much as possible to hide Christ from our eyes—~~***

Satan is aware that no one who has a discovery of Christ's glory, will ever continue submissive to his government. Let a soul be favored with a ray from Heaven, whereby it shall have a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, and it will instantly cast off its allegiance to Satan, and take up arms against him. But, while the veil continues on the heart, and this heavenly light is concealed from the view, the soul will be satisfied with its lost state, nor ever exert itself in earnest to break the yoke imposed upon it.

This therefore it is the great work of Satan to accomplish: he cares not what we know or what we do, if he can but keep us from beholding the Divine image in the face of Jesus. As everything short of this will be ineffectual for our salvation, so he is willing that we would have every attainment in knowledge or morality, if he can but succeed in this one point. This is the very marrow of the Gospel, if we may so speak; it is that which infuses life into the dry bones: in vain will each kindred bone resume its proper station in the body; in vain will the flesh and sinews be superinduced upon them—*the body will be no other than a breathless corpse, until a spirit of life be infused into it*,[Ezekiel 37:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.7-9). Just so will the soul, however exactly fashioned as to the outward appearance, be altogether destitute of spiritual life, until Christ be revealed to it, and formed within it. While "the Gospel is hidden from the soul, it is, and must be, lost!"

God, on the other hand, strives to reveal Christ unto us—

He knows that nothing short of a discovery of Christ will ever save the soul. If we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, if we have faith that can remove mountains, if we give all our goods to feed the poor, and our body to be burned, and have not that view of Christ which fills our souls with love to God and man, it profits us nothing, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. *Not even a knowledge of Christ himself will be of any effectual service, if we do not see the Divine perfections united in him and glorified in the redemption which he has wrought out for us.*Hence, in every dispensation, whether of providence or of grace, he aims at leading sinners to the perfect knowledge of his Son: nor can he ever look upon them with pleasure and delight, until this is accomplished.

***~~This subject will clearly show us,~~***

***~~1. The value of our souls—~~***

Shall two such great powers interest themselves so much about us, and we imagine that our souls are of little worth? Surely that which incessantly occupies their attention must well deserve our incessant care.

***~~2. Our state before God—~~***

Let us not ask ourselves merely whether we be moral or immoral, but whether the scales have ever fallen from our eyes, and the glory of Christ been ever revealed to our souls? We must be made sensible that Satan once blinded us; that through his influence we were in unbelief; that nothing but a light from Heaven could dispel this darkness; and that such a revelation of Christ to the soul is the only possible source of life and salvation. Let us inquire whether we have ever felt that conviction, and whether, under the influence of it, we have sought and obtained that divine illumination?

This is the criterion by which we must judge ourselves, and by which our state will be determined to all eternity.

***~~3. The constant duty of our lives—~~***

Though we are not to neglect our earthly calling, we must seek above all to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ:" even after we have been enlightened, we need be careful lest Satan blind us again and again. The falls of David, Solomon, and others, should put us on our guard. We should seek continually the illumination of God's Spirit, and, by increasing views of Christ's glory, to be changed into his image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord!

***~~#2014~~***

***~~MINISTERS, THE BEARERS OF A RICH TREASURE~~***

**[2 Corinthians 4:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6-7)**

"For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."

PAUL was occasionally constrained to vindicate his own character against the accusations of his enemies. He was averse to it; and, when so doing, accounted himself "speaking as a fool." But, whenever he boasted, his endeavor was to magnify, not himself but his office. As for himself, no terms were too humiliating for him to use, whether he spoke of his former life, or of his present exertions in the cause of his divine Master. The passage before us well illustrates his views in both respects. The Gospel which he ministered was, in his estimation, "a treasure:" but he himself, and all his colleagues, were no better than "earthen vessels;" worthless in themselves, and only useful as imparting unto men "the riches which they contained."

The passage before us will lead me to notice,

***~~I. The true character of the Gospel—~~***

It is here called "a treasure" and well it deserves the name.

***~~In itself, it is utterly invaluable—~~***

If considered as the product of Divine wisdom, it infinitely surpasses all that could have been conceived by the brightest intelligences in Heaven: and, as an effort of Divine love, it is so stupendous as to be absolutely incomprehensible. In it, all the glory of the Godhead shines, with a splendor never before seen even by the angels around the throne. There is not a perfection of the Deity which is not honored by it, and magnified far beyond what it could ever have been by any other device, or any other dispensation.

***~~As dispensed, it marvelously enriches all who receive it—~~***

To every man who embraces it, is imparted a forgiveness of all sin, a peace that passes all understanding, a strength that shall triumph over every adversary, and, at the close of this present life, all the glory and felicity of Heaven! In comparison with this, the riches of ten thousand worlds were nothing. Possessed of this, a Lazarus is rich; and in the lack of it, the greatest monarch in the universe is poor.

Most unsuited to this, however, appears to be,

***~~II. The character of those to whom it is committed—~~***

We would naturally expect, that those who are appointed to dispense this treasure would be taken from the highest order of creation, and from the very first rank among them. We would imagine that none but angels and archangels would be counted worthy of so high an honor. But God has judged otherwise; and has committed this treasure to "earthen vessels—jars of clay."

***~~The Apostles are justly so denominated—~~***

They were men of low origin, a few poor fishermen. They were exceeding frail in their nature, not one among them without some great blemish: for in the hour of their Lord's extremity, "they all forsook him, and fled." They were all worthless in themselves, "made of the earth, and earthly:" nor had they anything in themselves, either to recommend the treasure, or to augment its efficiency. If Paul is thought an exception, on account of his learning and eloquence, he purposely laid aside his eloquence, from a persuasion that the wisdom of words had no other tendency than to make void the cross of Christ.

***~~And this is the character of God's most faithful servants at this day—~~***

*It is not from among the wise and learned that God, for the most part, selects his most active and efficient instruments*. Not that he forbids learning; but because he is jealous of his own honor, and would "have our faith to stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, [1 Corinthians 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.5)." He "chooses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty [1 Corinthians 1:26-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.26-29)." Not that any, however eminent, can claim any higher title than that assigned them in the text: for all are *guilty*, and need the same mercy which they preach to others; all are *weak*, and must be upheld by God every moment, lest they fall and perish. And not one among them can convert or edify one single soul by any power of his own.

However useful any be, they are only like the pitchers which contained the lamps of Gideon, [Judges 7:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 7.19-21). God would not allow Gideon to employ anything like an effective army, lest they would ascribe the victory to themselves. It was by three hundred only, with their pitchers and lamps, that God wrought this great deliverance.

And so it was by the ministry of a few poor fishermen, that he triumphed over all the powers both of earth and Hell; it was not the pitchers that in any respect contributed to his success; no, nor yet the light which they contained: it was the power of God accompanying that light, which obtained the victory; and which alone prevails at this day for the subduing of men to the obedience of faith.

Let us now proceed to contemplate,

***~~III. The peculiar advantage arising from this dispensation—~~***

***~~There is an "excellency of power" in the Gospel—~~***

There is nothing under Heaven that accomplishes such wonders as this. It comes to men who are dead in trespasses and sins, and by a divine energy brings them forth to life. The prophet's vision of the dry bones gives a just representation of its effects, [Ezekiel 37:1-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.1-10). We see how it wrought on the day of Pentecost, and afterwards throughout all the Roman Empire. And the same effects does it produce at this day, *wherever it is preached in simplicity, and accompanied with power from on high*. There are many living witnesses (not a few, I would hope, in this place) who can attest, that, by means of it, their "eyes have been opened, and their souls been turned from the power of Satan unto God."

***~~By the weakness of those who dispense it, the power of God that accompanies it is the more displayed—~~***

If it were ministered by angels, men would be ready to ascribe its efficacy to the instruments by whom it was dispensed. But, when it was preached by poor fishermen, without learning, without any earthly power to support them, and in direct opposition to all the prejudices and passions of mankind—to what could its wonderful power be ascribed? To nothing, surely, but the mighty operation of the Spirit of God.

So, if at this day God made use of none but the great and learned, we would give the honor unto those by whom he wrought, rather than to Him alone. But when he ordains strength, as it were, in the mouths of babes and sucklings, we are constrained to say, that He who works either in us, or by us, is God! [2 Corinthians 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.21); [2 Corinthians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.5). By this it is clearly shown, that "neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters; but God who gives the increase, [1 Corinthians 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.7);" it is He who is "all in all! [Colossians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.11)."

***~~We may see, then, from hence,~~***

***~~1. How we are to preach the Gospel—~~***

*The Gospel was never intended to give to men an opportunity of displaying their own talents, and of getting honor to themselves*. No! we are "not to preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, verse 5." It is a treasure committed to us, that, as God's almoners, we would dispense it to an ungodly world. *We are to think of nothing, but of enriching immortal souls.*If we see not this effect, we would account nothing done to any good purpose, even though our names were celebrated over the face of the whole earth. And if we see this seal to our ministry, we would account ourselves truly blessed, though we were considered in no other light than as "the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things."

In preparing for our public addresses, we should keep this end in view: in delivering them, too, we would labor with all our might to attain it: and we would consider the enriching of one single soul with the unsearchable riches of Christ, a far more glorious recompense than all the honors and wealth that could be heaped upon us!

***~~2. How you should hear the Gospel—~~***

You should lose sight of man altogether, and look only unto God. To "be of Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas," is a proof of sad carnality; and is the sure way to rob yourselves of God's blessing. You would consider the public ordinances as God's appointed means of dispensing wealth to your souls. You should go up to them *poor*, that you may be enriched; and *empty*, that you may be filled.

As for the particular talents of the preacher, or the peculiarities which attend his ministrations, you should, as far as possible, overlook them; and *fix your attention only on the treasure which he unfolds to your view*, and presents for your acceptance. You should act thus in reference to a casket of jewels which was set before you: you would not despise them because the casket was plain; nor regard them because it was elegant. The enjoying of the possession is that which would be uppermost in your mind. Just so it should be when the treasures of the Gospel are offered to you. You should not consider the vessel in which they are brought: If it is of gold, your regards would not be fixed on that; nor, If it is "earthen," would you undervalue the treasure it contains.

*To be enriched with all spiritual and eternal blessings should be the one object of your pursuit; and for that your mouth would be opened in prayer to God in secret; and your soul be expanded under the ministry of his word.*Above all, be sure to look to God, and not to man; lest you provoke your God to jealousy, and he withhold from your souls his saving benefits.

***~~#2015~~***

***~~THE TRIALS OF CHRISTIANS THE MEANS OF MAGNIFYING THEIR LORD~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 4:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.10-11)~~***

"We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body."

THAT the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was the Creator of all things, is readily acknowledged: nor will the assertion, that "without him was nothing made that was made," be for a moment disputed by anyone who believes the Scriptures. But when the same expressions are used in reference to the events of daily occurrence, they gain not the same easy access to our minds: yet it is true in reference to all the works both of providence and grace, that "without him is nothing done that is done:" all the evil that is done, is done by his permission: and all the good, by his agency.

*To direct the attention of men to him as the Sovereign Disposer of all events, is the continual aim of the sacred writers*, who teach us to regard him as "upholding all things by his own power," and overruling them for his own glory.

One reason for his committing the ministry of his Gospel to a few poor fishermen was, that the enriching of the world with its treasures might not be ascribed to human wisdom, but altogether to the Divine power, verse 7. For the same reason did he leave these "earthen vessels" to be treated in such a way as almost to preclude a hope of any long continuance of their ministrations: it was, to give the most decisive evidence to the world, that He reigned on high, and by his almighty power preserved them, until they had finished the work which he had given them to do.

Paul, maintaining the authority of his Apostleship against those who disputed it, shows, that, while the *trials*to which he was exposed appeared to render his divine mission questionable, the *supports*and *consolations*that were afforded him placed it beyond a doubt; yes, both the afflictions and consolations were sent on purpose that the almighty power and continual agency of the Lord Jesus Christ might be the more conspicuously seen, and more universally acknowledged.

Twice is this declared in the short space of two, verses, verse 10, 11; and it is a truth that demands from us the most attentive consideration. But that we may take the subject in the connection in which it stands, we shall show,

***~~I. What was the state of the first Christians—~~***

***~~Perhaps the Apostle primarily refers to himself and his fellow Apostles—~~***

Their trials were great beyond all conception. While their Divine Master continued upon earth, they were screened from persecution, [John 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.7); but when he was removed, they stood in the fore-front of the battle. At the very commencement of their work, they were all imprisoned, and beaten for their Lord's sake, [Acts 4:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.3); [Acts 5:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.18); [Acts 5:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.40); and from that time they were treated with all imaginable contempt and cruelty. Paul, in this very epistle, enumerates such a catalogue of sufferings as would have broken the spirit of any man who was not miraculously strengthened by Divine grace: "I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked! [2 Corinthians 11:23-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.23-27)."

Now though he had a greater measure of these trials than others, they were to a very great extent the common lot of all: for it is not of himself only, but of all, that he speaks in another place, saying, "I think that God has set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place: we are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things unto this day! 1 Corinthians 4:9; [1 Corinthians 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.11); [1 Corinthians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.13)." Every one of them might with truth make the same solemn assertion as Paul did, "I protest by my rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus my Lord, I die daily! 1 Corinthians 15:31."

***~~But the whole Church was in fact exposed to the heaviest trials—~~***

Stephen, being distinguished by his gifts and graces, speedily fell a victim to the people's rage: and his death was a signal for a general persecution against the whole Church: and so bitter was this persecution, "that the people were scattered abroad through all the regions of Judea and Samaria, none daring to continue at Jerusalem, except the Apostles, [Acts 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.1)." *They had been taught from the beginning to expect this: they had been told, that, "if they would be Christ's disciples, they must take up their cross daily," and "forsake all," and follow him.*

The saints of former days had been called to suffer like things, [Hebrews 11:35-38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.35-38); and the same path was now prescribed to all the followers of Christ: "they must bear about in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus, verse 10," and "through much tribulation must enter into the kingdom of Heaven." By "bearing about in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus," I understand the being subjected to the same trials as the Lord Jesus Christ himself endured when on earth: and this was, more or less, the appointed portion of all the early Christians. The same description of people who hated him, and persecuted him, hated and persecuted all who resembled him, and all who honored him: "they had called the Master of the house Beelzebub;" and by the same ignominious name did they designate "those of his household." In a word, so vehement and universal was the hatred against the very name of Christ, that the mere profession of faith in him was esteemed a sufficient ground for imprisonment and death: so that the prediction of David respecting them was fully verified, "For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter! [Psalm 44:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 44.22)."

How greatly we are interested in their history will appear, while we consider,

***~~II. The instruction to be derived from it—~~***

The reflections which most powerfully suggest themselves to our minds, are,

***~~1. How worthy the Lord Jesus Christ is to be loved and served—~~***

Every convert was taught beforehand what he was to expect. Yet, in the face of all these dangers, millions embraced, and openly professed, the faith of Christ: and as fast as one set of Christians sealed the truth with their blood, others came forward to confess the same Lord, like soldiers instantly springing forward to occupy the ranks which the devouring sword had thinned. So far were they from being intimidated, they were rather emboldened, by all that they saw and heard: if they fled from the sword of persecution, they availed themselves of the opportunity which their flight afforded them, to preach the Gospel throughout all the Roman empire, [Acts 8:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.4), and "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake."

The example of the Apostle Paul, though transcendently eminent in these respects, may serve to show us what was the general feeling of the whole Church. Though his afflictions were so numerous and heavy—yet "none of these things moved him, neither did he count his life dear unto him, so that he might but finish his course with joy." He was "willing not only to be bound, but also to die, at any time, and in any manner, for the Lord Jesus."

Now in this way did the primitive saints show their regard for Christ: when informed what sacrifices they would be called to make for him, they counted the cost; and considered the *pearl*cheaply purchased at the price of all that they possessed, [Matthew 13:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.46).

And has this *pearl*sunk in value? Does not the Lord Jesus Christ deserve as much at our hands as he did at theirs? Yes; it is in this way that we must all receive him: we must "account all things but loss and rubbish, that we may win him!" "If we hate not father and mother, and even our own lives also in comparison with him, we cannot be his disciples."

Inquire, brethren, whether you have ever come to Christ in this way? whether you have ever had such exalted views of his excellency, as to determine you to know nothing, and value nothing, but him? and whether you have felt such a deep sense of your obligations to him as to "glory in the cross for his sake," and to make even the most cruel death for his sake a subject of congratulation and joy, rather than of sorrow and condolence, [Philippians 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.17).

When such are our views of Christ, and such are the dispositions of our minds towards him, then, and then only, have we any scriptural evidence that we truly know him, and really belong to him.

***~~2. What rich provision we have in Christ—~~***

If we are Christ's, we must expect "fiery trials to try us;" for "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." But "if our *afflictions*abound for his sake, he will make our *consolations*to abound also." In this respect the Apostle's experience shall be realized in us. Like him, we may be greatly tried; but, "though troubled on every side, we shall not be so straitened," as to have no way to escape: we may be so "perplexed," as not to know what to do; but "we shall not be left to despair," as though we had none at hand that was able to help or deliver.

We may be "persecuted" by the whole human race; yet shall we "not be forsaken" by our God. We may be "cast down," and apparently vanquished, for a season; but we shall "not ultimately be destroyed." This is expressly promised to every true Christian. "He will not allow us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation make also a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it, [1 Corinthians 10:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.13)." In the full confidence of this we may exult as the Apostle did, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us! [Romans 8:35-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.35-37)."

Our extremities may be such as almost to destroy all hope: but they shall be the Seasons of his effectual interposition. "In the mount He shall be seen" by us, just as he was by Abraham, [Genesis 22:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 22.14); "when he sees that our power is gone, and that there is none shut up or left" to assist us, "then will he interpose for our relief, [Deuteronomy 32:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.36);" and "when we are cast down, then shall we say, There is lifting up: for God will save the humble person! [Job 22:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 22.29)."

Beloved brethren, know what provision there is for you in this adorable Savior: and, while you reflect on "the help which is thus laid up for you in One that is mighty," learn to confide in him, and to say, "If God is for me, who can be against me?" "If my God and Savior are on my side, I will not fear what either men or devils can do against me."

***~~3. How thankful we should be that we are permitted to serve the Lord Christ on such easy terms!~~***

Though we must all have some cross to bear—yet our trials are nothing in comparison with those that were endured by the primitive Church. The worst that we are called to sustain is, a sneer, an opprobrious name, or some trivial loss. How light would the first Christians have accounted such petty sufferings as these! Yet even by these are many among us so intimidated, that they dare not to confess Christ openly. What then would such persons do, if the sword of persecution were drawn against them now, as in former days, or as at the time of the Reformation in our own land, when so many were burnt alive for the Gospel's sake? Well may we be thankful that such trials of our faith as these no longer exist: for, if such a sifting time were to arise, many, very many, among us, it is to be feared, would be found no better than chaff! [Amos 9:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 9.9). Many who now look mirthful, "receiving the word with joy, would on the rising of temptation and persecution presently fall away, [Matthew 13:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.20-21), and make shipwreck of their faith."

Let us all then be thankful for the rest we enjoy: and improve it for our more abundant edification in faith and love, [Acts 9:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.31); that, if God would see fit again to let loose the chain by which our great adversary is bound, we may "be able to resist in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand."

***~~4. What under all circumstances should be our main concern—~~***

The end for which such grievous persecutions were permitted to harass the primitive Church, was that Christ's power and grace might be visibly seen in those who were called to endure them: and this very consideration made Paul to "take pleasure in all his distresses," because he knew, that the power of Christ would rest upon him, and "be perfected in his weakness, [2 Corinthians 12:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9-10)."

In like manner should we also rise superior to the concerns of time and sense, and be anxious only, "that Christ may be glorified in our body, whether by life or death! [Philippians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.20)." He is now seated at the right hand of God, and possesses "all power both in Heaven and earth." In him is treasured up all fullness for the use of his Church, that out of it, all his members may receive according to their several necessities. He is their life, [Colossians 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.4); and "they live by him, exactly as he, when on earth, lived by his Father, [John 6:56-57](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.56-57)," with whom he was altogether one, [John 10:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.30). In all his miracles the finger of God appeared, because they were wrought by God: just so in all the exercises of our spiritual life Christ is seen: because it is only by strength communicated from him, that we can either do, or suffer, as we ought, [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13).

Let this then be our endeavor, namely, *so to live, as to carry conviction to all who see us, that we are under the guidance and care of an all-wise, almighty Being*. Let our every act, as it were, show, not only how Christ lived on earth, but that he now lives, and rules, in Heaven; and that he is still as present with his people by his Spirit, as ever his own Father was present with him in the days of his flesh. This is an object worthy of the ambition of the first archangel: yet is it attainable by all of us, if only we will "live by faith in Christ," and "cleave unto him with full purpose of heart!"

***~~#2016~~***

***~~THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPERIENCE IN AFFLICTION~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 4:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.17-18)~~***

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

THE Christian in every state, whether of prosperity or adversity, differs widely from the unconverted world. While others are elated by prosperity and depressed by adversity, the Christian is kept in an equable frame of mind. As he does not place his happiness in earthly things, he is not much affected either with the acquisition or the loss of them. He is thankful for success, but not overjoyed, as though some great thing had happened unto him; and he is patient in tribulation, knowing that in the outcome it shall work for his good.

To this effect the Apostle speaks in the text, in which he assigns the reason why, notwithstanding the greatness of his afflictions, he was kept from fainting under them. And his words afford us a proper occasion to consider,

***~~I. The disposition which the Christian cultivates—~~***

The account which Paul gives of himself is characteristic of every true Christian.

***~~His chief aim is to attain things that are invisible—~~***

By "the things which are *seen*" we understand everything which relates merely to the present world, which the Apostle comprehends under three names, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life."

By "the things which are *not seen*" he meant the love and favor of God, the renovation of our inward man, the glory and felicity of Heaven. The latter of these are the objects towards which the Christian turns his principal attention.

It I not that he neglects the concerns of this world—this would be absurd and criminal; but his great end and aim is to obtain an eternal inheritance beyond the grave. Even while he is most actively employed in secular concerns, he looks through them all to this grand object, and labors incessantly to secure it.

***~~To this he is led by the transitoriness of earthly things—~~***

The things of this world perish with the using. If they are not withdrawn from us—we must soon be taken away from them; nor will so much as one of them remain to be enjoyed in the future world.

But spiritual things remain forever. If we secure the love of God now, it shall abide with us to all eternity. A saving interest in the Redeemer's merits, and a title to all the glory of Heaven, shall never be taken away from us. Death, so far from terminating our enjoyments, will bring us to the full possession of that glory, of which our present foretastes are a pledge.

The Christian, seeing the infinite disparity between these things, determines to make invisible eternal realities the supreme objects of his regard, and comparatively disregards all that can be offered to the eye of sense.

In this pursuit he is aided by his afflictions, as will appear, if we consider,

***~~II. The privilege he enjoys—~~***

***~~The Christian has troubles as well as others—~~***

The very conduct he observes with respect to temporal things has a tendency to involve him in trouble. *The world cannot endure to see their idols so disregarded, and their conduct so reproached*. One would have supposed from the account given us of his sufferings, that Paul must have been the vilest reprobate who ever lived, [2 Corinthians 11:23-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.23-27); but the more we resemble him in *holiness*, the more shall we resemble him in *sufferings*also. Our enemies indeed will not professedly persecute us for our holiness; they will assign some specious reason. *Elijah*shall be called "The troubler of Israel;" *Paul*, "The man who turns the world upside down;" and *Christ*shall be punished as a blasphemer and an enemy to civil government. But the same reason obtains with respect to all—the world cannot endure the light of their holy life, [John 15:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.19).

***~~These troubles however shall work for his good—~~***

They "are not in themselves joyous, but grievous;" but they tend to refine his soul, and to fit him for glory. Yes, inasmuch as these sufferings constitute a part of the obedience required of him, they bring with them a correspondent reward [2 Timothy 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.12). In this view they are mentioned in the text as highly beneficial. They work for the faithful Christian, a reward of glory; "a weight of glory" as great as his soul is able to sustain, and as durable as eternity itself. In comparison with this, the Apostle calls his troubles light and momentary; yes, not only light, but lightness itself; and intimates, that, if hyperbole were heaped upon hyperbole, it would be impossible for language to express, or for imagination to conceive, the greatness of that glory which his afflictions wrought for him (this is implied in the original).

The preceding subjects being, to appearance, so remote from each other, it will be proper to mark,

***~~III. The connection between them—~~***

***~~Afflictions do not necessarily produce this effect—~~***

In too many instances the effect that flows from them is altogether opposite. Instead of purifying the soul, they fill it with impatience, fretfulness, and all manner of malignant passions; and instead of working out a weight of glory for it, they serve only to prepare for it a more aggravated condemnation! "The sorrow of the world," says the Apostle, "works death! [2 Corinthians 7:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.10)."

***~~It is only where the pursuits are spiritual, that sufferings are so eminently beneficial—~~***

If the mind is set upon carnal things, it will be cast down when it is robbed of its enjoyments. It will say, like Micah, "I have lost my gods; what more do I have?" But the soul that desires heavenly things will be comforted with the thought that the objects of its desire are as near as ever. "While it looks at things invisible," it will be quickened in its pursuit of them:*it will be made to feel more sensibly the vanity and insignificance of earthly things*, and be urged more determinately to seek "a kingdom which cannot be moved." Every fresh trial will make it long more and more for the promised rest; and the *storms*which menace its existence, will thus eventually waft it with more abundant rapidity towards its desired haven.

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How infatuated are the generality of mankind!~~***

It is but too evident that the generality of the world are seeking earthly things, while those who are pressing forward in pursuit of heavenly things are comparatively few in number. What a melancholy proof is this of men's blindness and folly! *Who is there that, however much he may have gained of this world, has not found it all to be vanity and vexation of spirit?*What comfort has anyone derived from earthly possessions in an hour of deep affliction? And what benefit will accrue from them in the eternal world?

Say, O worldling, or you false professor—what has the world done for you? And what have you of all that is past, except shame and remorse in the remembrance of it? Who does not acknowledge the truth of these observations the very instant he begins to have a prospect of the eternal state? Yet, *so infatuated are we, that though every successive age has seen the folly of such conduct, they have trodden the same delusive path*, according to what is written, "This their way is their folly, and yet their posterity approve their saying."

Let us, however, awake from our slumber. Let us not so regard the things that are visible and temporal, as to forget that there are things invisible and eternal. Let us live and act as for eternity. Let us read, and hear, and pray, as for eternity. In this way we shall remove the sting from all present afflictions, and secure "an eternal glorious inheritance."

***~~2. How blessed is the true Christian!~~***

As there is no state, however prosperous, in which an unconverted man is not an object of pity—so there is no state, however afflictive, wherein the Christian may not be considered as a blessed man. However severe or long-continued his troubles may be, they appear to him but light and momentary; and however they may be productive of present pain, he has the consolation of knowing that they work for him a weight of glory, which will infinitely over-balance all that he can endure in the body. "Who then, or what, can harm him, while he continues thus a follower of that which is good?"

Surely, even in this present world the Christian has incomparably the best portion! What he will enjoy hereafter, when he shall come to the full possession of his inheritance, cannot be imagined. We can have no doubt but that the invisible realities will be found a very sufficient recompense for all his zeal and diligence in the pursuit of them. Let us then keep those realities in view, and the nearer we come to the goal, let us be the more earnest in "running the race that is set before us!"

***~~#2017~~***

***~~THE CHRISTIAN'S ASSURED PROSPECT OF GLORY~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 5:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.1-5)~~***

"Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in Heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

IT has justly been said of Christians, that if in this life only they had hope, they would be of all men in the most pitiable condition; seeing that they renounce all the pleasures of sin, and are exposed to all manner of trials for their Lord's sake. And certainly, if we consider the variety and greatness of Paul's sufferings, this may be applied to him with more propriety than to any other men. But notwithstanding, he was "delivered daily unto death for Jesus' sake, he was still cheerful and hopeful: and, notwithstanding "his outward man decayed, his inward man was renewed day by day."

Do we seek the *cause*of this? He had his eye fixed on eternal things, and derived from thence a fund of consolation sufficient to bear him up above all his afflictions. Death had no terrors for him; because "he knew that, when his earthly tabernacle would be dissolved, he had a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!"

But, as this experience was not confined to him, we shall take occasion from the words which we have read to show,

***~~I. The Christian's experience in the prospect of the eternal world—~~***

***~~He knows that there is a glorious mansion prepared for him—~~***

Here he dwells in a poor frail "tabernacle," like the patriarchs of old, [Hebrews 11:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.9), exposed to vicissitudes of every kind, and uncertain how soon he may be called to change his precarious abode. But he has a better tabernacle prepared for him, a house more glorious in its structure, and more lasting in its duration, even "a building from God, an eternal house in Heaven!"

Nor is his speedy enjoyment of this house a matter of conjecture with him, nor even of hope; it is a *certainty*, of which he is assured: he "knows" that such a tabernacle is prepared, prepared for him too; and that, "as soon as his earthly tent shall be dissolved," he shall instantly be translated to it. It is the inheritance to which he has been born; and which is therefore "reserved for him," as he also is for it; the very power which made it for him being pledged to put him into the possession of it, [1 Peter 1:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.3-5).

To it the patriarchs looked forward as the certain termination of their earthly pilgrimage, [Hebrews 11:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.10); and with still greater certainty does the Christian look forward to it, as being at this instant occupied by his forerunner, the Lord Jesus Christ, "who is gone before to prepare it for him, and is coming speedily to remove him to it! [John 14:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.2-3)." Like Job, he can say, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and my eyes shall behold him! [Job 19:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 19.25-27);" and with the same blessed assurance also he can add, "I shall be with him, and be like him," for ever and ever! [1 John 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.2).

***~~In the prospect of this he longs for the period of his death—~~***

In his present tabernacle he is laden with grievous corruptions, and beset with manifold temptations, and exposed to injuries on every side: and, from "his fightings without, and fears within," his time is often spent in sighs and groans. Many, many times does he exclaim with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Notwithstanding "he has within himself the first-fruits of the Spirit, he groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, namely, the redemption of the body! [Romans 8:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.23)." Twice is this mentioned in our text, to certify us the more fully that groans are the common language of the heaven-born soul; and that it is in that language more especially that "the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us [Romans 8:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.26)."

"To be delivered from the bondage of corruption," is certainly one great object which the Christian pants after: but he also longs, and "earnestly desires," to be brought "into the glorious liberty of the children of God, [Romans 8:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.21)." He knows that "when unclothed, as it respects his present tabernacle, he shall not be found naked" and destitute, seeing that a better habitation is ready for him; and it is his desire after this better habitation, that chiefly actuates him in his longings for the dissolution of his earthly tabernacle. It is "not merely to be unclothed," and to get rid of his present troubles, but "to be clothed upon with his house from Heaven," and have "mortality swallowed up of life!" It is no disparagement to a godly soul to say, "O that I had wings like a dove, [Psalm 55:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 55.6), for then would I flee away and be at rest:" but it is a higher attainment to say, "I long to depart, that I may be with Christ! [Philippians 1:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.21-23)."

We are ready to imagine that there is a confusion of metaphor in this place, and that "to be clothed upon with a house," is an absurd expression: but, if we advert to the circumstance, that that house is "a tabernacle," and that a tabernacle is constructed with an awning or covering cast over it, the propriety, and indeed the beauty, of the expression will appear at once. And when it is considered that even the tabernacle of the Most High was not so far superior to the accommodation of the basest Israelite, as the mansions prepared for us are above the tabernacle in which we now live, we shall not wonder, that the soul of the believer sighs and groans for his blessed abode; his abode, the residence of angels, the habitation of his God.

It was this consideration that made Paul so satisfied in the near prospect of martyrdom: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand: but there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me, 2 Timothy 4:7-8."

It was the same, that rendered Peter also equally composed in the near approach of crucifixion. He designates even that cruel death by the gentle term of "putting off this tabernacle;" to which he was reconciled by the thought that an infinitely better mansion awaited him at his departure hence! [2 Peter 1:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.13-14).

But is it for Apostles only to enjoy this sweet assurance? Are they alone authorized to look forward with delight to the eternal world? No! this is the privilege of every saint. Heaven is the believer's home! While he is here on earth, he is merely a sojourner, in a state of exile from his Lord: and when he goes hence, he ceases from his pilgrimage, and goes home to the bosom of his God, verse 6, 8. If we are "walking by faith and not by sight," that is, if we are true believers, that is our present portion, and "our eternal great reward!"

But, while we assert that this is *the Christian's experience*, it will be proper to show,

***~~II. How he attains to it—~~***

***~~It is wrought in him by his God—~~***

Man cannot work it in himself. Man may desire to get rid of his present trials, and in a fit of impatience may "choose strangling rather than life:" indeed it is but too common for those who are bowed down with a load of worldly troubles, to seek relief in *suicide*.

But this is very different from the experience in our text, a principal ingredient in which is a desire after the glory and felicity of Heaven. This no man can produce in his own soul. Man, of himself, has no conception of that blessedness, nor any taste for the enjoyment of it: much less has he such a view of it as will incline him to brave the most cruel death for the attainment of it.

He who alone can work this in the soul of man, is God. He alone, who opened the eyes of Stephen to behold God, and Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God—can give to any man a just apprehension of the heavenly glory, together with an *assurance*of his title to it, and his interest in it. He alone, who raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead, can so deliver us from the fear of death, that it shall appear to us a desirable acquisition. He alone, who has enabled us to say, "To me to live is Christ!" can enable us to add, "To me also it is gain to die!"

How God works this in the soul, it is not easy to state. We are but little acquainted with the workings of our own spirit, and still less with the operations of the Spirit of God. We know little of wind, but by its effects: as to the mode of its operation, we have but very indistinct notions about it: it is no wonder therefore that there would be many things relative to the operation of the Holy Spirit on our souls which we are not able clearly to define.

But from the *effects*produced by the Spirit, we do assuredly note his agency: and where we see an ardent desire after the heavenly glory, we do not hesitate to affirm, that the author of it is God; since none but He, who created the universe out of nothing, can create so blessed a disposition in the soul.

This disposition is called "the pledge of the Spirit," which God gives to his believing people. Now a pledge is, not merely a pledge of anything, but a part of the thing itself, given as a pledge that the remainder shall be imparted in due time: and hence that which is called in our text "the pledge of the Spirit," is in another place called "a pledge of our inheritance, [Ephesians 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.14);" which being given to the soul by God, is to that soul a ground of the strongest assurance that the promised blessing shall in due time be communicated in all its fullness.

***~~It shall be wrought in all who heartily desire it—~~***

One of the most important lessons which the Gospel teaches us, is that we should be ever "looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ! [Titus 2:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.11-13)." We should not only be looking for it, but "hastening unto it," even "to the coming of the day of Christ, [2 Peter 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.12);" and the character given to all Christians is, that they do thus "love his appearing, [2 Timothy 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 4.8)."

But, if we have not a well-grounded hope of glory, how can we delight ourselves in the prospect of that day? It is our taste of the grapes of Eshcol that assures to us the full enjoyment of the promised land: and it is our partial entrance on our rest in this world, that assures to us the complete possession of "the eternal rest that remains for us, [Hebrews 4:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.3); [Hebrews 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.9)." Let us therefore seek the first-fruits, and we need entertain no fears respecting the full harvest.

***~~From hence we may learn,~~***

***~~1. How desirable it is to have clear evidences of our conversion—~~***

Though the pledge of the Spirit is itself both a seal and evidence of our conversion, it must not be found alone; much less must it be supposed to exist, where any habitual or allowed sin attests the contrary. The witness of the Spirit is in perfect harmony with the written word: and though it may for wise and gracious reasons be withheld from a person who is walking uprightly before God; (for a man may "fear the Lord, and yet walk in darkness and have no light [Isaiah 50:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.10),") yet it never is given to any one who is not serving God in sincerity and truth.

The man who imagines that he has the pledge of the Spirit, and the witness of the Spirit, while yet he is not sincerely and unreservedly devoted unto God, deceives his own soul! Some imagine that to speak of *evidences*is to encourage legality: but it is impossible to read the Epistle of 1 John, and not to see, that he lays down, I had almost said, a system of evidences, whereby a man would try his state before God. *Feelings*, however strong, and whatever confidence they may generate in the soul, cannot be depended on, if separated from the *dispositions*and *actions*produced by them: and therefore I cannot but earnestly recommend every one to examine carefully the state of his own soul, lest he dreams of Heaven, and awakens in Hell!

***~~2. How light all trials should be to the believing soul—~~***

Well does the Apostle in the words before our text call them "light and momentary;" so light, as to be lightness itself, 2 Corinthians 4:17. Of what importance are the accommodations of an *inn*, where the traveler stops an hour in his journey to his father's house? Such travelers are we; and the period of our stay is at the utmost an hour, or rather, the twinkling of an eye.

I may ask too, of what importance are his little inconveniences there—in comparison with the great and permanent felicity that awaits him? This is the true way to estimate our sufferings, of whatever kind they may be, [Romans 8:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.18).

You who are most tried, fix your eyes upon the glory that shall be revealed; think of "the grace that shall be given you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Think especially too of your trials as loosening the pins of your present tabernacle, and hastening forward your entrance into that tabernacle that is prepared for you.

View them, I say, in this light, and you will be so far from complaining of them, that you will rejoice and glory in them as the wise appointments of a gracious God: and "the trial of your faith will be precious, because it will be found to his praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ! [1 Peter 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.7)."

***~~3. How blessed is the portion of every child of God—~~***

As difficult as his present abode is, and as painful as his state at present is in some respects, he is yet truly blessed. Consider what prospects he enjoys, yes, what anticipations and foretastes of his future bliss; for by faith he has already as clear evidence of the future glory, as if he saw it with his bodily eyes; and as truly the substance of it, as if he had it already in his possession, [Hebrews 11:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.1).

Tell me not of his trials; for I say, he is a truly blessed man: and our blessed Lord again and again declares him *blessed*, [Matthew 5:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.11-12). Then think of his state as soon as this earthly tabernacle is dissolved; think of him as clothed upon with his house from Heaven; and mortality, with all its attendant pains, "as swallowed up of life." Not an atom of his former troubles or weaknesses remains—all is swallowed up, and is as if it had never been! Read the account of him as dwelling in the tabernacle of his God, [Revelation 21:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.3-4), and you will break forth into the most heart-felt congratulations, "Blessed are you, O people saved by the Lord! [Deuteronomy 33:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.29)."

***~~#2018~~***

***~~THE CHRISTIAN WALKING BY FAITH~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.7)~~***

"We walk by faith, not by sight."

IF we behold any wonderful effects, we naturally inquire after the cause that has produced them. Now in the preceding context we behold as extraordinary a phenomenon as can be conceived: a sinner, like ourselves, not only divested of all fear of death, but longing after death as the consummation of all his hopes, and the completion of all his desires. This is a frame of mind totally unknown to man by nature, and incapable of being produced by any natural means. How then was it produced in the Apostle Paul?

He tells us, "Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose." But how did God work it? for it is certain that he works by means. I answer, By forming in his soul a principle of faith, and making that the great moving cause of all his actions.

This is the account which Paul himself gives us in the words before us: "We are willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight." It was by faith that he attained this blessed state: and if, like him, we cultivate that heavenly principle, and take it as the spring and source of all our conduct, we shall find it productive of similar blessedness in our souls. It is, in truth, this principle, which above all others distinguishes the true Christian from every other person under Heaven.

To explain and vindicate his conduct in reference to this matter, we will show,

***~~I. The principle by which the Christian is actuated—~~***

***~~He fixes his eye, not on things visible and temporal, but on things invisible and eternal—~~***

This is declared at the close of the preceding chapter, 2 Corinthians 4:18; and the same contrast is marked in our text. Faith is opposed to sight, and has respect entirely to things which are beyond the reach of mortal eyes. Faith looks upon an unseen God; even as Moses did, who feared not the wrath of Pharaoh, because "he saw him who is invisible, [Hebrews 11:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.27)." This great and adorable Being it beholds, and contemplates all his glorious perfections.

Faith sees all his mind and will in the book of revelation.

Faith recognizes his superintending providence in all events.

Faith regards him as inspecting continually the most hidden recesses of our souls, and noting everything in the book of his remembrance in order to a future judgment.

Faith also views an unseen Savior as the supreme object of his people's love, and the only foundation of all their hopes! [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.8). Faith beholds him dying for their sins, and rising again for their justification. Yes, faith sees him interceding for them at the right hand of God, and preserving for them that peace which by their sins and infirmities they would soon forfeit. Faith enters into the whole of the Savior's work and offices, surveying them in all their extent and variety; and particularly regards him as the fountain of life to all his people; as having in himself all fullness of spiritual blessings treasured up for them, and imparting to them continually out of that fullness according to their several necessities.

Faith views an unseen Heaven also. It soars and penetrates into the very paradise of God, and surveys the crowns and kingdoms which God has there prepared for all who love him. There it beholds that glorious tabernacle which the soul shall inhabit as soon as this earthly house shall be dissolved: and in the promises recorded in the written word, faith sees the possession of that glory assured to every believing soul, assured by an everlasting covenant, and by the oath of a "God who cannot lie."

Such are the objects of faith! and such the objects on which the Christian's eye is continually fixed!

***~~By these objects, the Christian regulates the whole of his life and conduct—~~***

These are the things which draw forth his regards; and in comparison with these, all earthly things are but as dung and dross. For these he sighs, and groans, and weeps, and strives: to obtain a saving interest in them is more to him than ten thousand worlds! Whatever will endanger the loss of these, he flees from, as from the face of a serpent. And whatever has a tendency to secure his interest in them, he labors incessantly to perform. In these all his affections center: his hopes and fears, his joys and sorrows, all terminate in these: and, in exact proportion as he is enabled by faith to realize and apprehend these, he is blessed. In a word, "he walks by faith:" and every step he takes is under the influence of that principle.

Faith is to the Christian what the compass is to the mariner in the trackless ocean: under all circumstances he consults its testimony, and follows its directions: and, in so doing, he fears not but that in due time he shall arrive at his destined haven.

This was the character of the Apostle Paul: and it is the character of every true Christian under Heaven: "the life which he now lives in the flesh, he lives by faith in the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him! [Galatians 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.20)."

But as to those who understand not his views he appears to act absurdly, we will proceed to mark—

***~~II. The reasonableness of his conduct in this respect—~~***

Doubtless the people who are strangers to this principle must gaze strangely at the Christian, and account him almost mad. The overlooking with comparative contempt all that he has ever seen, and following with all possible ardor things which no mortal eye ever did see—must appear the height of folly and enthusiasm! We wonder not if many would say to him, "You are beside yourself; much learning has made you mad." But we reply, that there is no comparison between the wisdom of walking by faith, or of being actuated by sight.

***~~1. The principle of faith is more exalted in its objects—~~***

The objects of *sense*are all poor, and base, and worthless. Take all that eye ever saw, or ear heard, or heart conceived; and it would not compare to one glimpse of the Savior's glory, or one taste of his love! Besides, it is all transient and of very short duration.

But think of Almighty God and his covenant of grace; think of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all the wonders of redeeming love; think of Heaven, and all its glory and blessedness; and then say, which are most deserving of our regard? In attaching ourselves to the one, we degrade ourselves to the state of unenlightened heathen, I had almost said, of the brute beasts; but by living wholly by faith, we emulate, as it were, the glorified saints and angels. The one is as high above the other, as the heavens are above the earth.

***~~2. The principle of faith is more certain in its testimony—~~***

*Earthly things*may dazzle us with their glare and glitter, but they are all a lie, a cheat, a shadow, a delusion: there is no substance in them. With whatever confidence we press forward for the attainment of them, the more they disappoint our endeavors. And when we think we have secured you prize, we no sooner stretch out our hands to lay hold on it, than it eludes our grasp. Or, if we apprehend the object of our desires, it proves to us no better than vanity and vexation of spirit.

But was ever anyone deceived in apprehending the realities of the eternal world? Did ever any one who sought them by faith, fail in the pursuit of them, or find them, when attained, below his expectation? No truly, it is justly said by the Lord Jesus Christ under the character of wisdom, "I cause them that love me to inherit substance, [Proverbs 8:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 8.17);" and every promise that makes over these things to the believing soul, is as immutable as God himself.

***~~3. The principle of faith is more excellent in its operations—~~***

The tendency of visible things is to sensualize and debase the soul; but the effect of heavenly things is to purify and exalt it. The more we contemplate the Divine Being, the more shall we be transformed into his blessed image. The more we exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the more will *grace*, and *mercy*, and *peace*be multiplied unto us. The more we breathe the atmosphere of Heaven, the more shall we be fitted for the everlasting enjoyment of it! "Every man that has such hopes in him, purifies himself even as God is pure, [1 John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.3);" and the very promises by which he apprehends them, lead him to "cleanse himself from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God, [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.1)." Truly "by these he becomes a partaker of the divine nature, [2 Peter 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.4)," and is progressively "changed into the divine image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of our God! [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18)."

***~~4. The principle of faith is more conducive to our true happiness—~~***

What does he possess who has the whole world at his command? A mere phantom! and, if he looks for any solid happiness from it, he will find, that he has only "filled his belly with the east wind." But who can describe the happiness of him, who, by faith, has already in his soul "the substance of things hoped for, as well as the evidence of things not seen, [Hebrews 11:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.1)." Who can declare the blessedness of him, who has:  
God for his Father,  
Christ for his Savior,  
the Holy Spirit for his Comforter,  
and Heaven for his home!

This man lives on "angels' food."

He has *grapes of Eshcol*all along the way.

He stands on Pisgah's top, surveying in all its length and breadth the land of promise.

He has already a pledge and foretaste of the heavenly bliss.

When he goes hence, he will change neither his company nor his employment: he is already dwelling in, and with, his God; and tuning his harp ready to join the choirs above, as soon as ever his attendant angels shall have received their commission to bear him hence.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are walking by sight—~~***

You are reputed wise by the men of this world; but are worse than fools in the estimation of your God. What has the *world*ever yet done for you? Has it ever yet afforded you any solid satisfaction? Possess what you may, will not a pain, a loss, a disappointment, be sufficient to rob you of all your enjoyment? And what can the *world*do for you in a dying hour? Will it prolong your life, or assuage your anguish, or pacify your conscience, or take away the sting of death?

But, above all, what will the *world*do for you at the bar of judgment? Will it bribe your Judge, or avert the wrath of an offended God, or mitigate your torments in the world of woe?

You think the Christian unwise in having respect to things which his eye has never seen. But who will be found the wise man in that great and awful day? Not he who neglected God and his own soul; not he who trampled under foot the dying Savior, and poured contempt on all the glory and blessedness of Heaven; but he who lived as a *pilgrim*and a *sojourner*here, and "looked for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." O, that you "may be wise, and consider, before it is too late, your latter end!"

***~~2. Those who are walking by faith—~~***

We thank our God that there are a goodly number of you who have learned to estimate things by their relation to eternity. O beg of God to "turn off your eyes from beholding vanity, and to quicken your souls in his way." Pray to him to "increase your faith," that your discernment of unseen eternal realities may be more clear, your enjoyment of them more rich, your improvement of them more uniform and abiding.

*Pray that your faith may be more and more influential on the whole of your life and conduct.* Strive, in dependence on the Spirit of God, to walk more and more "worthy of your high calling."

Paul, in his most assured prospects of glory, "labored, that, whether present in the body, or absent from it, he might be accepted of the Lord, verse 9." Do you in this respect follow his example: "not setting your affections on anything here below," but "having your conduct altogether in Heaven, from whence you look for the Lord Jesus Christ" "to come and take you to himself," that you may "be with him, and like him "for ever! [1 John 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.2).

***~~#2019~~***

***~~THE IMPROVEMENT TO BE MADE OF THE DOCTRINE OF A FUTURE JUDGMENT~~***

**[2 Corinthians 5:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.10-11)**

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience."

TIME is generally thought to be of little use, except as it may be employed in amusements or in the prosecution of worldly business; but its value, as it stands connected with eternity, exceeds all calculation. The manner in which every hour is spent is recorded in Heaven; every moment, as it were, increases our eternal happiness or misery. This consideration made the Apostle solicitous to redeem time himself, and to improve it for the good of others.

***~~I. The Apostle's account of the day of judgment—~~***

***~~"Christ" is the person who shall judge the world—~~***

He who stood at Pilate's bar is exalted for this purpose, [Acts 17:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 17.31). Our Lord himself plainly and repeatedly affirmed it, [John 5:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.22); [John 5:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.27).

***~~He will erect his "tribunal" in a solemn and public manner—~~***

Daniel spoke of this in very exalted terms, [Daniel 7:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 7.9-10). Our Lord also has declared it, [Matthew 25:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.31).

***~~Before this tribunal "we must all appear"—~~***

All who have ever existed from the beginning to the end of the world shall stand at his bar, [Revelation 20:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 20.12-13). None shall be able to elude or to withstand the summons, [John 5:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.28).

***~~All that we have done in the world will then be made manifest—~~***

The secrets of every heart shall be disclosed, [Ecclesiastes 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 12.14). The mask will be taken from the face of the hypocrite: the tears and sighings of the contrite will be declared before all, 1 Corinthians 4:5.

***~~Then shall every one receive according to his doings, "whether they be good or bad"—~~***

The seeming inequalities of the Divine government will then be rectified: the godly will not then be any more condemned, or the wicked be justified. Those who from faith and love have obeyed God shall be rewarded. Those who have been disobedient and unbelieving shall be punished, [Romans 2:5-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.5-11).

***~~The rewards and punishments shall be respectively proportioned to the good or evil that has been done—~~***

Those who have greatly improved their talents will be greatly rewarded, [Luke 19:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.17); [Luke 19:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.24). Those whose sins have been peculiarly aggravated will be more severely punished, [Luke 12:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.47).

A more important consideration than this cannot enter into the mind of man!

***~~II. The improvement which he made of it—~~***

***~~This subject is extremely solemn even to the best of men—~~***

The most eminently pious are conscious of many defects. They know also the deceitfulness of their hearts. Hence not even Paul himself could fully rely on the verdict of his own conscience, [1 Corinthians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.4).

***~~But it is full of "terror" to the ungodly—~~***

To see him as their Judge, whose dying love they despised!

To be confronted with all their accomplices in wickedness!

To have the books of God's remembrance opened!

To have all their secret thoughts and desires exposed!

To know that their doom is irrevocably fixed!

To await the dreadful sentence from the mouth of their Judge!

To have nothing but an eternity of unmixed misery before them!

What can be more terrible! [Revelation 6:14-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 6.14-17).

***~~Paul well "knew" this terror of the Lord. He therefore labored "to persuade men"—~~***

He persuaded men to "flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life:" he spared no pains to attain this object of his wishes, [Romans 15:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.19). [1 Corinthians 9:19-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.19-22); he regarded no sufferings if he might but prevail on some, [2 Timothy 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.10). [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24).

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

We should improve this subject as the Apostle did. We know most assuredly these terrors of the Lord. We, on account of our office, are peculiarly interested in the events of that day, [Hebrews 13:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.17). We therefore would persuade you to repent, and believe the Gospel, [Mark 1:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 1.15); we would persuade you by every alarming or encouraging consideration. Consider:  
the *certainty*of that day,  
the *nearness*of it,  
the greatness of the preparation necessary,  
and the consequences of dying unprepared!

Consider the free remission of sin, and the almighty assistance now offered you, and the blessedness of being prepared to meet your God. May we all lay these considerations to heart! May we at the last be found, not only *almost*, but *altogether*Christians!

***~~#2020~~***

***~~THE CONSTRAINING POWER OF CHRIST'S LOVE~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14-15)~~***

"For the love of Christ's compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

PAUL was more abundant both in labors and in sufferings than any other of the Apostles: but his zeal was by many considered as no better than madness. To the lukewarm, as well as to those who were altogether careless, he appeared to be transported far beyond the bounds of reason and propriety; and they therefore did not hesitate to say that "he was beside himself."

But while he was thus condemned as a wild enthusiast, he cultivated in reality the strictest sobriety; as is evident throughout his whole history, and in all his epistles. "It was with him a small matter to be judged of man's judgment:" he cared not what opinion his adversaries formed of him, while he had the consciousness that he was actuated by zeal for God, and by love to man. Nevertheless he was not backward to declare whence his zeal arose; nor was he afraid to let his enemies themselves judge whether it was rational or not. He tells them, that, "if he was beside himself, it was to God," that he might be glorified; or, "if he was sober, it was for their cause," that they might be benefitted: but that, whatever judgment might be passed upon him, the love of Christ constrained him, and under the influence of that, he thought it right to live entirely to his God.

In vindication of the Apostle, and for the regulating of our own minds, we shall inquire,

***~~I. What it was which stimulated him to such unparalleled exertions—~~***

It was "the love of Christ which constrained him." By this I understand, not his love to Christ—but *Christ's love to him*; which is here mentioned in its two great leading features;

***~~1. His dying for us—~~***

Wonderful indeed was this love! that when he was incapable of any increase of honor or happiness himself, he left the bosom of his Father, and took our nature upon him with all its sinless infirmities, on purpose that he might expiate our guilt by his own blood, and work out a righteousness for our acceptance before God! That he would do this so readily, undertaking everything as soon as it was proposed to him by the Father, [Psalm 40:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 40.6-8), and adhering to his engagement until it was perfectly fulfilled, not dissuaded by any, [Matthew 16:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.23), nor deterred by the dreadful prospect of all his sufferings [Luke 12:50](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.50), but drinking to the very dregs the bitter cup, and completing everything until he could say "It is finished!" Well may it be said, "What manner of love was this!"

***~~2. His employing for us the life that was restored to him at his resurrection—~~***

As "he *died*for our offenses, so he *rose*again for our justification." *He is as much occupied about the work of our salvation now, as he was when living on earth, or dying on the cross,* "He ever lives to make intercession for us." Everything is put into his hands, in order that he may manage it for our good.*All the works of Providence are directed and overruled by him for the furtherance of our welfare*, and he, as the living Head of his people, imparts to them such measures of grace as he sees needful for them. In a word, he lives in them as in his temple, and carries on the whole work of grace in them, and never allows so much as "one of them to perish!" Can we wonder that such love as this constrained the Apostle, and carried him forward, like a resistless torrent, in the service of his God?

The Apostle, in further vindication of himself, proceeds to state,

***~~II. Why Christ's love for him had such an ascendant over him—~~***

He acted not from feeling only, though doubtless the flame of love that was thus kindled in his soul burned with inextinguishable ardor, [Song of Solomon 8:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 8.7-8); but from judgment also: "he judged,"

***~~1. That our obligations to the Lord Jesus Christ are infinite—~~***

It is plain, that "if one died for all, then were all dead." And was this our state? Were we dead in trespasses and sins, and under a sentence of eternal condemnation? O! what do we owe to that Savior who emptied himself of all his glory for us, "who died for us when enemies," and actually became a curse for us, bearing in his own person all that was due to the iniquities of a guilty world!

The apostate angels had no such mercy shown to them: they fell, and had none to help them; and are therefore "reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day." And had not the Lord Jesus Christ died for us, we would have been dead still, and remained to all eternity companions with the fallen angels in misery, as we have been in transgression.

Moreover, his *life*is as necessary for us as his death: for if he did not *keep*us every moment, even as the apple of his eye, no one of us could endure unto the end: the great adversary of mankind, who tempted our first parents to sin, would beguile and ruin us for ever, if Jesus did not carry us in his bosom, and give us grace sufficient for our returning necessities.

Judge then whether this be not a reason for loving him, and for devoting ourselves unreservedly to his service? *Can too much be done for him, who has done, and is doing, so much for us?*Or would we think much of any sufferings that we may be called to endure for him? Would we not even rejoice if we are counted worthy to suffer for him, and welcome even death itself, if only "his name may be magnified?" If to entertain such sentiments, and to pursue such conduct, is madness, I wish that we all were as obnoxious to the charge as Paul himself! But let the world say or think as they will, such a devotedness to God is "a reasonable service! [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1)."

***~~2. That the very end for which the Lord Jesus Christ has conferred those obligations upon us, is that he may bind us to himself in a state of holy obedience—~~***

It is not to rescue us from death and Hell alone, that Jesus has died for us, but to deliver us also from sin and Satan, and to bring us back to the state from which we are fallen. Were we created holy and happy, even like the angels themselves? To that state would the Lord Jesus elevate us again, that both in this world and to all eternity we may delight in God! This is declared to be the express purpose of his death, [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14)." Did he then "die to redeem us from all iniquity"—and shall we still live in sin of any kind? Did he die to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works—and shall we not labor to attain this blessed character? Shall there be any bounds to our zeal; or shall we restrain it because a blind and ungodly world agree to call it madness?

We mean not by this to justify any departure from real sobriety of mind; for religion is a sober thing, being not like the transient glare of a meteor, but like the steady course of the sun: but this we would do. We would dissuade all from living in any measure to themselves, and bring them to live wholly and entirely to their God; and, if the world deride this as enthusiasm, and prescribe to us a lower standard of duty, we would say with Peter, "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, you judge;" for we cannot but consult his will, and approve ourselves to him, [Acts 4:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.19-20).

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~1. Let us all seek a saving interest in Christ—~~***

Has he died for us; and shall we die too? God forbid. It is a blessed truth, that he has "died for all," and "given himself a ransom for all," and "tasted death for every man," and made himself "an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world." How solemn then the thought that any would "perish, for whom Christ died!" What a bitter reflection will it be to such persons in the eternal world, that Christ died for them, and yet they would not seek for salvation from him! O that this may not be our unhappy state! Let us look to him, and believe in him, and live by faith upon him now, that we may live with him for evermore.

***~~2. Let us meditate much upon his love for us—~~***

*Were we but duly sensible of his love to us, we could not refrain from loving and serving him.* O think what a subject for contemplation this is! It has been the one theme of praise and adoration in Heaven for thousands of years, and will be to all eternity; and shall we not delight in the contemplation of it? It has "a height and depth, and length and breadth, that is utterly unsearchable." Beloved brethren, meditate upon it, until the fire kindles in your hearts, and you are constrained to "glorify him with your bodies and your spirits which are his."

***~~3. Let us endeavor to answer the true end of all his love for us—~~***

You have heard what this was, even "that you would not henceforth live unto yourselves, but unto him who died for us." Now, then, set about the blessed work.*Let the pleasures, the riches, the honors of the world be to you as the dirt under your feet!*"Be crucified to the world, and let the world be crucified unto you." And begin to walk as Christ walked, and to follow the example which Paul has set for you. Let the world despise you, if they please. Seek the approbation of your God: and when they, like Michal, deride your piety, say with holy David, "If this is to be vile, I will be yet more vile than this! [2 Samuel 6:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 6.22)."

***~~#2021~~***

***~~THE CHRISTIAN A NEW CREATURE~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.17)~~***

"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new!"

A faithful discharge of our duty to God has in every age rather provoked the displeasure, than conciliated the favor, of a wicked world. The most eminent characters, instead of escaping censure by means of their distinguished piety, have on the contrary incurred the greatest portion of obloquy and reproach. It was thus that Paul's love and zeal were requited by many at Corinth; he was deemed "beside himself." But *indifferent both to their censure and applause*, he declared to them the motives by which he was actuated; he told them plainly that *he was under the constraining influence of the love of Christ*, and that, however strange his views and actions might appear, they, if they were Christians indeed, would certainly adopt and imitate them; their present views and habits would pass away, and all become new. In the words of the text we have:

***~~I. The character of a Christian figuratively expressed—~~***

A man is said to be "in Christ," when he is engrafted into him as a branch of the living vine, or, in other words, when he truly believes in Christ, he is then a Christian. But in order to show what a change every man experiences when he becomes a Christian, the Apostle says of him that he is "a new creation." In this term there is a reference to the creation of the world, which may be considered as *a type or pattern of that work which God performs in the hearts of his people*. The correspondence between them may be seen in the manner, the order, and the end of their formation—

***~~1. In the manner of their formation—~~***

The world was created by God, according to his own sovereign will, without the intervention of human aid: and, though brought into existence in a moment, was gradually perfected in its various parts, [Genesis 1:3-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 1.3-31). Thus the souls of God's people are regenerated purely by the sovereign will of God, and entirely through the agency of his word and Spirit, [James 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.18). [John 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.13). [Titus 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.5). Though they use the appointed means, it is God alone who renders those means effectual [1 Corinthians 3:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.5-6) and [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.10); "He who made the light to shine out of darkness, shines into their hearts to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ! [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6)."

There is an instant of time, however unknown to us, when the new man as well as the old, receives the vital principle; a moment, wherein we are "quickened from the dead," and "pass from death unto life:" but *the work of grace is carried on in a constant progression*, and "the inward man is renewed day by day, [2 Corinthians 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.16)."

***~~2. In the order of their formation—~~***

Light was the first thing that was produced in the material world: and, after that, the confused chaos was reduced to such a state as that there would be a harmony in all the parts, and a subserviency in each to the good of the whole. Thus light is first darted into the mind of the regenerate man, [Colossians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.10); a view of his guilt and misery is given to him, and then his disorderly passions, which blinded his judgment and sensualized his soul, are rendered subject to reason and the gospel, [Ephesians 1:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17-18). [Colossians 1:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.9-10).

***~~3. In the end of their formation—~~***

The world was formed by God for his own glory: as all things were by him, so also were they formed for him, [Colossians 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.16). [Revelation 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 4.11), It is for this end also that he renews the souls of men after his own image. He rejoices indeed in the good of his creatures, and in a subordinate measure may propose that as the end of his dispensations: but we are assured *his principal intent is, to show forth the exceeding riches of his own grace, and to exalt himself in the eyes of his redeemed people*,[Ephesians 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.7).

We are at no loss to understand the preceding figure, since we have, in the text, its import,

***~~II. The character of a Christian plainly declared—~~***

Justly is a work of grace represented as a new creation; for, as in the reduction of the confused chaos to order and beauty, so also in the restoration of the soul after God's image, "old things pass away and all things become new."

***~~1. The Christian experiences this change in his views of every important subject—~~***

He *once*judged sin to be a light and trivial evil: if it were of a very gross nature indeed, or committed against himself in particular, he might feel some indignation against it: but if it were not reprobated by the world, or injurious to himself, he would behold it without sorrow, and practice it without remorse.

But very different are his views of sin when once his eyes are opened to behold it in its true colors! It then appears to him as base, loathsome, and abominable. He hates it from his inmost soul. He desires deliverance from it as much as from Hell itself. He would not harbor it in his heart for one moment, but would extirpate it utterly, as well from his thoughts as from his actions.

Nor are his sentiments less altered respecting Christ. He *once*felt no love towards him, notwithstanding his religious professions.

But now the name of Jesus is precious to him: he is filled with admiring thoughts of his incomprehensible love. He adores him with devoutest affection; and "cleaves to him with full purpose of heart." He once "saw no beauty nor loveliness in him," but now views him as "fairer than ten thousand, and altogether lovely!"

The same change takes place with respect to the world, and holiness, and everything that has any relation to eternity: so that he really becomes altogether a new creature!

***~~2. The Christian experiences this change in the great ends and aim of his life—~~***

The unregenerate man, to whatever class he may belong, whether he is sensual and profane, or moral and religious, invariably makes *self*the principle and end of all his actions: his life is one continued scene of self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-delight. He makes his very duties to God subservient to his main end of gratifying his desire after self-approbation and the applause of man.

But these old desires are mortified when once he becomes a real Christian: they will indeed often rise in his mind, because he is "renewed only in part;" but he has a far higher end, which he infinitely prefers, and to which he gives a deliberate, determined ascendency. He has a concern for the honor of his God; and he strives that God in all things may be glorified through Christ Jesus. Whether his actions be of a civil or religious nature, he still proposes to himself the same end: to glorify God with his body and his spirit which are God's! [1 Peter 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.11). [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20). [1 Corinthians 10:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.31). Nor is there anything that more strongly characterizes the child of God.

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~1. Let every one put this question to himself: Am I a true Christian?~~***

The Apostle leaves no room for exceptions in favor of any man whatever; "if any man is a Christian, he is, and must be, a new creature." Nor does this import a mere change from profligacy to morality; or from a neglect of outward duties to the performance of them: the change must be radical; it must pervade every faculty of the soul; it must influence all our words and actions, our thoughts and desires, our motives and principles.

Has then this great change been accomplished in us? On this point eternity depends. O that we might not give sleep to our eyes or slumber to our eyelids, until we can return a favorable answer upon sure and scriptural grounds!

***~~2. Let those who have experienced a work of grace, seek to have it carried on and perfected in their souls—~~***

It must ever be remembered, that the renovation of the soul is a gradual and progressive work: we are to be continually putting off the old man, and putting on the new, [Ephesians 4:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.22-24). Let us then not rest in low attainments; but rather, "forgetting the things that are behind, let us press forward unto that which is ahead." Let us beg of God to "perfect that which concerns us," and to form us altogether "into his own image in righteousness and true holiness." It is by our progress that we must manifest the work to have been begun; and then only can we be sure that our path is right, when, "like the light, it shines more and more unto the perfect day!"

***~~#2022~~***

***~~THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 5:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.19-20)~~***

"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God!"

NATURAL as well as revealed religion teaches us that God is the author and giver of all good things.

He originally formed man out of the dust of the earth, and still brings us into existence in our successive generations. He appoints the time and place of our birth: he bestows the talents we severally possess: he preserves the health of our bodies, and the vigor of our minds: "in him we altogether live, and move, and have our being."

Nor is it less evident that *redemption*also is the work of his hands: for he formed the plan alone, and executed it without the creature's aid. He sent his Son; and qualified him for his office; and upheld him in it. He laid our iniquities on him; and accepted his vicarious sacrifice; and commissioned his Apostles to declare these tidings to the world. All this is plainly asserted in the passage before us; from which we shall,

***~~I. Show what God has done to save us—~~***

There are two things particularly specified in the text:

***~~1. He has wrought salvation for us—~~***

Man in innocence walked with God as a friend; but, as soon as he had fallen, shunned his presence, and fled from him as an enemy. Since that time "the carnal and unrenewed mind has been in a state of enmity against God;" and all the children of men have shown themselves "enemies to God in their minds by wicked works."

To effect a reconciliation for themselves was impossible: but God, in his infinite mercy, opened a way for their restoration to his favor. He assumed our nature, and, in the person of Jesus Christ, became our substitute and surety; that, by his own obedience to the law which we had broken, and his enduring of the penalties which we had incurred, he might make satisfaction to his injured justice, and pardon us without any dishonor to himself. By this means "he has reconciled the world unto himself;" "nor will he impute to any their trespasses," if they will accept the reconciliation which he offers them.

***~~2. He has sent salvation to us—~~***

God has in every age raised up men to whom "he has committed the word of reconciliation," on purpose that they might publish it to their fellow-creatures. He has not committed it to angels, whose presence would confound us, and who, from their never having tasted the bitterness of sin, would probably be unable to sympathize with us. Hut he has appointed those to speak to us, who are "encompassed with the same infirmities," and who need the same forgiveness, as ourselves. To these "he has given the ministry of reconciliation." He sends them forth, not to tell men how to purchase his favor, or how (as the common expression is) to make their peace with God; but to inform them, that "Christ is our peace," and that "God, for Christ's sake, is ready to forgive us all our trespasses." This is the sum and substance of the Gospel. This is the "treasure which God has put into us earthen vessels," for the enriching of the poor, and the saving of the lost. And, in having thus sent the tidings of salvation home to our own doors, he has done what will leave us without excuse for ever.

That such grace may not be displayed in vain, let us,

***~~II. Urge you to accept salvation—~~***

The message we are commissioned to deliver to you, is, "Be reconciled to God"—

Acknowledge that you have indeed been enemies to God. Surely none of us can doubt whether such have been our state. Let us only look back upon our violations of his law, and they will bear ample testimony to this melancholy truth.

Being convinced of your enmity against God, be humbled for it in dust and ashes. It is not possible to bewail too deeply the guilt which you have contracted.

Be careful to seek reconciliation with God in the way which he has pointed out. Beware of attempting to make satisfaction, as it were, for your sins; for you owe ten thousand talents, and cannot pay one single mite! God in Christ has taken your debt upon himself; and he is willing "frankly to forgive you all." Go to him then, and receive mercy at his hands "without money, and without price!

Some have thought that because we are called upon to be reconciled to God, the enmity exists only on our part. But a multitude of passages that represent God as "angry with the wicked every day!"

***~~As ambassadors of Christ we would urge our suit with befitting earnestness—~~***

Though we are neither inspired, nor empowered to work miracles, like the Apostles of old—yet are we truly "ambassadors from Christ" to a guilty world; and we come in his name and stead to deal with you respecting peace with God. We proclaim an eternal amnesty, if you return to your allegiance: and though, as God's representatives, we might command, yet, after Christ's example, "we beseech you to be reconciled to God."

And is this an unreasonable request? Is it not, on the contrary, most reasonable that you would be reconciled to him, who never rendered anything to you but good, in return for all the evil you have done against him? Is it not madness to continue in rebellion against him, who must prevail at last? And is it not better to bow to the scepter of his grace, than to be "broken in pieces with his rod of iron?"

What would you reply, if God would entreat you by a voice from Heaven? Would you still refuse? Know then, that "God himself beseeches you by us;" and if you continue to pour contempt on this mercy, your punishment will be great indeed!

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

What account now shall we give to him who sent us? Must we return and say, "Lord, we have spoken to them; but they will not hear; we have invited; but they all begin with one consent to make excuse?" O think with yourselves, how soon "this day of acceptance and salvation" may be passed; and how aggravated will be your condemnation, if you reject these overtures of mercy!

Let not our embassy be unsuccessful; but be prevailed upon to "seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near." Remember however that, if you are restored to God's favor, you must also be reconciled to his government. Tou must not assume a subject's name, and retain a rebel's heart: if you "name the name of Christ, you must depart from all iniquity!"

***~~#2023~~***

***~~THE WAY OF RECONCILIATION WITH GOD~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.21)~~***

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God in him."

A MORE important question cannot be asked than this:*"How shall man be just with God?"*In the words before us, that question is resolved. The Apostle has before declared in more general terms, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

But in our text he enters more particularly into the subject, and informs us, that, in order to effect a reconciliation between our offended God and us, God caused a *double transfer*to be made; first, of our sins to Christ, that they might be punished in him; and next, of Christ's righteousness to us, that it might be rewarded in us, and that we might be accepted through it. This doctrine of the mutual transfer of our sins to Christ, and Christ's righteousness to us, being not generally understood, we will,

***~~I. Explain it—~~***

Two things are to be explained:

***~~1. The imputation of our sins to Christ—~~***

It is an undoubted fact, that the Lord Jesus Christ died under the curse of God's broken law. But was he himself a sinner? No! in him was no sin. Both in his Divine and human nature he was perfectly holy: and he was able to appeal to his bitterest enemies, "Which of you convicts me of sin?" Indeed, if he had had sin himself, he could not have atoned for our sins. The lamb that was slain at the Passover was to be without spot or blemish—and such was Christ, after the fullest possible examination, proclaimed to be innocent by the very judge who condemned him. It was for our sins that he died: they were laid upon him by his own consent, that they might be punished in him, and that through his vicarious sacrifice we might be absolved.

This will be best understood by the sacrifices which were offered under the law. The person who had sinned was exposed to the wrath of his offended God. But by God's appointment he brought an offering, a bullock or a young goad, and, after putting his hands upon the head of his offering in token of his transferring his guilt to it, the victim was slain in his stead, and he was absolved from his guilt. The particular command, that the offender would put his hand on the head of his offering, place beyond all reasonable doubt the point we are insisting on, [Leviticus 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 4.4); [Leviticus 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 4.15); [Leviticus 4:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 4.24); [Leviticus 4:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 4.29). See also particularly [Leviticus 16:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 16.21-22).

***~~2. The imputation of Christ's righteousness to us—~~***

Man, though forgiven, was still incapable of fulfilling perfectly in future the law of God, and consequently was incapable of working out a righteousness wherein he could stand before God. A righteousness therefore was provided for him fully adequate to all the demands of God's holy law, even the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by his own obedience unto death, not only "made an end of sin, and reconciliation for iniquity, but brought in also an everlasting righteousness! [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24)," which is "unto all, and upon all those who believe in him, [Romans 3:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.21-22)." It is on this account that he is called, "The Lord our righteousness."

Thus, "He is made righteousness unto us," and we are made, as our text expresses it, "the righteousness of God in him." It is not to be expected that this would be capable of such illustration as the former point, because nothing similar to it ever did, or could, exist: yet we may behold something of the kind in the very sacrifices which were first offered. We are informed, that, after their fall, our first parents "sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons," because by their sin they had made themselves naked, to their shame. But God, we are told, "made coats of skins, and clothed them, [Genesis 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.7); [Genesis 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.21)." If it is asked, of what beasts were these skins? We answer, of those beasts which God had previously appointed to be offered in sacrifice to him: (for, if this was not the time when sacrifices were ordained, we have no account whatever of their first institution, notwithstanding they were undoubtedly of Divine origin,) and the very beasts which died as sacrifices for their sins, provided them also with clothing to cover their nakedness.

Thus the Lord Jesus by his death atones for our sins, and by his righteousness clothes us as with an unspotted robe, in which we stand before our God without spot or blemish! [Isaiah 61:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.10).

But as this doctrine is disputed by many, we will proceed to,

***~~II. Vindicate it—~~***

Some deny this doctrine as unscriptural, while others abuse it to licentiousness: but against all we will vindicate it as the only true way of reconciliation with God: against,

***~~1. The proud infidel—~~***

One will say, this doctrine of a mutual transfer is not agreeable to my reason. But reason is not competent to judge of these matters. This is a point of pure revelation: and the office of reason in relation to it is, not to sit in judgment upon it, but to inquire whether it is revealed in Scripture: and, if it is, then is it to be assented to as true, whether we can comprehend it or not. But it is not at all repugnant to reason.

We see daily somewhat of a similar nature transacted before our eyes. A man has made himself surety for his friend; that friend becomes insolvent; and his debt is required at the hands of his surety. If it is not discharged, the surety is imprisoned: but if the surety discharges the debt, the original debtor has no further claim made upon him.

Thus do reason and experience fully sanction the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, and the liberation of the guilty through the sufferings of the innocent. And that this is the way for man's reconciliation with God, is abundantly testified throughout all the inspired writings. That the types are all founded in this notion, has already appeared: and the prophecies declare the same with one voice. No one can read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and doubt of this truth. "All our iniquities were laid upon him," "he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed."

The New Testament speaks the same language throughout: "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree," and "suffered, the just for the unjust, [1 Peter 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.24); [1 Peter 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.18)." Here there is a substitution of Christ in the place of sinners: just as it is said, that perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die; that is, would die in his place, in order to preserve his life. Just so Christ died for, and in the place of, the ungodly, that by his own death he might preserve them from everlasting death! [Romans 5:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.6-8). Yes, however the scoffing infidel may deride these things, they are the very truth of God; nor is there any other way of reconciliation for any child of man.

***~~2. The self-righteous Pharisee—~~***

Many will admit that Christ died for sinners, who yet cannot receive the idea of his righteousness being imputed to them for their justification before God. They think that, though Christ by his death atoned for our sins, we are to procure for ourselves a title to Heaven by a righteousness of our own. But this cannot be; for it would give to man a ground of glorying before God, when God has expressly said that all boasting is excluded by the Gospel, and that men must glory in Christ alone.

This was the great error of the *Pharisees*of old; and it proved a stumbling-block to them to their everlasting ruin, [Romans 9:31-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.31-33); [Romans 10:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.1-2). This is the great error of the *Papists*also, and, more than all other things, contributed to stir up the more enlightened part of the Christian world to separate themselves from the corruptions of the Church of Rome.

Happy would it be, if many, who call themselves Protestants, did not in this matter go back again to the heresies which they profess to have renounced! But however pertinaciously men cling to the covenant of works, they never can obtain salvation by it: they must lay hold on the covenant of grace: they must renounce their own righteousness, even as the Apostle Paul himself did, and seek for acceptance by Christ's righteousness alone, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9); "in Christ shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory, [Isaiah 45:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.25)."

***~~3. The Antinomian professor—~~***

There are, it must be confessed, some who abuse the doctrine of our text, and maintain, that, because Christ is our righteousness, we need no righteousness of our own. They acknowledge indeed that Christ is our sanctification: but they suppose that his sanctification is imputed to us in the same way as his righteousness. But this is contrary both to reason and Scripture; for *sanctification necessarily implies a change both of heart and life*.

We may easily conceive righteousness to be imputed, and that persons not righteous in themselves, may be dealt with as righteous on account of the righteousness of another: but it is not possible that a person can be *made inwardly holy*by the holiness of another, any more than a dead tree can be made a fruitful one by having the fruit of another tree suspended on it.

The Scripture universally requires us to be daily putting off the old man and putting on the new. If real and radical holiness is not required of us, why is it so strongly and so continually inculcated throughout all the apostolic writings? Of those who deny that the law is to the believer a rule of life, we would ask one question: What does the law require which the Gospel does not? The law requires us to love God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves; and what does the Gospel require less? What part of our duty does it dispense with? Alas! it is a fatal error to imagine that holiness is not as necessary now, as formerly. Were this true, Christ would actually be a minister of sin, in that he would be vacating the obligations of God's law, which is as immutable as God himself.

For our justification, it is true, we do not need any righteousness of our own; and if we were to attempt to unite our righteousness to that of Christ, we would make void the whole Gospel; and Christ would have died in vain so far as we are concerned. But to attest the reality of our faith, and manifest our love to Christ; to glorify our God on earth, and obtain a fitness for Heaven, holiness is absolutely indispensable; and if we cultivate it not, even universal holiness of heart and life, we shall never see the kingdom of God.

Having thus endeavored to establish the doctrine of our text, we proceed,

***~~III. To improve it—~~***

***~~1. Let no man despair of mercy—~~***

What can any person want in order to his reconciliation with God, which has not been already wrought? There is a perfect atonement for your sins, and a perfect righteousness for your justification; and the benefits of both are offered you freely, without money and without price. All that is necessary to your reconciliation on God's part, is already done by Jesus Christ: and all that remains to be done on your part, is to receive gratefully what God offers freely.

Truly this is, if I may so call it, the religion of a sinner: it is suited to sinners of every class: and wherever it is received in truth, it shall prove effectual for our present peace with God, and our everlasting salvation.

***~~2. Let no man attempt to alter the plan which God himself has devised—~~***

We are ever leaning to the side of self-righteousness. But the righteousness which God imputes to us is, and ever must be, "a righteousness without works, [Romans 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.6)." We must be justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Why would we wish to alter this? What is it less than madness for a person destitute of one single farthing, to undertake to pay ten thousand talents, when he may be freely forgiven his whole debt? Be content to be indebted wholly to the grace of God and the mediation of the Lord Jesus: and let God alone be exalted in your salvation.

***~~3. Let all who embrace this salvation endeavor to adorn it by a holy life—~~***

This is the duty of all, and the privilege of all; this is what "the grace of God teaches us;" and it is a most important end of our union with Christ, [Romans 7:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.4). Are you reconciled to God? Then endeavor henceforth to manifest your friendship towards him in every possible way. Do not think much of anything you are called either to do or suffer for his sake. Can anything be too much to do for one who has done so much for you, or to suffer for one who has suffered so much for you?

If a man will lay down his life for an earthly friend, of how small account would you reckon any temporal interests, or even life itself, for such a friend as this?

Seek to know more and more of this stupendous mystery revealed in our text: and, while you are filled by it with rapturous admiration, give full scope to all its transforming efficacy, until it has changed you into the very image of your God!

***~~#2024~~***

***~~THE GRACE OF GOD NOT TO BE RECEIVED IN VAIN~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 6:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.1-2)~~***

"As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation."

"THE grace of God," mentioned in the words before us, is the same with that which in the preceding context is called "the word of reconciliation:" it is the declaration, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is elsewhere called, "the Gospel of the grace of God;" and a wonderful display of divine grace it is: because from the first devising of this plan of reconciliation in his eternal counsels, to the last bestowment of its blessings on any child of man, it is altogether of grace: grace laid the foundation; grace raised the superstructure; and, when the head-stone shall be brought forth, the universal shout will be, "Grace, grace unto it! [Zechariah 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.7)."

In bringing men into a state of reconciliation with God, we ministers are fellow-laborers with God, [1 Corinthians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.9) with the text. Not that we do, or ever can do, anything towards perfecting the work of Christ; (that was finished by him upon the cross, when he offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world,) but we are ambassadors from God, and speak to men in Christ's stead, and thus are "workers together with God:" and in this character we beseech you, as the Apostle did the Corinthians, "not to receive the grace of God in vain."

That we may proceed agreeably to the example set before us in our text, we shall consider,

***~~I. The exhortation here given—~~***

And here we shall separately notice,

***~~1. The subject-matter of it: "Receive not the grace of God in vain"—~~***

*The generality of those to whom the word of reconciliation comes, hear it to no purpose.* Many pay no attention at all to it, but, like Gallio of old, care for none of these things. Many hate it, and oppose it with all their might; either regarding it as foolishness, through their philosophic pride, or making it a stumbling-block, through their self-righteous habits. To all such it comes in vain, or rather, worse than in vain, seeing that it proves to them a savor of death to their more aggravated condemnation. In truth, all receive it in vain, who do not welcome it into their hearts, and conform to it in their lives. O that it might be embraced thus by all to whom it now comes! Receive it, brethren, as the most stupendous effort of Divine Wisdom for the salvation of your souls.

***~~2. The manner of it: "We, as workers together with God, beseech you"—~~***

We come not in our own name, when we announce these glad tidings, but in the name of our God and Savior. We have no private ends to accomplish: it is the work of God, and that only, that we endeavor to advance: we have the same end in view that God himself had, when he sent his only dear Son into the world; the same that Christ had, when he died upon the cross: the ministry of reconciliation is committed to us; and, in the exercise of this ministry, "we are fellow-workers with God."

In this capacity we might *command*you all: but we choose rather, like the Apostle, to use the language of *entreaty*: yes, "We beseech you;" in the very name and stead of Christ himself, we beseech you, that you receive not this grace in vain. If you will not listen to us, listen to that God in whose name we speak; and, if you will not bow to his commands, resist not his entreaties; for it is he himself who beseeches you, by our mouth, "Be reconciled to God!"

To impress this exhortation the more deeply on your minds, We will call your attention to,

***~~II. The considerations by which it is enforced—~~***

The Apostle urges his request:

***~~1. From the written word—~~***

"Whatever was written aforetime, was written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Every promise of God throughout the Bible has a general aspect upon the Church of God, and, in the spirit of it, may be applied to individuals of the present day, as well as to those to whom it was more immediately addressed. Compare [Joshua 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 1.5) with [Hebrews 13:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.5-6). The promise before us was primarily addressed to the Messiah, assuring him of success among the Gentiles, [Isaiah 49:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.8); but it is also fitly applicable to us; because all the blessings promised to the Head, belong also to all the members of his mystical body. To him this promise was fulfilled: in every time of need he was succored; and in due season he was exalted above all his enemies: and so shall it be to us also, if we embrace his offered salvation. What a delightful thought is this, that the very promise which was made to Christ, and fulfilled in him, is made to us, and shall be fulfilled in us! What an encouragement is this to receive the grace of God aright, when we are thus assured of the very same assistances and triumphs as Christ himself enjoyed!

***~~2. From his own inspired comment upon it—~~***

The accepted time, the day of salvation, was then come to the Gentile world; and we may say with truth that it is come to us also. It is come to us, because the word of reconciliation now sounds in our ears, and is proclaimed to us in the name of God himself. How long this shall continue we know not. We know that the candlestick has long since been removed from Churches, where the light of the Gospel once shone as with meridian brightness: and how soon it may be removed from us, who can tell? But it does now shine, and the grace of God is displayed among us in all its freeness, and in all its fullness. We are authorized therefore to say with full assurance, that it is now the accepted time respecting you.

But further, it is the accepted time with you, because you are yet here to receive these tidings. With multitudes who once heard the word of reconciliation, the day of grace is passed: they are now gone into that world where offers of mercy are never sent. And how soon may this be the case with you! Many who, but a year ago, were as likely to live as you, have been summoned into the presence of their God in the past year; and many who are now in health will, before another year, be called to follow them. But who they shall be we know not: the young and vigorous have no more security than the weak and sickly: it is of the present hour only that we can speak with any measure of certainty; and it is of that only that we can say, "It is the day of salvation." But it is possible that you may still be preserved in life, and the Gospel be yet sounding in your ears, and your day of salvation may have actually already come to a close. We may, by our obstinate rejection of mercy, provoke God to withdraw his Holy Spirit, who alone can make those offers effectual for our good. He has said, that "his Spirit shall not always strive with man:" and when he sees us obstinately bent on our own evil ways, he may say of us, as he did of Israel of old, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone!" He has given us many solemn warnings on this subject, [Proverbs 1:23-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 1.23-31), and many fearful examples of the judgment actually inflicted, [Hebrews 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 3.11); [Hebrews 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 3.18-19). [Luke 14:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 14.24). Surely, this should lead us all to "seek the Lord" while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near. May the Lord grant that we may know the day of our visitation, and "seek the things belonging to our peace, before they be for ever hidden from our eyes!"

***~~That this subject may be yet further impressed upon your minds, consider,~~***

***~~1. How wonderful this grace is—~~***

The more we consider the gift of God's only-begotten Son to assume our nature, and to expiate our guilt by his own blood—the more shall we be lost in wonder, love, and praise! And shall all this be done in vain? Shall he become sin for us, and we not seek to be made the righteousness of God in him?

***~~2. How awful will be the consequence of rejecting it—~~***

Happier will Tyre and Sidon, yes, and Sodom and Gomorrah, be in the day of judgment, than those who hear and make light of these overtures of reconciliation. Think of those solemn words, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?"

***~~3. How truly blessed they are who receive the grace of God in truth—~~***

Well does the Psalmist say, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound!" Truly, they are beyond expression, and beyond conception, blessed! In this world, their "peace passes all understanding," and their "joy is unspeakable and full of glory:" but their portion in the world to come—who shall declare! An archangel would in vain attempt to give it utterance. And shall all this belong to those who accept God's offers of reconciliation aright? Let not one of you delay to flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you.

***~~#2025~~***

***~~THE CHARACTER OF A CHRISTIAN MINISTER~~***

**[2 Corinthians 6:4-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.4-10)**

"Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything."

WHAT a portrait is here drawn! Was there ever, from the foundation of the world, an uninspired man that could pour forth an extemporaneous effusion like unto this? By much study, a man of deep thought may broaden a subject, and distribute it into a great variety of minute particulars: but the passage before us smells not of the lamp: it savors not of scientific arrangement: it is no labored accumulation of particulars, brought forward in order to display a fund of learning, or to exhibit the resources of ingenuity. It is an effusion out of the fullness of a heart devoted to the Lord, of a heart enlarged in the service of mankind.

To enter minutely into the different expressions here brought before you, would be unprofitable in a public discourse. It is by taking the passage in the aggregate, as one vast compendious whole, that we shall best consult the edification of your souls. It refers primarily, no doubt, to Paul himself: but, improved in the way I propose, it will be of essential benefit to the whole Christian world: for which end, I shall take occasion, from it, *to set before you the ministerial office.*

***~~I. As executed by Paul—~~***

His whole life, after his conversion to Christianity, was one continued scene of "afflictions," to which he submitted with unconquerable "patience." Those two words ("afflictions" and "patience") may be considered as comprehending the whole, which in all that follows is branched out into a variety of particulars. Bearing that in remembrance, there will be found a climax throughout the whole. It will be proper to notice,

***~~1. The circumstances in which he was placed—~~***

He was in one continual state of trial, as arising from different sources. Mark his trials; first, as arising from the occurrences of every day: he was often in such "necessities," as to lack everything that was needful for the body, and to suffer much from hunger and cold and nakedness: his "distresses," too, were often of so embarrassing a nature, that he knew not how to extricate himself from them.

Mark them, next, as arising from the treatment he met with: multitudes were embittered against him to the last degree; sometimes loading him with "stripes;" at other times tormenting him with "imprisonments;" and at other times raging against him with such "tumults," that he was literally in danger of being torn in pieces by his infuriated enemies!

Mark them—yet further, as arising from his own zeal in the discharge of his high office. His "labors," and "watchings," and "fastings," were doubtless sometimes imposed upon him by necessity; but they were also sometimes voluntarily undertaken, for the advancement of God's work in his own soul, and for the furthering, by means of more fervent intercession, the glorious cause he had undertaken to promote.

Now let us turn our attention to,

***~~2. The manner in which he conducted himself under them—~~***

On this he dilates, with a richness and a copiousness unrivaled perhaps in the whole world. He speaks of his patience under these diversified trials, and of his deportment under them; first, in a way of active exertion. He was careful, above all things, that no one would have cause to impeach the "pureness" of his principles; and he strove to act with such judgment, that his "knowledge" of God's will would be evident to all, and be exercised to the uttermost, for the benefit of all.

At the same time, he took care, by his "long-suffering," to show that he could not easily be stimulated to resentment against his persecutors: on the contrary, he lost no opportunity of requiting by "kindness" the injuries they inflicted; evincing, by this, that he was under the influence of "the Holy Spirit," and actuated altogether by "sincere love" to every child of man. "The word of truth" was constantly upon his lips; and it was attended always, in a greater or less degree, by "the power of God" to the souls of men: while, in consequence of being clad with "the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left," he was enabled to defy all the assaults, whether of men or devils.

At the same time, he manifested his superiority to all his difficulties, in a way of patient submission.

Passing through "honor and dishonor," he showed that he was neither elated with the one, nor depressed with the other. With some he was an object of "evil report," and with others of "good report;" some calumniating him in every possible way; and others exalting his character in terms of the highest approbation: but he was alike unmoved both by the one and the other.

What if he was accounted a "deceiver," who took advantage of the weakness or wickedness of others, to impose upon them, and thereby to advance his own interests? This did not move him, while he knew himself to be "true," and a faithful minister of the truths which he had been commissioned to declare.

The proud looked down upon him with contempt, as one altogether "unknown," and unworthy of regard; while, in fact, he was "well known" by the many blessings which he imparted wherever he went.

It was supposed, inasmuch as he was "dying" daily, that his course would soon be finished: but yet, contrary to all human expectation, though sometimes left for dead, he was "yet alive." He was "chastened" with all imaginable severity by magistrates, on different occasions; yet was he "not killed."

Viewed according to his outward appearance, he was in a most "sorrowful" condition; yet was he, in reality, "always rejoicing" in the testimony of a good conscience, and in the favor of his God.

He was "poor," no doubt, and bereft at times even of the most common necessities of life; but yet, in the whole course of his ministry, he was "making many rich," yes, richer far than all the monarchs upon earth could ever make them.

Finally, he was as one "having nothing;" and yet, both as to his present enjoyments and future prospects, he was as one "possessing all things;" so that, if the whole world could be given him, it would not add one atom to his wealth.

What a surprising description is this! How remote from all the conceptions of the natural man! Yet how exactly suited to the experience of every faithful minister on earth!

Leaving now these views of the Apostle's ministry to the contemplation of those who are called to minister in holy things, I will proceed to speak of it,

***~~II. As appointed for us—~~***

Let us conceive of the Apostle as set apart to this office by Almighty God, and, as informed, at the very time of his appointment to it, "how great things he would suffer" for his Master's sake; and let us further bear in mind, that all who are in every age ordained to the office of the ministry are called to a measure of the same experience; and how strongly will it impress our minds with,

***~~1. The exceeding great value of the soul—~~***

The souls of men were "perishing for lack of knowledge." God, in his mercy, determined to set apart an order of men to instruct them, and to guide them into all truth. But the wickedness of men would "not endure sound doctrine:" they would hate the light, and endeavor to extinguish it, wherever it would appear. This, however, would tend rather to the furtherance, than to the obstruction, of God's gracious purposes. It would tend to complete the work of his grace in the souls of his servants, whom he would thus send forth; and it would serve to illustrate the power of his grace, in upholding them under circumstances of such peculiar trial.

Conceive now of persons so separated and so appointed, in every age, for the benefit of mankind; and what an idea will it give us of the value of their souls! What! shall strangers, unconnected with the world, except as being partakers of the same nature, be raised up to devote themselves to such labors, and to undergo such sufferings for us? to warn us, instruct us, encourage us, and lead us into the way of peace?

Truly, then, the interests of an immortal soul are not of so little importance as the world at large seem to imagine. Indeed, brethren, if we are bound, by our high office, to live as the Apostle lived, and in the whole of our ministerial career to follow him for the benefit of your souls—it can never be that you would be at liberty to neglect your own souls, or to manifest less concern for yourselves, than we are to exercise for you. Doubtless, that which most marks the value of an immortal soul, is the gift of God's only-begotten Son to die for you. But next to that, is the appointment of an order of men, who are to go with their lives in their hands, and endure all that an ungrateful world can inflict, for the purpose of "turning you from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

Read carefully the text in this view; and then say, "He did all this for me, and suffered all this for me: and then you will see what is that measure of zeal which you are called to exercise for your own souls!

***~~2. The true nature of the Christian warfare—~~***

There was nothing in the Apostle's experience which we ourselves are not, according to our measure, called to undergo: and we ourselves must approve ourselves servants of God, precisely in the same way as he "approved himself a minister." In degree, our trials may differ from his; but in substance they will be the same. We may not be called to stripes and imprisonments for the Lord's sake: but we should be prepared for them, if it would please God that persecution would rage against his Church, as it has done, not in the apostolic age only, but in ages not very remote from that in which we live; and in this country too, not less than in other kingdoms. But whatever be the measure of our trials, our spirit must be the same as his. We must be proof against all the assaults of our enemies; "not being overcome of evil, but overcoming evil with good."

As to all the contempt that shall be poured upon us, or the privations we may be called to undergo, they must be as nothing in our eyes, by reason of our enjoyment of the Divine presence that bears us up above them, and our prospect of the Divine glory, that will compensate for all the labor or suffering that ever we could endure, if our lives were protracted for ten thousand years.

The Apostle expressly calls upon us to follow him: and to "be imitators of him, even as he was of Christ, [1 Corinthians 10:32-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.32-33) with 11:1." And I would call on every one of you to set before your eyes the pattern as it is here drawn; and to aspire after the highest conformity to it that God shall enable you to attain.

***~~3. The great blessing of a faithful ministry—~~***

What would the world have been, if no such persons as the Apostle had been raised up to instruct them? See what the heathen were, as described by Paul in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans; and what the Jews themselves were, as described in the second chapter. Or see what heathen countries are at this day, yes, and Christian countries too, where the Gospel is not preached with fidelity and power. Then look at the Churches formed by the Apostles, and at Churches even at this day, where Christ is preached in sincerity and truth. This will show how great a blessing is a faithful ministry.

But let us go no further than to the Apostle Paul; and compare his picture as drawn previous to his conversion, with that which is drawn in the passage before us: does not the difference strike us as truly wonderful? Yet it was all formed by the grace of God operating upon his soul, through the principles he had imbibed.

Permit me to say, that I consider my ministry as of no use, any further than it operates to the production of the same change in you. If it have wrought on any to their conversion, let them be thankful for it; and strive more and more to show its power, by an entire conformity to the Apostle both in heart and life. But if it has not, (and how many of you are there that are in this awful predicament!) remember your sad responsibility to God; and tremble, lest that, which God has sent you for your salvation, prove only an occasion of your more aggravated condemnation!

***~~#2026~~***

***~~PARADOXICAL EXPERIENCE~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.10)~~***

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

THEY who form their opinions on mere outward appearances, will almost invariably err. But in nothing will they be more mistaken, than in their judgment of the Christian state. The experience of one that is converted to God is a perfect paradox: and those who are strangers to it, evince that they yet need to learn the very first principles of true religion.

Paul is enumerating a great variety of things whereby he had "approved himself a faithful minister of God:" and after a multitude of other paradoxes, he comes at last to those in the text. Doubtless, they had a more immediate reference to his own state, and, in some points of view, were applicable to him alone: but in other respects, they are equally true of "all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

We shall take occasion from these words to show,

***~~I. How poor the Christian is in himself—~~***

The bitter persecutions, the painful needs, and the continued load of care, under which the Apostle labored, might well make him sorrowful. But if we drink not of his cup in these respects, there yet are other grounds on which we may be called, like the Laodiceans, "wretched, and miserable, and poor! [Revelation 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.17)."

***~~1. We are destitute of all that is truly desirable—~~***

The man who lacks all the necessities of life, does not feel himself more destitute than the Christian.

How poor is he who has no righteousness to justify him before God! Yet the Christian has none in himself; he has nothing whereon he can rely, no, not any more than the fallen angels themselves, [Isaiah 64:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.6).

How poor is he who has no strength whereby to serve God! Yet this is the Christian's condition. If the thinking of a good thought would save him, he has not of himself a sufficiency to do it, 2 Corinthians 3:5.

How poor is he who has no wisdom to guide him one step of his way towards Heaven! Yet thus destitute is the Christian. If he would in any one instance lean to his own understanding, he would as surely err, as if he would attempt blindfold to explore the most intricate path, [Jeremiah 10:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 10.23), [Proverbs 3:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 3.5-6).

In short if he had attained the eminence of Paul himself, he still must say, "In me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing, [Romans 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.18)."

***~~2. We have continual cause of sorrow—~~***

Numberless are the conflicts which the Christian has to maintain with his indwelling corruptions: and too frequently he receives a wound that fills him with the acutest anguish! [Romans 7:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.23).

Many are the seasons too when his soul is "in heaviness through manifold temptations, [1 Peter 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.6);" and when, through the hidings of God's face, he "walks in darkness and has no light, [Psalm 88:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 88.14-16)."

Supposing him ever so free from persecution, still he has in these things abundant reason for grief. Well may he on these accounts exclaim, with the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am! [Romans 7:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.24)."

But the Christian's poverty is rather a subordinate point in the text; we therefore pass on to show more fully,

***~~II. How rich he is in Christ—~~***

With respect to this, every Christian is on the same footing with the Apostle himself:

***~~1. He has an inexhaustible fullness of all good—~~***

Is not he rich, who has reconciliation with God; and that has "all his iniquities cast into the depths of the sea?"

Is not he rich, who has liberty of access to God at all times, and who can obtain, day and night, the manifestations of his presence, and the testimonies of his love?

Is not he rich, who, besides the present aids and consolations of God's Spirit, has an assured prospect of eternal happiness and glory?

Yet this, and more than this, does the Christian possess in Christ. "All things are his, when he is Christ's! [1 Corinthians 3:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.21-23)." He is "complete in Christ, [Colossians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.10);" he is "enriched with unsearchable riches, [Ephesians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.8);" and "blessed with all spiritual and eternal blessings, [Ephesians 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.3)."

Compare with these things all the wealth of kingdoms; and say, whether it is not lighter than vanity itself.

***~~2. He has an incessant ground of joy and glorying—~~***

Let the Christian be in the most afflictive circumstances with respect to the things of time and sense, and yet may he rejoice in Christ!

What an inexpressible comfort must it be to him to contemplate:  
the virtue of Christ's sacrifice,  
the efficacy of his intercession,  
the sufficiency of his grace,  
the extent of his promises,  
and lastly, his inviolable truth and faithfulness!

May not he well adopt the language of the text, "I am sorrowful—yet always rejoicing; having nothing, and yet possessing all things!" Yes; it is his privilege to "rejoice in the Lord always, [Philippians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.4);" and that too, "with joy unspeakable and full of glory! 1 Peter 1:8."

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. What an exalted character is the true Christian!~~***

The men of this world are altogether dependent on outward circumstances for their happiness; and, if their cistern fails, they are bereft of all. But the Christian is independent of everything here below. He may be deprived of health and liberty, of possessions and friends; but nothing can hinder his communion with Christ. Neither men nor devils can intercept the communications of Heaven; which, for the most part, are increased, in proportion as other comforts are withdrawn, [2 Corinthians 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.5).

Let Christians then show by their contempt of this world, that they are born from above; and prove in the midst of all their tribulations, that they possess indeed the magnanimity imputed to them.

***~~2. How pitiable is the state of unconverted men!~~***

If they are poor and afflicted in a temporal view, they have nothing to sustain their drooping spirits.

If, on the contrary, they are rich and mirthful—still their happiness is but empty, transient and delusive. *In a little time they will be poor and miserable beyond conception!*In their very best estate therefore they are objects of pity and compassion. They may possess much, but yet are destitute of all things. They may be often rejoicing, but have continued occasion for grief and sorrow.

O that they were wise, and would consider this! O that they would begin to seek a saving interest in Christ, that through him their state might be reversed, and that they might participate in the Christian's blessed lot!

***~~3. What a blessed work is that of the ministry!~~***

The Apostle gloried in this, that "though poor, he made many rich." And is not this the one intent of our ministry? Is it not that for which we were consecrated to the service of the sanctuary? Has the Christian preacher no better end in view than to display his talents, and obtain applause? Surely, if we have been anointed with a heavenly unction, and ever learned the true nature of our office—our only desire is to "win souls:" and, as that is the scope of our labors, so, when we behold one and another coming to the possession of the true riches, we consider our success as the most glorious of all rewards! [1 Thessalonians 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.19-20).

O that every minister might view his office in this light; and every faithful preacher be thus recompensed for his labors!

***~~#2027~~***

***~~EFFECTS OF THE GOSPEL IN ENLARGING THE HEART~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 6:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.11-13)~~***

"We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also."

THE ministers of the Gospel sustain an office characterized in Scripture by the most exalted terms. They are ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ: they address men in the name, and in the very place, of God himself, [2 Corinthians 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.20); and they are in this respect fellow-workers with God, verse 1.

But, though they are at liberty, and indeed are bound, to "magnify their office, [Romans 11:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.13)," they are not at liberty to magnify themselves: nor, indeed, will they be disposed to do so: they know, that, while they bear for the good of others an inestimable "treasure, they are themselves but earthen vessels, [2 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.7);" and, if they glory at all, they can "glory only of their infirmities," by means of which the Lord Jesus Christ is honored, and his work advanced [2 Corinthians 11:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.30).

It is to these that the Apostle, in the passage now under our consideration, refers, as the proofs of his appointment to, and his fidelity in, the apostolic office: and so ample is his enumeration of the difficulties and trials to which he had been subjected in the discharge of his duty, that he apologizes, as it were, for the fullness of his description; and entreats his Corinthian converts to exercise towards him the same disposition which he was at this instant exercising towards them.

The words which we have read to you will afford me occasion to show,

***~~I. How the Gospel enlarges the heart of a faithful minister—~~***

***~~To the servants of Christ is committed the ministry of reconciliation—~~***

In this respect, a common minister is on a par with an Apostle. Paul himself could declare nothing, but that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them:" and those blessed tidings we also are privileged to bear; as we are, also, to "beseech men, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God." And this office I will now perform, hopeful that God may give his blessing to the word, and bring the soul of any one among you into a state of favor and acceptance with himself.

***~~In the discharge of this high office they have many difficulties to encounter—~~***

The Apostle here, with astonishing enlargement, sets them forth, and adduces them as evidences of his fidelity to God and man.

He had "approved himself as a minister of God" in the diversity and intenseness of his sufferings: "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings."

He had approved himself, also, in the whole of his spirit and conduct: "by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."

He had given yet further evidence of his fidelity, in the different kinds of reception he had met with: "by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as a deceiver—yet true; as unknown—yet well known; as dying, yet, behold, he lived; as chastened, yet, contrary to all human expectation, not killed."

Lastly, he had shown himself a true minister of God, in the supports and consolations that had been administered to him: "as sorrowful—yet always rejoicing; as poor—yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

The eloquence of this passage has perhaps never been surpassed: and it proceeded, not from the richness of his imagination, but from the fullness of his heart; as he says: "O Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged."

And were these things peculiar to the Apostle? Has not every faithful minister a measure of the same? What, if we have not to experience bonds and imprisonments, have we not to go "through honor and dishonor; through evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers, and yet true; regarded as unknown—yet well known?" Yes, and under the lowest pressure of adverse circumstances, we trust we can say, "As sorrowful—yet always rejoicing; as poor—yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

But difficulties, of whatever kind, are of no account with them, if only they may be rendered subservient to the progress of the Gospel, and the salvation of immortal souls—

It was not in a way of complaint, and much less in a way of boasting, that the Apostle dilated thus on his experience: no; it was for the purpose of convincing the Corinthians that he longed for their welfare, and accounted not his life dear unto him, if he might by any means promote their eternal happiness. He had himself obtained, by the Gospel, reconciliation with God; and he panted to make them also partakers of the same benefit. This hope it was that made him so indefatigable in all his labors, and so invincible under all his sufferings.

And I may safely say, that the same blessed hope will animate every faithful minister to tread in the Apostle's steps, and to be a follower of him, as he was of Christ.

In this address of Paul to the Corinthians, we yet further see,

***~~II. What reciprocity of feeling he may hope to find among those to whom he ministers—~~***

If this experience attends a faithful ministry of the Gospel, so does it also, in some degree, a faithful reception of it: and if it should be welcomed by the preacher as an evidence of his fidelity, so should it also be welcomed by his hearers as a testimony borne by God himself in their favor. I call you then, beloved, to show a measure of that enlargement which was so conspicuous and unrivaled in the Apostle Paul. To every one of you I say, Resemble him.

***~~1. Let your reception of the Gospel be alike cordial—~~***

It is as worthy of your reception, as it was of his; and will be as rich a source of blessings to you as ever it was to him.

***~~2. Let your devotion to it be alike entire—~~***

See how entirely he devoted himself to God, from the very first moment that the Lord Jesus revealed himself unto him. "He conferred not with flesh and blood." Having asked, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" He knew of no will, but God's; no way, but that which the Lord himself prescribed. Brethren, be alike upright in the service of Him who "has reconciled you to God by the blood of his cross." "You are not your own: you are bought with a price: therefore you must glorify God with your body and your spirit, which are his".

***~~3. Let your zeal for it be alike ardent—~~***

In the whole passage we have read to you, you have heard what labors he undertook, and what sufferings he endured, in order to diffuse the knowledge of that Gospel which he had found so beneficial to his own soul. And shall not "the love of Christ constrain you" also? Shall any labor be accounted too great, or any suffering too severe, if you may be instrumental to the advancing the Redeemer's kingdom upon earth?

***~~4. Let your sacrifices for it be alike welcomed—~~***

By the cross of Christ, in which Paul gloried, "the world was crucified to him, and he unto the world, [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14);" and he regarded all that it contained, just as a man dying on a cross would regard it. Yes, in his Master's service he was ready to welcome martyrdom as an occasion of self-congratulation and joy, [Philippians 2:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.17-18). A noble example! Seek to imitate it, my beloved brethren; and instead of repining at anything you may suffer for the Gospel's sake, "count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations;" and "rejoice, if you are counted worthy to suffer for your Lord's sake".

***~~And now let me, in conclusion, "speak to you as my children"—~~***

Would to God I could say, that "you have never been straitened in us," Alas! we are conscious that in out ministrations we have often been cold and dead. But, on the present occasion, we hope that, in some small degree, we may adopt the Apostle's words; and, "in recompense for the same," we would add with him, "Be also enlarged." Truly, if you had not been "straitened in your own affections," many, many blessings would have flowed down upon you, which yet have been withheld, because you were not sufficiently alive to the importance of the subject propounded to you: You well know, that a vessel with a contracted opening receives but little of the showers of Heaven, in comparison with one that presents to them a wide and expanded orifice: and thus*it fares with many, who, through prejudice or worldly-mindedness, have their hearts almost closed to the glad tidings of the Gospel*.

O that you might henceforth be enlarged, so as to come with minds fully prepared to receive at God's hands all that his dear Son has purchased for you, and all that his own unbounded mercy is ready to bestow!

Come to the house of God as *rebels*that have subjected yourselves to God's heavy displeasure.

Come as *penitents*, imploring mercy at his hands.

Come as *believers*, that are persuaded of the fullness of the salvation provided for you in Christ, and of the willingness of God to bestow it on every believing penitent.

In a word, Come to hear the testimony of God, in the manner, and in the spirit, that Paul went forth to announce it to his hearers. Let but this feeling be reciprocal, (the Lord grant that it may be more and more found in me!) and then we shall not speak in vain, nor will you hear in vain.

***~~#2028~~***

***~~SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD ENJOINED~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 6:14-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.14-18)~~***

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

A MINISTER never appears, to young people especially, in so forbidding an aspect, as when he is circumscribing men's fellowship with the world, and marking with precision the spirit that characterizes the true Christian in relation to the things of time and sense. *Many on such an occasion are ready to account him an enemy to their happiness, and to censure him as a promoter of gloom and melancholy*. But where do we find the Apostle pouring out such copious streams of love, as in the chapter before us? So accumulated were the expressions of his regard, that he thought it almost necessary to apologize for the more than ordinary effusions of his heart: "O Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged." Yet in that very frame of mind did he give the directions in our text.

As a parent in his dying hour would most tenderly guard his children against the temptations which were most likely to draw them aside from the paths of virtue and happiness, so does the Apostle on this occasion instruct and caution his Corinthian converts: and with a measure of the same spirit we would now proceed to the consideration of the subject before us.

That we may bring it before you with the greater clarity, we shall show,

***~~I. What is that separation from the world which Christianity requires—~~***

It must be confessed, that the expressions in our text are often quoted and urged in too unqualified a manner, and without a due consideration of the difference between the heathen world, among whom the Corinthians dwelt, and the professedly Christian world, among whom we dwell. Certainly a greater measure of separation was necessary for them than for us: inasmuch as the dangers to which fellowship with heathen would subject them, were greater than those to which we are exposed by fellowship with those who profess the same faith with ourselves.

Even they were not debarred from the courtesies of social life, [1 Corinthians 10:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.27), nor from some degree of fellowship even with the most ungodly and profane, [1 Corinthians 5:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 5.9-10); much less are we from such a measure of communication with them, as is necessary for the discharge of our civil and social duties. But still we must "not be unequally yoked with them:"

***~~1. We must not have fellowship with them in any of their evil deeds—~~***

It is probable that in the caution here given, the Apostle had some respect to idolatrous ceremonies, and idol feasts, in which a true Christian could not consistently take any part. Being himself "the temple of God, he could not have any communion with idols." Not but that the prohibition must extend also to every kind of evil, as well as to idolatry: for, in another place, the same Apostle speaks of "impurity, and covetousness, and foolish talking, and jesting, as bringing down the wrath of God upon all the children of disobedience;" and then adds, "Be not therefore partakers with them:" and again, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them, [Ephesians 5:3-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.3-7); [Ephesians 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.11)."

This therefore is a law unto us, and to the Church of God in all ages, that, *though we may to a certain degree unite with ungodly men in things that are indifferent, we must not unite with them in anything that is evil, however much it may be sanctioned by the customs and usages of the world: "we must not follow a multitude to do evil."*

***~~2. We must not form any close connection with them—~~***

Under the law, men were forbidden to sow their fields with different kinds of seed, or to wear clothes that were formed of different kinds of materials, as of woollen and linen: nor were they to yoke together an ox, which was a clean animal, with a donkey, which was unclean, [Deuteronomy 22:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 22.9-11). The import of these different laws was the same: they were all intended to intimate, that in the Lord's people there would be a perfect simplicity of mind, and an entire freedom from all mixture of evil.

It is to the yoking of the clean and unclean together, that the Apostle refers in our text: and his illustration of it is beautiful. He represents believers as the temple of the Lord, in which nothing but what is holy would be found. All the vessels of that temple must be holy; and all the priests that officiate in it must be holy also. In confirmation of this he quotes a passage from the Prophet Isaiah, where the priests in Babylon are enjoined to keep themselves from every species of defilement, in daily and hourly expectation that the order for their return to their own country shall be issued, and that they may be in a fit state to bear the vessels of the Lord, which would be restored by Cyrus for the service of the sanctuary at Jerusalem, [Isaiah 52:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.11). In such a state must all Christians, who are a holy priesthood, keep themselves. If they would please and honor God: they must "come out from among the ungodly, and be separate, and not touch anything that is unclean." They must be in Babylon, until the time of their release from it: but they must keep themselves from all close connection with the people of it, and be in heart and mind as separate as the vessels of the sanctuary are from any profane use.

The Apostle's direction, not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, is justly urged against that most fatal of all connections, the union of a believer with an unbeliever in the indissoluble bonds of marriage. This union on the part of a believer, is to be formed "only in the Lord, [1 Corinthians 7:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 7.39)," and with such a partner as will prove a helpmate for the soul. But the same rule would as far as possible be observed in every other relation of life, so that the spiritual person may not augment his difficulties in the way to Heaven.

***~~3. We must not cultivate any unnecessary intimacy with them—~~***

What is necessary for the discharge of our social duties must, as we have before said, be allowed: yet even that is rather to be submitted to from necessity than be sought from choice. The whole of the Apostle's argument extends to this. He supposes, that, as "the whole world lies in wickedness," *it is almost impossible for a believer to be much in union with it without contracting some defilement*. Hence he says, in reference to all who would divert us from the path of duty, or impede in any way our spiritual progress, "Come out from among them and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing!"

Aware how soon "evil communications will corrupt good manners," his advice is like that of Solomon, "enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men: avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away, [Proverbs 4:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 4.14-15)."

In a word, the true line of conduct seems to be that which a physician would follow in the time of a pestilential disease. He would go among the infected from a sense of duty, and with a desire to do them good: but he would not make them his companions, nor stay longer with them than his duty, and their necessities, required: and both before and after his visit, as well as during his fellowship with them—he would use all proper means to preserve himself from the contagion which he had reason to apprehend.

Such being the separation from the world which Christianity requires, we proceed to show,

***~~II. Whence the necessity for it arises—~~***

On this part of the subject the Apostle speaks very fully: and, because of the perfect conviction of his own mind, he addresses us in a way of appeal, determining to make us judges in our own cause.

Paul supposes the difference between the believer and unbeliever to be as great as between light and darkness, or Christ and Belial. And though this at first appears harsh and extravagant, it is really no exaggeration, if only we consider, that *the one is a partaker of the Divine nature and a child of God, while the other is altogether carnal, a child of disobedience, a child of Satan!* The question then is, What real fellowship can there be between persons so dissimilar? Let any one think what a total difference exists,

***~~1. In their tastes and sentiments—~~***

The believer desires heavenly things. As for the things of time and sense, he is dying to them daily, and allows them to have as little influence as possible upon his mind. He is convinced that everything in this world is lighter than vanity itself; and that the care of the soul is the one thing needful. To have a sense of the Divine presence, and an assured hope of dwelling with God for ever, *to see sin increasingly mortified in his soul, and the image of God progressively advancing there—this is happiness in his estimation*; and it is the only happiness he desires.

But how different are the taste and sentiments of the merely natural man! All of his affections are set on earthly things: nor has he any wish beyond them. If he could have an uninterrupted enjoyment of health, and wealth, and honor, and pleasure—he would wish for no other Heaven: he would be well satisfied with his state, though he had never one glimpse of God's countenance, nor one foretaste of the heavenly glory.

Now we ask: What communion can there be between persons so totally discordant from each other? They live in a different element; and what is life to the one, is to the other death.

***~~2. In their habits and pursuits—~~***

The *believer*delights in the word of God and prayer. Meditation on heavenly things is the very food of his soul. "The life which he now lives in the flesh, he lives by faith in the Son of God, who has loved him and given himself for him." To receive out of his Savior's fullness more abundant communications of grace and peace, and to glorify him more in the midst of a wicked world, this is his daily desire, habit, and pursuit.

But is it thus with the *unbeliever*? Does he appear like a man running in a race, and determined to win the prize? No; there is no resemblance between the two characters: and, if yoked together, their union would be like that of a reptile and a bird: the reptile fetters the bird to the earth, while every motion of the bird, when aspiring after liberty and striving for its usual flights, bothers and pains the reptile: and the sooner a separation is effected, the better will each of them be pleased.

Now these things are by the Apostle made a matter of appeal. And we also appeal to yourselves respecting them: Is there not, in profession at least, this contrariety between the characters, and, as far as the believer acts agreeably to his profession, does it not exist in practice also?

Here then is abundant reason for the separation before spoken of: for it is impossible for the believer to derive either comfort or benefit from a fellowship that damps all his best feelings, and obstructs all his best interests. His true way to be holy and happy is, to "Come out from the world, and be separate, and if possible, not to touch the unclean thing."

Nor will this separation be thought painful, if only we bear in mind—

***~~III. The honor which God will confer on all who steadfastly maintain it—~~***

***~~The people of the world, in order to retain the believer in a state of bondage, hold out to him the benefits of which a separation from them will deprive him—~~***

They tell him of his reputation, which will suffer; and of his interests, which will be impaired by what they call his needless singularity. Perhaps, and indeed not uncommonly, his own parents will be the most forward to discourage him in his heavenly course, and "his greatest foes will be those of his own household."

***~~But the encouragement here afforded him is sufficient to outweigh it all—~~***

What astonishing words are these! "I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." *What need we care about being cast out by men, if we are received by God?*yes, if even disowned and disinherited by earthly parents, what loss do we sustain, if God himself acknowledges us as his sons and daughters, and provides an inheritance for us worthy of that high relation?

Think of the sweet access which a child has to his parent, the delightful confidence he has in his love, and the full assurance he enjoys of all suitable provision in the time of need. This, and infinitely more than this, does the believer enjoy in the presence of his God: and beyond all this he looks forward to an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance. Say, believer, how small are your privations, when such are your enjoyments! how contemptible are your losses, when such are your gains!

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are just entering on the divine life—~~***

Let every one who sets himself to seek his God, prepare his soul for temptation. Yes, beloved, if you will be followers of Christ, you must have some cross to bear. The servant cannot be above his lord: if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they those of his household. Be content then to have it so. Do not imagine that you can ever reconcile the ungodly to the ways of God. If you will maintain friendship with them, you must renounce your friendship with God. "You cannot serve God and Mammon:" and even a wish to do so is in God's estimation constructive treason, [James 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.4). You think perhaps to do them good: but you are infinitely more likely to be injured by them, than to impart any solid benefit to them. See [Haggai 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Haggai 2.12-13). They must come to you; not you to them. To attempt to unite with them is folly and madness. You do not meet on equal terms. There is nothing that they will not say and do to draw you *from*God: but they will not allow you to say or do anything to draw them *to*God. They will propose to you to join with them in their amusements: but if you were to propose to them to join with you in reading the word of God and prayer, they would pronounce you mad! Come out then from among them and be separate, even as your Lord and Savior did. "You are not of the world," says our Lord, "even as I am not of the world." Let this saying be verified in you: and let such be your love to his cross, that by means of it "the world may be crucified unto you, and you unto the world."

***~~2. Those who have made some progress in the Divine life—~~***

Do not imagine that, because the world has not hitherto prevailed to draw you back to them, you need not be on your guard against them. Remember Demas! "Remember Lot's wife!" The world will never cease from their efforts, because, while you walk steadfastly with God, you are a reproach to them. Like Noah, you, by your living faith, and practical fear, "condemn the world." Your own experience will be a sufficient warning to you in the future.

You have doubtless at times been drawn into a closer intimacy with the world than was expedient: and what, I would ask, has been the effect of it? Have you found the same satisfaction in their vanities that you have found in holy exercises? Have you not found that fellowship with them has invariably tended to interrupt your fellowship with God? When you have been walking closely with God, you have known somewhat of what is meant by those words, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them," but have you ever been taught this by communion with the world? Your own conscience will give the best answer to these questions.

Let past experience teach you; for it is in perfect unison with the word of God, that to be "holy, and to be harmless, you must be separate from sinners."

Let your one concern then be, to "present yourselves as living sacrifices unto God, which is your reasonable service." And "be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." And be assured, that if, like the little remnant in the Church of Sardis, you keep your garments undefiled, you shall walk with God in white, approved by him as conquerors, and rewarded with "a crown of glory that fades not away."

***~~#2029~~***

***~~SANCTIFICATION WROUGHT BY THE PROMISES~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.1)~~***

"Having therefore these *promises*, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

CHRISTIANITY, if viewed aright, is a remedy suited to the necessities of fallen man. Man has lost both the favor and the image of God—and the Gospel restores him to both: to his favor first, and afterwards to his image. The promise made to Adam in Paradise, that "the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head," was given without any preparation of heart on Adam's part, yes, altogether unsolicited and unsought. It was, in fact, not given to Adam personally; but was rather a part of the judgment denounced against the serpent that had beguiled him, [Genesis 3:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.14-15).

Thus, in the passage before us, the promises in the close of the preceding chapter are given freely to the sons of men: and the sanctification that follows it, is to be the fruit and effect of the promises apprehended by them, and applied to their souls.

To put this matter in a clear light, we shall show,

***~~I. The nature and extent of the sanctification required of us—~~***

*Sanctification is not a mere removal of evil from the soul, but a positive renovation of the whole man.*It is set forth in our text as,

***~~1. The mortification of all sin—~~***

As man consists of two parts, flesh and spirit, so sin resides in both, and defiles both: and is therefore distinguished into fleshly and spiritual filthiness; the former assimilating us to the beasts, and the latter to that great enemy of God and man, the devil: as our Lord has said, "You are of your father the devil; and the lusts of your father you will do! [John 8:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.44)."

By "the filthiness of the *flesh*," we understand all those sins which take their rise from, and are acted by, the body; as lust, intemperance, sloth.

By "the filthiness of the *spirit*," we understand those sins which are more independent of the body, and have their proper residence in the mind; as pride, envy, malice, anger, revenge; discontent, covetousness, deceit; impenitence, unbelief, and numberless other evils.

But from all of these we are to be cleansed. If one is retained willingly, deliberately, habitually, it will so defile, as utterly to destroy, the soul: as God has said, "If any man defiles the temple of God, him will God destroy, [1 Corinthians 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.17)." It is to no purpose for any to plead that God has given them passions, and that they are not able to restrain them; for God will enable us to restrain them, if we cry to him for help! He has declared, that "his grace shall be sufficient for us."

Neither, on the other hand, must any one think well of himself, merely because he does not indulge any gross corporeal lusts: for he may be "fulfilling the desires of the *mind*to a vast extent," even while he restrains "those of the flesh, [Ephesians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.3);" and the indulgence of spiritual lusts is no less hateful in the sight of God, than the gratifications which are more disgraceful in our eyes.

A proud Christian, a passionate Christian, a discontented Christian, or an unbelieving Christian, is as palpable a contradiction in terms, as a drunken or a lewd Christian. Evil tempers and dispositions of whatever kind must be subdued and mortified; if but one reigns in the soul, we are Christians in name only, and not in deed and in truth: for "those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts, [Galatians 5:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.24)." Would to God that professing Christians would more attentively consider this! It is a grievous mistake to imagine, that any notions however scriptural, or any virtues however specious, will be of any avail, as long as *one*evil temper remains in us unmortified and unsubdued. "If we regard iniquity in our hearts (of whatever kind it be), the Lord will not hear us."

***~~2. The cultivation of universal holiness—~~***

Not contented with "putting off the old man," we are to be continually "putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness:" we are to be "renewed in the spirit of our mind, [Ephesians 4:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.23-24)." This is an expression that deserves to be deeply considered: for it contains the very essence of real sanctification. We must "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, [Romans 13:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.14). [Galatians 3:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.27)," and have in ourselves the very "mind that was in him, [Philippians 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.5)." Mark his every disposition; his delight in God's presence, dependence on his care, and zeal for his glory; his self-denying habits of every kind; and, at the same time, his patience and meekness, his compassion and love towards men, even towards his most inveterate enemies. These are to be the dispositions which we are to cultivate, and in which we are to grow up even to perfection, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Whatever we have attained, we are to "forget it all, and press forward for more, [Philippians 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.13-14)," and to "grow up into him in all things as our living Head, [Ephesians 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.15)."

All this we are to do "in the fear of God." This expression must be particularly marked: for in "the fear of God" the perfection of holiness consists.*By "the fear of God," I understand that tenderness of conscience, and watchfulness of mind, that guards against even a thought which would be displeasing to God.* There is a susceptibility of impression (such as exists in the apple of the eye when touched by the smallest mote in the air), which we would keep alive in our hearts in reference to sin, and have in uninterrupted exercise. In this the Lord Jesus Christ himself pre-eminently excelled, being "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, [Isaiah 11:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.2-3);" and it is by this that God has engaged to perfect his work within us, "causing us to fear him forever," and "putting his fear into our hearts that we may not depart from him, [Jeremiah 32:38-40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.38-40) and [Isaiah 11:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.2-3)." These passages would be carefully noticed and compared in this view.

The fear of God is the crown of all Christian graces and attainments: without which nothing is of any value. It is the lowered tint which marks the ripeness and maturity of our choicest fruit: it is that by which the man of God is perfected, and the image of God is completed in the soul.

The mention of the promises in connection with this, leads me to show,

***~~II. The use of the promises in the production of it—~~***

Peter tells us, that "by the promises we are made partakers of the Divine nature, [2 Peter 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.4);" and to the same effect does Paul speak in the words before us. It is by the promises that we are to accomplish the task assigned us in the text. For this blessed work they are well fitted: for they operate,

***~~1. In a way of motive—~~***

Who can contemplate the promises in the preceding context, and not feel his obligations to Almighty God so great as to outweigh every other consideration under Heaven? Does God promise to "dwell and walk in us" as in his temple? Does he engage to "be our God," as much as if there were no other creature in the universe besides ourselves that had any saving interest in him? Does he declare that he will both "receive us," and act towards us, as the most indulgent Father towards his own beloved "sons and daughters?" Is all this promised to us freely, even to all who will separate themselves from an ungodly world, and seek his face?

Who can contemplate this, and not instantly inquire, "What shall I render to the Lord for all these benefits?" Who can have such a hope in him, and not endeavor to "purify himself, even as God is pure! 1 [John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.3)." It is thus that Paul felt his obligations to the Lord; and it is from the consideration of them that he urges us to an unreserved devotedness of ourselves to God, assuring us that the mercies conferred upon us render an entire consecration of ourselves to him "a reasonable service! [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1)."

***~~2. In a way of encouragement—~~***

Anyone who would merely contemplate the greatness of the work assigned him, would sit down in despair: "How shall I hope so to cleanse myself from all sin, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God?" But in the promises, he finds ample ground of confidence and joy. "What! has God freely given to me his only dear Son, and will he not with him also freely give me all things?" Would an earthly father refuse bread to his famished child; and will my Heavenly Father not give his Holy Spirit to me in the measure that I need his influences? To what purpose are all these promises which he has given me, if he will not work in me that measure of sanctification which is necessary to the complete enjoyment of them?

I find holiness among the most distinguished of his promises. He has said, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you! [Ezekiel 36:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.25-27)," etc. I will not fear then to engage in the work of "cleansing myself," since God has promised to perform it in me! [Philippians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.12-13); for "if he works, who shall hinder him?" My weakness, so far from being an obstacle to him, shall rather be an occasion for him to glorify himself the more, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9); and, "through him strengthening me, I can do all things! [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13)."

***~~3. In a way of actual efficiency—~~***

The promises, as contained in the word, effect nothing. It is only as dwelling in the heart, and relied upon in the soul, that they produce any saving operation. Then they are of necessity accompanied by the Holy Spirit, who works in and by them; and who, on that very account, is called "The Holy Spirit of promise, [Ephesians 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.13)." When applied to the soul by the Spirit, they have, if I may so speak, a buoyancy, bearing up the soul to high and heavenly things. When "filled with the Spirit," and borne up upon the wings of promise, rise in our hearts and minds to the highest heavens! Our blessed Lord himself has said, that "his Holy Spirit in us shall be within us as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life! [John 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.14)." Here the heavenly tendency of the principle within us is plainly asserted: and, whatever be the word which first begets us to the heavenly life, it is the word of promise which brings the soul to its full maturity of Christian perfection, [James 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.18). [1 Peter 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.23). [Ephesians 5:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.26-27).

It was the abundant indwelling of the promises in the Apostle's soul that filled him with "the love of Christ, and constrained him" to live unto his God and Savior in a way that no other man ever did, and caused his "conduct to be continually in Heaven! [2 Corinthians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14). [Philippians 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.20)." And *in proportion as the promises are realized in our souls, will be the sanctifying effects produced by them*.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are seeking holiness as their end, without using the promises as the means—~~***

This is common both in those who are altogether ignorant of the Gospel, and in those whose views of it are yet dim and clouded: in the one, it springs from self-righteous pride; in the others, from mistaken and misplaced humility: but in both it is a fatal evil.

As for the *self-righteous formalist*, he would reverse the Apostle's exhortation, and, instead of saying, "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves," they would say, Having cleansed ourselves, let us expect a fulfillment of all the promises. But no man shall ever attain salvation in such a way as that. No man can ever attain such holiness as God requires, but by the promises: nor, if he could, would such attainments ever purchase him a saving interest in the promises. They must be received as freely as they are given: they are given to us as sinners, as "ungodly," as having no works whatever to bring to God, [Romans 4:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.4-6); and, if we will not embrace them under this character, renouncing all dependence on our own righteousness, and seeking to be saved by grace alone, we shall never have so much as one of them fulfilled to us, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9). [Romans 3:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.24). [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.8-9).

Nor is the *legal Christian*in reality building on any better foundation than the self-righteous formalist: for, though he does not profess to found his hopes on his own righteousness—yet *he looks to his own attainments as his warrant for relying on the promises of his God*. He thinks it would be pre-sumptuous in him to rely on the promises, because he cannot find in himself that measure of holiness which he considers as necessary to qualify him for a saving interest in them. But this is the very same error which the self-righteous formalist runs into: and the same answer, in a measure, must be given to it: only, while to the formalist I say, You *must*rely upon the promises; to the legal character I say, You *may* rely upon the promises. They are all given as freely as the air you breathe: and precisely as the converts on the day of Pentecost apprehended them, so may you apprehend them freely, without money and without price: and as the jailor was justified by his faith the very instant he believed, so shall you be.

Nor need we be afraid of this doctrine as having a *licentious*tendency; for what was the effect of it in the apostolic age? the same shall it be in this and every age; *the promises of God will always, when duly received, operate to the production of holiness; and every one who embraces them aright, will proceed to cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.*

***~~2. Those who rest in the promises without regarding the end to be produced by them—~~***

Such persons there are, and ever have been, in the Church of God; persons, who think it legal to exhort men to holiness, and who make no other use of the promises, than to cherish in themselves an assurance of their own acceptance with God. These persons would correct the Apostle as an ignorant and ill-instructed teacher. They would say, "Having these promises, let us be full of confidence and joy:" but they would never deign to say, "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves:" this, forsooth, is legal. But whether they be right, or the Apostle, you judge. Let such self-deceiving and conceited professors imagine as they will, God does not make so light of holiness: on the contrary, he tells us, that by our works we shall be judged in the last day, and by our works we are to be judged even now. Yes, by their *fruits*shall the followers of Christ be known: and if we slight them, we shall find all our pretended faith to be of no effect. "In vain shall we say, *Lord, Lord*, if we do not practice the things which he says." I must entreat all then to shun this deadly heresy; and to search and try themselves, and *see what effect the promises have produced upon them*; for, as God is true, "without holiness shall no man see the Lord."

***~~3. Those who are seeking the end by the appointed means—~~***

Shall you fail of success? Assuredly you shall not: for "the word of promise will bring forth fruit in you, as it does in all the world." Treasure up in your minds all "the exceeding great and precious promises," which "in Christ Jesus are yes and Amen;" dwell upon them: plead them before God in prayer: declare to him your affiance in them: expect their accomplishment: limit not the Holy One of Israel in anything: bear in mind that with him all things are possible.

Truly, if you will thus believe, you shall see the glory of God. Sin shall be weakened in you. Satan shall flee before you. All the principalities and powers of Hell shall be bruised under your feet. In a word, Christ shall be formed in you, and "you shall be changed into his image from glory to glory by the Spirit of your God." Strengthened by these, your *consolations*shall be rich, your *progress*rapid, your *victories*secure: and *in due time you shall possess the full substance of all the promises in the complete attainment of God's perfect image*, and the everlasting fruition of his glory.

***~~#2030~~***

***~~THE GROUNDS OF A MINISTER'S REGARD FOR HIS PEOPLE~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 7:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.3)~~***

"I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die together with you."

THERE is in every man a quick sensibility with respect to anything that may affect his character; even a slight insinuation that seems to convey reproof, is keenly felt. On this account we ought to be extremely cautious, not only when incriminating others, but even when vindicating ourselves; because a necessary self-vindication may easily be construed as an indirect censure upon others.

We cannot but admire the delicacy of the Apostle's mind, when asserting the integrity of his conduct towards the Church at Corinth. There were some in that place who had traduced his character: for the sake of others therefore it was necessary that he would declare his innocence with respect to the things that were laid to his charge. But fearing that, in doing this, he might appear to cast a reflection indiscriminately on the whole body, he adds, with exquisite tenderness and affection, that, so far from intending to condemn them all, he was willing, if his other duties would admit of it, to live and die among them.

In order to promote in all this amiable disposition, we shall consider,

***~~I. The grounds of the Apostle's love—~~***

Paul felt a love towards the whole human race: but he was filled with a peculiar affection towards the Corinthians on account of,

***~~1. Their relation to God—~~***

The Apostle had reason to believe that the Corinthians, notwithstanding some great evils which prevailed among them, [1 Corinthians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.11); [1 Corinthians 3:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.1-4); [1 Corinthians 5:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 5.1-2); [1 Corinthians 6:5-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.5-8); 1 Corinthians 8:9-12; [1 Corinthians 11:18-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.18-22); [1 Corinthians 14:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 14.26)—were truly converted to God; and that the greater part of them were very eminent Christians [1 Corinthians 1:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.5-7) and [2 Corinthians 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.7).

This was a just ground for loving them. Indeed, if he had not been penetrated with a sincere regard for them, he would have had no evidence of his own love to God: for "he who loves him who begat, must love those who are begotten by him, [1 John 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.1)."

***~~2. Their relation to himself—~~***

Having been, in God's hand, the instrument of their conversion, he stood related to them as their spiritual father, 1 Corinthians 4:15 and [2 Corinthians 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.14) with [Acts 18:1-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 18.1-18). Now, as a peculiar affection exists between those who bear this relation according to the flesh, so it is reasonable that there would be a mutual regard between those also who are thus united in the bonds of the Spirit. Doubtless the Apostle did not confine his regards to these, [Colossians 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.1); but, having "travailed in birth with them," he felt all the anxieties and affections of a parent towards them.

The fervor of his love will appear from,

***~~II. The way in which he manifested it—~~***

We may notice in the context,

***~~1. His affectionate remembrance of them—~~***

He boasted of them wherever he went: he held them up as peculiarly worthy of imitation, [2 Corinthians 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.14) and [2 Corinthians 8:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.24); 2 Corinthians 9:1-2; and so great was the satisfaction which he felt in hearing of their welfare, that it far over-balanced all the sufferings he endured. What clearer proof could he give of his affection for them?

***~~2. His faithful admonitions—~~***

*Though he loved them, he was not blind to their faults. When he saw them deviating from the path of duty, he performed the office of a monitor and guide.*He changed his voice towards them, as he saw occasion: sometimes he spoke with the *authority of an Apostle*, 1 Corinthians 4:18-19; and sometimes with the *tenderness of a friend or parent*, [2 Corinthians 2:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.1-5) and [1 Corinthians 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.14). This was an eminent proof of his love, because it showed that his concern for their souls swallowed up every other consideration, [Leviticus 19:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 19.17) with, verse 12.

***~~3. His devotion to their service—~~***

He regarded not wealth, or ease, or honor; but would have been contented "to live and die together with them" who had but ill requited all his past kindness: yes, he declared, that "he would most gladly spend and be spent for them, though the more abundantly he loved them, the less he were loved, [2 Corinthians 12:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.15)." Nothing short of laying down our life for any person could testify more love than this.

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~1. Let us improve our fellowship with each other in life—~~***

It is the happiness of a minister and his people to have frequent and familiar fellowship with each other. We have through the mercy of our God enjoyed it; but alas! how little have we improved it! Let us look unto our God for his blessing upon us in the future, [2 Corinthians 6:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.11-13); for without that "neither Paul can plant, nor Apollos water, to any good purpose, [1 Corinthians 3:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.5-7)."

***~~2. Let us prepare for our separation in death—~~***

As "the priests under the law could not continue by reason of death," so neither can we under the Gospel. We must go to give an account of our stewardship; and you to answer for the advantages you have enjoyed. Let us be looking forward to that solemn meeting which we shall have at the bar of judgment. Let us implore help from God, that we may discharge our duties towards each other aright; and meet again, not as witnesses against each other—but as fellow-heirs of his glory. And the Lord grant that we may then be your joy, and that you may be "our joy and crown of rejoicing" to all eternity! [1 Thessalonians 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.19-20) and [2 Corinthians 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.14).

***~~#2031~~***

***~~REPENTANCE EXEMPLIFIED IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 7:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.10-11)~~***

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter."

IT is sometimes urged against faithful ministers, that they distress the minds of their auditors by their preaching: and it must be confessed that the accusation is true. But it must not be concluded from thence, that they take a pleasure in grieving any, or that they are too harsh in their ministrations: they must declare the mind of God respecting sin and sinners, in order to bring men to repentance: and if they find any persons truly humbled for their sins, they account it the richest reward of their labors.

Paul had reproved the Corinthian Church for taking part with the incestuous man, instead of casting him out from their society, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; [1 Corinthians 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 5.13); and his epistle had been the means of producing in them a godly sorrow, together with a suitable demeanor. When he found this to be the case, he wrote again to them, and told them, that it had pained him exceedingly to grieve any of them; but that he rejoiced in seeing their grief operate in so beneficial a manner; this godly sorrow had answered the very end of his admonitions; and he was now ready to pour the oil of joy into the wounds which he had inflicted, verse 8, 9.

We shall take occasion, from the words before us, to trace out the doctrine of REPENTANCE,

***~~I. In its nature and cause—~~***

Repentance, as a grace, proceeds from God, the giver of every good gift, [James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.17), and from Christ, who is exalted to bestow it, [Acts 5:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.31); and who alone can produce in the heart that "godly sorrow which works it."

To ascertain what godly sorrow is, we must compare it with "the sorrow of the world," with which all of us are in some measure acquainted. The sorrow of the world may either relate to that sorrow which arises from worldly troubles, or that sorrow which a worldly man may have in reference to his sins. In either view it is a sorrow which "works death."

The troubles of this life often depress men, so as to indispose them for their proper business, and rob them of all their comfort, and destroy their constitution, and ultimately to bring them to the grave. It is not uncommon to say of such persons, that they died of a broken heart.

Many also are greatly distressed in reference to their sins: they are filled with dreadful apprehensions of God's wrath; they are harassed with unbelieving fears; they are even brought into the depths of despair, conceiving, that there is no mercy for them—that they are not of the number of God's elect—that they have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit—and that it would be either hypocrisy or presumption in them even to offer up a prayer to God.

Now this sorrow, like that before-mentioned, works only death. Worldly sorrow keeps us from God, instead of bringing us to him, [Jeremiah 2:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.25). Worldly sorrow leads us to cloak and extenuate, rather than to confess and aggravate, our sins. Worldly sorrow stimulates only to self-righteous purposes and endeavors, which are invariably frustrated by the power of indwelling corruption. Sometimes it terminates even in suicide itself, as we see in Judas. At all events worldly sorrow causes hard thoughts of God, and utterly unfits the soul for real humiliation and contrition; so that, whether it be more or less afflictive at present, it equally furthers our eternal condemnation.

In direct opposition to this worldly sorrow, is that godly sorrow which produces genuine repentance. Worldly sorrow consists of unbelief, despondency, and fear of punishment; but *the most essential ingredients of godly sorrow are faith, hope, and love*. The person sorrowing goes to God, *believing*him to be a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. He goes to God through Christ, *hoping*that for Christ's sake his sins shall be forgiven. He goes to God with *love*in his heart, determining to justify God in whatever he shall do, yes, even in his own eternal condemnation.

Now this godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation. Godly sorrow it disposes a man to search out all his sins, and to humble himself for them in dust and ashes. Godly sorrow urges him to plead with earnestness the promises which God has made to returning penitents, and humbly to rely upon them. Godly sorrow causes him to seek after a conformity to God's image; and determines him to glorify his Savior with all the powers that he has.

Such a repentance as this no man ever yet repented of; nor would he ever repent of it, however distressing the means had been by which it had been wrought in him. Every sorrow, short of this, would only end in everlasting sorrow: but this godly sorrow invariably works repentance to life.

Thus we have traced repentance to its *source*, and seen it in its *cause*. Let us proceed to trace it,

***~~II. In its effects—~~***

The Apostle enumerates a great variety of effects produced in the minds of the Christians at Corinth: and his words have certainly a primary reference to that particular people on that particular occasion. But they admirably express also the emotions which are universally produced by true repentance, in whoever it reigns. We may therefore be permitted to consider them in that view, or, at least, to accommodate them to that subject.

For the sake of an easy distribution of the subject we shall transpose the first word, and consider it last: we shall then see *the effects of genuine repentance in reference to our past, present, and future conduct*.

The Corinthians, humbled by Paul's reproofs, were studious to "clear themselves" to the world, to the Church, to their consciences, and to God himself; and to show that they sincerely repented of what they had done amiss. They felt an "indignation" against the sin they had committed, and against themselves for having committed it; nor could they forgive themselves, until they knew that God had forgiven them.

Thus will every true penitent endeavor to "clear himself," and render it conspicuous both to God and man, that he is indeed a new creature. He is "indignant," nor can he endure himself, when he reflects on his past life when he calls to mind his rebellion against God, and his contempt of Christ's redeeming love, he is covered with shame and confusion of face.

The Corinthians, penetrated with a sense of their misconduct, felt a holy "fear," lest they would ever relapse into the sin of which they were repenting, or be drawn aside again to any similar enormity. They vehemently desired pardon of God for their past transgression, and grace, that they might be enabled to act with more consistency in the future. They were animated in this with a "zeal" which nothing could damp, and with a "revenge" which determined them neither to spare the public offender, nor the evil dispositions of their own hearts.

Do we not see in them, the character of every true penitent? In all who truly repent, there will be:  
a humble "fear" of falling again under the power of those lusts which formerly led them captive;  
a "strong desire" to serve, to enjoy, to glorify their God;  
a "zeal," which enables them to set their faces as a flint against the whole world;  
and a "revenge" that determines them to sacrifice their bosom lusts, though dear as a right eye, or useful as a right hand.

The Apostle further notices the "carefulness" with which the Corinthians exerted themselves to avoid everything in future which might turn them aside from the path of duty. What word can more fitly characterize the disposition of a penitent in reference to his future conduct? Once he could walk at large, without taking any heed to his ways; but now he inquires whether the action be pleasing to God or not:

he watches over the motives and principles by which he is actuated: he considers what may be the consequences of his actions both to himself and others: he is solicitous to avoid not only what is in itself evil, but whatever may be the means and occasion of evil.

Hence he will not readily expose himself to temptation: he keeps at a distance from those amusements, and those companions that have formerly ensnared him: and he begs of God to guide his every step, and to "preserve him blameless unto his heavenly kingdom."

We CONCLUDE with inquiring whether the commendation bestowed on the Corinthians in the text, can with propriety be applied to us?

"Have we in all things approved ourselves to be clear in this matter?" We ask not, whether we have had any repentance at all or not, (though perhaps there are many among us that have had no concern for their past sins, and that feel no concern about their eternal salvation,) but we ask, *whether we have had any other sorrow for sin, than such as will spring from worldly principles, and consist with a worldly mind?*

Let us inquire whether our sorrow be of an unbelieving, desponding, nature, that is little else than slavish fear; or whether it be of a sincere kind, that leads us to rely on Christ in the exercise of a humble hope, and fervent love?

Let us examine thoroughly the effects of our sorrow, and see whether they accord with those which were produced in the Church at Corinth? Can we appeal to God, that we have "approved ourselves to be clear in this matter," so that there is no room to doubt whether our repentance is genuine or not? If God were now to call us to his judgment-seat, could we appeal to him, as the searcher of our hearts, that it has been, and yet is, our daily endeavor to exercise such repentance as this?

Let it be remembered, that all other repentance is worldly, and must be repented of: all other repentance will leave us short of salvation: all other repentance will deceive us to our ruin. Our blessed Lord has told us, that, "Unless we repent, we must all perish:" and we have now seen the nature of repentance, not in a mere superficial manner, but as it may be distinguished from everything that is apt to be mistaken for it.

Behold then, life and death are before us; let us beg of God to undeceive us all, and to give unto us that repentance which shall never be repented of!

***~~#2032~~***

***~~LIBERALITY TO THE POOR~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 8:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.1-6)~~***

"And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part."

(This sermon was delivered in aid of a Visiting Society, where the souls of the persons visited are the chief object.)

THE texture of the human mind is extremely delicate: and everyone who would produce any beneficial effect upon others, must approach them with tenderness and care. We may, by an unseasonable urgency, cause a person to revolt from a measure, to which by a more gentle address he might have easily been persuaded. The mind of man naturally desires liberty; and will be more powerfully moved, when its decisions appear to be the consequence of volition, than when they are called forth by the compulsory influence of persuasion.

This the Apostle Paul well understood, and bore, as it were, in constant remembrance. Not that he on any occasion acted with artifice: no; his caution was the result of his own exquisite delicacy and holy refinement; and his success in affecting the minds of others bore ample testimony to the wisdom of his measures.

He was anxious to obtain from among the Gentile Churches relief for the distressed and persecuted saints at Jerusalem. In writing therefore to the Church at Corinth who were more opulent, he endeavored to interest them in behalf of their suffering brethren in Judea. But he did not proceed, as we might have expected, to expatiate upon the needs of the sufferers, or on the obligations of the Church at Corinth to relieve them; but simply communicated, as an article of pleasing news, the liberality that had been displayed towards them by the poorer Churches of Macedonia; and then stirred them up to imitate so laudable an example.

With the same view we shall now,

***~~I. Consider the example here set before us—~~***

The Churches here referred to were those of Thessalonica, Berea, and Philippi; and truly their example was most eminent in respect of,

***~~1. Their liberality—~~***

*The real extent of liberality must not be judged of by the sum given, so much as by the circumstances under which it is given*. Our blessed Lord has told us, that the widow's mite exceeded in value all that the most opulent had bestowed, because their donations were only a small portion of what they possessed, whereas hers was her *all*, even all her living. To view the liberality of the Macedonians aright, we must particularly notice the time and manner of its exercise.

It was in a time of "great affliction and of deep poverty." Now persons in great affliction are for the most part so occupied with their own troubles, as to have but little either of leisure or inclination to enter into the concerns of others. And, if they be at the same time in a state of deep poverty, they seem by their very situation, as it were, to be exempt from any obligation to relieve the needs of others. If they shed a tear of sympathy, it is as much as, under their circumstances, can be expected of them. But behold, it was in this very state, and under these circumstances, that the Macedonian Churches exerted themselves for the relief of persons belonging to a different and distant country, of persons too, who, though agreeing with them in the profession of Christianity, differed widely from them in many points of subordinate importance.

The *manner*too in which their liberality was exercised deserves particularly to be noticed. It was put forth *voluntarily*. They waited not for any application to this effect from the Apostle; they were willing of their own mind to embrace the opportunity afforded them of fulfilling a duty so congenial with the best feelings of their hearts.

It was exercised also *bountifully*. Their ability was the only measure of their gifts. In some respect they seemed, as it were, to exceed even that: for "to their power, and beyond their power," they exerted themselves, insomuch that, according to God's estimate of their gifts, they "abounded unto the riches of liberality."

And what they did, they did *zealously*. They did not make an offer which they hoped would be refused, and then, on the refusal, feel pleased that the will had been accepted for the deed: no; they forced the Apostle to accept their donations: they would not allow him to decline their offer; "they begged him with much entreaty that he would be their almoner, and be the medium of conveying to their afflicted brethren the relief which God had enabled them to bestow.

If we would know whence it was that they were enabled so to act, the text informs us that it was, primarily, from "the grace of God" operating powerfully on their hearts; and, next, from the joyful frame of their minds, which bore them up above all their own trials, and exulted in every opportunity of manifesting their love to their blessed Lord and Savior. They had "an abundance of joy" in the midst of their deep poverty; and that "joy in the Lord was their strength."

***~~2. Their piety—~~***

This was not a whit less remarkable: indeed, it was the foundation, of which their liberality was the superstructure. They "first gave up themselves to God" in a way both of private surrender, and of open profession.

They surrendered themselves wholly to Christ as his willing subjects and servants. Without this, all their liberality would have been a mere heathen virtue. If, without love to man, a person might "give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet be no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal;" much more would his best actions be of no value, if not springing from love to God. It is this principle that constitutes the perfection of everything we do, and makes a wish, a sigh, a groan—more acceptable to God, than the most splendid action without it. Everything emanating from it has "a fragrance of a sweet smell, and is a sacrifice truly acceptable and well-pleasing to God."

At the same time they openly and boldly confessed Christ before men: They gave themselves to the Apostle and to the Church, by the will of God. They were not timid Christians, fearful of augmenting their afflictions by an open profession of the Gospel: they were willing to bear any cross which their adherence to Christ might bring upon them. They had already been brought into "a great trial of affliction, and to deep poverty," for his sake: but none of these things moved them, nor did they "count even life itself dear to them," if only they might but honor their Divine Master, and finish their course with joy. This puts an additional value on their services, as manifesting the very spirit that was in Christ, "who willingly impoverished himself to enrich a ruined world, verse 9."

Having so excellent an example before us, we will now,

***~~II. Propose it to your imitation—~~***

***~~First, we would call you to imitate their piety—~~***

This, though last mentioned in the text, was first in point of time, and was, in fact, the source and fountain of all the graces which they exercised.

We call upon you then to "give yourselves up wholly to the Lord." This is the indispensable duty of every child of man. As *creatures*, we are bound to serve and glorify our God, from whom we have received all that we are and have; but, as *redeemed sinners*, our obligation to serve him is infinitely enhanced. The Apostle tells the Corinthians in his former epistle, "You are not your own; you are bought with a price:" so I say to every one among you, "You are not your own." Nothing, that you either are or have, is your own: the members of your bodies, the faculties of your souls, your time, your property, your influence—all belong to him, "whose you are, and whom you are bound to serve." All are to be improved for his glory; as Paul has said, "You are bought with a price; therefore glorify him with your body and your spirit, which are his." This is as *reasonable*as it is *necessary*; agreeably to what he has elsewhere said, "Yield yourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

But with this private surrender of yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ there must also be an open avowal of your adherence to him. "With the heart man believes unto righteousness; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "If we will be Christ's disciples indeed, we must take up our cross daily and follow him;" we must follow him "outside the camp, bearing his reproach;" and so far must we be from dreading his cross, that we must "glory in it," and "rejoice that we are counted worthy to bear it," and "esteem as Moses did, the reproach of Christ as greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt."

We must never be ashamed of Christ; for, if we are, he will be ashamed of us "in the presence of his Father, and of the holy angels." "If we confess him, he will confess us; but, if we deny him, he will deny us." When the Apostle says, "they gave themselves unto us by the will of God," it must not be understood as if he gloried in gaining proselytes to himself: it is of their union with the Church, as avowed friends and followers of Christ, that he speaks; and this all must be, if they would approve themselves faithful to their Lord and Master. This is the will of God respecting every Christian; that we "come out from the world, and be separate" from it, and be "as lights shining in a dark place," "holding forth the word of life in the whole of our spirit and conduct."

Let me then urge upon you all this duty. The Churches of Macedonia acted thus in defiance of all the malice of men or devils. Though brought by means of it into "a great trial of affliction and deep poverty," they turned not back, but strove the more to glorify their God in proportion as their enemies sought to suppress their zeal. So then you also do: do not harbor for a moment that "fear of man which brings a snare;" "fear not man, who can only destroy the body; but fear him, and him only, who, when he has destroyed the body, can destroy both body and soul in Hell!"

***~~Next, we would invite you to imitate also their liberality—~~***

Your obligations to it are as great as theirs: for you, as well as they, "have been redeemed by the precious blood of that spotless Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ." The occasion too, if not altogether similar, is quite as urgent: for if we plead not now in behalf of persons reduced to the deepest distress by persecution, we plead for those whose circumstance are most indigent, and whose temporal benefit is consulted with an ulterior view to the welfare of their souls.

Let me then call upon you all to "manifest" by your liberality "the sincerity of your love to Christ." I will not exclude any from this labor of love. Are any of you "in a great trial of affliction," and at the same time "in deep poverty?" I would not on that account dispense with your exertions; nor would you wish me so to do, if you have received the grace of God in truth. I will not indeed be importunate with you, but I will remind you of what was done by the Christians of former days in circumstances more afflictive than your own. I will add, that their conduct is set forth by the Apostle as worthy to be followed by Christians in every age.

I will not urge you to liberality on this occasion; but I well know what you will do, if "God has bestowed his grace upon you:" I know, that "to your power, and even beyond your power, you will be willing of yourselves."

But to those who are in circumstances of ease and affluence I would say, Look at the example set before you; and think what exertions your circumstances require. O, give not in a grudging or sparing manner; but let it be seen by your donations what you understand by "abounding unto the riches of liberality:" and, as God in his providence has enabled you to stretch forth Corinthian hands, show that he has also in his mercy given you Macedonian hearts.

***~~#2033~~***

***~~LIBERALITY TO THE POOR RECOMMENDED~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 8:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.7-8)~~***

(This sermon was addressed to a Society for Visiting and Instructing the Poor.)

"But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others."

THOUGH there is no such thing as absolute perfection in this life, the Christian, if his life really corresponds with his profession, is in some sense a perfect character. In this respect, the new creation of the soul resembles the first creation of the body. A child, the very instant it comes into the world, is perfect in all its members: advancing years will strengthen him, indeed, in every one of them, but will add to him no new faculty, or sense, or power.

Just so, the child of God, when once he is truly regenerate, possesses in himself the whole circle of Christian graces, though at first in a state of infantile weakness only: but the more he cultivates them, the more will they all improve. The particular grace which is here mentioned requires more than ordinary attention, because of its transcendent excellency, and because of the frequent occasion which arises to the whole Christian world for the exercise of it. The Apostle acknowledged, that in other graces the Corinthians greatly excelled; and therefore he took encouragement to recommend to them a similar pre-eminence in this grace also.

To bring this subject before you to advantage, I must mark,

***~~I. The commendation given—~~***

***~~The approbation here manifested was doubtless exceeding strong—~~***

Many are afraid to express approbation of what is good, lest the person commended would make it an occasion of pride. But this was not the mind of the Apostle Paul. He would not indeed pay a compliment to any man at the expense of truth: he even appeals to man, and calls God himself also to witness, that "he had not at any time used flattering words, [1 Thessalonians 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.5)." Yet he saw no reason for withholding from men a testimony of his approbation, when the expressing of his sentiments would encourage them to increased exertions in the cause of God.

To the Christians at *Rome*he expresses himself thus: "I am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another, [Romans 15:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.14)." To the *Corinthian*Church he speaks in yet stronger terms: "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything you are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; so that you come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, [1 Corinthians 1:4-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.4-7)."

So again, after the high eulogy which he had given them in my text, he tells them, in the very next chapter, that all who had heard of their liberality "both prayed for them and longed after them for the exceeding grace of God in them, [2 Corinthians 9:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 9.14)."

And good reason there was for this commendation: for their "faith" was genuine; their "utterance" easy and intelligible to all whom they addressed: their "knowledge" was diversified; so that they delivered their sentiments to great advantage: and so devoted were they to the service of God in their respective spheres, that nothing could exceed their "diligence." In addition to all this, instead of setting up themselves or others against him, as had formerly been the case with many among them, they abounded also in "love to him," as their common parent, [2 Corinthians 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.7). Truly this was a state highly creditable to them, and most honorable to Christianity itself.

And may I not adopt, in some measure at least, the language of my text towards you?

God knows, my brethren, that I would not knowingly "use flattering words towards you:" but I must and will say, in reference to many of you, that your "faith" is remarkably simple, unmixed with erroneous notions of any kind. You do also, in your respective spheres, communicate instruction to others with a ready "utterance," and with a "knowledge" that is at once enlightened and discreet. You discharge also, with "diligence, all" your offices in common life.

I would be ungrateful in the extreme, if I did not acknowledge also your "love to your minister," and your readiness to promote any measures for the good of others which he proposes for your adoption and support. And, from this view of your character, I am emboldened to exhort you to bear with me, while I call your attention to,

***~~II. The advice administered—~~***

"See that you abound in this grace also," the grace of liberality to the poor. The Apostle tells us, that "he did not speak by way of commandment, but only in a way of advice." He tells us, also, on what grounds he offered this advice; namely,

***~~1. Because he wished them not to be outdone by others—~~***

He had said of the Macedonians, that "they, out of their deep poverty, had abounded unto the riches of liberality, verse 1, 2." Now, shall the rich Corinthians be exceeded by the poor and afflicted Macedonians? God forbid. It would be a disgrace to them to be found lacking in a duty which they were so much better able to fulfill: and therefore, "from the generosity of others, he takes occasion" to excite in them a holy ambition to excel.

Some would be ready to think that such a motive was base, and carnal, and unworthy of a Christian mind. I grant there is an unholy ambition; but there is also a holy jealousy, to which men may with propriety be called; such as that which Paul endeavored to excite in his Jewish brethren, when he addressed the Gospel to the Gentiles, and "magnified his office as a minister of the Gentiles, if by any means he might provoke to jealousy them who were his flesh, and might save some of them, [Romans 11:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.13-14)."

And on this ground I would now address myself to you There are occasions, such as great and public calamities, which have called forth the benevolence of the public, when such an address is peculiarly called for.

***~~2. Because he would have them "place beyond a doubt the sincerity of their love"—~~***

If it is sincere, love must be operative. Yes, and must operate too in this way: for "if we see a brother have need, and shut up our compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in us? [1 John 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.17)." Or, "if we see a brother or sister have need, and bid him be warmed and filled, while we administer nothing for his relief, what are our professions of love to man, but downright hypocrisy! [James 2:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.15-17)."

If we have true Christian love, it will resemble "the love of Christ, who, though he was rich. Yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich, verse 9."

I call you, brethren, to this proof of your love. Let it be seen that "you love not in word, and in tongue; but in deed and in truth! [1 John 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.18)."

The occasion for your liberality is great and urgent. I trust, that "as you abound in" every other grace, so you will not merely exercise, but every one of you according to your ability "abound in" this grace also.

***~~Brethren, let me, in conclusion, entreat you,~~***

***~~1. To merit this commendation—~~***

Truly, if the Christian world at large were addressed in such terms as these, it would be as keen a satire as the most malignant infidel could utter! But I must say, that if you answer not, in some measure at least, to this character, you have no just title to the Christian name: you resemble those rather in the Church of Philadelphia, "who said that they were Jews, but lied, [Revelation 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.9)." "He who is a Jew in deed, must be a Jew inwardly; and have the circumcision, not of the flesh only, but of the Spirit also; the praise of which is not of men, but of God, [Romans 2:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.28-29)."

***~~2. To fulfill this duty—~~***

Need I say, that *charity brings with it its own reward?* You may conceive that the indigent and distressed are greatly comforted by the seasonable relief that is administered to them: but this I tell you with confidence, that those who on Christian principles administer to their relief, are the happier of the two: for we have authority to declare, and it was a favorite saying of our Lord, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive!"

***~~#2034~~***

***~~THE GRACE OF CHRIST~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.9)~~***

"You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich—yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich."

THE excellence of Christianity with respect to the *mysteries*it reveals, and the *precepts*it inculcates, is generally acknowledged; but few see it with respect to the *motives*by which it enforces the performance of our duty. But in this last respect it differs as widely from all other religions as in either of the former; and claims an undoubted superiority over all the dogmas of philosophy, and over Judaism itself.

*The love of Christ in dying for us is not merely proposed as a tenet to be believed, but is urged as the most powerful, and indeed the only effectual, argument for the quickening of us to a universal and unreserved obedience.*This was the consideration by which Paul enforced his exhortations to liberality when writing to the Corinthian Church: and it will be universally operative, wherever it is understood and felt.

In discoursing on this subject we shall not enter in a general way into our fall, and our recovery by Christ, but will,

***~~I. Set forth the grace of Christ as it is here delineated—~~***

There are four distinct considerations in the text, every one of them reflecting light upon this point, as so many mirrors uniting their rays in one common focus. These we shall view in their order:

***~~1. The pre-existent exalted state of Christ—~~***

In the text we are told, "He was rich." This idea when applied to our fellow-creatures we can easily understand: but who can comprehend it when applied to Christ? What adequate conception can we form of his glory or felicity? He was from all eternity "in the bosom of his Father [John 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.18)," and was "daily his delight, [Proverbs 8:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 8.30)." He had a communion with the Father in all that he *knew*, [Matthew 11:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.27), in all that he *did*, [John 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.19), in all that he *enjoyed*, [John 17:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.10). He had a most perfect Oneness with the Father, [John 10:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.30), possessing in himself all the fullness of the Godhead, [Colossians 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.9), and receiving together with him the adoration of all the angels in Heaven, [Isaiah 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.3) with [John 12:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.41). Such was the glory which Christ had with the Father before the world was brought into existence, [John 17:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.5).

Nor was he capable of receiving any addition either of honor or of happiness from his creatures, [Psalm 16:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.2). He would have been equally great and glorious though no creature had existed either in earth or in Heaven to behold him, [Job 22:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 22.2); or though all who transgressed against him would perish for ever. Yet such was his love, that in the midst of all his blessedness he thought of us, and undertook our cause, and engaged to become our substitute and surety! [Psalm 40:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 40.7-8).

How infinitely does this "grace" transcend our highest conceptions! Indeed we do but "darken counsel by words without knowledge," when we attempt to speak on this mysterious subject.

***~~2. The humiliation to which he submitted—~~***

It was a marvelous act of grace that he would condescend to form creatures, and to give them a sight of his blessedness and glory. But that he would notice them after they had left their first estate, and despoiled themselves of their original righteousness, this was an act of condescension which we would have deemed impossible, if he had not actually evinced by his conduct that it could be done.

But who would believe it possible that he would stoop so low as to take our nature upon him? Yet even that he did; and that too not in its primitive unfallen state, but in its present fallen state, subject to numberless infirmities and to death itself. He was "made in the likeness of sinful flesh, [Romans 8:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.3)," and was in all things like unto us, sin only excepted, [Hebrews 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.17); [Hebrews 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.15).

Nor did he assume even our fallen nature in its highest condition: he was born, not in a palace, but a stable; he spent his life, during the first thirty years, in the lowly occupation of a carpenter; and, for the four last years, he was often destitute of the common necessities of life, yes, even of a place where to lay his head, [Matthew 8:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 8.20).

He was aware that he would meet with nothing but contempt and persecution from men; and yet he submitted to it for their sakes.

But even this, as great as it was, by no means reaches to the full extent of his debasement: No! he put himself in the place of sinners, that he might endure the curse due to their iniquities, [1 Peter 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.24); he submitted to bear the assaults of Satan, and the wrath of God, [Isaiah 53:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.10). If therefore we would form a just idea of his humiliation, we must visit the garden of Gethsemane, and see him bathed in a bloody sweat, and hear him "making supplication to his Father with strong crying and tears," for the removal of the bitter cup, [Luke 22:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.44), [Hebrews 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.7). We must then follow him to Calvary, and hear his bitter complaints under the depths of dereliction, [Matthew 27:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 27.46), and behold him in the midst of inexpressible agonies of soul and body, dying the accursed death of the cross. And lastly, we must view him imprisoned in the grave under the sentence of the law, of that law which doomed us all to everlasting death, [Galatians 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.13). Here, here was humiliation, such as filled all Heaven with wonder; here was poverty, such as never can be comprehended by men and angels.

In this view the Apostle elsewhere describes the grace of Christ, contrasting the dignity of his pre-existing state with the lowly state he assumed, and the degradation he endured, [Philippians 2:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.6-8). O that we might have worthy conceptions of it, and be enabled in some poor measure to comprehend its unexplored heights and unfathomable depths! [Ephesians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18-19).

***~~3. The objects for whom he interposed—~~***

It was not for angels, the highest order of created beings, that Jesus interested himself, but for man: he passed by *them*, and deigned to notice *us*, [Hebrews 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.16).

But was there anything in us more than in them, to recommend us to his regard? No! we were destitute of even the smallest good; and full of all imaginable evil! [Jeremiah 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.9). [Genesis 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.5). There was not a faculty of our souls that was not debased by sin, nor a member of our bodies that was not polluted with iniquity, [Romans 3:10-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.10-18). We were even haters of God himself! [Romans 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.30); and so full of enmity against him, that we were actually incapable of obeying any of his laws, [Romans 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.7), and as far as our influence or example could prevail, we strove to banish him from the world! [Romans 1:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.28). [Ephesians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.12) and [Psalm 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 14.1). "No God," that is, I wish there were none!

Our *misery*too was as great as our wickedness. We were under sentence of condemnation, and exposed to all the curses of the broken law: "the wrath of God abode upon us;" and nothing remained but that the thread of life would be cut, and we would have been miserable in Hell for evermore.

Yet such was his compassion that he interposed for us, and became our mediator with God, our "advocate with the Father." How wonderfully does this enhance the grace he has manifested!

It would be a marvelous effort of love, if a king would put himself in the place of a condemned rebel, and suffer the sentence of the law in his stead. But for the Creator himself to become a creature, that he might suffer in the place of those who deserved nothing but death and Hell, well may this be termed "the exceeding riches of his grace!" the very masterpiece of Divine love! [Ephesians 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.7). [Romans 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.8).

***~~4. The state to which, by his sufferings and death, he exalts us—~~***

If he had procured a remission of our sentence, and the favor of annihilation, then what a mercy would it have been! and what a mercy would the devils account it, if they could obtain such a favor at his hands! But this would not satisfy our adorable Savior; he had far higher views in undertaking for us; he determined to restore us to a state of reconciliation with God; to renew our nature, and thereby fit us for the eternal enjoyment of God. Moreover, to all the blessings of grace and peace he determined finally to add that of everlasting glory. He determined, not merely to remove our poverty, but to make us "rich." In order to see how rich he makes his people, contrast for one moment the state of Dives in Hell, crying in vain for one drop of water, and Lazarus enjoying all the fullness of God in Abraham's bosom.

Such are the riches he designs for us: to procure them for us was the very end of his incarnation and death: nor will he ever relinquish those whom he has purchased with his blood, until he makes them "joint-heirs with himself," and puts them into possession of that "incorruptible, and undefiled, and unfading inheritance!" In a word, he became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, [Ephesians 5:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.30), that we might be one spirit with him, [1 Corinthians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.17). He emptied himself of his glory, [Philippians 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.7), and descended, as it were, to the lowest Hell, that he might "pluck us as brands out of the burning," and exalt us to the throne from whence he came! [Revelation 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.21).

Such, such was the grace of Christ: it was infinitely more than words can express, or than imagination can conceive!

Having endeavored to unfold this mystery, we will,

***~~II. Inquire what you "know" respecting it—~~***

It is here taken for granted that all Christians "know" this grace. Let me ask then, What you do know of it,

***~~1. As an article of faith—~~***

Multitudes who are *called*Christians, know scarcely anything respecting the faith which they profess; and, if interrogated concerning the ground of their hopes of salvation, would be found to expect it, not as purchased for them by the death of Christ, but as obtained and merited by their own repentance and good works.

Many indeed are decidedly opposed to the principles of the Gospel, denying strenuously the divinity of Christ, and the atonement made by him, and the doctrine of justification by faith in him. As for such persons, they, with all their pretended knowledge, are as ignorant of the Gospel as if they had never heard it at all! And, if they were to attempt to expound my text, would reduce it to the greatest absurdity; divesting the work of Christ of all its grace and of all its efficacy.

But you, I hope, brethren, "have not so learned Christ." You, I trust, do indeed believe in him as "Emmanuel, God with us!" You believe that all the glory of the Godhead was his; and that laying aside that glory for a season, he become a man, and lived and died for you; that by his sin-atoning blood he might reconcile you to God; and by his all-perfect righteousness he might obtain for you a title to a heavenly inheritance. You believe that if ever you possess the felicity of Heaven, it must be altogether through the humiliation which he submitted to for you: and all your hopes of Heaven you found on him alone.

Hold fast then this faith. Yet let it not be in you as a mere speculative truth, but seek to improve it,

***~~2. As an influential principle in the heart and life—~~***

It is in this view that it is particularly brought forward in my text. And in this view chiefly was it endeared to the Apostle Paul, who bears this testimony respecting it; "The love of Christ constrains me!" He rightly judged, that, "if one died, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that those who live, would not live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again, [2 Corinthians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14)."

Now has it that same influence on you? Does it fill you with wonder and adoration, that the God of Heaven and earth would:  
stoop so low for you,  
and submit to such indignities for you,  
and endure such sufferings for you,  
and by such mysterious methods obtain eternal glory for you?

My dear brethren, if you know this mystery aright, it will so operate upon you, as to make you feel that all you are, and all that you have, is Christ's, to be employed solely and exclusively for him, whose you are, and whom you are bound to serve! [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.19-20). You will live not to yourselves, but altogether for him who is by every possible claim your rightful Lord and Savior.

The consideration of this love will also lead you to walk in his steps, and to show to others, as far as you are able, the love which he has shown to you.

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~1. Seek then this experimental knowledge of Christ—~~***

You well know with what labor and industry worldly knowledge is obtained: and will you grudge the labor that is necessary for the attainment of divine knowledge? What are all earthly sciences, in comparison with "the grace of Christ?" Paul, the most learned man of his day, "accounted all things but dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, [Philippians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.8)." And you also, if you estimate things aright, will never rest, until you have acquired some insight into the great mystery of redemption through the sufferings of your incarnate God!

As to the poor and illiterate, the knowledge of philosophy is far beyond their reach: but not so the knowledge of divine mysteries. "What God has hidden from the wise and prudent, he does and will reveal to babes, [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25)." "The weak and foolish he has chosen in preference, in order that he may confound the wise and mighty, and constrain all to glory in him alone! [1 Corinthians 1:27-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.27-29)." Only ask of God to enlighten your minds by the influence of his Spirit, and "he will give to every one of you liberally, and without upbraiding, [James 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.5)."

***~~2. Endeavor to improve it for the good of others—~~***

This is the knowledge which saves the soul, [2 Timothy 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.15). In "this is eternal life," which is the inalienable property of all who possess it, [John 17:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.3). Will you then "hide this light under a bushel, instead of making use of it for the benefit of all around you, [Matthew 5:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.15)." No, my brethren, seek to "grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ" yourselves, and diffuse it, if possible, to the very ends of the earth!

***~~#2035~~***

***~~LIBERALITY ENCOURAGED~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 8:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.13-15)~~***

"Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."

YOU have heard our king's letter read to you regarding the Relief of the Distressed Manufacturers.

If Paul thanks God for "putting into the heart of Titus a pledge desire" to improve his influence at Corinth for the relief of the distressed Christians at Jerusalem, verse 16, well may we acknowledge with thankfulness the goodness of God, who has "put it into the heart of our king" to exert his influence with us in behalf of our distressed brethren in the north: and I do trust, that a measure of the same success which Titus was favored with at Corinth, will attend the appeal now made in the king's name to your liberality on this occasion. The distress being extremely great and urgent, I will show you:

***~~I. What the inequalities of Divine Providence call for at our hands—~~***

That there are great inequalities in the states of men, is obvious, in all places and in all ages. Even in the country which was governed more immediately by God himself, it was declared, that "the poor would never cease out of the land, [Deuteronomy 15:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 15.11);" much more, therefore, may we expect to see the same dispensations in our land.

***~~Certainly there are great inequalities in the states of men—~~***

These occur, from birth, from education, from accident.

One person is born to opulence, and, from the moment he comes into the world, enjoys all that this world can afford. Another, from the first instant of his birth, is destitute of the most common necessities of life, or would be so if they were not supplied by the hand of charity.

One, from early infancy, is instructed in some branch of knowledge that may fit him for a higher sphere; while the mind of another is left without any culture whatever.

Hence we see some, even of the lower classes of society, rise to wealth and eminence; while others, for the lack of such advantages, are left to perform the most degrading offices in life.

And from what we call accident, that is, from occurrences which could neither have been anticipated nor avoided, have the most astonishing changes been produced; the rich being reduced to poverty, and the poor being elevated to situations of wealth and dignity. The greatest acquisitions have been made by some unforeseen event, that has prepared the way for them, and almost forced them, as it were, upon us. On the other hand, what bereavements have been suffered, from fire, from flood, from reverses in trade, from the failure of others, from war, from civil commotion, or even from sickness, which has incapacitated men for their proper duties!

***~~And what do these call for at our hands?~~***

Are the rich to sit down satisfied, as if their abundance was given to them for themselves alone? Are they not rather to consider themselves as stewards of the Lord, appointed by him to minister to the necessities of their poorer brethren?

God himself, in the wilderness, showed us what his end was, in so diversifying the lots of men. He gave manna from the clouds of Heaven to his people; and he appointed that every one would gather an omer of it daily, for his own use. But it frequently happened, through some accidental circumstance, that some gathered less than the measure prescribed, and some, perhaps through illness, gathered none at all. Yet, without any concerted plan, it constantly happened, that if some of a family gathered less than their proper measure, others had gathered more: and in all the families of Israel, for the space of forty years, it was found, that when the whole of a family put their gatherings together, they amounted to the precise quantity that was enjoined; "those who had gathered much having nothing over, and those who had gathered little having no lack. See [Exodus 16:16-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 16.16-18)."

Now God would have us also to know, that *all which we have, however laboriously gathered up by us, was His gift, and given by him for the express purpose of administering to the necessities of our more indigent brethren*. True, we are not called now to put all we have into a common stock; but we are called to "make our abundance a supply for the necessities of others;" so that there may be such a measure of "equality," as will consist with a due maintenance of all the different orders in civil and social life.

With these inequalities we shall be well satisfied, if we consider,

***~~II. The vast advantages derived from them—~~***

Exceeding great benefits arise from such dispensations, for,

***~~1. They call forth from men the greatest possible exercise of grace—~~***

To all classes of the community, the poor as well as the rich, are these dispensations truly beneficial.

The poor derive instruction, which they would not attain in any other way: they learn both resignation to the Divine will, and dependence on the care of God. If tempted at any moment to repine, they learn to say, '"Shall a living man complain?" If I had my deservings, it is not bodily sustenance that I would lack, but a drop of water to cool my tongue in Hell.

I see the birds, that plow not, nor sow, nor gather into barns, have food in due season provided for them: why, then, would I despond? The God who feeds the ravens, can feed me: and he will rather send me food by the very ravens themselves, than allow me to lack what he sees to be good for me.

The rich, too, are taught most invaluable lessons by what they see around them. From beholding the distresses of others, they learn to sympathize with the afflicted (what an invaluable lesson is that!) They learn, also, self-denial, which they gladly practice, "that they may have something to give to those who lack." And I hesitate not to say, that they have more exquisite pleasure in any instance of self-denial, than any person upon earth has in the most unbridled self-indulgence.

But what shall I say of the delight they feel in acts of beneficence? This is the very occupation, if I may so speak, of God himself, "who is good to all, and whose tender mercy is over all his works." This, too, is pre-eminently the point in which they are conformed to the image of "their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; who, though he was rich—yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich! verse 9."

And now tell me, I beg you, whether these different classes are not greatly benefitted, when called to the exercise of such graces; for which there would be comparatively no scope, if these inequalities in providence did not exist?

***~~2. They bring to God the greatest possible acquisition of glory—~~***

Take all these persons in their respective stations: and see how all of them admire and adore God for the manifestations which he thus gives of his providence and grace: the poor, in having their needs so seasonably supplied; and the rich, in being made God's honored instruments of good to man. This is very particularly noticed by Paul, in the following context; and in comparison with this honor accruing to God, the relief conferred upon the poor he accounts as nothing, "The administration of this service," says he, "not only supplies the lack of the saints, (that is comparatively a small matter,) but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; while, by the experiment of this ministry, they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; and by their prayer for you, who long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you."

And then he adds, with a heart overflowing with gratitude to God, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! [2 Corinthians 9:12-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 9.12-15)."

Now, if there were no such inequalities, there would be no scope for the rectifying of them; and, consequently, none for the adorations and thanksgivings offered unto God by those for whom he had so mercifully interposed. Say, then, whether these inequalities are not, on the whole, an unspeakable blessing to mankind; and whether, instead of repining at them, we ought not to adore and magnify our God, who makes such use of them, for the exercise of such grace, and for the manifestation of such glory unto men?

Let me not, however, forget your necessities, brethren, while I plead for the relief of others.

***~~Let me entreat you,~~***

***~~1. To seek from God the spiritual supplies which you yourselves need—~~***

None of your fellow-creatures, however destitute they may be in respect of temporal necessities, are half so necessitous as you, in relation to your spiritual condition. In this respect, all, whether rich or poor, are on a level. Truly, there is a sad "equality" with respect to this: all being not only "wretched and miserable," in a general view, but spiritually "poor, and blind, and naked," in particular. And who shall give you relief? Shall any fellow-creature be able to support you? No! the best man on earth has "no more oil in his vessel than is needful for himself." There is no help for any man, but "in Christ Jesus, in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness would dwell," and "from whose fullness he has ordained us to receive."

Get then, I beg you, brethren, a just sense of your necessities; and look to Christ for a supply of them: for "he is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you, having always all-sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work, [2 Corinthians 9:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 9.8)."

***~~2. To impart to your fellow-creatures the relief which they need—~~***

The occasion is indeed urgent, and I may well call upon you to impart out of your abundance, according to your ability. Of course, some of you are able to give but little: but, "if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not, verse 12." This, however, I must say, "He who sows sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he who sows bountifully, shall reap also bountifully, [2 Corinthians 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 9.6)."

Nor is it unwise for you to consider what changes may yet occur with respect to your own temporal condition: and how much you yourselves may hereafter need relief from the very persons you now relieve. In this view, I would say, for your encouragement, that "what you give to the poor, you lend to the Lord;" and in the hour of necessity he will repay you.

Arise, then, all of you, to this good work; and "cast your bread upon the waters, that you may find it after many days." In Heaven, at all events, you shall find it; for God has promised, that not so much as "a cup of cold water given for his sake shall lose its reward."

***~~#2036~~***

***~~THE BENEFIT ARISING FROM ATTENTION TO THE POOR~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 9:12-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 9.12-15)~~***

"This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

IN this happy country, benevolent institutions of every kind abound, insomuch that there is scarcely any distress to which human nature can be subjected, for which some appropriate provision is not made. But of all charities, there are none that deserve our support more than those which have respect to the poor in an hour of sickness, and provide for their temporal and spiritual needs at the same time. Such is the institution to which we are to call your attention this day. We will briefly set before you,

***~~I. The nature of the institution—~~***

It is called 'A Visiting Society.' Its design is to find out the modest and industrious poor in a time of sickness, and to administer to them relief for their bodies, and, at the same time, instruction for their souls. For the better accomplishment of this design, the town and neighborhood are divided into districts; in each of which, two persons, one of each gender, are appointed to superintend their immediate vicinity, to inquire into such cases of distress as may come within their knowledge, and to afford them such relief as their immediate necessities may seem to require. As in such seasons the ears of men are more open to instruction, the visitors are to avail themselves of the opportunity thus afforded them, to direct the attention of the poor to the concerns of their souls, and to lead them to that adorable Savior, who calls himself, "The way, the truth, and the life."

Of these visitors, there is a meeting once a month under the superintendence of their minister, to report what persons they have visited; and to be advised, in case of any difficulty, what is most fitting to be done. At those meetings also the accounts of every district are settled; and the book which contains them is kept open to the inspection of them all. This records what has been done for about fifty years under the Author's ministry at Cambridge.

From this short view of the institution may be judged—

***~~II. Its great utility—~~***

The words of our text refer to the contributions sent from Macedonia and Achaia to relieve the necessities of the saints at Jerusalem: and they mark with great distinctness the chief excellencies of the institution before us. Its obvious tendency is to advance,

***~~1. The comfort of the poor—~~***

The poor in a time of health are happy; because their minds and habits are fitted to their state. But in a time of sickness their situation is truly pitiable; because they are unable to procure those comforts which their necessities require. Their very application for parochial relief sometimes subjects them to unkindness: and those, who have been familiar with them in a season of prosperity, too often neglect them in a time of need. See [Proverbs 19:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 19.7). Conceive then at such a season a visitor coming to them, and not only tendering to them that relief which they could not have obtained from any other source, but expressing the tenderest sympathy with them under their affliction. What a balm must this be to the wounded feelings of the poor sufferer! If the *rich*, who are accustomed to kindness from their friends, find it doubly acceptable at such a season, then what must the *poor*man feel at the unexpected and unsolicited attentions of a perfect stranger!

But conceive the poor man now for the first time led to call upon his God; now instructed in the knowledge of a Savior; now blessed with the first dawn of spiritual light, and begotten to a hope full of immortality. Conceive him now saying with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I learned your law." How altered is his state! How peaceful is his mind! How exceeding joyful is he in all his tribulation!

Know then that such effects have frequently arisen from the exertions of those who are engaged in this good work; and it is the manifest tendency of the institution to produce them. This therefore may well recommend the institution itself to your support.

***~~2. The welfare of all engaged in it—~~***

To enter cordially into a work of this kind is no small exercise of grace: it truly displays "the exceeding grace of God in us:" and where grace is so exercised, it will assuredly be strengthened and confirmed. God has said, that "he who waters, shall be watered also himself." And we will appeal to all who have ever visited the chambers of the sick, and labored for the spiritual welfare of their fellow-creatures, whether they have not been richly repaid by the blessing of God poured out upon their own souls? We know assuredly, that in proportion as any have offered unto God these sacrifices of love, they have been made by him to feast upon their own sacrifice.

But further, we are told in our text, that the persons relieved will offer up "their prayers" to God in behalf of those who relieve them: and is this a small benefit? Possibly the prayers may be only devout aspirations to God, such as "God bless you!" but shall such prayers go forth in vain? If God hears the cries of the injured, and punishes their oppressors, [James 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.4), will he not hear and answer the prayers of men when offered for their benefactors? No doubt he will; and will recompense into the bosoms of the benevolent every benefit they have conferred.

Nor is it a small benefit to such benevolent persons that their names are respected, and their company desired. True indeed, we are not to engage in such services with a view to the applause of man; but we are not to despise the approbation and love of our fellow-creatures, but rather to accept it as an expression of God's kindness to our souls. See how *Job's*exertions in this way were recompensed, [Job 29:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 29.11-13); and was this a despicable reward?

But consider how such benefactors are loved by the objects whom they relieve; "how greatly they are longed after for the exceeding grace of God in them." How do the poor people count the hours, and almost the minutes, when these kind friends are expected to arrive! Truly this is a great honor from the Lord, and an unspeakable comfort to those who have rendered themselves so respected and beloved.

***~~3. The honor of the Gospel—~~***

Of this also the text particularly speaks. These kind offices are regarded both by God and man as a "professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ." The Gospel expressly requires these offices of love. "Pure religion," we are told, "is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction:" and again it is said, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ, [Galatians 6:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.2)." When therefore these offices are performed, the Gospel appears, in its true light, a religion of love.

And here we cannot but observe, how such conduct in the professors of the Gospel is calculated to silence all its enemies. Many cry out against the Gospel as inculcating faith only, and leading its advocates to neglect good works. But where shall we find among the enemies of the Gospel such institutions as these? Where shall we find that a regard for the souls of men forms a leading feature in any charity of theirs? It is under the Gospel alone that these institutions flourish; and no sooner does any one receive "the truth as it is in Jesus," than he delights to aid such institutions to the utmost of his power. Truly this is most honorable to the Gospel; and that which so adorns the doctrine of God our Savior, must needs be itself worthy of universal support.

***~~4. The glory of God—~~***

Doubtless it is not in the power of man to *add*anything to the glory of his God. Yet, inasmuch as these institutions lead men to acknowledge the providence of God, and to adore him for his gracious interposition in their behalf, they may be justly said to advance the glory of God. And this view of the subject is repeatedly mentioned both in the text and context, See [2 Corinthians 8:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.19) and, verse 11.

The visitor may possibly, in the first instance, be regarded as the sole source of the benefit conferred: but his instructions soon lead the grateful person to behold the hand of God, and to render thanks to Him as the true and only source of good. Then the benefactor is viewed in his true light, even like the angel sent by God to deliver Peter from his prison: but God is viewed as "the Author and Giver of the gift." Then "thanksgivings abound to Him;" and the person who perhaps thought nothing of God before, now adores him and magnifies him from his inmost soul. This is the only tribute that man can pay to his Maker: but it is "a sacrifice most pleasing unto God."

***~~Conclusion—~~***

We now call upon you all to adopt the language of our text, and say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

The true import of these words is not generally understood. It is supposed, that, because our blessed Lord and Savior calls himself, "The gift of God," and is undoubtedly the greatest of all God's gifts to man, the passage must relate to him: but, both from the text and context, it is evident that we must understand it as relating to the alms which were collected for the service of the Church at Jerusalem. Speaking of the part which Titus had taken in this measure, Paul says, "Thanks be to God, who put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you, 2 Corinthians 8:16;" where it is observable, that he traces the blessing to God as its true Author, and returns thanks to God for it. So in our text he speaks of "Thanksgivings to God" occasioned by it, and "God as glorified for it," and "the exceeding grace of God" as manifested in it. Hence the import of it undeniably is, that "Thanks" would be given by all to God for so "unspeakable a gift."

And truly it is "the gift of God:" it is God alone who has put it into the heart of so many persons to unite in so good a work. It is to his grace alone that we can trace this tender concern for the temporal and eternal welfare of our fellow-creatures. Man, by nature, has it not: and those who are ignorant of the Gospel have it not: they may talk about good works; but this is a work in which they never engage. We must therefore glorify God for it, as being the only true source from whence it proceeds.

And it may well be called an "unspeakable gift." It is unspeakable, whether as existing in the visitors, or as operating on those who are visited. No grace can justly be considered as a light matter, since the smallest portion of it that can exist in the soul is of more value than the whole world. Of what value then must such "exceeding grace" be, such grace as most assimilates us to God himself! Was "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" most displayed in this, that "when he was rich, he for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich, [2 Corinthians 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.9)." This is the pattern which the visitors desire to imitate, so far at least as, by the most self-denying offices of love, to contribute to the utmost of their power to the happiness of their afflicted brethren.

If we look at the *effects*which have followed from their exertions, these are "unspeakable" indeed. For, in addition to the temporal comfort administered to Christ himself in many of his poor members, [Matthew 25:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.40), I doubt not but that there are at this very hour before the throne of God several, whose first thoughts about religion originated altogether in the instructions received from this society. Had there been but one soul brought out of darkness into the marvelous light of the Gospel by means of this institution, the labors of all connected with it would have been richly recompensed: but we say again, that many, we doubt not, will have to bless God for it to all eternity.

Let all then give thanks to God that such an institution exists; and let all contribute liberally to its support. We beg to remind you all, that the contributors, no less than the visitors, are accessary to all the good that is done by it; and may expect a blessing on their own souls: and we close our subject with that admonition of the Apostle, "He who sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully, shall reap also bountifully, verse 6."

***~~#2037~~***

***~~THE EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL~~***

**[2 Corinthians 10:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.3-5)**

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ!"

*EVERYTHING, however good, may be made to appear in a disadvantageous light, if we choose to put a perverse construction upon it. The more diligent any person is in approving himself to God, the more must he expect to suffer from misrepresentation and calumny.* His humility will be called superstition; his zeal will be called ostentation; his devotion will be called enthusiasm; and his whole deportment will be called hypocrisy. No man ever labored to do what was right more than the Apostle Paul; yet no man was ever more calumniated. There was no self-denial which he did not exercise, no suffering which he did not cheerfully endure, for the good of others: yet through the artifices of false teaches, who sought to establish their own influence on the ruins of his, everything he did became to him an occasion of reproach.

There were great disorders in the Corinthian Church, which he sought to rectify. He in the first instance adopted the mildest methods: when these were ineffectual, he threatened to exert his apostolic authority: when still he could not prevail, he was extremely averse to use the necessary severity; and forbore to do it, in hopes that his lenity might conciliate their regards, and reduce them to a willing obedience. But they construed all this change of conduct as the result of deceit, or timidity. They considered him as influenced by a view to his own carnal interests, and as being unworthy of their respect in proportion as he strove to merit it.

Of this he complains in the passage before us. He assures his adversaries that, though like other men he was still encompassed with infirmities, he was not actuated by any considerations of ease, or honor, or self-interest, but was intent on mortifying every evil thought in himself, as well as of checking it in them: and that, as he was impelled by a sense of duty in the whole of his conduct towards them, so, if his present kind entreaties would be without effect, he was ready and determined to exert his apostolic authority in casting out of the Church all obstinate offenders, and in inflicting on them also, by his miraculous powers, some heavy judgment.

This seems to be the import of the text as it stands connected with the context. But if we divest it of the peculiarities arising from the occasion, we shall find in it *a summary view of the effects produced by the Gospel in the Apostle's own mind, and, through his instrumentality, on the minds of others also*. In discoursing upon it we shall be led to show,

***~~I. The opposition which sinners make to God—~~***

We might here lay open the actions of men, and show their contrariety to the commands of God. But the text speaks of "imaginations and of high things which exalt themselves," not merely against the authority, but "even against the knowledge, of God." We must therefore mark the rebellion of men as it shows itself in their "thoughts" which serve as "strongholds" in which they are intrenched and fortified, and by means of which they exclude God from their hearts.

***~~1. They fortify themselves against God by proud thoughts—~~***

It is scarcely credible that such an insect as man would exalt himself with such impious presumption in the presence of his God. If we assert the authority of God, and vindicate his claim to their hearts, they reply, like Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I would obey his voice? I know not the Lord; neither will I obey his voice! [Exodus 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 5.2). See also [Psalm 12:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 12.4) and [Jeremiah 44:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 44.16)."

***~~2. They fortify themselves against God by unbelieving thoughts—~~***

We declare what will certainly be the outcome of the contest; and that, if they will not bow to the scepter of his grace, they shall be broken in pieces with a rod of iron! [Psalm 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.9); and that, if they will not have Christ to reign over them, he will call forth his executioners to slay them before him! [Luke 19:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.27). But not one word of this will they believe. They deny that God will ever execute his threatenings, or that they have anything to fear at his hands! [Psalm 94:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 94.7) with [Malachi 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 2.17).

***~~3. They fortify themselves against God by worldly thoughts—~~***

When we summon them to surrender themselves up to God, they tell us, that at some more convenient season they may listen to us; but at present they are so occupied with the cares or pleasures of life, that they cannot find leisure for such concerns as these. To all our pressing invitations, they either answer, more civilly, "I beg you have me excused," or, more rudely, "I cannot come! [Luke 14:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 14.18-20)."

**4.** **They fortify themselves against God by *self-righteous*thoughts—**

When they are driven, as it were, from their out-posts, they raise interior fortifications with great zeal and industry: they encompass themselves with "works of righteousness," and there insist upon stipulations and agreements with God. They will pay him such a tribute; they will perform such services; they will surrender up a portion of their hearts, provided their old friends and allies may be permitted to continue unmolested in the remainder. *The terms of the Gospel are too humiliating for them*, and rather than they will come like Benhadad, trusting solely on the mercy of the king of Israel, [2 Kings 20:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 20.31), [32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 20.32), they will die in the breach, and be buried in the ruins of their citadel.

***~~5. They fortify themselves against God by desponding thoughts—~~***

God's entrance into the heart is frequently obstructed by these, as much as by any other thoughts whatever. And it is surprising to see with what obstinacy they are defended. Sinners will even bring Scripture itself to support them against God, and to justify their rejection of his offered mercy. They are as studious to persuade themselves that "there is no hope" for them, as once they were to assure themselves that there was no ground for fear, [Ezekiel 37:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.11). [Jeremiah 2:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.25).

But impregnable as these "strongholds" appear, God can "cast them down!" To evince this, we proceed to show,

***~~II. The means by which God overcomes them—~~***

***~~God in this warfare does not make use of "carnal weapons"—~~***

The *sword*of the civil magistrate is not needed in it. It may indeed be properly used to suppress any evils which injure society, and to protect the godly in the free enjoyment of religious liberty, [Romans 13:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.3-4); but it must not be put forth to propagate the truth, [Zechariah 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.6). Let *Muhammadans*bathe their swords in blood, and *Papists*kindle their fires, to make proselytes to their religion; but God abhors such measures; and has declared, that "those who take the sword shall perish with the sword! [Matthew 26:52](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.52)."

Neither are his servants to call in *artifice*to their aid. They are indeed, in some sense, to "become all things to all men, that by all means they may save some, [1 Corinthians 9:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.22);" but they are not to make any sinful compliances. They are to stand upon their own ground: they must "have their conduct in the world, not with fleshly wisdom, but with simplicity and godly sincerity [2 Corinthians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.12);" they must not attempt to exercise *craft*, or to "catch men by *deceit*, 2 Corinthians 12:16;" but, "renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, they must commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, 2 Corinthians 4:2."

Nor is *oratory*of any use in this warfare. Paul was qualified beyond most to fight with this weapon, if he had judged it expedient: but he laid it aside as an incumbrance. He knew that, instead of advancing the interests of his Lord, *oratory* would "render the cross of Christ of no effect, [1 Corinthians 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.17);" and therefore he determined to "preach not with the enticing words of man's wisdom [1 Corinthians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.4)," or "in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but in those only which the Holy Spirit teaches, [1 Corinthians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.13)."

***~~That which God renders effectual, is the simple preaching of the Gospel—~~***

The *law*is usually that which first shakes the foundations of the citadel, and batters down the fortifications with which it was encompassed. Yes, the Gospel itself also is at first alarming, because it proposes a remedy to persons perishing in their sins, and consequently apprises them of their danger, which they were not before aware of. But when it has convinced them of their guilt and misery, then it speaks peace unto their souls; and sweetly constrains them to yield up themselves unreservedly to God, as their reconciled God and Savior, [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14-15).

Not that the Gospel has this power in itself: it is in itself as weak as was the sound of ram's horns which cast down the walls of Jericho, [Joshua 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 6.20); but it is "mighty through God;" and, when accompanied by the operations of his Spirit, it compels the stoutest rebel to deliver up the keys of his citadel, and surrender at discretion.

***~~The victories gained by the gospel are perfect and complete—~~***

The victories obtained by carnal weapons, may be followed by the subjugation of the vanquished people: but no conqueror could expect his newly acquired subjects to become instantly his active and faithful allies.

Yet this invariably follows the triumphs of the Gospel: the vanquished sinner begins to fight as zealously for God as ever he fought against him. Moreover, as his thoughts and imaginations were the strongholds and fortifications whereby he maintained his stand against God, so now they are employed in his service, and are instrumental in repelling all the attacks of his enemies: "they are brought, not only into captivity, but also into obedience to Christ."

Now he entertains *humble*thoughts, abhorring himself for ever rebelling against so gracious a God and Savior; and detesting the base servitude to which he submitted under the government of Satan. These, in proportion as they are entertained, form a very strong rampart around his soul.

Now he cherishes also *jealous*thoughts, aware of the subtlety of his great adversary, and of the traitors which yet remain within his own bosom. He stands upon his watch-tower, and guards every avenue whereby his enemy may again approach to hurt him.

Now also he raises up *grateful*thoughts, magnifying and adoring that love with which his blessed Lord has loved him, and that grace whereby his God and Father has distinguished him, [1 John 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.1). These form a bulwark that may defy all the confederate hosts of earth and Hell.

Now moreover he forms *resolute*thoughts. He is menaced by an ungodly world; but he defies them ll. Is he told that he shall be imprisoned and put to death for his adherence to Christ? He answers, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself! [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24);" "I am willing not only to be bound, but also to die for my Lord's sake! [Acts 21:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 21.13);" "Yes, if I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all, and desire that you also will joy and rejoice with me! [Philippians 2:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.17-18)."

In short, he labors that "every thought" which can give advantage to the enemy, may be "cast down," and every thought which can maintain the authority and promote the honor of God, may be established in the soul: so entirely does Christ overcome the *strong man*, and convert to his own use all his spoils, [Luke 11:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.21-22).

***~~We may learn from hence,~~***

***~~1. How to judge of our conversion—~~***

Our *words*or *actions*are a very inadequate criterion whereby to judge: for, though they must of necessity be good if we are converted, and a lack of piety in them will incontestably prove us unconverted—yet there may be nothing manifestly exceptionable in them, while we are still ignorant of Christ and of his salvation. But the *thoughts*will form an infallible rule of judgment. "As a man thinks in his heart," says Solomon, "so is he, [Proverbs 23:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 23.7)."

*Examine therefore whether proud, unbelieving, worldly, self-righteous, and desponding thoughts are subdued within you; and whether humble, jealous, grateful, and resolute thoughts are in habitual exercise.*

Far be it from us to say, that men are not to employ their thoughts about worldly things; for their duties in social life absolutely require that they would do so: but, to whatever point our thoughts lead us when they are wholly unconfined, that will show the real disposition of our minds. If we are carnal and worldly, then our thoughts will be running out after things of a carnal and worldly nature. If, on the contrary, we are spiritual, then will our thoughts, which are known to God alone, be spiritual and heavenly.

***~~2. How to act when we are converted—~~***

What is spoken proverbially in reference to the expenditure of money, may very fitly be applied to this subject: 'Take care of little things; and great ones will take care of themselves.' Be attentive to your thoughts—and we shall have no fear about your actions. There is not anything done, but it has been previously transacted in the thoughts. *The heart is the womb in which everything is first conceived, whether it is good or evil*, [James 1:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.15). Out of the abundance that is there, will the mouth speak, and the members act, [Matthew 12:34-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.34-35).

Let us then attend to the advice of Solomon, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life [Proverbs 4:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 4.23)." Let us endeavor to train the thoughts for God. Let us not allow them to roam without restraint; but frequently arrest them, and inquire into their nature and tendency. Then shall we become ornaments to our holy profession, and acquire an increasing fitness for Heaven, where "every" thought will indeed be captivated to the obedience and enjoyment of Christ!

***~~#2038~~***

***~~THE FAITHFUL MINISTER'S DESIRES~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 10:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.15-16)~~***

"Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man's territory."

THE Apostle Paul was a man of an enlarged heart: he panted for the salvation of the whole world, and to the utmost of his power labored to promote it. But, in his labors, he was under the direction of his Divine Master, who assigned to him the path in which he was to run. To the course that was prescribed to him he carefully adhered; neither going beside it, to interfere with others; nor going beyond it, as obtruding himself any where without an express commission.

In these respects, he differed widely from some who sought to establish themselves on the foundation which he had laid at Corinth, and to subvert his influence in the Church which he had planted. To remedy the evils which had been introduced by them, he planned another visit to that city; and hoped, after rectifying all abuses there, to proceed to other regions beyond them, for the purpose of diffusing more widely, than he had yet done, the Gospel of Christ. This intention, which he specifies in the words of our text, will lead me to set before you,

***~~I. The desires of a faithful minister, in reference to any Church which he has planted—~~***

***~~He will desire their growth in every grace—~~***

However numerous his converts may be, no faithful minister will be satisfied, unless they make their spiritual profiting apparent. Every believer is enjoined to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, [2 Peter 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.18);" and it is in that way alone that he can either promote the honor of God, or advance his own happiness. Like persons engaged in a race, he must "forget what is behind, and reach forward to that which is before; and press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, [Philippians 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.13-14).

A mother, however rejoicing over her infant child, would soon cease to rejoice, if she saw no advancement in his stature: and so can no faithful minister find pleasure in his converts, if he sees them not gradually advancing in the divine life, and "growing up towards the measure of the full stature of Christ."

***~~He will desire their growth in faith more particularly—~~***

*Faith is the root of every grace; and according to its vital operations in us, will be our growth in all that is good.* When our Lord inculcated on his Apostles the exercise of a forgiving spirit, they replied, "Lord, increase our faith! [Luke 17:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 17.3-5)." One would have supposed that they would rather have said, "Increase our love." But they judged well; because their love was sure to be augmented in proportion to their faith. It is precisely in the same view that Paul speaks to the Corinthians, when he refers to an expected "increase of their faith."

It is by increasing discoveries of the great mystery of redemption, and of the glory of God as displayed in it, that we are to be assimilated to the image of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18); and to be rendered fit for the service of God on earth, or the enjoyment of him in Heaven.

The Apostle's hopes of ultimately proceeding to regions beyond them, lead me yet further to notice,

***~~II. The desires of a faithful minister, in reference to the whole world—~~***

A truly benevolent mind will extend its efforts as far as possible for the welfare of mankind: it would not willingly leave one to "perish, for whom Christ died." In diffusing the blessings of salvation to the whole world, the pious minister,

***~~1. He will labor personally with all his might—~~***

A minister's first concern, is to instruct the people committed to his charge: nor will the most enlarged philanthropy justify a neglect of his more appropriate duties. But, while it is his duty to pray, "May Your kingdom come," it is his duty to exert himself, according to his ability, to extend that kingdom to the very ends of the earth. If by his own personal labors he can carry the Gospel to foreign lands, he will account it his highest honor to engage in that service; and, like the Apostle, will regard every advance which he makes, a step towards regions and services yet beyond. But if his proper labors are stationary, he will exert all his influence to accomplish, through the instrumentality of others, what he cannot effect by his own personal exertions.

***~~2. He will look for the concurrence and aid of all his people—~~***

Paul hoped that his Corinthian converts would unite in furthering, to the utmost of their power, his efforts for the benefit of others beyond them. It is possible enough that the partiality of some towards him might have made them desirous of enjoying his continued labors, even at the expense of others whom he hoped to benefit. But such selfish wishes are decidedly wrong. We should be willing to make sacrifices for the good of others; and to "seek not our own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved, [1 Corinthians 10:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.33)." By such sacrifices the people do, in fact, concur in promoting and propagating the Gospel of the kingdom: and, if to these they add their financial contributions and their prayers for the furtherance of this good work, they are, in the truest and sublimest sense, "fellow-workers with God." To this, therefore, the faithful minister will endeavor to bring his people: that, through the united efforts of many, that work may be done, which cannot be effected by individual exertion.

***~~Let me now entreat you,~~***

***~~1. To improve your own privileges—~~***

Through the tender mercy of God, "the Gospel has come unto you;" and many of you, I trust, have been led to "believe in Christ, to the saving of your souls." But let none of you continue "weak in faith." Your faith must increase: your views must be more enlarged, your affiance more simple, your confidence more firm: you must "be strong in faith, if you would give glory unto God." Remember, that it is "to perfect that which is lacking in your faith," that our labors are directed: and you yourselves must ever keep that object in view. Go on then, from grace to grace: and let this testimony be borne respecting you, that "your faith and love grow exceedingly."

***~~2. To extend those privileges to all around you—~~***

There is no need that any of you would overstep the line assigned you by Divine Providence: but, if your personal efforts are limited, your wishes and your prayers should know no bounds. I call upon you, then, to help forward the work of God in the world. Assist, to the utmost of your power, the different societies that are established for the conversion whether of Jews or Gentiles: for in this way, though you yourselves are stationary, the work of God will be advanced by you; seeing that the active agents of those societies, both at home and abroad, will "be enlarged by you abundantly."

***~~#2039~~***

***~~THE FOLLY OF PRIDE AND BOASTING~~***

**[2 Corinthians 10:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.18)**

"It is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends."

ONE would be ready to suppose that the more any person excelled in everything that was good, the more he would be filled with self-delight; and that the less holy any person was, the more he would be humbled under a sense of his vileness. But observation and experience attest that the very reverse of this is true!

The *godly*do indeed enjoy the testimony of a good conscience; but they are far from boasting of their own superior worth; they rather account themselves "less than the least of all saints."

But *formalists*and *hypocrites*are ever ready to commend themselves on account of their imagined excellencies, and to assume honor which does not belong to them.

There were at Corinth some of this description—some conceited teachers, who had entered into the Apostle's labors, and were endeavoring to advance their own influence in the Church by weakening and subverting his. To put the Corinthians on their guard against them, Paul shows them how different had been his conduct from that of these vain-glorious men:

Paul had brought the Gospel to those regions where it had never been heard before; whereas they were "boasting in work done by others."

Paul had moved in the sphere appointed to him by God; they were going beyond the line marked out for them.

Paul had sought only the glory of the Lord; while they were puffed up with pride, and seeking their own glory.

He then lays down a rule, applicable indeed to these teachers in the first instance, but equally proper for us also: "It is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends."

In discoursing on these words we shall show,

***~~I. From whence pride arises—~~***

The hearts of men are by nature proud, and their pride finds abundant scope for exercise:

***~~1. From their over-rating the quality of their actions—~~***

If what they do appears to be good, they are not strict in inquiring whether it is really so: they do not wish to detect those deficiencies which might render them dissatisfied with themselves. They do not examine the *principle*from which their actions flow, or the *manner*in which they are performed, or the *end*for which they are done; whereas these are the things which alone determine the real quality of their actions in God's eyes. They take for granted that all is right, because they see nothing wrong; and thus are filled with self-admiration and self-delight, when, if they formed a proper estimate of their conduct, they would rather be filled with shame and self-abasement.

***~~2. From their judging of them by an erroneous standard—~~***

Though men are not precise and scrupulous in weighing their actions, they involuntarily and imperceptibly judge of them by some standard.

Now the standard by which they try them, is that of popular opinion, and general practice: and whatever stands this test, they conclude to be deserving of praise.

They never think of weighing themselves in the balance of the sanctuary: the *popular scale*is more suited to their minds: that is not turned by small matters: it is so favorably constructed that a small weight of virtue will over-balance a heavy load of iniquity; and the many grains of allowance thrown into it are almost sure to make it preponderate in their favor. No wonder then that *they applaud themselves, when, if they took the word of God as their standard, they would find cause for nothing but humiliation and contrition!*

***~~3. From their ascribing them to a wrong cause—~~***

Because they are free agents in all that they do, they suppose that the merit of every good action must belong to them. But they forget that "God is the sole author of every good and perfect gift;" that it is "he who of his own good pleasure gives us both to will and to do;" and that consequently all the honor is due to him alone.

Granting then that their actions were really as excellent as their excessive conceit would paint them—yet they would have no ground for self-commendation. *The more they did for God, the more they would be indebted to God, by whose agency alone they were either inclined, or empowered, to do anything that was good.*But when they leave God out of their thoughts, and ascribe their virtues to their own will and power, they must of necessity contract habits of self-preference and self-esteem.

***~~4. From their overlooking their defects—~~***

Proud and vain-glorious men reflect only on what they do; and never think at all of what they leave undone, or of the deficiencies which are found in their very best actions. They perform one duty perhaps—but neglect many others. They attend to some injunction of the second table—but forget entirely the precepts contained in the first. They mark their observance of the *letter*of a command—but quite overlook their inattention to its *spirit*. They will have no more gods than one—but they will not "love that God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength." They will "draw near to God with their lips"—but will not inquire whether they have "worshiped him in spirit and in truth."

What can we expect from such *partial*views of their conduct, but that they will vaunt and boast themselves, as if they were worthy of the highest commendation!

Having traced the pride of men to its true source; we proceed to show,

***~~II. The folly and danger of pride—~~***

To illustrate this, let two things be considered:

***~~1. God will not regulate his judgment by theirs—~~***

Man is often influenced by the opinions of his fellow-creatures; and it is proper that he should be so; because others may have more accurate information than he, or be more capable of forming a just conclusion from the premises before him. But "unto God all things are naked and open!" However specious any appearances may be, He cannot be deceived. He will "lay righteousness as a line or plummet" to the souls of men, and thereby mark the smallest deviations from perfect rectitude. In vain will the boaster vaunt before him; for he will with one single interrogation confound him utterly, and lay him in the dust. In vain will the self-deceiver bring forward in his defense the good actions that he has done; for his God and Judge will indignantly dismiss him as unworthy of the smallest regard, [Matthew 7:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.21-23).

To have the approbation of *men*will avail him nothing, for "God will not judge according to appearance, but will judge righteous judgment." "He will show, that *many things which are highly esteemed among men, are an abomination in his sight*,[Luke 16:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 16.15);" and, when he passes sentence on them, he will "be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges, [Psalm 51:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.4)."

***~~2. Instead of sanctioning, he will reprove, their conceit—~~***

Nothing is move odious in the sight of God than pride! "The proud in heart, we are told, are an abomination to the Lord! [Proverbs 16:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 16.5)." Indeed pride is not befitting for any man.*Pride assimilates us, as much as anything can do, to the devil himself; and will certainly bring us into the same condemnation with him!* [1 Timothy 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 3.6). Our own high opinion of ourselves, will have an effect directly opposite to that which we wish. It will cause God to "*resist*us, [James 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.6)," *abase*us, [Daniel 4:30-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 4.30-32); [Daniel 4:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 4.37), and utterly *destroy*us! [Isaiah 10:12-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.12-16) with [Luke 18:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.14)."

We need go no further to prove that men, "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise, verse 12."

That we may be preserved from this most destructive habit, we will point out,

***~~III. The most effectual antidotes—~~***

***~~1. Study the holy law of God—~~***

The law of God is the only true standard of good and evil: and "by that is the knowledge of sin." That reaches to the inmost thoughts and dispositions, as well as to the outward acts. It was by a view of that, as extending to every desire of the soul, that Paul was made to feel himself a guilty and undone sinner, [Romans 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.9); and that once understood, will bring all of us into the dust before God.

***~~2. Watch the motions of your own hearts—~~***

Little do we suspect how much evil we would discover, if we were to mark the *motives*and *principles*by which we are actuated. Even when we are influenced by a good principle in the first instance, Satan will find some occasion to sow tares with the wheat, and to defile our very best actions. Let us then exercise a holy jealousy over ourselves. Let us not be too confident, even when we are most unconscious of any secret evil, [1 Corinthians 4:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.3-4). Let us especially be on our guard against every proud thought. Let us abase ourselves, that we may be exalted by our God.

***~~3. Bear in mind the strictness of the scrutiny in the day of judgment—~~***

God "weighs" not our actions only, but "our spirits." There is not a thought of our hearts that is not open to his all-seeing eye! He views at once the rule, and the observance of it; and *every deviation from the line of absolute perfection is marked by him*. True indeed it is, that while we are looking to the blood of Christ to cleanse us from our secret faults, and to the Spirit of Christ to perfect in us his good work—God will not "be extreme to mark what is done amiss." But, if we harbor any secret lust, or indulge any unhallowed principle, our God will search it out, and judge us according to it! [1 Corinthians 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.5). Our self-commendation will then avail us nothing; but we shall stand or fall according to the decision of an omniscient and unerring Judge!

***~~#2040~~***

***~~GODLY JEALOUSY, THE DUTY OF MINISTERS~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 11:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.2-3)~~***

"I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

*TO boast of ourselves is a mark of a weak and foolish mind.* Yet there are occasions whereon it may be necessary, particularly where the welfare of the Church of God is concerned. It would have ill become the Apostle to sit down in silence under all the calumnies that were cast upon him as a designing and deceitful man, who sought only his own glory, while he was assuming a character which did not properly belong to him.

In vindication of himself, he appeals to the plain, visible, acknowledged testimonies which God had given in his favor; which far exceeded any which his opponents could produce, and equaled any which had ever been given to "the very chief Apostles." At the same time he entreats the Corinthians to "bear with his folly" in mentioning these things, since it was not for his own sake, but for theirs, that he adverted to them.

Now *the jealousy which he felt for the saints at Corinth is precisely such as every minister would feel for his people*, exposed as they are to temptations on every side: and that it may be seen how necessary such a jealousy is, we shall show,

***~~I. In what near relation believers stand to Christ—~~***

***~~Believers are espoused to Christ—~~***

Christ is the Head and Husband of his Church. Under this character he is described by the Prophet Isaiah, [Isaiah 54:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.5); it is also given him in the Gospel, [John 3:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.29); and the Apostle Paul largely and repeatedly assigns it to him [Romans 7:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.4). [Ephesians 5:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.32). In the book of Revelation also the Church is expressly represented as "the wife of the Lamb, [Revelation 19:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.7)."

Truly, if it had not been so plainly revealed, we could not have dared to entertain such a thought in our minds. That sinners, so guilty, so polluted as we are, would be admitted into so near and so endearing a relation to our incarnate God! How wonderful! how surpassing all knowledge, and all conception! Yet so it is: and both the Church at large, and every member of the Church, is a partaker of this honor.

***~~Into this relation believers are brought by the ministry of the Gospel—~~***

The Apostle says, "I have espoused you to one husband." Ministers may fitly be compared to Abraham's servant, who was sent forth to seek a wife for his master's son. They have received a commission from their Lord and Master: they make known to the children of men the excellencies of him in whose name they come: they look to God for the success of their labors: and by their means he works, "making persons willing in the day of his power."

Sinners thus wrought upon, agree to take the Lord Jesus Christ as their Husband; and by their union with him they hope henceforth to "bring forth fruit unto God." In him they see all that they can possibly desire; and on him they rely for the communication of it to their souls: they take him as their "wisdom, their righteousness, their sanctification, and redemption;" and they glory in him, even in him alone. Having thus accepted Christ for their all, they make a covenant with him, "a perpetual covenant not to be forgotten, [Jeremiah 50:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 50.5);" and *they consecrate to him all that they are, and all that they have, to be disposed of from henceforth as his property according to his sovereign will and pleasure*. They pledge themselves henceforth through grace to be entirely "for the Lord, and not for another, [Hosea 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 3.3);" and never more to yield their affections to any but him.

This surrender the Lord Jesus Christ accepts; and to every one by whom it is made, he commissions his servants to proclaim in his name, "I will betroth you unto me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies; I will even betroth you unto me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord! [Hosea 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 2.19-20)."

But while on the one hand we contemplate their privileges, we must on the other hand consider,

***~~II. The danger to which believers are exposed—~~***

It is not to be supposed that he who ruined their first parents in Paradise, will leave them in the quiet possession of this high honor. No, as he envied the happiness of man in innocence, and never rested until he had robbed him of it, so he envies all who are brought into this near relation to the Lord Jesus, and never ceases from his efforts to deprive them of it.

***~~The state which befits those who are thus espoused to Christ, is that of perfect simplicity—~~***

A person, espoused to a fellow-creature only, ought to possess a simplicity of mind towards him: she would have no interest, no desire, no wish distinct from his. Thus there would be a singleness of eye in all who are united in these holy bonds to our Lord Jesus Christ. There would be no dependence on anything but on him alone. The constant habit of the believer's mind must be, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength." Nor must the betrothed person indulge a wish after anyone but him to whom she is espoused: she must "forget her own people and her father's house, if she would have her Lord to find pleasure in her beauty [Psalm 45:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 45.10-11)." She must possess also a modest, humble, child-like spirit, free from all pride, conceit, and vain-glory. In a word, she must be wholly his, in body, soul, and spirit; "an Israelite indeed, and without deceit."

***~~But from this state Satan is ever striving to divert us—~~***

Innumerable emissaries has he at his command ready to take advantage of us. Many even of our fellow-creatures are used by him as his instruments: many who are, in fact, no other than "false Apostles and deceitful workers," under his influence transform themselves into "Apostles of Christ," even as that wicked fiend himself assumes the semblance of an angel of light, verse 13-15." They will profess a great regard for truth, and under that garb will endeavor to commend their own erroneous principles. Under a profession of inculcating sublimer views of the Gospel, they will sap its very foundations, or build a superstructure altogether adverse to it, relaxing the obligations of the law, under a pretense of enhancing the excellency of the Gospel: and, as sure as any embrace their pernicious tenets, they are despoiled of all virgin modesty, and puffed up with pride and self-conceit.

The same kind of artifices which Satan used in tempting Eve, he still makes use of by other serpents than he then inspired. He suggests the superior wisdom that will be acquired by embracing this or that dogma; and the gratification that will be derived from a compliance with such or such a temptation. He calls in question the import of such divine declarations as militate against his views, or at least the danger of acting in opposition to them: and by these devices he beguiles many to their everlasting ruin.

Persons so tempted are generally unconscious of their danger; and hence arises,

***~~III. The duty of those to whom God has committed the oversight of them—~~***

The work of a minister is but just begun when he has been the means of bringing any soul to Christ: he has yet to watch over that soul, and to prepare it and make it ready for its destined honors.

***~~At a period yet future is the servant to present the bride to her Lord and husband—~~***

Even the horrid and disgusting offices performed for the virgins who were to be presented to king Ahasuerus, may, when divested of the sensuality connected with them, serve to illustrate the purification necessary for every member of the Christian Church. In the great day of the Lord Jesus we are to present to him our every convert "as a chaste virgin." Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ himself is now by his word and Spirit preparing the Church, "that he may then present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it may be holy and without blemish! [Ephesians 5:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.25-27)." If she is not made ready for him, and "clothed in fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints, [Revelation 19:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.8)," she can never be acknowledged as his bride. Any fundamental error in faith, or any allowed deviation from his law in practice, will entirely make void the covenant entered into at the espousals, and will cut her off from any hope of that felicity after which she aspires: and thus will all the minister's "labor prove in vain, [Galatians 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.11)."

***~~Until that period arrives, he must be jealous over her with a godly jealousy—~~***

If he sees any declension from the simplicity that is in Christ, he must instantly raise his warning voice. If he sees only a device of Satan whereby her piety may be endangered, and her mind may be in any respect corrupted, he must instantly put her on her guard. He is not to wink at anything whether in doctrine or practice that is contrary to the mind of God. If there is only a secret leaning towards anything that is wrong, he must with all the solicitude of the tenderest parent, point out the snare that Satan is laying for her feet.

Her Divine Husband is "a jealous God:" and a corresponding jealousy in his ministers must be ever awake to the discernment of incipient danger, and the correction of the slightest error. This is "a godly jealousy." It is the highest possible expression of love: and the minister who with most fidelity and affection discharges this duty, most approves himself to God, and displays the most valuable friendship towards man: "he watches for souls, as one who must give account."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who have given occasion for jealousy—~~***

Is it asked, Who are they? I answer: Those who have either declined in their love to Christ, or have not made their Christian growth apparent. What would any of you feel towards an object, who, after having solemnly betrothed herself to you, and once professed towards you the most ardent affection, had ceased to delight in your society, or showed that her more intimate acquaintance with you produced no increase of attachment towards you? Would your mind be easy? Would you be satisfied with such equivocal professions of regard?

What then must the Lord Jesus Christ feel, and what would your ministers feel, when your whole spirit and conduct give so much reason for doubt and fear? They must be jealous; they ought to be jealous: and towards all who come under this character we must "change our voice." We do truly "stand in doubt of" such: and we are constrained to "travail in birth with them, as it were, a second time—until Christ is formed in them [Galatians 4:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.19-20)."

"Look well to yourselves, my brethren, that you lose not the things that you have wrought, but that you receive a full reward:" for if you draw back from the Lord Jesus Christ, either in heart or life, "his soul shall have no pleasure in you, [Hebrews 10:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.38)."

***~~2. Those in whom no visible occasion of jealousy exists—~~***

We bless our God who has kept you thus far faithful to your engagements. Truly, "he who has established you in the midst of such manifold temptations is God." But still, though we have no occasion to be jealous over you, it befits you to be jealous over yourselves with a godly jealousy. For who can tell what a day or an hour may bring forth?

David, when walking on the top of his house, little thought what a snare Satan had laid for him. Just so, you little know how sorely he may thrust at you before another day has passed over your heads. "Be not high-minded, but fear." "Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." Take notice from time to time how your minds stand affected to the Lord Jesus Christ. Mariners are often forced out of their track by currents, and never discover their deviations until they have made their observations afresh. Make your observations then:

Do you delight more in secret communion with Christ?

Do you think less of every sacrifice you are called to make for him?

Is it more and more the one endeavor of your soul to please him?

Are you looking forward with increasing desire for that day when you shall be intimately and indissolubly united to him, and spend an eternity in the fruition of his love?

By such *marks*as these you may judge of your own state, and acquire a confidence in relation to his judgment also. Leave nothing in suspense. Give yourselves to him: walk with him: cleave to him with full purpose of heart: and "be diligent that you may at last be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless, [2 Peter 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.14); [2 Peter 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.17)."

And now to his holy keeping we commend you; even to him, "who 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 dominion for ever and ever. Amen! Jude verse 24."

***~~#2041~~***

***~~PAUL'S ZEAL ILLUSTRATED AND IMPROVED~~***

**[2 Corinthians 11:23-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.23-29)**

"Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?"

THE people of the world are in the habit of representing Christians as defective in every mental attainment, and negligent in the discharge of every social duty. It befits Christians not only to cut off all occasion for such reproach, but so to conduct themselves as to be able to appeal to all who know them, that they are in no respect below any other people who are similarly circumstanced with themselves.

As Paul, when his adversaries sought to detract from his character, silenced them by this challenge, "Wherein soever any is bold, I am bold also: Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I" So ought Christians in every department of life to be able to challenge competition with other men, and boldly to say, 'Are they modest, prudent, kind, faithful, diligent? So am I.' This they should be able to do in reference to all virtues and wholesome attainments.

But in relation to everything of a spiritual nature, the Christian should so far excel, that no worldly person would be able to challenge him. Our blessed Lord intimates this in the question which he puts to us; "What do you more than others?" We ought to do more than any other people in the world either do or can do; and, like the Apostle in our text, we should be able to enumerate many things, in which our adversaries, even the best of them, can bear no competition with us.

It is well for the Church of God that Paul was so calumniated by his enemies: for, if he had not been so traduced, he never would have recorded the extent of his labors, respecting which, from the brief history of them in the Acts of the Apostles, we could not have formed any adequate conception. True it is, indeed, that he again and again acknowledges, that, if not so compelled to declare the truth, he would have been a fool for boasting in this manner. Just so, we too shall be guilty of the most egregious folly, if we without necessity proclaim our own goodness. But still, I say again, we should be inferior to the world in nothing that pertains to this life, and superior to them in everything that pertains to the life to come.

From this account, which the Apostle gives of his own labors, we shall take occasion,

***~~I. To place them more distinctly before you—~~***

Of course, it is only a cursory notice that we can take of them: and indeed it is the accumulated mass, rather than any particulars, which will best answer our end in this discourse. Yet, that we may have something of a distinct view of his labors, let us notice,

***~~1. His sufferings—~~***

Paul, at his conversion, had been told by the Savior "what great things he would suffer for his Master's sake," and truly they were great, greater far than those which fell to the share of any other Apostle.

He was "in stripes above measure," being five times scourged by the Jews to the utmost extremity that their law allowed; and thrice by the Romans, though in direct opposition to the Roman law.

"In prisons" all the Apostles had been; but not so frequently as he.

So "often was he in deaths," that he felt himself "standing in jeopardy every hour," and could appeal to God that "he died daily, [1 Corinthians 15:30-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.30-31)."

Thrice did he suffer shipwreck: and on one of those occasions he floated on a piece of the wreck "a day and a night," every moment in danger of being consigned to a watery grave.

On one occasion he was stoned (at Lystra), and actually left for dead; and doubtless he would have died, if God had not, by a miraculous power, raised him up again, and restored him.

All these were prior to his sufferings recorded in the latter part of the Acts of the Apostles.

What patience, what resignation, what fortitude, must the Apostle have possessed, when he could persevere in the midst of such continued and severe trials as these! ow strange does it appear, that "in every place such bonds and such afflictions would await" such a man as he; *whose only fault was that he loved his God and Savior, and loved his fellow-creatures too even beyond his own life!*

But so it was; and so it will be, as long as ungodly men shall have it in their power to put forth into exercise their enmity against God. In proportion as any man resembles Paul in his zeal for Christ, and in his love to men, he will meet with the very same treatment that the Apostle did. And if he is not persecuted unto death, as Paul was, he will be indebted for his protection, not to the abated hostility of men, but to the laws of the land in which he dwells.

***~~2. His dangers—~~***

These were incessant, wherever he moved.

Sometimes he was in peril "by waters," that is by rivers, which he was obliged to ford, or more probably by land floods, which he could neither foresee nor escape.

Sometimes by robbers, who, conceiving him to be carrying money with him from one Church to another, lay in wait to plunder him.

Sometimes "by his own countrymen," who were incensed against him for going to the Gentiles.

At other times "by the heathen," who were indignant at his endeavors to overthrow idolatry.

"In the city," he was beset by enraged mobs;  
"in the wilderness," by ravenous beasts; and,  
"in the sea," by frequent tempests, or by pirates, more to be dreaded than death itself.

But who would have thought that persons professing love to Christ would be found adverse to him; and that he would be in as much danger from their envy and jealousy, their subtlety and malignity, as from the more open assaults of professed enemies! Yet amidst his other perils he mentions those in which he was "among false brethren," who sought by misrepresentations to subvert his influence, and by treachery to destroy his life. Alas! alas! that such impiety would ever be concealed under a cloak of zeal for Christ! Yet the faithful minister shall find that such monsters do exist; and that there are yet in the Church, no less than in the apostolic age, "wolves in sheep's clothing," who, if only they can find opportunity to exercise their predominant dispositions, will tear in pieces the Church, and spare neither the shepherd nor the sheep! [Acts 20:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.29).

***~~3. His privations—~~***

Amidst all his labors, he was often destitute of the *comforts*, yes, and of the common *necessities*of life; so that, in addition to all the weariness and painfulness of his exertions, he was exposed to "hunger and thirst, and cold and nakedness," not having clothing to protect him from the inclemencies of the weather, nor food to sustain his feeble body. And, as if all these privations were not sufficient, he often added to them by voluntary fastings, and by a sacrifice of needful sleep, so that he might be able to support himself without being burdensome to any, and make himself an example to those who accused him of seeking only his temporal advancement.

How lightly and thoughtlessly do we read this account, as though there were nothing very extraordinary in it! But if we had only to spend one single week in such trials as his, we would soon see what astonishing grace he must have had, that could enable him to bear them for a series of years, and even to "take pleasure in them," if only his Lord and Savior might be glorified by means of them! verse 30 with [2 Corinthians 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.10).

***~~4. His cares—~~***

These, under such circumstances, were truly overwhelming. The Churches everywhere, whether planted by him or not, looked to him for guidance and direction in all their difficulties; so that there was a weight upon his mind sufficient to depress anyone who did not feel his consolations and supports.

The trials of Moses being great, seventy persons were appointed to bear the burden with him. But Paul had to bear his burdens all alone. He was the referee of all; the counselor of all; the director of all. Nor did he attend merely to the general concerns of all the Churches; no, he bore in mind the case of every individual that was brought before him; and labored as much for the benefit of each, as if he had no other object to engage his mind. For this he could appeal to the Corinthians themselves, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" If any, through prejudice, or ignorance of Christian liberty, or through any other cause, were weak, he sympathized with them, and accommodated himself to their feeble state, and labored by all possible means to comfort and encourage them. In like manner, if any were stumbled either by the artifices of false teachers, or the violence of persecution, he "burned" with an ardent desire to restore their minds, and to establish their hearts.

Such was the life of that holy man; and such were the labors in which it was continually occupied. We will now endeavor,

***~~II. To suggest such considerations as obviously arise from them—~~***

But where shall we begin? Or, once begun, where shall we end? We must of necessity confine ourselves to a few which are of most general utility. Let us see then in these labors of his,

***~~1. The incalculable value of the soul—~~***

If we were to judge by the conduct of all around us, we would suppose that the soul were of no value; for the generality of men pay no more attention to their souls than if there were no future state of existence. And of those who profess to care for their souls, how few labor for their welfare with befitting zeal! If they be called upon to bear some reproach, or to sustain some temporal loss, they are ready to draw back, as though the interests of their souls were not worth the sacrifice. They are more terrified at the sneers of a fellow-creature, than at the threatenings of their God. They are more desirous of the applause of man, than of the approbation of their Judge.

But look at the Apostle Paul: Did he think so lightly of immortal souls? Would he have labored and suffered so much for them, if they were of no more value than men in general account them? Surely, either he was wrong, or we are. If the souls of men deserved no more attention than is usually paid to them, he was a foolish and mad enthusiast: but if we may at all estimate their value by his labors for them, then are the world mad, in paying so much attention to worthless vanities, and in so little regarding what is of more value than the whole world.

O careless ones, whatever be your rank or age, let me expostulate with you on your more than brutish folly!

***~~2. The vast importance of the Gospel—~~***

When we urge on men the necessity of believing in Christ, and of living altogether by faith in him; they reply that there is no need of that entire surrender of ourselves to Christ; and that to condemn all who will not comply with such requisitions, is uncharitable in the extreme.

When we urge them also to use all possible means for the conversion of the heathen; they tell us that we may safely leave them to their respective creeds; and that God is too merciful ever to condemn them. But, if this is true, then how can we account for the conduct of the Apostle? Why did he labor so for the conversion of Jews or Gentiles, if either Jews or Gentiles could be saved in any other way than through faith in Christ?

Some labors and some sufferings we may suppose a man to undergo for the sake of proselyting others to his own opinions; but who would endure all that Paul endured, and that too so continually, and for so long a series of years, if he had not known that *the everlasting welfare of men depended on their hearing and receiving of his message?*

Know then that the record of God, even that record which says, "God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; he who has the Son, has life, and he who has not the Son of God, has not life!" That record, I say, is true: and just so many of you as are living simply by faith in Christ, and receiving everything out of his fullness, are in a state of salvation: but every other person without exception is "under condemnation, and the wrath of God abides on him!"

And here let me caution those who are convinced of this truth, to hold it fast and glory in it, though earth and Hell would conspire to turn them from it: for if the Apostles labored so much and endured so much to impart the knowledge of it to others, much more should we be in earnest to secure a saving interest in it for ourselves!

***~~3. The spirit with which alone men would enter on the ministerial office—~~***

Many, in undertaking this office, have no view but to their own ease, or self-interest, or honor: and if in these things pre-eminence is to consist, they would have no objection to equal "the very chief Apostles." But if their preferment is to resemble that of Paul, they care not how many get before them: they have no taste for such things; and if they had ever so small a measure of them, they would account it much more an occasion of complaint than any ground of glorying.

But it was in labors and sufferings that Paul gloried:  
first, because they were the best proofs of his ministerial fidelity, 2 Corinthians 6:4;  
next, because they were the means of magnifying the grace of Christ, whose strength was perfected in his weakness, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9).

Would to God that more of his spirit were found among us! There would not then be such difficulty in finding men to go forth to the work of missions.

Now, the leaving of earthly friends, the incurring of some danger from foreign climates, the having but small provision, and looking forward to many difficulties and privations; these are such formidable obstacles, that but few are willing to encounter them. But *those who have so little zeal for God, as not to be willing to encounter trials and afflictions in his service, are not fit for the Christian ministry!*They may satisfy themselves with a ceremonious round of duties; but they will not so satisfy their God, who requires his *stewards*to be faithful, and his *soldiers*to war a good warfare. We must tread in the steps of Paul, if ever we would "save ourselves and those who hear us".

***~~4. The proper influence of redeeming love—~~***

Look at the text, all you who profess to believe in Christ. See what faith will do, wherever it exists in truth. Look and see what you have ever done for the Lord that can be compared with this: say whether the best among you have not cause to blush and mourn for your unprofitableness?

If you ask the Apostle Paul, what it was that animated him to such exertions, he will tell you: the love of Christ constrains me! This it was that carried him forward in the midst of so many difficulties, and enabled him to bear up under such accumulated afflictions. This made him ready to be bound or to die, at any time or at any place, content that "Christ would be magnified in his body whether by life or death."

Beloved brethren, thus will the love of Christ work in you: it will fill you with zeal for God, and with love to man. It will make you earnestly desirous to spread the knowledge of the Savior throughout the world; and will render sacrifices, whether of ease or property, delightful to you. You will account it an unspeakable honor that you are permitted to do or suffer anything for the advancement of his glory; just as the Apostles, after having been imprisoned and beaten by the Jewish council, departed, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for their Redeemer's sake.

Rise up then, servants of the Lord Jesus, and gird yourselves to your Master's work. Let each inquire, What can I do for Christ? How can my time, my property, my talents, my influence be made serviceable to his cause?

It is said of the angels, that they do their Maker's will, "hearkening to the voice of his word;" do you thus look for the first intimations of your Savior's will. If the most arduous and self-denying office be proposed, be ready instantly to say, "Here am I; send me! [Isaiah 6:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.8)." So will you approve yourselves his disciples indeed, and reap a glorious recompense in the great day of his appearing!

***~~#2042~~***

***~~CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 11:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.29)~~***

"Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who are made to stumble, without my intense concern?"

TRULY, the testimony of a good conscience is a source of unbounded joy. There are, and ever were, those who would traduce the characters of the best of men. The Apostle Paul himself was reproached by many, yes, and by many who professed themselves Christians too, as a "weak" man, and "a fool, verse 16, 21." He was able, however, to give very abundant proof, that, while others boasted on false grounds, he had just and good ground for boasting; and that, "in no respect was he inferior, either to them, or to the very chief Apostles, verse 5, 21-28."

In truth, the very things which rendered him contemptible in the eyes of many, were those which redounded most to his honor. His enemies thought that "hunger and thirst, and cold and nakedness, and persecutions" for Christ's sake, were occasions for reproach; whereas the Apostle judged that they were grounds rather for approbation from men, and for thanksgivings to God. And, while he vindicated himself thus from the charges that were brought against him, he could appeal to his very enemies, and ask whether his labors had been of a mere general and ostentatious kind; or whether they had not, even to that very hour, been so universal and particular, as to entitle him to gratitude from every member of the Christian Church: "Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who are made to stumble, without my intense concern?"

Now, in this appeal we may see,

***~~I. The infirmities incident to the people of God—~~***

There were at that time, and have been in every age of the Church, some who need all possible attention from their brethren:

***~~1. Those who are weak—~~***

There are "children" in the family of Christ, no less than "young men" and "fathers."

In truth, there are many who are "weak" in *knowledge*, having but very indistinct views of the Gospel and its attendant privileges.

Some also are "weak" in *faith*, even as the Apostles themselves showed themselves to be on many occasions [Matthew 6:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 6.30). [Mark 4:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 4.40). [Luke 8:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 8.25); "they stagger at the promises of God;" and, when greatly tried, are unable firmly to rely upon them

Some, too, are "weak" in *hope*: for though, under the Christian dispensation, we do not see so much of doubts and fears as under the darker dispensation of the law; yet we can have no doubt but that in the apostolic age, as well as now, there were many sincere persons, who felt secret misgivings respecting their own state before God, and lacked that "full assurance of hope" which some were privileged to enjoy.

IIn *conflict*, doubtless, many are "weak." It is no easy thing to contend even with flesh and blood, and still more with the principalities and powers of darkness*. Not a Christian would be able to stand, if not upheld by an almighty arm!* In fact, the only way to be strong in the Christian warfare is, to feel ourselves "weak," and to be "strong only in the Lord and in the power of his might".

***~~2. Those who are made to stumble—~~***

The consequence of weakness is, a liability to be cast down by troubling circumstances of any kind.

It is no uncommon thing for persons to stumble even at the very mysteries of our holy religion. When our Lord spoke of our eating his flesh and drinking his blood, some of his disciples exclaimed, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it? [John 6:41-43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.41-43)." Upon which, our Lord, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, says to them, "Does this offend you? What if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? [John 6:60-62](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.60-62)."

So, at this day, many of the sublimer truths of Christianity are "hard sayings" in the ears of some, whose "hearts, we yet hope, are, on the whole, right with God." Our Lord intimated that it would be so, when he said, "Blessed is he who shall not stumble at me, [Matthew 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.6)."

And, as some are offended at the word of God, so are others at his *providence*; especially when they see what persecutions they have to endure for righteousness' sake, and how the ungodly triumph over the very Church and cause of God, [Matthew 13:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.21).

Nor are the falls or *apostasy of professors*an uncommon occasion of stumbling. We are apt to forget, that "all are not Israel, who are of Israel." There was a Judas even among the Apostles themselves: and of the immediate followers of our Lord, so many went back and walked no more with him, that even the stability of the Apostles themselves was endangered, [John 6:66-67](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.66-67).

What then is,

***~~II. The duty of their more established brethren towards them?~~***

Certainly the Apostle's example is that which we ought to follow, even as he himself followed Christ: of whom it is said, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, until he sends forth judgment unto victory, [Matthew 12:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.20)."

***~~"With the weak, then, we must be weak"—~~***

We are on no account to despise our weaker brethren, but to treat them with all imaginable condescension and kindness; as the Apostle himself tells us: "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me, [Romans 15:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.1); [Romans 15:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.3)."

We should listen to their statements with an attentive ear.

We should enter into their feelings, and sympathize with them in their troubles.

We should deal tenderly with their mistakes, and gladly give them the advantage of our superior knowledge and experience.

We should come down, as it were, upon their ground, and endeavor to make their way plain before their face.

We should "strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; and say to them that are of a fearful heart, Fear not! Your God will come and save you! [Isaiah 35:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.3-4)."

This is particularly inculcated in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed, [Hebrews 12:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.12-13)."

This doubtless is the duty of ministers primarily; because they are as fathers, who ought to feel for their children with parental tenderness; and even, as mothers, to "travail in birth with them, until Christ is formed in them, [Galatians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.19),." But it is also the duty of every true Christian: for it is said, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ, [Galatians 6:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.2)."

***~~And those who stumble, we should with ardor labor to restore—~~***

Behold the state of the Galatian Church: see them when they were in danger of being turned aside through the influence of Judaizing teachers; what zeal the Apostle manifested to keep them sound in the faith! He hesitated not to reprove even Peter himself, and that before the whole Church, [Galatians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.14).

See the Churches, both of Rome and Corinth, when they were in danger of being drawn to act contrary to the convictions of their own minds, in reference to the eating of foods, and the observing of certain days according to the Jewish law. Paul enjoined the more enlightened part, who understood the nature and extent of Christian liberty, to abstain from the use of that liberty in the presence of their weaker brethren, lest they should, by the indiscreet use of it, cast a snare and a stumbling-block before any, [Romans 14:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.1-6); [Romans 14:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.13-15). [1 Corinthians 8:4-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.4-12). As for himself, he determined not to eat food so long as the world would stand, rather than make a weak brother to sin, [1 Corinthians 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.13). Whatever be the stumbling-block in our brother's way, we should be inflamed with a desire to remove it, as much as we would to rescue an only child from any peril to which he was exposed. The value of his soul, and the honor of God as interested in it, should be present to our minds; and we should labor with all our might, and with the utmost tenderness of spirit, for the recovery and salvation of his soul.

***~~And now see, from hence,~~***

***~~1. How arduous the office of a minister is!~~***

Had he indeed only to perform a certain routine of duties, his office would be easy enough: but when he has to give an account of every soul committed to his charge, and should be able to say of every individual among them, "Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who are made to stumble, without my intense concern?" methinks the most zealous minister in the world must perform his office "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling, [1 Corinthians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.3)." Paul himself was constrained to say, "Who is sufficient for these things? [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.16)."

***~~2. How lovely is true religion!~~***

*Religion consists, not in the adoption of any creed, but in a conformity to the Divine image.*Doubtless there is no salvation but in Christ Jesus; and, whatever measure of holiness we attain, it can form no ground of glorying before God: but the faith which alone will save us, is "a faith that works by love." We may have the knowledge of angels, the liberality of saints, and the zeal of martyrs; and yet, for lack of love, "be only as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal."

See the Lord Jesus, during his ministry on earth: "He bore our sins and carried our sorrows," first in a way of sympathy, [Matthew 8:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 8.16-17), and afterwards as an atoning sacrifice, [Isaiah 53:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.4). In the latter sense, this was his exclusive office; but in the former sense, it is ours also. Let us then show forth in our conduct the excellence of his Gospel; and exercise towards others the tenderness and compassion which we have ever met with at his hands.

***~~#2043~~***

***~~THE SUCCESS OF FERVENT PRAYER~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 12:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.7-9)~~***

"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

THERE is scarcely anything in the Scriptures that more deserves our attention than the remarkable instances of answers to prayer. Throughout the whole Bible, if we see any one betake himself to prayer, we may know beforehand the outcome of his conflicts. Whatever are his difficulties, if only he go to God, saying, "I have no might in myself, but my eyes are unto you," we may be well assured of his success: his petition invariably brings Omnipotence to his support; and he is made more than conqueror over all his adversaries.

Paul relates a most encouraging instance respecting himself, wherein he found to his unspeakable comfort the efficacy of prayer. To illustrate it, we shall consider,

***~~I. The trial with which he was so oppressed—~~***

***~~As highly favored as the Apostle was, he was nevertheless bowed down with a heavy affliction—~~***

None, however honored and beloved of God, can hope to escape trouble. What the particular trial was, with which the Apostle was assaulted, it is impossible to say. The most reasonable conjecture seems to be, that it was something occasioned by his vision, or perhaps some distortion of his features, or impediment in his speech, that rendered both his person and his speech contemptible; and of which the false teachers, those "messengers and ministers of Satan, [2 Corinthians 11:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.14-15)," took advantage, to undermine his influence in the Church of God.

This to the Apostle, whose heart was wholly bent upon glorifying God, and saving the souls of men, would be a heavy affliction, like "a thorn in the flesh," festering and causing the acutest pain. But, whatever it was, Satan took occasion from it to distress the mind of the Apostle with a far keener anguish than his body could have sustained from the severest blows of men. Nor need we regret that we are ignorant of the precise thorn with which Paul was harassed; since whatever our trials are, we may consider ourselves as in his situation, and obtain relief in the same way that he did.

***~~It is of great importance to observe the reason for which that affliction was sent to him—~~***

The Apostle was not yet perfect. Though he had been caught up into the third heavens, he was yet liable to sin: the *seeds of pride were yet in his heart*; and they would derive life and vigor even from those very mercies, which, to human appearance, would have had a tendency to destroy them. To counteract this evil of his heart, God sent him a heavy trial. And, if we were more attentive to the ends of God's dispensations towards ourselves, we might always find some good reason for them within our own hearts.

Pride is a hateful and accursed evil; and, if allowed to reign within us, will bring us "into the condemnation of the devil;" nor, however severe the remedy may be, would we be averse to endure it, if only it may be instrumental to the extirpating of this deeply-rooted evil propensity. In this case, though Satan may be the agent that inflicts the stroke, God is the kind friend that "gives" it: and *though Satan intends us nothing but evil, God overrules it for our good.*

The conduct of the Apostle under his trial will be instructive to us, if we consider,

***~~II. The means by which he obtained deliverance from his trial—~~***

***~~He carried his trouble to the throne of grace—~~***

Paul well knew the efficacy of fervent prayer, and how vain it was to contend with Satan in his own strength. He therefore besought the Lord to extract this *thorn*, and to relieve him from his distress. The Lord not immediately giving him an answer, he renewed his petitions with yet greater fervor: and when still no answer came, he became more and more urgent, determining, like Jacob of old, that he would not go without a blessing.

This was a certain means of obtaining deliverance. It was the means which our Lord himself used under the pressure of that wrath that was due to our sins: He prayed "thrice" that the cup might pass from him. Nor is such urgent prayer at all expressive of a lack of resignation to the will of God: it is our privilege and our duty to "call upon God in the time of trouble;" and *troubles are often sent for this very purpose, to bring us nearer to God*. They are continued for a time, to reveal to us more abundantly the condescension of God in the removal of them.

***~~The person whom he immediately addressed, was the Lord Jesus—~~***

Paul had heard Stephen in the hour of martyrdom calling on the Lord Jesus; and had seen what support was administered to him on that trying occasion, [Acts 7:58-59](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 7.58-59). And where would he himself fly, but to that same adorable Friend, who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and, "having been in all points tempted like us, is able and willing to support his tried people! [Hebrews 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.18); [Hebrews 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.15)." That his petitions were immediately addressed to Christ, is certain; for we are told in the text, that it was Christ who answered him, and on whose promised aid the Apostle was enabled to rely.

***~~In due time he received an answer to his petitions—~~***

At last the suppliant was informed, that the grace of Christ which had already been so abundant in his first conversion, would be "sufficient for him" under every subsequent trial: and that however disheartened the Apostle might be on account of his great and manifold infirmities, he would experience no real evil from them. On the contrary, they would be a source of much good, inasmuch as they would be the means of displaying, and magnifying, the strength of Christ! Thus all cause of complaint was taken away from him, because Satan was sure to be defeated by him, and the work of Christ to be advanced both in his own heart, and by his ministrations in the world.

This answer, though not precisely agreeable to the *letter*of the Apostle's petition, fully corresponded with the *spirit*of it. Our blessed Lord himself, when "supplicating with strong crying and tears" for the removal of the cup, did not obtain the precise object of his request; yet we are told that he "was heard," because he was strengthened, and enabled to drink it, [Hebrews 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.7).

Thus the Apostle's petitions also were crowned with success. The trial was indeed continued: but the *end*for which God sent it, was accomplished. Had God removed the thorn, it is possible that the Apostle might have been "exalted above measure," and might thereby have suffered irreparable loss in his soul: but by *sanctifying the trouble*, God confirmed him in his humility, and rendered him a distinguished instrument of good to his Church.

That the Apostle considered his petition as completely answered, will appear from,

***~~III. The effect which this answer produced upon him—~~***

***~~From this moment all his sorrows were turned into joy—~~***

Paul did not merely submit to the Divine will, and bear with patience a trial which he could not remove; but he even gloried in his tribulations; and made those very infirmities, which just before had been a subject of such pathetic lamentation, an occasion of joy and triumph!

It is thus that every Christian is called to manifest humble acquiescence in all of God's providential appointments. He would count it all joy when he falls into various trials, and, being strengthened unto all patience, with joyfulness he would give thanks unto the Father, who, by *trials, is fitting him for glory*,[James 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.2). [Colossians 1:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.11-12).

***~~The consideration that Christ would be glorified in him, was sufficient to counter-balance all that he had suffered, or might yet suffer for his sake—~~***

The honor of Christ was dear unto the Apostle, and should be dear unto all who call themselves Christians. The *continuance*of the trial in the Apostle's flesh, was an occasion of Christ's more abundant kindness towards him. His compassionate Savior drew near unto him, and dwelt as it were upon him; as God, by the symbol of his presence, had formerly rested on the tabernacle in the wilderness. And as the rebellious Israelites had been constrained to acknowledge the presence of God with Moses, so were Paul's enemies constrained to acknowledge that Christ was with him in truth. The more weak and contemptible he was in their eyes, the more they must be compelled to glorify Christ, by whom he was strengthened in his spirit, and made successful in his ministrations. And if more glory might be brought to Christ by means of these infirmities, he was not only willing to endure them, but ready to glory in them even unto death! [Philippians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.20).

***~~Exhortation—~~***

***~~Let us inquire into the cause of our troubles—~~***

*God's rod has a voice which we ought to hear!*[Micah 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 6.9); and, if we would attend to it, it would reveal to us many hidden but grievous abominations, which lurk unseen in our hearts; and we would almost invariably find, not only that the chastisement was needed by us, but that it was that very trial which was most of all calculated to promote our spiritual and eternal good.

***~~Let us carry all of our trials to the throne of grace—~~***

It is to little purpose to complain of our trials to our fellow-creatures: but "God never says to any, Seek my face in vain." Who could have conceived that Paul would receive such a speedy and effectual answer to his prayer? But if we were alike urgent in our supplications, we would be crowned with the like success.

***~~Let us exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—~~***

He says to us, "Believe in God; believe also in me, [John 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.1)." He is God, equal with the Father; and "in him all fullness dwells." His promise is addressed to all his suffering and tempted people; and the truth of it shall be experienced by them all. Only let us believe in him; and no *adversary*shall be too strong, no *calamity*too heavy, no *duty*too difficult—for "all things are possible to him who believes!"

***~~#2044~~***

***~~A SENSE OF WEAKNESS CONDUCIVE TO STRENGTH~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.10)~~***

"When I am weak, then I am strong."

THERE are many things in Scripture which appear inconsistent and contrary to truth. Christ is represented as God, and yet a man; as the Lord of David, and yet his son; as a lion, and yet a lamb. And, as his *person*is thus variously described, so is his *work*: he is said to heal us by his own stripes, and to give us life by his death. But, however strange such expressions may seem, they contain many important truths.

In the same manner the Apostle's words, which we have now read, may be thought to imply a contradiction: but they accord with the experience of all God's people, and justly deserve the most attentive consideration.

In discoursing on this paradoxical assertion, we shall illustrate, confirm, and improve it.

***~~I. Illustrate it—~~***

***~~A part of David's history will help us to elucidate the words before us—~~***

When the champion of the Philistines defied and terrified the whole army of Israel, David, "a stripling," without armor, defensive or offensive (except a sling and a stone), went forth against him; and, though unused to war himself, entered into combat with that experienced and mighty warrior. But the weaker he was in himself, the more confident was he in his God; and instead of being intimidated by the threatening aspect and boasting menaces of his adversary, he was as assured of victory, as if he had seen his enemy already under his feet, [1 Samuel 17:45-47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 17.45-47).

***~~But the context will give the best clue to the Apostle's meaning—~~***

Paul labored under a heavy trial, which he calls a thorn in his flesh, verse 7, 8. Apprehensive that this would counteract his usefulness in the world, he cried most earnestly to the Lord Jesus Christ to remove it from him. But *the Lord, not judging it expedient to grant him his request, promised him (what was incomparably better) more abundant communications of grace, whereby he would obtain in a more advantageous manner the desires of his soul*.

Observe the effect—Paul remained as weak as ever; but, being persuaded that Christ's power would be the more magnified through his weakness, he was satisfied; yes, rather, he made that a matter of joy and triumph, which had just before been a source of the greatest trouble. He was well assured that, however unable he was in himself either to bear his trials, or to fulfill his duties, he could not but succeed, when his Almighty Friend was pledged to support him.

The Apostle's assertion being equally applicable to all believers, we shall,

***~~II. Confirm it—~~***

A sense of weakness necessarily tends to make us strong, inasmuch as it makes us:

***~~1. Our conscious weakness makes us watchful against temptations—~~***

If we conceive ourselves to be strong, we shall be fearless of temptation; and by exposing ourselves to it, shall be in greater danger of falling. Whereas, if we feel our utter weakness, we shall not only pray, "Lead us not into temptation," but shall carefully shun the places, the books, the company, that may ensnare us. Like Joseph, we shall not parley with the tempter, but flee in haste! Or, if we cannot flee, we shall oppose our enemy at first; and thus vanquish that, which, if it had time to gather strength, would soon vanquish us.

***~~2. Our conscious weakness makes us importunate in prayer—~~***

It is the sick alone who calls for a physician. Just so, those who are strong in their own conceit, will never pray in earnest; but he who feels his need of divine assistance will seek it at the throne of grace. Now if we do not pray for God's aid, we cannot receive it; and therefore in the hour of trial shall surely fail. But, if we pray with importunity and faith, we shall obtain the things we ask for; and consequently shall be upheld, while others fall. It was by this means that Paul obtained strength; "he prayed to the Lord thrice:" the answer given to his petition dissipated all his fears, and strengthened him with might in his inner man; and similar means will always be attended with similar success.

***~~3. Our conscious weakness makes us dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ—~~***

In proportion as we imagine ourselves strong, we must of necessity confide in our own strength; the consequence of which may be sufficiently seen in the repeated falls of Peter Being strong in his own apprehension, he proved himself lamentably weak.

But, if we are conscious that we are wholly without strength, and can do nothing of ourselves, we shall be more simple and uniform in our dependence on Christ.

Now Christ will never allow those who trust in him to be confounded. He would consider it as an impeachment of his own veracity, if he did not give them "grace sufficient for them;" consequently *we never are so truly strong, as when we are deeply convinced of our own utter impotence*.

This truth enters deeply into the experience of all the Lord's people: we shall therefore endeavor to,

***~~III. Improve it—~~***

Among the various lessons which it teaches us, let us especially learn two:

***~~1. Not to be too much elated on account of any manifestations of the Divine favor—~~***

Paul was caught up into the third heavens; but soon afterwards we behold him tormented with much anguish of mind, under a severe affliction. Thus it may soon be with us.

Indeed the seasons most distinguished by God's favor to us, are often most distinguished also by Satan's malice. It was immediately after they had received peculiar tokens of God's love, that he assaulted Paul, verse 4; and Peter, [Matthew 16:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.17), [Matthew 16:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.23); and Christ himself, [Matthew 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 3.17); [Matthew 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 4.1).

Let us then, when most highly favored, "rejoice with trembling, [Psalm 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.11)," and not while harnessed, boast as if we had put off our armor, [1 Kings 20:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 20.11).

***~~2. Not to be too much dejected on account of our manifold infirmities—~~***

Jacob was lamed by God himself, that he might know he had not prevailed by his own strength, [Genesis 32:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 32.25). And Paul had a thorn in the flesh given to him, "lest he would be exalted above measure."

Our infirmities are very painful, but they are necessary, in order to keep alive in our minds a remembrance of our own weakness and vileness! If we do but carry them to God in fervent prayer, he will glorify himself by means of them, and "perfect his strength in our weakness." "Let the weak then say, I am strong! [Joel 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Joel 3.10);" let them "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, [Ephesians 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.10);" and, doubtless, they shall receive that effectual support which believers, in all ages, have experienced, [Hebrews 11:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.34), and shall invariably find their "strength according to their day" of trial, [Deuteronomy 33:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.25).

***~~#2045~~***

***~~THE DUTY OF MINISTERS~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.14)~~***

"What I want is not your possessions, but you!"

UNSELFISHNESS, in whatever it appears, is universally admired. But most of all does its excellency appear, when it is manifested in the service of the sanctuary. The ministers, whom the prophet represents as "*Israel's watchmen*are blind, they all lack knowledge; they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark; they lie around and dream, they love to sleep. *They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough.*They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, *each seeks his own gain*, [Isaiah 56:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 56.10), [11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isaiah 56.11)." They who would "not so much as shut the doors of the temple, or kindle a fire on the altar for nothing, [Malachi 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 1.10)," must be considered by every one as the most contemptible of men: whereas the appeal which the Apostle makes to the Church at Corinth, cannot fail of exalting his character in the eyes of all. We may learn from this declaration,

***~~I. The paramount duty of ministers—~~***

Ministers are the pastors of their flock; and ought to watch over them as parents over their children. Now a parent does not exercise kindness to his children from a selfish consideration of the *profit*which he may one day make of them, but from a real delight in their welfare; and he regards their happiness as his reward. Thus,

***~~1. A minister must never seek his own temporal advantage—~~***

To obtain honor and emolument is ardently desired by carnal and worldly men: but a minister of God must be superior to such base pursuits. He must not court the favor of men. He ought indeed to avoid needless offense both in his preaching and conduct. He should "choose out acceptable words, [Ecclesiastes 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 12.10)," and endeavor to "please all men for their good to edification, [Romans 15:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.2);" but he must not conceal or adulterate any single expression of the word of God, [2 Corinthians 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.17). He must never attempt to set forth the truths of God in an eloquent manner or with words of human reason, for the purpose of gaining applause, or for temporal advantage, [1 Corinthians 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.17). He must faithfully "declare the whole counsel of God," and "commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." If he does not preach in this manner, "he cannot be a servant of Jesus Christ, [Galatians 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.10)."

Neither must he seek to enrich himself with their property: "Those who serve at the altar have a right to live of the altar." "The ox was not to be muzzled, while he was treading out the corn." "The laborer is worthy of his hire."

But the obtaining of filthy lucre should not in the least degree operate with a minister as an inducement to undertake or execute his high office. If he were actuated by such a principle as this, he would degrade himself to a mere hireling! [1 Samuel 2:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.36). Nor can he allow so base a principle to influence him at all in his work, without greatly diminishing the value of his services, and their acceptableness in the sight of God, 1 Peter 5:2.

The injunction given to Christians in general would be regarded with peculiar scrupulosity by him, "Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others, [1 Corinthians 10:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.24). [Philippians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.4); [Philippians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.21)."

***~~2. A minister must always seek the advantage of his flock—~~***

Their sincere conversion to God, their progressive edification in faith and love, and their final everlasting salvation—are to be the unvaried aim of all his labors. "He must lift up his voice like a trumpet, and show the house of Israel their sins." He must not be satisfied with effecting a change in their sentiments and external conduct, but must continue "travailing in birth with them, until Christ be manifestly formed in their hearts." When that end is attained, his care of them, instead of being relaxed, must be increased. They still need his unremitting exertions, to administer to their numerous needs, and to give them from time to time that direction and encouragement which their necessities require, [Ezekiel 34:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.4).

As long as they continue in this world, he is God's minister to them for good, and the medium through whom he will communicate to them the blessings of grace and peace. He is to live for them, to the end that he may be "a helper of their joy," and "perfect that which is lacking in their faith." This is to be his one employment; and he is to consider the salvation of their souls his richest recompense! [1 Thessalonians 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.19-20). "Everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening, [2 Corinthians 12:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.19)."

This subject naturally involves in it,

***~~II. The corresponding duty of the people—~~***

The relation of pastor and flock, like every other relation in life, has its peculiar and appropriate obligations. Those which arise out of the text, as pertaining to the people, are,

***~~1. To seek above all things the salvation of their own souls—~~***

We are far from saying that people are not to attend to their temporal concerns: on the contrary, we affirm, that a neglect of their worldly business is exceeding criminal in the sight of God; that their duties in civil and social life are as much to be attended to as any other duties whatever; and that their families and dependents would have just cause of complaint if their temporal interests were disregarded.

But still, the *first*of all duties is, the care of our own souls. Nothing can equal the value of the soul: "if we would gain the whole world, and lose our own soul—what would we be profited?" If a minister must not allow any earthly interests to stand in competition with the souls of his people, how much less should the people allow them to stand in competition with their own souls! In this view their duty is very strongly marked; and the reasonableness of attending to it is incontrovertibly established.

***~~2. To improve the ministry with all diligence—~~***

It has been shown that ministers should invariably keep in view the salvation of their hearers. What then should the hearers do when about to attend upon the means of grace? Should they not bear in mind their own responsibility for their due improvement of the ordinances? Should they not pray earnestly to God to prepare their hearts for the reception of divine truth, and to accompany it with the effectual working of his almighty power? Should they not entreat him to give unto their minister "a mouth and wisdom which none shall be able to gainsay or resist;" and to direct him "how to speak a word in season to their weary souls?"

In short, would they not be as solicitous to receive, as their minister can be to communicate, spiritual good; and would not every other consideration be regarded as a matter of comparative indifference? Happy would it be for the Church of God, and happy for the world at large, if such dispositions prevailed among the hearers, wherever the Gospel is proclaimed!

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

We ask, What is the improvement which you have made of our ministry? We presume not to compare ourselves with the holy Apostle; we know full well how remote we are from him in every attainment. Yet we hope that, in some small measure, we may adopt his language in the text, and say, "What I want is not your possessions, but you!" Would to God that we could affirm it as fully, and as confidently, as Paul himself!

Let each of you then put the question to himself, and ask, Whether the pursuit of your own salvation is the main concern which swallows up, as it were, all others? At least, are all other things comparatively worthless in your eyes? And are you, "as new-born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby?"

Remember that, if we must give an account of your souls to God, much more must you give an account of your own souls; and the more our exertions for you are increased, the more will your condemnation be aggravated, if the prove ineffectual for your salvation!

***~~#2046~~***

***~~THE POWER OF THE RISEN SAVIOR~~***

**[2 Corinthians 13:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.4)**

"Though he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you."

AMONG the evidences of our holy religion, there are many which are of a obscure nature; and which, as superadded to those which are more obvious, are of great importance. The passage before us affords a strong proof that the Apostle Paul was no impostor. Suppose that he knew himself to have been acting the part of a deceiver, he would be extremely careful not to offend and irritate those who might detect his treachery. But behold, when he had occasion to reprove the Corinthians for their unchristian practices, he declared, that, if they persisted in them, he would exert his apostolic authority, and inflict upon them, in the Savior's name, some heavy judgment. Now, if he had not known that such an authority was delegated to him, and that the Lord Jesus Christ himself would uphold him in the exercise of it—he would not have ventured to utter such a threat as this; because it would, of necessity, lead to an exposure of his own weakness, and to the overthrow of that religion which he was endeavoring to establish.

The power of Christ, which he here asserts, must be considered by us in a twofold view:

***~~I. As possessed by himself—~~***

***~~In his crucifixion, he appeared weak—~~***

He did indeed exhibit somewhat of his almighty power, in beating to the ground with a mere word all the soldiers who came to apprehend him. And at the bar of Pilate he declared, that his judge could have no power at all against him, except it were given him from above. He could, if he had seen fit, have had twelve legions of angels sent to rescue him. But he had previously determined to submit to all the indignities which they would offer him.

In the prophetic writings concerning him it had been foretold, that he would give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to those who plucked off the hair; yes, that he would go as a lamb to the slaughter, and, as a sheep before its shearers, not so much as open his mouth in murmurings or complaints.

Accordingly, he submitted to everything with such meek resignation, that he appeared to his enemies to be incapable of delivering himself from their hands. With this, the people around him taunted him, saying, "Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.' [Matthew 27:39-43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 27.39-43)." Thus, in apparent weakness, he died.

***~~But he still lives by the power of God—~~***

In vain were all the precautions taken by his enemies: the stone, the seal, the guard, were not able to detain him as a prisoner in the grave. At the time he had foretold, he burst the bonds of death, by which it was impossible he would be held, and rose triumphant; and in due season ascended to the right hand of his Father, far above all principalities and powers, whether in Heaven or in Hell. There He possesses all power in Heaven and in earth: there are all things committed to his hands: there is He, in a more especial manner, made Head over all things to his Church, to every individual of which he imparts whatever is needful for him: And there will he reign, until he has put all enemies under his feet.

In connection with this must we contemplate his power,

***~~II. As delegated to his ministers—~~***

The Apostles were invested with miraculous powers: which, when moved to it by him, they exercised, sometimes in a way of mercy, and sometimes also in a way of judgment. Paul had, by the authority committed to him, delivered to Satan, Hymeneus and Philetus, and the incestuous Corinthian: and, with a similar judgment, he threatened to visit other refractory persons at Corinth, if they would persist in their contemptuous and profane conduct. Those powers have long since ceased in the Church: but others are transmitted to God's faithful ministers in all ages.

***~~Ministers are WEAK, like their divine Master—~~***

Paul himself was, in all his sufferings, conformed to his blessed Lord; and, in enduring them, appeared weak as He. And ministers at this day are exposed to the same trials, which they are to bear in the same submissive manner. And so weak do they appear, that persons of every description, the poor as well as the rich, the young as well as the old, will venture to insult and injure them.

***~~But, through Him, they also are STRONG—~~***

Every word which they speak in their Master's name, supposing it to be really in accordance with the written word, shall be ratified in Heaven: "What they bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and what they loose on earth, shall be loosed in Heaven."

In them the Lord Jesus Christ will evince his own almighty power. He will manifest it in them personally; enabling them to sustain all their trials with fortitude, and to perform all their duties with fidelity, [2 Corinthians 4:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.10-11). And he will manifest it by them ministerially, accompanying their word with power from on high, and enabling them to raise to newness of life those who were "dead in trespasses and sins."

There was not a miracle wrought by our Lord in the days of his flesh, which, in a *spiritual*sense, he does not yet work by all his faithful ministers. Their cause, too, will he maintain against all their adversaries; and he will, before long, make it visible to all, that those who have persecuted them, have persecuted him; and that those who have "touched them, have touched the apple of his eye."

***~~Let me, from this subject, exhort you,~~***

***~~1. To look to the Lord Jesus Christ for all that you need—~~***

Look not unto man, as though he were able to supply your needs. "Paul himself may plant, and Apollos water; but*it is God alone that can give the increase*." The Lord Jesus Christ is "exalted to be a Prince and a Savior." He is the Head of all vital influence. He has a fullness of all things committed to him for you: and "out of his fullness you may receive, at all times, grace," answerable to the grace that there is in him.

***~~2. Never to be discouraged on account of your weakness—~~***

You are weak; but "your Redeemer is strong;" yes, "there is help laid for you upon One that is mighty." Conceive of yourselves as reduced even to as helpless a state as Christ himself was, when dead upon the cross, and buried in the grave. Shall you despair? No! *Your weakness shall only be an occasion for the more glorious manifestation of God's power in the season of your greatest need*. Only be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; and in due season the whole power of the Godhead, which was displayed in Christ in raising him from the dead, shall be displayed in you, [Ephesians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.19); and you, like him, shall, in God's appointed time, be exalted to his throne, and be a partaker of his kingdom for ever and ever.

***~~#2047~~***

***~~SELF-EXAMINATION RECOMMENDED~~***

**[2 Corinthians 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.5)**

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you are reprobates?"

IT is generally, perhaps always, found, that *those who are most forward to censure others, have most need of personal reformation*. So it certainly was with those who labored to injure the character, and undermine the influence, of the Apostle Paul. While they accused him as a weak, ignorant impostor, pretending to a heavenly commission which he had never received—they were in reality no other than ministers of Satan, scattering the flocks which they pretended to feed.

Hence they constrained the Apostle to declare, that his forbearance towards them had a limit, and that their defiance of him, if further persisted in, would terminate before long in their own confusion. To prevent so painful an outcome, he entreated them to examine themselves as to their spirit and conduct; and to beware lest, after all their boastings, they would be disapproved of their God at last.

But it is not to persons only who are so circumstanced that the exhortation ought to be addressed: it is of universal importance, and highly proper for our consideration at all times.

Let us then consider,

***~~I. The duty to which we are here called—~~***

Self-examination is a duty incumbent upon all. But, instead of entering generally into the subject, we will confine our attention to two things:

***~~1. The point more especially suggested for our inquiry—~~***

The great question for every man to have settled in his mind and conscience is, whether he is in the faith, or whether he is yet in unbelief? To ascertain this point, we would ask ourselves, whether we have ever come to Christ as sinners, pleading for mercy solely through the blood of his cross, and "desiring to be found in him," accepted altogether through his meritorious death and passion.

Yet, not content with this, we would prosecute the inquiry further, and ask, *whether we are daily living by faith in the Lord Jesus, and receiving everything out of his fullness.*

Nor must we rest, even though we would receive a favorable testimony from our consciences in this matter: we must examine yet farther *the fruits of our faith*, and see whether it produce such a life as proves it to be "the faith of God's elect?" If our self-examination proceed not thus far, it will leave us as much under the power of self-deceit, as if we took no pains at all to investigate our state. These are the points which are of vital interest to every true Christian; and by them must the truth of our profession, and the safety of our state, be determined.

***~~2. The manner of conducting that inquiry—~~***

The words, "Examine yourselves" and "test yourselves" are not a mere repetition: they are intended to mark more particularly the care and accuracy with which the investigation would be made.

The Apostle refers to the trying of metals, in order to find what measure of alloy or dross may be in them. Not to mention the care exercised by the refiner, we all know what care is taken in reference to gold, even when there are but a few pieces of golden coin to be received. We subject it to the closest inspection; we mark its color, its sound, and, if there is any doubt, its size and weight, that we may not be deceived by counterfeits under the appearance of standard coin.

Shall we then take so much pains about things of little value, and neglect the soul which is of more value than ten thousand worlds! Should not rather our care increase in proportion to the loss which we may possibly sustain? This then is the manner in which we should inquire into the concerns of our souls, and more especially into that on which beyond all others the welfare of our souls depends.

To impress the more deeply on our minds this duty, the Apostle suggests,

***~~II. The importance of discharging it with all diligence—~~***

***~~We ought to know our own selves—~~***

Each other we cannot know; seeing that *both the best and the worst of every man is hidden from human observation, and can be perfectly known only by Him who searches the heart*. But with "ourselves" we may be, and ought to be, acquainted. God has given to us an *understanding*, that we may know the quality of our actions. He has given to us a *memory*, that we may trace them to their proper source. He has given to us a *conscience*, that we may pass sentence on ourselves according to our true character.

*Ignorance of ourselves is the worst of all ignorance!*We may be ignorant of everything else, and yet come to God in Christ Jesus with acceptance: but if we are ignorant of ourselves, we must of necessity be unhumbled and impenitent, and consequently objects of God's utter abhorrence. The very manner in which the Apostle asks the question, "Know you not your own selves?" shows, that self-ignorance is a just ground for self-reproach.

***~~Whatever we may think of ourselves, "if Christ is not in us, we are reprobates"—~~***

The term "reprobates" conveys a much harsher idea than is contained in the original. The Apostle, having bidden us prove our own selves as metals are tried and proved, tells us that, if in the outcome we be found without Christ, we shall be regarded by our God as base metal, or as dross—we shall be disapproved, and rejected, [Jeremiah 6:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 6.30). And this is the very truth of God. If "Christ dwells in our hearts by faith," it is well: but if he is not in us, by his Spirit, by his influence, by his grace—then we are mere counterfeits, and no better. We may pass current here, if I may so say, but we shall be detected and discarded in the great day of account.

And is this a truth unknown to us? Has not God expressly said, that "Christ is our life," and that, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his?" How is it then, that this sentiment is ever doubted for one moment? Beloved brethren, neither the truth itself, nor its bearing on your own state before God, ought to be unknown to any of you.

You ought to have the *experience*of it in your souls, and the *evidence*of it in your lives. Nor would you ever cease to examine and prove yourselves until you are assured, on truly scriptural grounds, that "Christ has indeed been formed in you, [Galatians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.19)," and that you are so "joined to him as to be one spirit with him, [1 Corinthians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.17)."

***~~Permit me, in conclusion, to urge upon you this duty, from two important considerations:~~***

***~~1. Consider the danger of self-deception—~~***

The great mass of mankind deceive their own souls. The generality perform not this duty at all; and, of those who do, few carry it to a due extent. It is not sufficient to inquire into our external conduct: we must inquire into the life of faith upon the Son of God, and see how far that is realized in us. That, If we are tolerably right in external matters, we are apt to take for granted: but we must make that, above all, the subject of our diligent inquiry; because, if Christ is not in us, there is nothing in us that can ever be approved of by our God. *O what a fearful thing will it be to be found dross at the last!* Remember, "Not he who commends himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commends, [2 Corinthians 10:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.18)."

***~~2. Consider the comfort of a self-approving conscience—~~***

Paul felt this in a very high degree, [2 Corinthians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.12); and we also may enjoy it, if it is not our own fault. Some deride the idea of spiritual marks and evidences of saving faith, and maintain that the Christian has no need of paying any attention to them. But, how we are to "examine and prove ourselves" without them, is beyond their power to inform us, and of mine to conceive. We must bring ourselves to the test of God's word; and if, from a diligent comparison with ourselves with the commands of God and the examples of his holy Apostles, we find that our experience is such as is required of us in the Gospel—then may we rejoice both in the retrospect of our past lives, and in the prospect of the future judgment: "If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things: but if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence towards God, [1 John 3:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.20-21)."

***~~#2048~~***

***~~THE APOSTOLIC BLESSING~~***

***~~[2 Corinthians 13:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.14)~~***

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

THE priests, under the law, were appointed to bless the people, [Numbers 6:22-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 6.22-27). The ministers of the Gospel also may consider this as a part of their office. All Paul's epistles begin or end with an authoritative blessing; that before us is more full and comprehensive than any other.

We shall endeavor to point out,

***~~I. Its meaning—~~***

Various are the senses in which these words have been understood. We shall content ourselves with stating what we apprehend to be the best.

The "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" is that grace which he communicates to his redeemed people. If we understand it as relating to his special favor, it will anticipate the meaning of the next clause.

*There is a fullness of grace treasured up in Christ!* [Colossians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.19); out of that grace, all his people are to receive [John 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.16); and all who depend upon it, shall find it sufficient for them, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9). [2 Timothy 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.1).

The "love of God" is a sense of reconciliation and acceptance with him. It cannot import our love to him, because it is something which we are to receive from him.

For this we are prepared by the grace of Christ; and by it we are brought to regard God as our Father and our Friend.

The "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" imports the abiding influence of the Spirit.

There are sublime communications of the Spirit, which the people of God receive. These are represented as a Spirit of adoption, [Romans 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.15), a witness, [Romans 8:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.16), a seal, [Ephesians 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.13), a pledge of their eternal inheritance, [Ephesians 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.14). By these they are enabled confidently to depend on God, and to delight themselves habitually in him; and by these they maintain continual fellowship with the Father and the Son, [1 John 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.3).

That all of these might be enjoyed by the Christians at Corinth, was the earnest wish and prayer of the Apostle.

They were not gifts peculiar to a few of the most exalted saints: they were the common privilege of "all" who truly believed; and are to be experienced now, as well as in former ages. We would therefore in the word, "Amen," express our own fervent desire to partake of them.

Having ascertained the *meaning*of this blessing, let us notice,

***~~II. Its importance—~~***

This will be manifest to all, if only we inquire,

***~~1. What would we be without "the grace of Christ?"~~***

Beyond a doubt we would be "dead in trespasses and sins." There is no other source of grace, but the Lord Jesus Christ [John 6:68](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.68); there is no substitute for grace that can have equal efficacy. Not reason, or education, or human strength; there is no life without grace to any soul of man, [Ephesians 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.5).

***~~2. What would we be without "the love of God?"~~***

There is no medium between a state of friendship with God, or of enmity against him. If we are not objects of his love and favor, then we must be objects of his just and heavy displeasure.

***~~3. What would we be without the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit?"~~***

There is no access to God but by the Holy Spirit, [Ephesians 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.18). If we are not brought to God by the Spirit, we must be afar off from him, [Ephesians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.13); [Ephesians 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.17); and if we are without God, we are absolutely without hope, [Ephesians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.12). Such a state is a prelude to that which will exist for ever! [Luke 16:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 16.23); [Luke 16:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 16.26).

Can anything more strongly mark the importance of this blessing than such considerations? But let us proceed to notice,

***~~III. Its excellence—~~***

In the text is comprehended all that is great and glorious:

***~~GALATIANS~~***

***~~#2049~~***

***~~THE GREAT OBJECT OF CHRIST'S COMING~~***

**[Galatians 1:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.3-4)**

"Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father."

THESE words are a part of an introductory prayer, with which Paul begins almost all his epistles. The portion of it which I have selected for the subject of our present contemplation, expresses a truth, which, if stated in a didactic form, might have somewhat of a forbidding aspect; but, as incidentally mentioned, in the midst of a prayer which conveyed to the Galatian Church the strongest evidence of his regard for their welfare, it comes recommended to us by all the endearments of Christian love.

One thing, in particular, we cannot fail to notice; namely, that the sentiment contained in it was well known among them, and universally approved. It needed nothing to confirm it, nothing to enforce it. They were in the habit of looking to the Savior, as well as to God the Father, for all the blessings of "grace and peace:" and to the one, as well as to the other, of these divine Persons, did they ascribe all "glory for ever and ever."

The nature of their obligations, too, both to the one and to the other, they clearly understood. They knew, that to "deliver them from this present evil world," was the Father's object in sending his Son to them, and the Son's object in dying for them. The introduction therefore of this sentiment would not offend them: on the contrary, it would meet with their most cordial concurrence; and would increasingly occupy their minds, whenever they were engaged in the blessed work of supplication and thanksgiving. Well therefore may the truths which it will of necessity lead me to inculcate be received by you, not as hard sayings, but as expressions of Christian love.

Consider, then, with me,

***~~I. What is the great object aimed at in our redemption by Christ—~~***

Persons at all conversant with the Gospel should, without hesitation, say, that Christ gave himself for us, to deliver us from the *guilt*of our sins, and from the *condemnation*due to them. But the complete connection which that subject has with our deliverance from the *sinful world*would not so immediately occur to the minds of all. That, therefore, it shall now be my endeavor to point out.

***~~Through the fall of our first parents, the world has usurped, in the heart of man, the place which was originally assigned to God—~~***

The *world*, as first constituted, and as subordinated to God, was good: but, as rivaling God in the affections of men, then it and every thing in it, is evil. To fallen man it is become his one object of desire, his one source of pleasure, his one ground of confidence. It occupies all his thoughts. The world is his pursuit, his portion, and his God.

As for his *Creator*, he flees from him, as Adam did in Paradise. He has no desire to contemplate him, to seek him, to serve him, to enjoy him. Nay, if the inspired testimony is true, "God is not in all his thoughts." The things of time and sense engross him utterly. When he rises in the morning, when he passes through the day, when he lies down to rest at night—the world, with its cares, its pleasures, its vanities, binds him as with adamantine chains, and keeps him from ever soaring to his God. He loves his bonds indeed, and feels them not: but he is bound notwithstanding; and, while "walking according to the course of this world, he is walking according to the dictates of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in all the children of disobedience, [Ephesians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.2)."

***~~To deliver him from this state was the great end for which our Lord and Savior came into the world—~~***

He came to cast out every idol from our hearts, and to bring us back to God. Not that he grudges us the enjoyment of earthly things; for "he has given us all things richly to enjoy, [1 Timothy 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 6.17);" but he cannot endure that God would have a rival in our hearts.

By contemplating man in Paradise, we may form an idea what that state is to which the Lord Jesus Christ seeks to restore us. Before sin had defiled the soul of Adam, he had as rich an enjoyment of earthly things as a creature could possess. But he enjoyed God in them: and it was this which rendered them so sweet to his taste. God was the first and last in all his thoughts. He kept the garden in which he was placed; but it caused him no anxious care; nor excited any idolatrous attachment in his mind; nor alienated his soul from God, even for a moment. It never unfitted him for communion with God, or deadened the ardor of his affections towards God. No; he walked before God, every day and all the day long: he walked with God, as a man walks with his friend.

Now, to bring us back to this, is the true end of redemption, and the proper scope of all that God has ever done for our souls.

Let us now proceed to consider,

***~~II. How great an object this is—~~***

***~~It is the one object aimed at both by the Father and the Son—~~***

For this the *Lord Jesus "Christ*gave up himself."  
For this he left the bosom of his Father;  
for this he vacated his throne of glory;  
for this he assumed our nature;  
for this he lived; for this he died;  
for this he rose again, and ascended into Heaven, and took upon him the government of the world.

This is the end he ever keeps in view, in the *chastisements*he inflicts, and in the *blessings*he bestows.

In all this, the *Father*also concurred with him. The very proposal, so to speak, originated with the Father, as the Son himself testifies: "Sacrifice and offering you would not: but a body have you prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin, you have had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do your will, O God! [Psalm 40:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 40.6-8) with [Hebrews 10:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.5-7)."

The Father, as is here said, "prepared him a body," and sent him into the world; and "gave him a commandment, what he would say, and what he would do, [John 6:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.38); [John 14:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.31)." The Father upheld him also in the whole of his work, [Isaiah 42:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.1); and "raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, [1 Peter 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.21);" and committed all things into his hands, that he might accomplish in man all the purposes of his love, [Ephesians 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.10).

What an object, then, must this be!

*We are accustomed to judge of objects, in general, by the efforts made to obtain them.*And, if we take that criterion, what is there that can equal the great object before us? That it would ever occupy for a moment the mind of God, is amazing: but that it would ever be so desirable in Jehovah's mind, that he would give his only dear Son to accomplish it; and that his Son, also, would willingly endure all the curses of the broken law to attain it; yes, that the Holy Spirit, too, would undertake, by his own almighty power, to accomplish in us this good work; that the Sacred Trinity, I say, would all combine thus to accomplish it, exhibits such a view of its importance as nothing can exceed!

Yet, how little is it viewed in this light! How little do men, at that season of the year when we commemorate the Savior's Advent, recollect the *end*for which he came! If we were to judge by the conduct of the generality among us, we would rather suppose that the Savior gave himself to deliver us *to*, and not to deliver us *from*, this present evil world: precisely as the Jews of old committed all manner of iniquity, and then said, "We are delivered to do all these abominations! [Jeremiah 7:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 7.9-10)."

You well know, that, as by general consent, this is made a season of more than usual conviviality; insomuch that profligacy is, if I may so speak, the order of the day: and the man who has no greater portion than usual of mirth and gaiety seems to himself to have failed in the peculiar exercises of his mind, which the season calls for.

If one were to say, that such base commemorations were an insult to the Deity; that they obstructed the very ends for which the Savior came; and were a direct act of rebellion against God the Father, whose avowed will was opposed; one would be thought a gloomy zealot, and an enemy to all social happiness!

But so it is, whatever ungodly men may think concerning it; and so it will be found at the last day. God says, "Give me your heart!" and that command must be obeyed. We must withdraw it from all things that stand in competition with him. The most lawful and honorable attachments must be subordinated to him: we must "set our hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. We must set our minds on things above, not on earthly things, [Colossians 3:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.1-2)." Our blessed Lord has shown us, in this respect, how to walk; and we "must follow his steps." *In*the world we are, and must be: but *of*the world we must not be, either in our spirit or our conduct. If we will be his followers indeed, we must "not be of the world, even as he was not of the world, [John 17:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.14-16)."

***~~In this subject we may clearly see,~~***

***~~1. How few are truly converted to Christ!~~***

The light of Christianity has certainly raised the tone of morals where its precepts are heard: but a complete conformity to the Christian code is rarely seen.

***~~Where do we find persons living according to the pattern of Christ and his Apostles?~~***

Where does the cross of Christ so operate, that those who look to it regard the world as a crucified object, or as a person that was himself crucified would regard it? [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14).

This is a feeling utterly unknown, except among a few; who, on that very account, are despised and hated by the whole world! [John 15:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.19). The truth is, that Christians in general differ very little from either Jews or Heathen. Christianity occupies their *heads*; but the world occupies their *hearts*. They pretend to have faith: but, as for "the faith that overcomes the world," they know nothing about it! [1 John 5:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.4-5). Their whole life, instead of being occupied in a progressive transformation of the soul after the Divine image, is one continued state of conformity to the world! [Romans 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.2); and, instead of regarding "the friendship of the world" as a decisive proof of their "enmity against God," they love it, they seek it, they glory in it! [James 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.4). This very inclination constitutes a man an *enemy*to God!

I appeal to all, whether these observations are not true; and whether those who are "dead to the world" are not regarded as fools and zealots in our day? Know, however, that they, and they alone, are right; and that all the knowledge, or all the experience, that leaves us short of this, is but *learned ignorance*, and *specious delusion*. "The whole world lies in wickedness," and "those who are of God" come out of it, even as Lot did out of Sodom! [1 John 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.19). "If we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us! [1 John 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.15-16)."

***~~2. How blessed is the effect of real Christianity upon the soul—~~***

It emancipates us from the sorest bondage; and brings us into a state of liberty and peace.

The votaries of this world, see with what *cares*they are harassed, with what *disappointments*they are vexed! See them in the full enjoyment of their portion—what have they? What, but "vanity and vexation of spirit!"

But, on the other hand, behold the true Christian is enabled to live above the world: his acquisitions cause no idolatrous feelings, like those which the rich man expressed, when he said "Soul, take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry! [Luke 12:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.19);" nor do his losses cast him down, or cause him to cry out, "You have taken away my gods; what more do I have? [Judges 18:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 18.24)." "He knows how to be full, or how to be hungry," as God shall see fit: and "in whatever state he is, to be content, [Philippians 4:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.11-12)." His happiness is independent of earthly things. "God himself is his portion, and his inheritance! [Psalm 16:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.5);" and death, which is so formidable to a worldly man, is to him an object of desire! [Philippians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.23), because it brings him to the full fruition of all that he holds dear. In a word, in him is fulfilled "the will of God the Father;" and in him is accomplished the purpose of Christ his Savior.

Behold this man! I ask not whether he be rich or poor, learned or unlearned, infirm or strong; but this I ask, Is there a person who does not in his heart envy him? I know full well, that in words the generality will reproach him, as a foolish zealot: but who would not wish, in a dying hour, to be found in his place?

A superiority to the cares and pleasures of life, if accompanied with a suitable deportment in other respects, carries such evidence along with it, as men know not how to reject. They may be ignorant of the principle from whence such conduct flows; but the conduct itself commends itself to their consciences with a force which they cannot resist. All in their hearts congratulate the consistent Christian ; and though they will not say, "Let me live his life," they will say, "Let me die his death, and let my latter end be like his!"

***~~#2050~~***

***~~THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE~~***

***~~[Galatians 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.8-9)~~***

"But even if we or an angel from Heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"

TO exercise candor and forbearance towards those who differ from us, is the duty of all: yet there are bounds beyond which candor becomes apathy, and forbearance becomes treason. In things which are non-essential, and only of secondary importance, we would on no account be rigid: we would form our own opinions, and leave others to follow their own judgment: yes, rather than grieve them by an unnecessary adherence to our own ways, we would at least forbear to demand our own ways. This was the conduct of the Apostle Paul. He "bore with the infirmities of his weak brethren, [Romans 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.1); [Romans 15:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.1);" he circumcised Timothy, in order that he might gain an easier access to them for their good, [Acts 16:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.3). "He became all things to all men," that he might win their souls, [1 Corinthians 9:19-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.19-22); and rather than prove a stumbling-block to any, by using that liberty to which he was introduced by the Gospel, he would decline the eating of meat to the last hour of his life, [1 Corinthians 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.13).

But was this his practice when he came to *essential things?*Did he express no concern when he saw the whole city of Athens given to idolatry? Yes; "his spirit was stirred within him," and he testified boldly against their ignorant superstitions, [Acts 17:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 17.16); [Acts 17:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 17.22). When he perceived that some of the Corinthians were lax in their opinions and conduct, he told them plainly, that "if any man defiles the temple of God, him would God destroy, [1 Corinthians 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.17)."

Thus, in the passage before us, he, who on other occasions "was gentle among them, even like a nursing mother cherishing her children, [1 Thessalonians 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.7)," was filled with indignation against those who perverted the "Gospel of Christ," and denounced against every one of them, even though he were an angel from Heaven, the most awful anathemas! Yes, that they might know the fixedness of his mind respecting it, he renewed his declarations, and repeated his anathemas.

Let us then inquire,

***~~I. What was the Gospel which Paul preached—~~***

On this point the utmost caution is necessary. The Apostle pronounces every one accursed who preaches any other Gospel different from that which he had preached to the Galatians. A mistake therefore in this matter will he absolutely fatal to us.

Observe then, that the great doctrine which he insisted on, was *justification by faith alone without the works of the law*. This, I say, was the point which he maintained, in contradistinction to justification by works, or by faith and works together: and this, namely, justification by faith without works, was the Gospel which he preached.

Respecting this we can have no doubt, if we consider,

***~~1. The statements which he makes—~~***

Here let us notice his train of argument, especially in that part of the epistle which accords with a similar statement in the Epistle to the Romans. He observes that Abraham was justified by faith; and that we become partakers of his benefits by faith also, [Galatians 3:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.6-9). He observes that the law, instead of justifying, curses and condemns us, [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10). He observes that the prophets asserted justification by faith, in direct opposition to justification by the works of the law, [Galatians 3:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.11-12). He observes that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, not that we might afterwards be justified by the law, but that we might enjoy his blessings through faith alone, [Galatians 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.13-14).

The Apostle then goes on to illustrate and confirm this by the covenant which was made with Abraham. In this covenant God gave to Abraham, and to his believing posterity, the inheritance of eternal life. Four hundred and thirty years after, he gave the law to Moses, and made another covenant with the Jews respecting their possession of the earthly Canaan. This latter covenant therefore, you perceive, was made between different parties; the former being between God and Abraham, (including all the believing seed of Abraham, whether they were circumcised or not,) and the other, between God and the Jewish nation only. Consequently, as a man's covenant cannot be annulled unless both parties consent, so the covenant which God made with the Jews cannot supersede that which he had so long before made with Abraham and his believing seed; because the latter party were not present at the making of it, nor had they ever consented to annul the covenant which had been made with them, [Galatians 3:15-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.15-18).

If it is asked, Why then was the law given? We answer, Not to supersede the covenant which had been "before confirmed of God in Christ," but to show men their need of that better covenant, [Galatians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.19), and to serve "as a school-master to bring them unto Christ, that they might be justified by faith, [Galatians 3:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.24)."

Now compare this with the whole train of argument in the five first chapters to the Romans, and the similarity will establish the point at once. The Apostle there shows our condemnation by the law, and the consequent impossibility of ever being justified by it: from thence he shows the necessity of seeking justification by faith in Christ, [Romans 3:19-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.19-22); more especially because that way of justification, and that alone, would exclude boasting, [Romans 3:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.27-28). He then proceeds to establish his point by the examples of *Abraham*, [Romans 4:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.1-3); and *David*[Romans 4:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.6-8), both of whom sought justification by faith only: and he argues from thence, that if works compose any part of our justifying righteousness, "our reward will not be of grace, but of debt;" and Heaven will be, not a gift bestowed, but a compensation that we have earned. Consequently, that we must "not work" in order to obtain righteousness, but "believe on him who justifies the ungodly, [Romans 4:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.4-5). Mark these, verses, and weigh every word in them;" (Mark well, not the godly, but the ungodly.)

If it is said that James represents Abraham as justified by his works, [James 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.21), Paul proves to demonstration, that James cannot speak of Abraham's justification before God, but only of the evidence, or manifestation, of his faith, as true, and genuine; for that Abraham "was justified while yet he was uncircumcised, [James 4:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.9-11);" which was not only before he offered Isaac upon the altar, but long before Isaac was born, [Genesis 17:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 17.19); [Genesis 17:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 17.23-24), with [Genesis 22:1-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 22.1-13).

It is needless to prosecute any further the Apostle's statement: it will be sufficient just to mention his *conclusion*from it, which is; "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, [Romans 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.1)."

***~~2. The objections he anticipates—~~***

In all his writings Paul is careful to obviate the objections which he foresees will be urged against the truths that he inculcates. The objections which he supposes an ignorant person will make, are two:

First, That if, where sin has abounded, grace much more abounds—then we may "continue in sin that grace may abound, [Romans 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20); [Romans 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.1);" for the greater sinners we are before we are justified, the more will the grace of God be magnified in justifying such ungodly creatures.

Secondly, if a person is justified without any respect to his works—then we may live in sin after we are justified; because we are not under the law which requires good works, but under a dispensation of grace, [Romans 6:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.15), wherein life is given freely without any regard to our works, past, present, or future.

Time will not admit of our considering how he answers these objections: (suffice it to say, that he shows they have no solid foundation; and that good works are effectually secured, though they are not taken into the account in our justification.) We mention the objections only, to show what the doctrine must be that gave rise to them.

Suppose the Apostle had said, that we were to be justified by our works alone, or by faith and works united—then what room could there have been for such objections as these? If works were taken into consideration in the matter of our justification before God, we could have no excuse whatever on that account, to neglect them, either before or after we were justified. But if we are justified by faith without any respect to our works, then we can see at once, how a person, not understanding the whole of the Christian scheme, might conceive that the doctrine tended to licentiousness.

Indeed these are the very objections that are yet daily urged by ignorant people against the Apostle's doctrine. They cry, 'You need only believe, and you may live as you will: and the more wicked you are, the more will the free grace of God be glorified in saving you!' Persons never think of urging these objections against those who preach salvation by works, whether in the whole or in part; which is a sure proof, that the Apostle did not preach that doctrine; but that the doctrine which he delivered was that of salvation by faith without the works of the law. In this view of his doctrine there is some apparent ground for the objection; in any other view of it, there is none at all.

***~~3. The perversions he complains of—~~***

What was it he complained of in the conduct of the Galatians? It was this: that they added the observance of the Mosaic ritual to the duties enjoined by the Gospel, [Galatians 4:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.9-10), hoping thereby to render themselves more acceptable to God. And in what manner does he complain of this? He calls it an introducing of "another Gospel, [Galatians 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.6-7)." For it was a mongrel religion, neither law nor Gospel; or, in other words, a "perversion or rejection of the true Gospel, [Galatians 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.6-7) with 3:1."

Now what ground had he for such heavy accusations, if he himself preached salvation (whether in whole or in part) by the works of the law? On this supposition, the more works they did, the more certain they would be to obtain justification: supposing the Mosaic ritual to be abrogated, there still was no harm in "observing days, and months, and years;" and all that he could properly say to them on the occasion, was, "That they were giving themselves needless trouble:" he must have commended them for their zeal in doing these works; and only told them, that now there was no occasion for these observances.

But if he preached justification by faith without the works of the law, and saw that they were performing these works in order to secure their justification, then he might well say, "I am afraid lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain, [Galatians 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.11)."

Again—We read of heavy complaints against Peter What had Peter done? He had conversed familiarly with the Gentile converts, and lived for a season, as they did, without any regard to the Mosaic ritual. But when some Judaizing converts came from Jerusalem, he was afraid of offending their prejudices; and therefore he forsook the Gentile converts, and lived with the others in the observance of all the Jewish rites and ceremonies, [Galatians 2:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.11-13). By this conduct, he not only sanctioned the erroneous idea that the Mosaic rites were still obligatory on the Jewish Christians, but that it was necessary even for the Gentile Christians to conform to them. Now this, in any view of Paul's doctrine, was highly blameworthy; because it was imposing a needless yoke upon the neck of the Gentiles. But this was all: and supposing that Paul had preached justification by works, this was all that he could properly lay to the charge of Peter.

But supposing, as we have shown, that the Gospel which Paul preached held forth justification by faith alone, then there was abundant reason for rebuking Peter in the presence of the whole Church, and accusing him of subverting the foundations of the Gospel! [Galatians 2:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.14-16), and declaring that, so far as he prevailed, he "frustrated the grace of God," and made "the death of Christ to be in vain, [Galatians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.21)."

We are convinced that, if this accumulated evidence is duly weighed, no doubt can remain upon our minds respecting the doctrine which Paul preached, and which he calls in our text, "The Gospel."

Let us then inquire,

***~~II. Why he manifested such zeal in maintaining it—~~***

No man had less of bigotry than the Apostle Paul: for, though a Jew, he spent his life in vindicating the liberty of the Gentiles, and, in fact, died a martyr to their cause, [Acts 21:28-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 21.28-31). Nor was he actuated by resentment; for, when most blaming the Galatians, he says, "You have not injured me at all, [Galatians 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.12)." Nor was he impelled by ambition, as though he would preserve an unrivaled ascendency over the Galatian Church; for he considered himself as "not having dominion over their faith, but merely as a helper of their joy, [2 Corinthians 1:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.24)."

His view was to maintain:

***~~1. The purity of the Gospel—~~***

The Gospel is a fountain of life to a ruined world: nor is there a cistern in the universe that can afford waters so beneficial. It is there alone that Christ is revealed: and "there is no other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we can be saved, [Acts 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.12)." Now a perverting of this fundamental doctrine of justification by faith alone, is a poisoning of that fountain; and consequently a destroying of the whole human race, as well those to whom its waters flow, as those who dwell in the parched desert.

Suppose any man were found so inhuman, as without any cause to poison the spring whereby a populous city were sustained, and from whence alone they could draw what was necessary for their sustenance; would not every living creature execrate him?*Yet that man would be innocent in comparison with him who diffuses the deadly doctrines of a mutilated Gospel!* For the former destroys only the bodies of men; whereas the latter consigns over their souls to everlasting destruction!

No wonder then that the Apostle expressed himself with such vehemence! No wonder that he pronounced every person, whether it were himself, or an angel from Heaven, "accursed!" who would dare to "adulterate the sincere milk of the Word, [2 Corinthians 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.17); [2 Corinthians 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.2)." It was on this ground that he resisted with invincible firmness the attempts that were made to get Titus circumcised, [Galatians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.3); and it was with the same view that he opposed so strenuously all the efforts of Judaizing teachers, even though they were sanctioned by the examples of Barnabas or Peter himself.

***~~2. The importance of the Gospel—~~***

Many who would shudder at the idea of infidelity, are ready to consider the doctrine of justification by faith alone—either as erroneous, or at best as speculative, doubtful, and indifferent. They will not unfrequently say,*'Take care to do good works, and you need not trouble yourself about these difficult questions.'* Now I readily grant that there are difficult questions relative to predestination and election, and some other points, which may, or may not, be received consistently with our "holding the Head," the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is not the case with the doctrine before us. *Justification by faith alone, is the hinge upon which the whole of Christianity turns!*If that is practically received into the heart, it will save a man, though he be mistaken in many other points: but a mistake relative to that will be fatal to him, though he would hold every other truth in the Bible.

Hear how Paul speaks in a passage before referred to, "If righteousness comes by the law, then Christ has died in vain [Galatians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.21);" that is, It was in vain that Christ came down from Heaven: all that he did or suffered was in vain, "if righteousness (whether in whole or in part) comes by the law;" for "all who are under the law are under the curse, [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10). compared with [Galatians 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.3)."

Again, with peculiar firmness and solemnity he says, "Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing, [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2)." What! was there any sin in circumcision? Why then did Paul circumcise Timothy? The act was as innocent as any act could be: but the sin lay, in complying with that ordinance with a view to further their justification before God: and then, it not only did not improve the prospects of the person that submitted to it, but made "Christ himself of no profit to him whatever."

Once more he says, "Christ is become of no effect unto you; whoever of you is justified by the law, you are fallen from grace! [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4)." That is, You have utterly renounced the grace of the Gospel, and you can no more be saved, than the devils themselves; for Christ is become of no effect unto you. In the Epistle to the Romans he confirms these things, not merely, as in the fore-cited passages, by strong assertions, but by matter of fact. For he declares that the Jews were left to perish, notwithstanding all their endeavors to obtain righteousness by the law; and that the Gentiles, who had paid no attention whatever to righteousness of any kind, were saved: and that the reason of the one being saved, while the others perished, was, that the one embraced the doctrine of justification by faith only, while the others were too proud to submit to it, [Romans 9:30-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-33); [Romans 10:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.3-4).

Let these matters be considered; and then let anyone say, whether there was not good reason for the Apostle's *anathemas*, which under any other circumstances might have been justly counted harsh and severe. He felt the importance of the doctrine; and he wished all others to feel it; and therefore he did not hesitate to imprecate curses even on an angel from Heaven, if any one could be found blind and impious enough to set it aside.

***~~3. The sufficiency of the Gospel—~~***

We are far from imputing any evil intention to those who object to the doctrine we are maintaining. "They have a zeal for God; but not according to knowledge, [Romans 10:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.2)." They have fears and apprehensions that the Gospel which has been set forth, is insufficient either to justify, or to sanctify, the soul: and on this account they *add good works to faith*in order to their justification; conceiving, that the righteousness of Christ cannot be the less effectual for the addition of ours to it; and that the idea of being *justified in part by our good works must be an irresistible inducement to the performance of them*. Whereas the exalting of faith as the *only*mean of salvation, must, they suppose, relax men's diligence in good works.

But let us not presume to change the plans which Infinite Wisdom has devised for the salvation of man. "The robe of Christ's righteousness" is quite sufficient "to cover our nakedness, [Revelation 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.18)," without adding to it "the filthy rags of our righteousness, [Isaiah 64:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.6)." And there are grounds enough for abounding in good works without putting them into the place of Christ, and making a Savior of them. The Scripture is plain; "All that believe are justified from all things, [Acts 13:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.39);" and it is equally plain, that "faith will work by love [Galatians 5:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.6)," and "overcome the world, [1 John 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.4)," and "purify the heart [Acts 15:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 15.9)."

Had the Gospel needed any addition in either of these respects, Paul would not have been so adverse to the attempts to improve it: but, as it needed nothing of this kind, he could not endure that we should presume to be wiser than God: "Shall he who contends with the Almighty, instruct him? [Job 40:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 40.2)."

***~~Our improvement of this subject must be short: but we cannot conclude it without briefly noticing its importance,~~***

***~~1. To those who minister—~~***

It is not within the compass of language to suggest words that could more deserve the attention of ministers, than those of our text. Many things doubtless are requisite for a due discharge of the ministry: but there is one that as far surpasses all others, as the sun exceeds a candle. It is this: an acquaintance with this fundamental doctrine of Scripture, the doctrine of justification by faith alone. If a man is not instructed in it, how can he instruct others? If he be not instructing them in this, what is he doing, but bringing down curses upon his own soul, and leading his people also to destruction?

Would to God, that those who look forward to the ministry as a source of worldly honor or emolument, would seriously reflect upon this tremendous passage, and consider, whether it be worth their while to involve themselves in such accumulated misery!

Would to God that those also who are in the ministry, would consider what they have undertaken to preach, and what is uniformly inculcated in the Scriptures and the articles of our Church! But whether men will consider for themselves or not, we must say, "a necessity is laid upon them, and woe be unto them if they preach not the Gospel! [1 Corinthians 9:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.16)."

***~~2. To those who are ministered unto—~~***

If there be such a necessity laid on ministers to preach "the truth as it is in Jesus," there must be the same necessity for you to hear and embrace it. Inquire then, what is the Gospel that you have received? Is it this, or is it "another Gospel?" Are your views of the Gospel such as would furnish occasion for a person to raise objections against it as tending to licentiousness? Yet do you, at the same time, manifest by your life and conduct, that it is "a doctrine according to godliness?" Inquire into these things; for "they are your life! [Deuteronomy 32:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.47)."

If your views of Divine truth do not answer to this description, they are not such as the Apostle Paul had, nor will they lead you where he now is. If, instead of looking for salvation by faith alone, you are mixing your own merits with those of Christ, you must inevitably perish! Christ shall profit you nothing. You may build hay, and wood, and stubble, upon the true foundation, and yet be saved at last—you will suffer loss indeed; yet you will be saved, though it be as persons snatched out of the fire! [1 Corinthians 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.12); [1 Corinthians 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.15). But if you build on anything besides Christ alone, you have a foundation of sand, which will fail you in the hour of trial, to the destruction of your whole fabric, and the ruin of your own souls! [Matthew 7:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.26-27). The mixtures of your righteousness with Christ's, like the feet of iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image, will never save you: they cannot unite; they cannot adhere; if you attempt to stand upon them, you will fall and be broken in pieces! [Daniel 2:33-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 2.33-34). There is but "one faith, [Ephesians 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.5)," but one foundation: "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ, [1 Corinthians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11)." Take heed therefore that you build upon it, [1 Corinthians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.10); and let your superstructure be such as shall be approved in the day when it shall be tried by fire! [1 Corinthians 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.13-14).

***~~#2051~~***

***~~MEN-PLEASERS REPROVED~~***

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

"Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."

IN the Churches of Galatia, great efforts were made by Judaizing teachers, to "pervert the Gospel of Christ," and to establish in its place a doctrine more congenial with Jewish prejudices and Jewish habits. Paul set himself vigorously to withstand their influence, and to maintain the Gospel in all its purity. For this end, he declared in this epistle, his full authority from God to require from all of them a submission to the doctrines which he preached; and he denounced a curse on any creature, whether man or angel, who would attempt to introduce any other Gospel.

In prosecution of his argument, he appeals to the Galatians themselves, whether he was, or could be, actuated by any unworthy desire of pleasing men: "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men?" Let it be remembered, that the Apostle, previously to his conversion, had sought to please men, and, under their authority, had opposed to the uttermost the cause of Christ, [Acts 9:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.1-2). Now he labored, with no less zeal, to maintain that cause; and denounced a curse, even against an angel from Heaven, if one would be found presumptuous enough to oppose it.

But was he now actuated by the same motives as he was before? Did he now act under the authority of men, or seek to please men? Was he not rather acting in obedience to God? It was clear that he was not pleasing men, nor could possibly have any such object in view; because men's wishes were in direct opposition to God's commands, and to the ministrations which he felt it his duty to maintain: and if he would please and obey man, he could not be the servant of Christ.

In opening the text, I shall,

***~~I. Confirm the Apostle's assertion—~~***

We shall have no doubt of its truth, if we consider the grounds on which it stands:

***~~1. The things which men, and the Lord Jesus Christ, require, are directly contrary to each other—~~***

*Men have their maxims and habits, to which they wish all others to be conformed.* Our blessed Lord, on the contrary, says, "Be not conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that you may know what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, [Romans 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.2)." But this is not all: he commands us, not only to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but also rather to reprove them, [Ephesians 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.11)."

Now, the separation alone is, of itself, sufficiently displeasing to the world, because *it forms a tacit reprehension of their ways: but, when to this is added a testimony borne against their ways as evil, they are irritated and incensed*; and, in self-defense, they brand their opponents with every term of ignominy and reproach.

Our blessed Lord found it so with respect to himself: "The world cannot hate you," said he to his unbelieving brethren; "but me it hates, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil [John 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.7)." And he has taught us to expect the same treatment on precisely the same ground: "If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you! [John 15:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.19)."

***~~2. There is no possibility of reconciling them—~~***

Our blessed Lord has placed this beyond a doubt: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You *cannot*serve both God and Mammon! [Matthew 6:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 6.24)." This is the very foundation of that separation from the world, which is the bounden duty of every one that calls himself "a servant of Christ." "What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he who believes with an infidel?" "Why come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, 2 Corinthians 6:14-17."

In truth, this is nothing but what must commend itself to every considerate mind. Paul appealed respecting it to the whole Church of Rome, and, in fact, to the whole world: "don't you know, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey? [Romans 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.16)."

It may be said, perhaps, that the services of God and Mammon are not so irreconcilable as we represent them; since our Lord himself has shown us that they may be reconciled. In one place he says, "He who is not with me, is against me; and he who gathers not with me, scatters abroad, [Matthew 12:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.30)." And in another place he says, "He who is not against us, is for us, [Luke 9:50](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 9.50);" and therefore he may, in this latter passage, be said to have modified and tempered the severer language of the former.

But there is no real opposition between the two passages: for if the occasions on which they were spoken be duly marked, it will be found that the former passage forbids neutrality in our own conduct; the latter forbids uncharitableness in judging of the conduct of others.

As strong as are the declarations of our Lord and of Paul, which have been before cited, they fall far short of that which is spoken by James. From them we see that neutrality is treason, in reference to God, just as it would be in an earthly kingdom, where a subject would not move to repel an invading enemy. But James declares, that even a wish to preserve friendship with the world is nothing less than a direct act of rebellion against God. "You adulterers and adulteresses, don't you know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, will be (wishes to be) the friend of the world, is (is thereby constituted) the enemy of God! [James 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.4)."

On these grounds I conceive that the Apostle's assertion admits not of the smallest doubt; but is plain, direct, and incontrovertible.

Let me now, then,

***~~II. Show the bearing which the Apostle's assertion should have on our life and conduct—~~***

It is of great importance for us to remember, that broad and unqualified assertions may easily be perverted, to the establishment of principles which, in reality, are false; and to the encouragement of conduct which is essentially unfitting. It is the part of sound wisdom to make those discriminations, which will serve to guide a humble and conscientious Christian to an adjustment of contending claims, and to a discernment of the path of duty in difficult and conflicting circumstances. With a view to this, I will point out,

***~~1. Negatively, what effect this assertion should not produce—~~***

*It should not render us indifferent to the opinions or feelings of those around us.*Indifference to the feelings of others is highly criminal: it argues a lack of love; without which divine principle, whatever a man may have, he is no better than "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal, [1 Corinthians 13:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.1)." Those around us have immortal souls, for which we ought to be tenderly concerned: and, as they must of necessity be more or less affected by our conduct, and have their estimate of our principles influenced by the fruits which they produce—it befits us, for their sakes, to avoid casting any stumbling-block before them, or giving them any unnecessary offense. We should, as far as possible, "prevent even our good from being evil spoken of, [Romans 14:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.16)."

Nay further; we would endeavor to "please men," yes, to "please all men." "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not himself, [Romans 15:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.2-3)." Nay, I go further still, and say, that we ought to be ready to make considerable sacrifices for this very end: for Paul, speaking on this very subject, says, "Give no offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved, [1 Corinthians 10:32-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.32-33)."

Now, this is a point on which religious people, and young people especially, need to be put upon their guard. There is a self-will, and self-pleasing, in religious matters, as well as in things unconnected with religion: and *there is a disposition to magnify the importance of matters that are indifferent*, and to urge the claims of conscience for things which are really dictated only by inclination; and an undue pertinacity in these things frequently proves a greater stumbling-block to our friends and relatives, than a firm adherence to any positive duty would do.

Still, however, I must guard this on the other hand; and say, that, in any concessions which we may make, we must look well to our motives, which, none but God can see. *We must not comply with the wishes or solicitations of men, merely to please them, or to avoid exciting their displeasure*: we must do it simply "for their good to edification."

This was the Apostle's motive, in all his compliances: "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings, [1 Corinthians 9:19-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.19-23)." Let this distinction be kept in view, and this principle be in operation, and we shall not materially err, either by *stubbornness*on the one hand, or by *compliance*on the other.

It may be said, that this mode of proceeding will make a Christian's conduct extremely difficult and unnecessarily dangerous; and that it will be better to adhere to the broad line altogether, and to wave all consideration except for the good of our own souls. But to this I can by no means accede. I agree that this would be far easier, and in some respects safer: but I cannot therefore say that it is better. It may be right to incur both difficulty and danger for the good of others; though it would not be right to incur them merely for their gratification. It would be right to expose our own lives to a tempest in a small boat for the sake of saving a shipwrecked crew, when it would be highly criminal to do so for the amusement of those on shore: and, if we do subject ourselves both to difficulty and a measure of danger for the everlasting salvation of others, we may expect the Divine protection and blessing in our endeavors. Let us but serve our God according to his directions, and we need not fear but that "he will give his angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways."

***~~2. Positively, what effect this assertion should produce—~~***

It must lead us to adopt a decided part, and never to swerve from the path of duty, even if the whole world would be against us. The conduct of the Apostles should be ours, whenever such an alternative is presented to us: "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, you judge," for we cannot but do the things which our God requires, [Acts 4:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.19-20).

We must be very careful to examine what the path of duty is; but, having ascertained it, we must not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, on any account whatever. We must not deviate from the path of duty, in a way either of commission or of omission.

Suppose it said to us, as to the Hebrew Youths, 'Bow down to this idol, or you shall go into the fiery furnace;' we should not hesitate to choose the fire in preference to the sin. Or if it were said, as to Daniel, 'Forbear to pray to your God, or you shall be cast into the den of lions, Daniel 3;' we should not hesitate to prefer the den of lions, to an abandonment of an acknowledged duty: nay, we would not even appear to concede the point; but would serve God openly, and at all events, Daniel 6.

As far as our Lord and the world go together, we would follow the world: but where they separate, we would let all men see "whose we are, and whom we serve."

***~~Now, in this subject we may see,~~***

***~~1. Matter for serious inquiry—~~***

"Do I yet please men?" This has been the habit of us all in the past, for the unconverted man has no higher principle of action than this. But, if we have been truly converted unto God, we have given ourselves up to another Master, even Christ; and *to serve and please him is our chief, our only, aim. We must have no will, no way, but his. For him must we both live and die.*

Well do I know, that our change, in this respect, is often imputed to us for evil; and that we are deemed weak, conceited, and fanatical, because we presume to judge for ourselves in this particular. But where eternity is at stake, how can we do otherwise? We must approve ourselves to God, and to our own conscience. In no other way can we have peace: in no other way can we ever attain to glory.

And I cannot but say, that in what the world demands at our hands, they are very unreasonable. For they will not measure to us what they expect us to measure to them. They will not be persuaded by us to do the smallest thing for God, and for their own souls. If, to please us, they read a book which we put into their hands, or attend upon a ministry which we have recommended, they think they make mighty concessions; though, in the daily habit of their minds, they are as much addicted to the world as others. But there are no bounds to the concessions which they require of us: *nor are they ever satisfied, until they have drawn us into the same vortex with themselves*. I must therefore recommend extreme caution in carrying into effect the very advice which I myself have given. For though to please all men is a legitimate and befitting object of pursuit, if you have attained it you will have great reason to suspect yourselves: for you will have attained what neither our Lord nor his Apostles ever did, or ever could. If "all men speak well of you," then you may be perfectly assured that you have been unfaithful to your God, and that nothing but a woe attends you! [Luke 6:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 6.26).

***~~2. Matter for unceasing consolation—~~***

It is extremely painful to have our friends and relations displeased with us, as they assuredly will be, if we give up ourselves unreservedly to the Lord. Our blessed Lord has told us, that, though this was not the end of his coming, it is, and will be, the effect: "I am come," says he, "to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against the mother, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law: and a man's foes shall be those of his own household, [Matthew 10:35-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.35-36)."

But then we would ask ourselves, "Have I, like Enoch, this testimony, that I have pleased God, [Hebrews 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.5)." If I have, I am satisfied. I would most gladly, if it were in my power, please all who are connected with me: but if they reduce me to the dilemma of either displeasing them or God, they must excuse me: for "I must obey God rather than man, [Acts 5:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.29)."

The persons who are offended with me, would expect their servant to obey them rather than a stranger: and is not God entitled to that deference from me? I am "a servant of Jesus Christ;" and I must, at the peril of my soul, obey him. And as our blessed Lord said respecting his own conduct to his heavenly Father, "I do always those things which please him, [John 8:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.29);" so, God helping me, will I say: and if I stand condemned for it at man's tribunal, I have this comfort, that, when standing at the tribunal of my God, he will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord! [Matthew 25:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.21)."

***~~#2052~~***

***~~CONVERSION, AND ITS EFFECTS~~***

***~~[Galatians 1:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.15-16)~~***

"But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man"

GREAT were the trials which the Apostle Paul met with in the Churches of Galatia through the subtlety of some Judaizing teachers, who labored, and with too much success, to turn the newly converted Christians from the faith which Paul had preached to them, and to bring them over to a faith compounded of Judaism and Christianity. To give the greater weight to their doctrines, they represented Paul as preaching a Gospel which he had received only from human authority, and not from the Lord Jesus Christ, as all the other Apostles had; and consequently, as unworthy of the confidence which his followers reposed in him.

To counteract the sad effects of their representations, Paul, in the very introduction to his Epistle to the Galatians, declared, that he had received his Gospel, "not of men (as the authors), nor by man (as an instrument), but directly from the Lord Jesus Christ, and from God the Father, who had raised him from the dead, verse 1." And then, after expressing his "wonder that they had been so soon turned away from him who had called them into the grace of Christ," he proceeds to vindicate more fully his apostolic authority: "I want you to know, brethren," says he, "that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man: for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ, verse 11, 12."

Then, after specifying the time when it was revealed to him, namely, in his way to Damascus, he asserts, that he studiously avoided everything which might be construed into a reception of it from men; for he had not gone at all at that time to Jerusalem, where the other Apostles were, but into Arabia, where there was none but God to teach him.

In the account which he thus gives of himself, he gives us an insight into the work of conversion, and into that line of conduct which all converted persons should pursue. It is for the elucidating of these two things that we have selected the passage which we have just read: from which we shall take occasion to show,

***~~I. Wherein our conversion must resemble Paul's—~~***

Certainly it is not at all necessary that our conversion should resemble his in the external circumstances; for in respect of them he stands alone, not so much as one of his attendants being, as far as we know, converted with him. Nor even in respect of the suddenness of it, is it at all necessary that we would resemble him: our conversion may be so gradual that we cannot trace it to any particular time; and yet it may be as certain and as evident as his. But *in its essential parts conversion is the same in all*. Ours therefore must resemble his,

***~~1. In its origin—the electing love of God—~~***

God "separated him from his mother's womb" to the apostolic office, just as he had done the prophet Jeremiah to the prophetic office, [Jeremiah 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 1.5). It was evidently not for his righteousness that he was thus chosen to know Christ for himself, and to preach him to others: for, to the very instant of his conversion, he was a blasphemer, and injurious, and a persecutor. His *election*can be traced to nothing but the sovereign will of God. And to this must our conversion also be traced, if ever we have been converted at all. "We have not chosen Christ, but Christ us!" Yes, "we were chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of the world," and "predestined to the adoption of children" into his family.

In this very epistle Paul most studiously marks this. He speaks of the Galatians as having known God: but, fearing, as it were, lest they would suppose that the work had begun on their part, he recalls his word, and says, "after you have known God, or rather are known by God, [Galatians 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.9). See also [Philippians 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.12)." Let us bear in mind therefore, that, if we are converted, it is "not because we loved God, but because he loved us, [1 John 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.10);" "he loved us with an everlasting love; and therefore with loving-kindness has he drawn us! [Jeremiah 31:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.3)."

***~~2. In its means—the effectual grace of God—~~***

God "called him by his grace;" and without the effectual working of his grace the Apostle would never have been called at all. Nor shall we ever attain to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus in any other way. Of ourselves "we can do nothing," no, "not so much as think a good thought:" it is "God alone who can give us either to will or to do" anything that is good, [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.13). "If we are brought into a state of grace," it is "he who has made us willing in the day of his power." "We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.10)." The new creation is his work as much as the old: whatever be the means, or whoever be the instrument "to plant or water, it is he alone that gives the increase, [1 Corinthians 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.6)." Every child of man must say with the Apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am! [1 Corinthians 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.10);" "whoever he be that is born again, he is born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God! [John 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.13)."

***~~3. In its manner—by a revelation of Christ to the soul—~~***

As far as relates to the external circumstances of conversion, we have before said that no one standard exists: but as it respects the revelation of Christ to the soul, conversion is the same in all. There may be a preparatory work of conviction without this; but no conversion: for in this consists the essence of conversion, if we may so speak.

The revelation given in the Scriptures may inform the mind; but it is the revelation made to the soul, that can alone convert and save the soul. The means which converted Saul, produced no such effect on his companions. Many others heard the word preached to them, as well as Lydia: but she received benefit from it which others did not, because "the Lord opened *her*heart to attend to the things that were spoken." Just so, if we are savingly enlightened, it is because God has "opened the eyes of our understanding," and "given us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of his Son! [Ephesians 1:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17-18)," and "shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6)." It is only then that we truly "receive Christ" as our Savior, [John 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.12); only then do we "feed truly on his flesh and blood;" only then do we "believe in him to the saving of the soul."

***~~4. In its end—to make him known in the world—~~***

We are not all called, like Paul, "to preach Christ among the heathen;" but we are called, like Paul himself, to confess him openly, [Acts 22:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 22.14-15). [Matthew 10:32-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.32-33), and to become his avowed followers, and to show forth in our life and conduct the power of his grace. We are all to "shine as lights in a dark world, holding forth the word of life, [Philippians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15-16)." We are to be his witnesses, even "epistles of Christ known and read of all men." We are so to make our "light shine before men, that all who see us may approve of his ways, and glorify his name, [Matthew 5:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.16)."

From the effect produced on him by his conversion, we are led to consider,

***~~II. Wherein our conduct must resemble Paul's—~~***

It is probable that his words relate rather to his not seeking any fellowship with those who were at that time the pillars of the Christian Church, than to any workings of his own mind, which he studiously suppressed. Yet the decision of his character on the occasion shows us what we should be and do, when once we have received the converting grace of God. We must enter on the duties assigned us:

***~~1. Without hesitation—~~***

Many doubts will be suggested by our own corrupt hearts, how far it is necessary or expedient to devote ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ; and our carnal friends will not fail to remonstrate with us on our new views and pursuits. They will tell us of the injury which we shall sustain in our reputation and interests, if we make ourselves singular, and join ourselves to "a sect that is everywhere evil spoken of." They will beseech us with much affectionate importunity to put away these enthusiastic notions: and, if they have power over us, they will blend threats with their entreaties. But, from whatever quarter the temptation may come, we must examine its tendency, and, as soon as we see that its effect will be to draw us back to the world, we must say to it, as our blessed Lord under similar circumstances said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! for you savor not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." We must listen to nothing, however specious it may be, that would cause us to dissemble with God, or divert us from the path prescribed to us in his word.

Our one question must be, What does my Lord and Savior require of me? By that must we be determined, though the whole world would endeavor to obstruct our way. We must neither be allured by self-interest, nor deterred by fear; but must "hate father and mother, and even our own lives also, in comparison with Christ."

***~~2. Without delay—~~***

Thus did Paul: "immediately" he betook himself to the work assigned him, [Acts 9:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.19-20). Thus should we also: we would not say, Let me go home first and take leave of my friends, or bury my father. No! let the dead bury their dead: our duty is to fulfill the will of Him who has called us to his kingdom and glory. We shall occasionally feel strong temptations on this subject. When difficulties and dangers present themselves, we shall be ready to think we shall find some more convenient season, when our way will be more plain and easy. But we must, like Matthew at the tax collector's booth, or like others of the Apostles at their nets, forsake all and follow Christ.

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

***~~1. Let those of you who have experienced converting grace, give God the glory—~~***

There is a strange backwardness in man to do this. If all is traced to the sovereign grace of God, we bring forward a thousand objections, so that we may divide the glory with him. But this is not so in Heaven; nor should it be on earth. In Heaven there is no song but that of "Salvation to God and to the Lamb." Let it be so on earth. It is our indispensable duty, our truest interest, our highest happiness, to give glory to the God of Heaven. Let us do it cheerfully, and without reserve.

***~~2. Let those in whose hearts Christ has been revealed, seek to know more and more of him—~~***

It is but little that any man knows of him. Paul himself, after preaching Christ for twenty years, desired to know more of him, in the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. Let us also seek to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of him." The more we behold his glory, the more we shall be changed into his image. The more we comprehend of his unsearchable love, the more shall we be filled with all the fullness of God.

***~~3. Let all learn how to avoid the snares which Satan lays for their feet—~~***

We must not parley with temptation, but act with promptitude and decision. There must be in us a firmness that is immoveable: yet would that firmness be tempered with gracefulness. We must not think, that, because our superiors are wrong in their endeavors to keep us back from Christ, we are at liberty to slight their admonitions on other subjects, or even on religion itself, as far as we can without violating the commands of Christ.

While we guard against an undue conformity to the world, we must guard also against two common evils, superstition, and unnecessary scrupulosity:

Scrupulosity makes that to be sin which is no sin.

Superstition makes that to be duty which is no duty.

Let us get our minds rightly instructed:

In matters of *indifference*—let us be willing to yield.

In matters of *vital importance*—let us be firm and faithful even unto death.

***~~#2053~~***

***~~GOD GLORIFIED IN HIS PEOPLE~~***

***~~[Galatians 1:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.23-24)~~***

"They only heard the report: 'The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.' And they praised God because of me."

THE account of men's conversion to God is a very profitable subject of contemplation. It tends to illustrate the infinite diversity of ways in which God deals with men, and draws them to himself. Paul, on various occasions, mentioned the peculiar manner in which he was turned to God, and brought to the obedience of faith, [Acts 9:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.22) and [26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.26). He adverts to it in the chapter before us, in order to establish beyond contradiction his divine mission. It is not my intention to enter into the circumstances of his conversion, any further than they are referred to in my text: from whence I shall take occasion to show:

***~~I. What may be expected of every true convert—~~***

***~~It is here taken for granted that he has embraced the Christian faith—~~***

This is to be taken for granted in all cases: for no man can be a Christian until he has truly come to Christ, seeking mercy at God's hands through him, even through his obedience unto death. This is the distinctive difference between the Christian and others. Others may possess all that Paul himself possessed in his unconverted state: all his privileges of birth, all his attainments in knowledge, all his zeal in religion, and all his blameless morality—and yet, after all, be "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." *It is his deep contrition as a sinner, his utter renunciation of all self-dependence, either in respect to righteousness or strength, and his simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, that must characterize him as a true believer.*

***~~This faith he will endeavor, to the utmost of his power, to advance—~~***

If, like Paul, he has been "put into the ministry," he will "preach Christ" to his people; yes, and will "determine to know nothing among them, except Jesus Christ, and him crucified, [1 Corinthians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.2)."

If he is a private Christian, he will exert himself in every possible way to promote the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. Has he *wealth?* He will gladly assist in educating pious persons for the service of the sanctuary. Has he *influence?* He will endeavor to establish faithful ministers in places which seem to afford them scope for more extensive usefulness.

Many of the primitive Christians gave up all that they possessed, that, in so doing, they might help forward the cause of Christ. And though the same sacrifices be not required now, the same disposition is; and every Christian in the universe would be able to say, "I count not even my life dear unto me, so that I may but finish my course with joy," and fulfill my duty to my Lord and Savior.

The tidings of the Apostle's conversion were soon spread far and wide; and the conduct of those who heard of it will show us, in reference to every other convert,

***~~II. What reason there is to glorify God on his behalf—~~***

In many views is the conversion of a sinner a ground of joy and thankfulness:

***~~1. For the benefit accruing to himself—~~***

He was but lately lying dead in trespasses and sins: now he is quickened to a new and heavenly life.

He was "an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenants of promise: he is now a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God."

He was a child of Satan, and an heir of wrath: he is now a child of God, and an heir of Heaven.

Over such a one the angels in Heaven rejoice, [Luke 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.10); yes, over such a one God himself rejoices; "killing for him the fatted calf, and making merry with him, [Luke 15:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.32) with [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.17)."

To this change of state must be added his change of *nature*also: and who can contemplate that, and not adopt the language of Paul, "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have to all the saints, and for the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven! [Colossians 1:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.3-4)." It matters not who he is, or in what quarter of the globe he live; the tidings of this change would draw forth from us the grateful sentiment which was expressed at the conversion of Cornelius; we would "glorify God, saying, Then has God also granted repentance unto life to the Gentiles, [Acts 11:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 11.18)."

***~~2. For the honor arising to God—~~***

By none except real converts is God honored in the world: but by them he is admired, and loved, and served, and glorified. In them, too, do all his glorious perfections shine forth. Who can see a true convert, and not admire the forbearance, the mercy, the love, the power, that have been exercised towards him.

In the works of creation the wisdom and goodness of God are visible: but in the new creation, there is a combination of all those perfections, which had no scope for exercise until man had fallen, and was redeemed by the blood of God's only-begotten Son.

Can we wonder that the angels, on the first discovery of this work of mercy, burst forth into songs which they had never known before: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men! [Luke 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.14)." In truth, this is the one great theme of praise and adoration in Heaven: and all who see the subject realized on earth, must, if they have any love to God, rejoice that persons are raised up to give him the glory due unto his name.

***~~3. For the advantages that may be expected from it to the Church of God—~~***

The conversion of Paul, what a benefit was it to the whole world! What a benefit will it be to millions through all eternity! And, though none of us can bear any comparison with him, will anyone pretend to estimate the good which the very least among us may be the means of effecting in the world? The work of a minister does not cease with his personal ministrations; but is extended through a whole country, and augmented through all succeeding ages. And the poorest person, by a word spoken, or by his life and conduct, may, like Naaman's maid, be the means of converting one whose influence may extend through a whole kingdom. Every addition therefore to the Church of God, is a ground of joy, and should call forth the devoutest thanksgivings from all to whom the tidings of it are made known.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who have never yet embraced the Gospel—~~***

Never has any one yet had occasion to glorify God for you. On the contrary, there has been reason to weep over you incessantly, even to the present hour. You may not have been a persecutor of the Church; but you have been an enemy of God and his Christ from your youth up: for "the carnal mind is enmity with God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." You, therefore, must be converted as much as he. It is not needful that you would be converted in the same way as he, or in the same sudden manner; but converted you must be, or perish! [Matthew 18:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.3). You must believe as he did; and embrace that very Gospel which he preached.

O, beg of "God to count you worthy of this high calling, and to fulfill in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, [2 Thessalonians 1:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.11-12)."

***~~2. Those who profess to have received the Gospel—~~***

See that you "adorn the Gospel; that you adorn it in all things." Let the change be as visible in you, as it was in Paul. I mean not that you are to affect the same public character as he sustained; for you are not called to that: but to live unto God you are called; and to exert yourselves, according to your opportunities and ability, to promote his glory in the world, you are called: and therefore to all of you, without exception, I say, "Let your light so shine before men, that they, beholding your good works, may glorify your Father who is in Heaven! [Matthew 5:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.16)."

***~~#2054~~***

***~~CHRISTIAN AND UNCHRISTIAN FIRMNESS~~***

***~~[Galatians 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.5)~~***

"We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you."

NEVER, from the foundation of the world, was there, as far as we know, a richer combination of graces in any man, than in the Apostle Paul. As in *light*there is an assemblage of very different rays, which, when in due proportion and in simultaneous motion, cause that bright and pure effulgence which we call *light*, so in him were found dispositions most opposed to each other—yet so combined as to form in him the most perfect character.

Certainly, that which first of all strikes us as constituting the chief trait in his character, is a freedom from all selfish feelings, and a willingness to do or suffer anything whereby man may be benefitted, and God may be glorified. Yet, in the passage which we have just read, we see, not only an inflexibility of mind, but such an expression of it as we would scarcely have expected from so mild and kind a man.

When he was at Jerusalem, attended by a young disciple named Titus, he was urged to have him circumcised; not for the purpose of removing prejudice, and gaining an easier access to the minds of men—but from an idea, that the observance of that rite was necessary to the completion of Christianity, and to the attainment of the Gospel salvation. To such advisers he would not listen for a moment. Whatever might be their rank or influence in the Church, he regarded them not as deserving the slightest deference from him on such a subject, see verse 6; since a compliance with their wishes would vitiate, and altogether invalidate, the Gospel of Christ.

Now, that this inflexibility of his may be duly appreciated, I will show,

***~~I. When pertinacity may be considered as unamiable and sinful—~~***

"To be zealously affected always in a good thing is commendable, [Galatians 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.18);" but zeal may be misplaced, and especially when it operates so far as to make a man inflexible. A bold, confident, dogmatic spirit, is at all times unamiable; and especially,

***~~1. When the object in dispute is questionable or indifferent—~~***

*There are some who, on every subject, speak as if they were infallible*; and not only claim what must be conceded to them, a right to think and act for themselves, but a right to impose on others also a necessity to comply with their mind and will. At all events, they themselves are immoveable on almost any subject upon which they have formed even the most hasty opinion: and, if they tolerate, they will never adopt, the opinions opposed to them.

Such were the dispositions manifested by many in the Apostle's days, especially in reference to some ordinances of the Jewish law; such as the observance of certain *days*, and the eating of *foods*offered to idols. So confident were the opposite parties, that, not content with following their own judgment, they each condemned the practice of the other; "the strong despising the weak, and the weak sitting in judgment on the strong, [Romans 14:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.1-3)." But how did the Apostle Paul act? He knew that neither the observance nor the neglect of such forms could "commend a man to God, or ameliorate his state before God, [1 Corinthians 8:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.8);" consequently, that he was at liberty to act in relation to them as circumstances might require; but, "rather than use his liberty in a way that would give offense to a weak brother, he would not eat flesh so long as the world would stand, [1 Corinthians 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 8.13)."

View him on another occasion, towards the close of his life. Being at Jerusalem, where there were "many thousands of Jews zealous of the law, he was advised by James, and all the elders of the Church, to join with four other persons in performing the vows of Nazariteship, according to the law of Moses; in order to show, that, notwithstanding he had maintained the liberty of the Gentiles to disregard the Mosaic ritual, he was no enemy to it, so far as respected the Jews, who could not yet see that it was abolished. Had he been of a self-willed and a pertinacious mind, he might have urged reasons in plenty, which, in appearance at least, might justify his opposition to this advice. But he had no wish, no will, no way of his own, if, by renouncing it, he might do good, and benefit his fellow-creatures; and therefore "the very next day he commenced the work of purification in the temple, according to the law of Moses, [Acts 21:20-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 21.20-26)." (There are, indeed, those who condemn him for this act of conformity. But, as they set up their own judgment against James, and all the saints and elders of Jerusalem, I leave them without further remark.)

Now we see, in these instances, how condescending he was to the views and wishes of others; and what that spirit was with which he exercised, as contrasted with the unamiable and unchristian spirit of his opponents.

***~~2. When the object in dispute is trifling and unimportant—~~***

Some will contend about the smallest trifles, wherein their own interest is concerned: and will even glory in their firmness and pertinacity. But this spirit is in direct opposition to the mind of Christ, who says, "If any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also; and whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two, [Matthew 5:40-41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.40-41)."

Let us see how Paul acted in reference to such matters. He had a right to be supported by the Church to which he ministered. God's law had actually so appointed, that "they would not muzzle the ox that trod out the corn." But there were, in the Church, some teachers whose main object was to advance their own interests, and who would not fail to cite him as sanctioning, by his example, their selfish habits. He therefore determined to wave altogether his own rights; and to work night and day for his own support, rather than to afford them such a sanction as they desired, [1 Corinthians 9:4-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.4-15). [2 Corinthians 11:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.9); [2 Corinthians 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.12). 1 Thessalonians 2:9. [2 Thessalonians 3:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 3.8-9).

We have a lovely instance of unselfishness in *Mephibosheth*, the son of Saul. When David fled from the face of Absalom, Ziba, Mephibosheth's servant took his master's donkeys laden with provisions, and went with them to David; reporting that his master was now gratified with the hope of David's death, and of his own restoration to his father's throne. David, in consequence of this, gave to Ziba all his master's property. But on David's return to Jerusalem, Mephibosheth went to meet him; and told him how deeply he had sympathized with the banished monarch, and how scandalously he had been traduced by his servant Ziba. Upon this, David so far recalled his former grant to Ziba, as to order that Mephibosheth and Ziba would divide the property between them. Upon which, Mephibosheth, overlooking all the injuries he had sustained from Ziba, replied, "Let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house, [2 Samuel 19:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 19.30)." Here we see how all his own personal interests were swallowed up in a sense of love to David, and in a joyful participation of David's happiness.

Such is the duty of every true Christian. For Paul, speaking to those Corinthians who contended for their own rights, and carried their contests into a court of law, tells them that "there was utterly a fault among them;" and then says, "Why do you not rather take wrong, and allow yourselves to be defrauded? [1 Corinthians 6:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.7)."

As for carrying this yielding spirit to excess, we are in no danger of that: our danger is, the not carrying it far enough: for it is impossible not to see, that, in the whole of our Savior's life, he never shined more bright than "when, being led as a lamb to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth, [Isaiah 53:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.7);" and when he was treated with every species of cruelty upon the cross, he prayed and apologized for his murderers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do [Luke 23:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 23.34)."

But, notwithstanding the hatefulness of pertinacity in general, there are seasons,

***~~II. When it becomes a virtue of prime necessity—~~***

A firmness of character is indispensable in the true Christian: and he must be absolutely "steadfast and immoveable, 1 Corinthians 15:58".

***~~1. When otherwise our obedience to Christ would be violated—~~***

Not our actions only, but "our very thoughts also, are to be brought into captivity to obedience to Christ [2 Corinthians 10:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.5)." A command from him supersedes all human authority, and must be obeyed under all circumstances.

The *three Hebrew Youths*were required to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's golden image: they were the only persons in the whole Chaldean empire who refused to comply with the royal edict: and they were threatened to be cast into a furnace of fire if they persisted in their disobedience, [Daniel 3:16-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 3.16-18); yet did they maintain their steadfastness, in despite of all these menaces: and in this they acted as befit the servants of the living God.

*Daniel*manifested the same holy boldness, when he was commanded not to offer prayers to Jehovah for the space of thirty days. He had been accustomed to pray with his window open towards the holy city of Jerusalem: and he might have avoided observation, if he would only have shut his window. But he felt himself bound to honor God at all events, and not to dissemble before him. He therefore yielded not to intimidation; but submitted rather to be cast into the den of lions, than to violate his duty to his God! [Daniel 6:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 6.10-11).

Who does not admire the fortitude of these men, and commend their pertinacity in such a cause?

The *Apostles*of our Lord all maintained the same firmness, when forbidden to preach in the name of Christ. Their governors would probably have connived at their secret adherence to Christ, if only they would forbear to preach his name, and to diffuse their heresy around them. But these holy men had received a commission to preach the Gospel; and execute it they would, whatever perils they might incur in the discharge of their duty. And they appealed to their governors themselves, whether it was right or possible for them to act otherwise: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, you judge: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard, [Acts 4:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.18-20)."

Thus *we*, in our respective situations, may be called upon, by those who are in authority over us, to neglect or violate a positive duty: but we must not give place by subjection, no, not for an hour; but "must obey God rather than man, [Acts 5:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.29);" and must "resist unto blood, striving against sin, [Hebrews 12:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.4);" and glory in death itself, when sustained in such a cause, [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24).

***~~2. When otherwise the Christian faith would be compromised—~~***

This was the particular point at issue between Paul and the Judaizing teachers whom he opposed. He had formerly circumcised *Timothy*, because he judged that that measure would facilitate his access to his Jewish brethren, and his acceptance with them. But the circumcision of *Titus*was demanded, as necessary to complete and perfect the Gospel-salvation. To accede to it in that view would have been to betray his trust, as the minister of the Gentiles. He knew that the Mosaic law was abrogated: and, so far would the observance of it be from perfecting the work of Christ, that it would invalidate it altogether, [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2). Could he then yield to such a demand as this? No, not for an hour; not for a moment.

On the contrary, if Peter himself were led to dissemble, and to compromise in any respect the Christian faith, Paul would "rebuke him to his face," and that too before the whole Church, verse 11; so determined was he to preserve from every base mixture the faith which he had been commissioned to propagate and uphold.

Now, this holy jealousy must we also cherish, in reference to the Christian faith. We must suffer nothing for a moment to blend itself with the work of Christ, as a ground of our hope before God. The doctrine of human merit must be an utter abomination in our eyes; as robbing Christ of his glory, and as substituting a foundation of sand in the place of the Rock of Ages! There is but one foundation: there can be no other, [Acts 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.12). [1 Corinthians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11); and if any power on earth could require us to build on any other, or to put so much as a single stone to it of our own forming, we must not listen to him for a moment.

The altar was to be built of whole stones, not hewn or wrought by man, [Exodus 20:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 20.25). [Deuteronomy 27:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 27.5-6); and Christ alone must sanctify our offerings, and procure us acceptance with our God.

So firm must we be in our adherence to him, and so simple in our affiance, that if an angel from Heaven were to instill into our minds any doctrine that would interfere with this, we must not hesitate to denounce him as accursed, [Galatians 1:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.6-8); so "earnestly must we contend for the Christian faith, Jude verse 3," and so resolutely must we keep it pure and undefiled.

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

***~~1. What need we have to get our minds duly enlightened—~~***

Suppose, for a moment, Paul had proved as ignorant or unstable as Peter, what evils would have accrued, both to the Church and to the world at large! In fact, the whole Christian faith would have been subverted; and, if God had not in some other way interposed to prevent it, the whole world would have been ruined! Yet how little is this point considered, by many who nevertheless call themselves Christians!

The whole Church of Rome has set aside the Christian faith, by uniting with Christ other objects of faith and other grounds of hope. It is right, therefore, that every enlightened man would protest against it, and depart from it!

But shall we, therefore, justify those who depart from our Church? No; for the Christian faith, as maintained by our Church, is pure and unadulterated. We have shown, that*, in matters of minor and subordinate importance, to indulge an unreasonable stiffness and pertinacity is wrong. We ought to have our judgment well informed, so as to discriminate clearly between the foundation and the superstructure.* In the superstructure there may be somewhat undesirable, and yet no material injury accrue: but an error in the foundation will be fatal to the whole building: and this is the consideration which alone justifies a determined and uncompromising resistance to the established order of our Church.

Paul has drawn this line of distinction, and adopted it as the rule of his own conduct; as indeed did James also, and all the other Apostles: and the more we get our views and habits assimilated to theirs, the better members we shall be of the Church of Christ.

***~~2. What need we have to get our spirit and conduct duly regulated—~~***

That same pertinacity which, under some circumstances, is necessary—under other circumstances is unfitting the true Christian. A yielding spirit is lovely, and perhaps we may say, that a yielding temper should be the rule, and a pertinacious spirit the exception. Perhaps too we may say, that *men will do well to mark the natural bias of their minds, and in their conduct to lean rather to that side which is opposed to it.*A person of a very gentle and yielding spirit should rather lean to the side of firmness in doubtful matters; and a person of a naturally bold and determined spirit should rather cultivate a spirit of compliance: because we are not in danger of erring much in opposition to our natural inclination; and if we do go too far, we have always something within our own bosoms to bring us back. Whereas, if we err on the side of our natural bias, we may be precipitated we know not where, and have nothing to bring us back again to a due equipoise.

But, under any circumstances, we must take care not to plead conscience, where, in fact, it is our own stubborn will that guides us; and, on the other hand, not to plead Christian liberty, where the path of duty is that of self-denying firmness. But "who is sufficient for these things?" If such men as Peter and Barnabas erred, we had need to cry mightily to God to "direct our feet in the right way," and to "uphold us in our goings, that our footsteps slip not."

***~~#2055~~***

***~~REMEMBERING THE POOR~~***

***~~[Galatians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.10)~~***

"All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do."

THE circumstances to which my text refers, were very peculiar. Paul, in conformity with the commission given him by the Lord, had preached his Gospel to the Gentiles, while the other Apostles confined chiefly their ministrations to the Jews; and, knowing that the ceremonial law had never been given to the Gentiles, he neither required of them the observance of it, nor observed it himself.

But now, after fourteen years, he went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas his fellow-laborer; and, being aware that his having neglected and dispensed with the ceremonial law was likely to excite prejudice against him among the Jews, he sought a private interview with the chief Apostles first, in order that he might explain to them the reasons of his conduct, and through them remove all objections from the minds of others. Having succeeded in this, he desired to know whether they, with all their superior advantages, could give him any additional instruction: but they frankly acknowledged, that they could add nothing to him; and all that they had to request of him was, that "he would remember the poor; which he of himself was most forward to do."

Now, from hence I will take occasion to show you,

***~~I. In what respects difference is admissible—~~***

***~~The difference between Paul's ministrations, and those of the other Apostles, was exceeding great—~~***

Paul, as we have said, dispensed with the Jewish laws altogether; while the other Apostles observed them. Now this difference, if Paul had not acted with consummate prudence, would have made an irreconcilable breach between them. Nor do we blame the other Apostles for the jealousy they exercised on this occasion. They had received the law from God; and were told, in that very law, that "every one who would presumptuously neglect it in any respect, would be cut off from the people of the Lord, [Numbers 15:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 15.30)." They did not, as yet, clearly see that the law had been abrogated by the Lord: much less was this known to the Jews in general at Jerusalem.

Still, however, it was so far understood, that all acknowledged, that the difference between Paul and them was, under existing circumstances, admissible. They saw, as Paul himself also did, that a uniform practice at Jerusalem was expedient: and therefore Paul himself, while at Jerusalem, observed the law, as well as others: yes, many years after this, he even joined himself to others who had made a vow to purify themselves as Nazarites, and purified himself together with them, [Acts 21:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 21.23-24). But, among the Gentiles, such observances were regarded as altogether indifferent; and therefore were neither required by him from others, nor retained in his own practice.

***~~Now this is the precise path adopted by the Church of England—~~***

The Church of England has its rites, its forms, its ceremonies; but they are as few, and as simple, as can be imagined. Nor does she require them to be observed by any but her own members. Others, who judge them inexpedient, are left to adopt any other rites which in their minds and consciences they prefer. And in this the Church of England differs altogether from the Church of Rome, which insists on a universal observance of all her forms; and denounces, as heretics, and consigns over to perdition, all who differ from her.

Every society under Heaven has rules established for its own government, and expects its members to conform to them; else there would be nothing, in any society, but disorder and confusion. And the Church of England fitly requires this: and I hesitate not to say, that her members generally, and her ministers in particular, are bound in conscience to adhere to them. But where a diversity of circumstances calls for a diversity of habits, there the rules, by which we were previously bound, are relaxed; and a difference of conduct may readily be admitted. Presbyterianism is the Established Church in Scotland; and the king, George IV as befit a wise, and candid, and tolerant monarch, attended divine worship at their church.

The true medium for our adoption is this; to think for ourselves; but neither to be intolerant nor rigid. The whole college of Apostles at Jerusalem observed the law themselves, but tolerated the non-observance of it in others. Paul, on the other hand, knowing that the law was no longer obligatory on him, observed it, because he would not give needless offense by refusing to conform to the established usages. This was a befitting spirit in both: and if this spirit prevailed among us, as it ought, we would see very little of separation from the Established Church, and no lack of cordiality towards those who judged themselves constrained to differ from her.

Thus we see how far they were agreed to differ. Now let us see,

***~~II. In what respects uniformity is indispensable—~~***

In doctrine they were all agreed. All preached repentance, and remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ. And in this can no difference be admitted; seeing there is no "other foundation whereon any man can build, but Jesus Christ, [1 Corinthians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11);" "nor any other name given, whereby any man can be saved, [Acts 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.12)." Hence, when Peter countenanced an idea that an observance of the law was necessary, and thereby obscured and endangered the purity of the Gospel, Paul reproved him to his face before the whole Church, verse 11. So far from tolerating anything that would supersede the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, Paul denounced a curse even against an angel from Heaven, if one would be found to publish any doctrine that would interfere with this. Uniformity in this respect, therefore, was taken for granted.

But we have in our text one point insisted on by those at Jerusalem, and cordially acceded to on the part of Paul; namely, the universal necessity of exercising love, and especially to the destitute and distressed. This was the only point which they specified, as indispensably necessary to the Christian character: on which, therefore, they required that no difference whatever would exist. Of this, then, I must say,

***~~It is, by the unanimous judgment of all the Apostles, recommended to you—~~***

It is absolutely essential to piety, that it exerts itself in a way of tender sympathy and self-denying energy towards all the members of Christ's mystical body. If we exercise not ourselves in this way, then in vain we profess to have love either towards God or man. We have none towards God: for John says, "Whoever has this world's good, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his affections of compassion from him, how does the love of God dwell in him? [1 John 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.17)." Nor can we have any real love towards our fellow-creature: for James says, "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says unto them, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled; notwithstanding, you give them not those things which are needful to the body; what does it profit? [James 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.15-16)." Nor, in fact, can we have any true religion at all: for James again says: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, [James 1:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.27)."

Indeed, I must add yet further, that we can have no hope before God in the day of judgment: for our Lord will say to those who have neglected these offices of love, "Inasmuch as you did it not to the least of these my brethren, you did it not to me: and therefore depart accursed into everlasting fire! [Matthew 25:40-41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.40-41)."

I do then most solemnly recommend to you, my brethren, that you very especially attend to this duty at all times, and under all circumstances. And, when I strike this chord, saying, "Remember the poor," I do hope that in your hearts there will be found a corresponding string that shall vibrate at the touch; and that every one of you will reply, 'This is the very thing which I myself am glad to do!'

***~~To CONCLUDE—~~***

Unite in your own hearts the blessed dispositions which are here exhibited. Cultivate,

***~~1. A spirit of fairness towards those who differ from you—~~***

There is in many a narrowness of mind, like that of the Apostles, when "they forbade a man to cast out devils, because he followed not with them." *It cannot be expected that all would think alike on matters of minor importance*: nor should you be grieved with any because they move not exactly in your way. There is no need that you should adopt the forms of those who differ from you—you must all judge and act for yourselves: but you would concede to others the liberty which you claim; and "bid Godspeed to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

***~~2. A spirit of benevolence towards those who need your aid—~~***

*If you are richer than others, consider yourselves as the Lord's stewards*; and do not stay until you are called upon, and then "give your alms grudgingly and of necessity;" but "be glad to distribute, and willing to givee;" remembering that blessed saying of our Lord, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

***~~#2056~~***

***~~PETER REPROVED BY PAUL~~***

***~~[Galatians 2:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.14-16)~~***

"When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

THE Apostles, in what they *wrote*, were infallible, being under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, by whom they were inspired; but, in what they *did*, they were frail and fallible, like other men. Of this we have a painful evidence in the passage before us; wherein we see Peter, from whom the Roman pontiff, unfortunately for his own claims, derives his infallibility, fallen into the grossest error, and acting in a way which brought upon him the severest reprehension. The circumstances relating to that event are faithfully recorded for the instruction of the Church in all ages: and, as they comprehend things of fundamental importance to our welfare, we will enter into them somewhat minutely; and state,

***~~I. The conduct reproved—~~***

Peter, during his stay at Antioch, where the Church consisted almost exclusively of converts from among the Gentiles, had disregarded the distinctions of the Jewish law, which he knew to be no longer binding; and had acted according to the customs of the Gentiles among whom he dwelt: but upon the arrival of certain persons from Jerusalem, where the ordinances of the Mosaic law were still continued in the Church, he returned to the observation of the Jewish ritual, and constrained the Gentiles also to follow his example. Now this was highly reprehensible, being,

***~~1. Peter's conduct was most sinful in itself—~~***

Had Peter from a tender regard to the prejudices of his less enlightened brethren conformed to their customs, he would have done well; even as Paul himself did, when, "to the Jews, he became a Jew, and to those who were under the law, as under the law." But, while he did this, he would have taken care to maintain the liberty of the Gentile converts, and to explain to them his reasons for reverting to Jewish ceremonies, that they might not be ensnared by his example.

But instead of acting with this caution and tenderness towards the Gentile converts, Peter withdrew from them, and compelled them to conform to Jewish rites: and this he did too, not from love to the Jews, but from fear of their displeasure. Now this was gross "dissimulation." He knew that the Jewish law was abrogated: he knew that he himself was liberated from the observance of it: he knew that the Gentiles could have no concern with it; and that to enjoin the observance of it on them, was to impose a yoke on them, which neither he himself nor any of his ancestors had been able to sustain. In this therefore he walked not uprightly; but betrayed the trust which had been committed to him, the apostolic trust, of enlightening and saving a ruined world.

***~~2. Peter's conduct was most harmful in its tendency—~~***

This conduct of his tended to sanction the most fatal error, and, in fact, to subvert the whole Gospel. The Jewish converts had an idea, that the Gospel itself could not save them, unless they added to it the observance of the law: and it was found impossible at once to eradicate this prejudice from the Jewish mind, because they could not see how that, which God had so strictly enjoined under one dispensation, could be wholly set aside under another.

Indeed this was the great stumbling-block to the Jews: and if they could have been allowed to blend their law with the Gospel, they would almost universally, and with great readiness, have embraced the Gospel. But of such a *mixture*,the Gospel does not admit. Christ has in his own person fulfilled the law; and, by his obedience unto death, salvation is provided for a ruined world. No other obedience must be blended with it as a joint ground of hope: his righteousness is that which alone can justify us before God; and his must be all the glory.

But Peter by this conduct confirmed the Jews in their error, and established the same error among the Gentiles also: and, if God had not raised up Paul to reprove it in the outset, the whole Gospel might have been superseded, almost as soon as it had been promulgated: and all the effects of Christ's mediation might have been utterly destroyed. We see on that occasion how far the influence of Peter extended: for it drew away all the Jewish converts at Antioch, yes, and even Barnabas himself, from the truth of God: and if the evil had not been stopped in its commencement, who can tell how soon, and how fatally, it might have inundated the whole Church! Truly such conduct as this deserved reproof; and we have reason to bless our God, who endued Paul with wisdom and courage to reprove it.

Suitable to the occasion was,

***~~II. The reproof administered—~~***

Paul, when he saw the misconduct of Peter, did not secretly endeavor to destroy the character of his offending brother, but boldly and openly reproved him before the whole Church. Had the offense been of a private and personal nature only, it would have been right to admonish his brother privately, and not to bring it before the Church, until private admonitions had been used in vain. But when the welfare of the whole Church was at stake, it was necessary that the reproof would be as public as the offense. Hence, when all the Church was assembled, Paul took occasion to reprove,

***~~1. Peter's inconsistency—~~***

Peter had in that very place neglected the Jewish law, as he was fully authorized to do: but, when some Jews came there from Jerusalem, he both altered his own conduct, and compelled all others, even Gentiles themselves, to follow his example. What a grievous inconsistency was this! And how must he have been struck dumb, when Paul so pointedly expostulated with him, "If you, being a Jew, live after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, WHY do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" What excuse could he offer? Alas! none at all.

But grievous as such inconsistency would have been in any one, it was peculiarly sinful in Peter, for it was at this very place, Antioch, that the point had been some time before discussed with great vehemence; and so pertinaciously had the Jewish teachers maintained the universal and perpetual obligation of their own law, that not even the united wisdom and authority of Paul and Barnabas could settle the dispute; so that it became necessary to refer the matter to the decision of the whole college of Apostles at Jerusalem. Accordingly the question was stated; and Paul and Barnabas on the one side, and some of the Judaizing teachers on the other, were deputed to go up to Jerusalem, and there to get it finally settled by such authority as they were all agreed to submit to. Accordingly the deputation was laid before the Apostles the matter in dispute. And who, of all the Apostles, was the man that undertook to determine it? It was this very Peter, who now was undoing all that he had before done. He called the attention of the assembly to the commission which he had received to open the kingdom of Heaven both to Jews and Gentiles; and reminded them, that, on his preaching first to the Gentiles, God had sent down the Holy Spirit on them, precisely as he had before done upon the Jews at the day of Pentecost; thus visibly and unquestionably declaring, that *the Gentiles were to have the Gospel freely administered to them without any observance of the Jewish law*. And on this testimony, supported by that of the prophetic writings, James, who presided on that occasion, determined the point; and, to the great joy of the Gentile converts, confirmed to them the liberty which they were so desirous to retain, [Acts 15:1-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 15.1-19) with [Matthew 16:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.18-19) and [Acts 10:31-44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.31-44).

Yet behold, this very Peter, at this very place, before these very Gentiles, and in the presence of these very messengers, Paul and Barnabas, took upon himself to rescind the decree of the whole college of Apostles, and to insist on the Gentiles observing Jewish rites, which he, as a Jew, had neglected and despised.

Alas! Peter, who would have expected this at your hands? Who would have thought that, after having been distinguished above all men, in that the keys of the kingdom of Heaven were committed unto you from your Savior's hands; and after having seen myriads (lock into it in consequence of your opening of the doors, you would use those very keys to shut the doors again, and thereby, as far as in you lay, exclude from the kingdom all who had already entered, and all others of the human race? Truly, the *reproof*given to you, though so public and severe, was nothing more than what you justly deserve for your grievous inconsistency.

***~~2. Peter's impiety—~~***

It was not the decree of man, but of the Most High God, that he presumed to abrogate. God had graciously sent his only-begotten Son to be the Savior of the world: and had declared that in him would all nations be blessed. By faith in that Savior had Abraham, the father of the faithful, been saved, hundreds of years before the Mosaic law was given: and when that law was given, it was not intended to alter the nature of the salvation, before promised, but only to keep the Jews a separate people, and to prepare them for the Savior whom they were taught to expect. Thus not even to the Jews was the observance of the Mosaic ritual enjoined for the purpose of establishing a righteousness by means of it, but only to direct their attention to that Savior, from whom alone a saving righteousness could be obtained.

Yet behold, Peter undertook to change the very way of salvation itself, and to thrust from his office that adorable Savior, who had already come down from Heaven, and "purchased the Church with his own blood." Had an angel from Heaven been guilty of such presumption, he had, as Paul tells us, deserved to be accursed! [Galatians 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.8-9). What then did not you deserve for your impiety, unhappy Peter, when, in committing it, you knew that you were sinning against God, and subverting the very foundations of a Christian's hope! Methinks, if Satan exulted when he had prevailed on you to deny your Lord and Savior, how much more did he shout for joy when he had seduced you so to betray the trust reposed in you, as to give him a hope, that through you the Savior's kingdom would be utterly and eternally destroyed!

Holy Paul, we thank you for your fidelity to your fallen brother: we thank you for your zeal in your Master's cause, and for your love to the whole Gentile world. But above all, we adore you, O most blessed God, who endued your servant with such wisdom and grace, and enable him by his timely and courageous interposition to break the snare which Satan had laid for the whole race of mankind.

The fact thus recorded is of infinite importance on account of,

***~~III. The instruction to be gathered from it—~~***

Every part of this record teems with instruction. But we must content ourselves with submitting to your attention two points only; namely,

***~~1. That salvation is solely by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, without the works of the law—~~***

This forms the very ground of the reproof which Paul gave to Peter. It was indeed the observance of the ceremonial law that gave occasion for the reproof: but the works of the moral law must of necessity be comprehended in the reproof itself, because it is as a subversion of the Christian faith that Paul chiefly complains of Peter's conduct. The observance of the ceremonial law, as an act of obedience to God, might have been unnecessary and inexpedient: but it could not have been of so fatal a nature as Paul represents it, if obedience in other respects had been meritorious before God: if it did not add to the merit of moral obedience, it could not so detract from it, as to make both that and the death of Christ also of no value: yet Paul speaks of it as "removing the people from the grace of Christ to another Gospel, [Galatians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.6)," yes, "as frustrating the grace of God," and causing "the death of Christ to be in vain, verse 21."

It was in this view, I say, as tending to establish a salvation by works instead of a salvation by faith in Christ, that Paul so strenuously opposed the conduct of Peter. The Apostles "knew that a man could not be justified by the works of the law;" and therefore they renounced all dependence on the works of the law, and looked for justification solely by faith in Christ. This, I say, they did themselves, and this they inculcated on others, as indispensably necessary to their salvation.

Paul elsewhere tells us, that in this way Abraham was saved, [Romans 4:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.1-5); and David was saved, [Romans 4:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.6-8); and all the world must be saved, [Romans 4:9-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.9-14). See also [Romans 9:30-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-33); [Romans 10:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.3-4). But in no part of Scripture is this truth more forcibly declared than in the passage before us.

We may contrive to pervert words, however plain they are: but here are facts which we cannot get over; and which speak volumes.

Let us learn then not to subject ourselves to similar reproof, by blending any human works with the merits of Christ, or using our influence towards the establishment of so fatal an error.

Let us be thankful to God that we have had reformers, who have ventured to withstand the impositions of popery, and have, at the expense of their own lives, emancipated us from the thraldom in which he who calls himself the successor of Peter, and boasts of deriving infallibility from him, had so long held the whole Christian world. If there arise among ourselves any who would yet stand forth as advocates of human merit, let us refer them to the Articles and Homilies of our own Church; that, if they believe not the language of inspiration, they may at least be put to shame before that Church, which has received those documents as the acknowledged symbols of her faith. See the 10th, 11th, and 12th Articles of the Church of England: and take for a pattern the Apostle Paul., verse 5.

***~~2. That no consideration under Heaven should lead us to compromise the truth of God—~~***

Peter doubtless excused himself in his own mind from an idea that his dissimulation was, in existing circumstances, expedient. But expediency, though worthy to be attended to by every true Christian, and in many instances a proper rule for his conduct, has no place, except in things that are otherwise indifferent. It can never warrant us to neglect a known duty, or to commit the smallest sin: for, if it could, Daniel and the three Hebrew Youths might have avoided the snares that were laid for their feet. Nothing can warrant dissimulation.

What we believe to be true, we must uphold and vindicate: and what we believe to be right we must do. Neither a desire to please, nor a fear of displeasing, must cause us to swerve a hair's breadth from the path of duty. We must obey the dictates of our own conscience, and "be faithful unto death, if ever we would receive a crown of life." We cannot indeed expect that we shall never err, seeing that infallibility pertains not to our fallen nature, nor is the lot of any of the sons of men: but if we err, it must not be through fear or through favor, but simply through the weakness incident to man in his present fallen state; and we must be especially careful that the error be not in anything of fundamental importance. We may in our superstructure "build hay, or wood, or stubble," and yet ourselves be ultimately "saved, though it be so as by fire." But if we err in the foundation, we involve ourselves in inevitable and everlasting ruin! [1 Corinthians 3:10-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.10-15).

Let us look to it therefore that we "hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints." Let nothing be allowed for one moment to move us from it. Let us bear in mind, that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." On that let us build, even on that alone, not uniting anything with it, or attempting to strengthen it by any addition of our own. Let us guard against any approximation to this fatal error. Many there are, who, while they would abhor the thought of uniting their own merits with the merits of Christ, will yet, through a false notion of humility, not venture to trust in Christ, unless they can see some measure of worthiness in themselves.

But this is in reality, whatever it may be thought, a repetition of Peter's sin; and will sooner or later meet with a severe reprehension from our God.

We must go to Christ *guilty*, that we may be forgiven.

We must go to Christ *naked*, that we may be clothed.

We must go to Christ *polluted*, that we may be sanctified.

And, when we are most empty in ourselves, then shall we receive most out of his fullness. We must "know nothing but Christ and him crucified," and be contented to be nothing, that he may be "all in all."

***~~#2057~~***

***~~THE TRUE USE OF THE LAW~~***

**[Galatians 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.19)**

"For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God."

The knowledge of the law is indispensably necessary to the knowledge of the Gospel. Even persons who have some views of Christ as a Savior, have, in general, a very inadequate idea of *the extent to which we need a Savior*. This can be known only by considering the requirements of the law, and the measure of guilt which we have contracted by our violation of them. In unfolding to us this subject, the Epistle to the Galatians stands, perhaps, preeminent above all others, not excepting even that to the Romans; and the words which I have just read will furnish me with an occasion to submit it somewhat fully to your view.

In these words is declared:

***~~I. The use of the law, in relation to our hopes from it—~~***

The law, in the first instance, was ordained unto life; and it would have given life to those who perfectly obeyed it. But to *fallen*man it is no longer a covenant of life: it rather destroys all our hopes of acceptance with God by our obedience to it; so that every one who understands it aright must say with the Apostle, "For through the law I died to the law." It produces this effect,

***~~1. By the extent of its precepts—~~***

If these comprehended nothing beyond *the letter*, the generality, of Christians at least, might account themselves, "as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." But it extends to every thought and disposition of *the soul*. It forbids us to entertain even so much as an inordinate desire. It does not say merely, "You shall not *steal*," but, "You shall not *covet*." And our blessed Lord, in his sermon on the mount, declares, that an *angry*feeling is, in God's estimation, as murder; and an impure *look*is, in God's estimation, as adultery.

Now then, when "the commandment is so exceeding broad," who will pretend to have kept it? *Who will build his hopes of salvation on his obedience to it?*It is manifest, that there is not a man upon earth who has not, in numberless instances, violated it; and who therefore must not shut his mouth with conscious shame, and acknowledge himself "guilty before God, [Romans 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.19)."

***~~2. By the inexorableness of its threatenings—~~***

For every violation of its commands it denounces a curse, saying, "Cursed is every one who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them, [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10)." We must not merely *wish*to do them, but actually *do*them; and not only *some*, but *all*; and that not for a *season*only, but *continually*, without interruption from first to last. And in default of this, every one, even every child of Adam, is cursed, even with an everlasting curse!

As for any lighter penalty than this, it knows of none: it admits of no relaxation of it, no mitigation whatever: so that, of all who are under the law, there is not so much as one who is not under the curse and wrath of God! To hope for salvation, therefore, from such a law as this, is quite out of the question. A man in the contemplation of these threatenings can do nothing but lie down in despair, even as Paul himself did: for though, previously to his understanding the true tenor of the law, he supposed himself to be alive, he no sooner saw the extent of its commands, and the awfulness of its sanctions, than "he died," and became sensible that he was nothing but a dead, condemned sinner before God! [Romans 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.9).

***~~3. By its incapacity to afford us any remedy whatever—~~***

When it requires obedience, it does not offer us any *strength*for the performance of it. Nor, when we have violated it in any respect, does it speak one word about repentance. Nor does it make known to us any way whereby pardon may be obtained. The only thing which it says to any man is, "Do this, and live! Offend, and die!"

What *hope*, then, can any man entertain of salvation by such a law as this? It precludes a possibility of hope to any man: so that we must be dead to the law, not merely because the Gospel requires it, but because it is the very intent of the law itself to make us so: "Through the law itself, we must become dead to the law."

We must not, however, imagine that all observance of the law is unnecessary: for the very reverse will appear, while we consider:

***~~II. The use of the law, in relation to our obedience to it—~~***

As a covenant of works, the law doubtless is set aside. But as a rule of life, it is as much in force as ever: and, though delivered from its curse, we are bound as much as ever to obey it:

***~~1. From a sense of gratitude—~~***

Will a man delivered from the law say, "I will continue in sin, that grace may abound?" No! if upright, we shall shudder at the thought. "We have not so learned Christ, if we have been taught of him." On the contrary, the first dictate of our minds will be, "What shall I render to the Lord for all of his benefits towards me?"

The love of Christ, in redeeming us from the law, will have a constraining influence upon us, and stimulate us to live to him who died for us! [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14-15).

No other end than this did the Apostle Paul contemplate. He was not dead to the law, that he might live to the world, but "that he might live unto God, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1);" and to God will every one live, who has a just sense of his mercy in giving us a better covenant, wherein we are called, not to earn eternal life by our works, but to receive it as a gift in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

***~~2. From a sense of duty—~~***

The law is still, and ever must be, the one standard of holiness to which we are to be conformed: and our obligation to obey it can never be reversed. God himself, if I may so speak, cannot dispense with our observance of it. It is of necessity our duty to love God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. Our having a better covenant to found our hopes upon, can never abrogate the essential laws of our nature. If we are in Heaven, earth, or Hell, love to God and man must be our duty: and every person feels it to be his duty to walk according to that unerring and unchanging rule.

Our freedom from the law, so far from being a reason for disregarding this rule, is the strongest reason for our most diligent adherence to it. Paul, by means of an illustration, places this matter in a clear light. He supposes us, in the first instance, married to the law; and afterwards, on the death of our husband, married to a second husband, the Lord Jesus Christ. But are we then content to be barren, as to the fruits of righteousness? No, quite the contrary: "So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code, [Romans 7:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.4-6)." Our obligation to obedience, so far from being relaxed by that change, is strongly and unalterably confirmed.

***~~3. From a sense of self-interest—~~***

Though we can never hope to be *justified*by our obedience to the law, our *reward*in Heaven will be proportioned to our obedience. The day of judgment is appointed for the express purpose of manifesting the righteousness of God in all his dispensations. And, in reference to our obedience, we may safely say, "He who sows plenteously shall reap plenteously; and he who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly." Now, with him who has trembled for his lost estate, and has fled for refuge to Christ as to the hope set before him in the Gospel, there will be an ardor of desire to secure a testimony in his favor. He will not be content to leave anything in doubt. He is well assured, that "not the person who merely *says*to his Savior, *"Lord, Lord!"* shall inherit the kingdom of Heaven, but he who *does*the will of his Father who is in Heaven." Having therefore this prospect, he will of necessity say, "What manner of person ought I to be, in all holy conduct and godliness!"

The subject, as you see, lies deep, yet is it very important.

***~~To all then I would say, respecting the law, endeavor,~~***

***~~1. To understand its nature—~~***

The generality regard is solely as a system of restraints and precepts. But, in truth, it is a covenant of life and death: of life to man in innocence; and of death, if I may so speak, to fallen man. The law is given:

not to justify, but to condemn;

not to save, but to kill;

not to be a ground of hope to any, but "to shut men up to the Gospel," and to Christ as revealed in it, [Galatians 3:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.23), even to him who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes! [Romans 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.4)."

I wish that this matter were better understood. In fact, it is but rarely stated, even by those who, in the main, preach the Gospel: and it is owing to this poor understanding of the law, that men's views of the Gospel are so very inadequate and superficial.

But let me entreat of you to improve the instruction given to you in relation to this matter.

See that the law does nothing but curse you, yes, deservedly, and eternally curse you. See that the New Covenant, that has been made with us in Christ Jesus, is our proper refuge, that we may flee to it, and lay hold upon it, and find acceptance by it: and let this covenant be all your salvation and all your desire.

***~~2. To fulfill its purposes—~~***

It was intended, as we have said, to drive you to Christ. Let it operate in this manner. Look not to it, for a single moment, as affording you any *hope*towards God. Be content to renounce, in point of dependence for salvation, your best actions, as much as your vilest sins! Look to Christ precisely as the wounded Israelites did to the brazen serpent in the wilderness. They did not attempt to combine with God's appointment any prescriptions of their own; but simply turned their eyes to that object, in faith. I beg you to bear this in mind, and to imitate their conduct in this respect. The more dead you are to the law, the more, I pledge myself, you will live unto your God.

***~~3. To honor its requirements—~~***

The world will have a jealousy on this head: they will always suppose, that if you do not seek for justification by the law, you have no motive for obeying it. Show them how greatly they err in this respect. Indeed, they stand in this respect self-condemned: for at the moment that they complain of your *opinions*as licentious, they find fault with your *lives*as too strict and holy. You are regarded by them as "righteous over-much;" and as making the way to Heaven so strait, that none but yourselves can walk in it. This is as it should be; I mean, as far as it respects you; for it is in this way that you are to "make your light shine before men," and to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men by well-doing!"

***~~#2058~~***

***~~THE CHRISTIAN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST~~***

**[Galatians 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.20)**

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

THE Gospel is, for the most part, plain and simple: yet there are some things in it which seem dark and contradictory. In one place Paul brings forward a long list of *paradoxes*, which to a superficial reader would appear absurd in the extreme, [2 Corinthians 6:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.8-10); but in all the sacred records there is not one so difficult of solution as that in our text.

The Apostle is speaking on the subject of justification by faith alone, without the works of the law: and he mentions, that he had publicly reproved Peter for sanctioning by his example the idea that the observation of the law was still necessary. He says, that the law itself sufficiently showed us the necessity of abandoning all hopes from it, and of seeking justification by faith in Christ alone. He then adds, that, in consequence of what Christ had done and allowed to deliver us from the law as a covenant of works, he considered himself as one dead to the law, and as having all his life and all his hopes in Christ alone. This is the plain import of the passage as divested of its paradoxical appearance.

But as the paradox, when explained, will be very instructive, we shall enter into it fuller consideration of it; and show,

***~~I. In what respect the Christian is dead—~~***

To understand in what sense the Apostle was "crucified with Christ," we must particularly attend to the *great ends*for which Christ was crucified.

*Christ was crucified, in the first place, in order to satisfy all the demands of the law*. The law required perfect obedience, and denounced a curse against every transgression of its precepts, [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10). Man, therefore, having transgressed the law, was utterly and eternally ruined. But *Christ having undertaken to restore him to the Divine favor, endured the curse which we had merited, and obeyed the precepts which we had violated*: and thus rendered our salvation perfectly compatible with the honor of the Divine law; inasmuch as what we have failed to do or suffer in our own persons, we have done and suffered in our Surety.

But Christ had a further end in submitting to crucifixion, namely, to destroy sin, and, by expiating its guilt, forever to annul its power. This is frequently declared in Scripture, not only as the immediate end of his death, [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14). [2 Corinthians 5:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.15), but as the end of the whole dispensation which he has introduced, [Romans 14:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.9). [Titus 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.12-13).

Now when Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ," we must understand, that there was something in his experience analogous to the crucifixion of Christ; or, in other words, that as Christ died a violent death, to cancel the obligations of the law as a covenant, and to destroy sin—so the Apostle, by a holy violence upon himself, died to the law as a covenant, and to sin as the most hateful of all evils.

***~~1. The believer then, according to this view of the subject, is dead to the LAW—~~***

Once all his hopes were founded on *his obedience*to the moral law; and he felt in his conscience a dread of God's wrath on account of his transgressions of its precepts. But now he abandons all his self-righteous hopes, and dismisses all his slavish fears, because he finds a better, yes, an assured ground of hope in Christ's obedience unto death.

He argues thus: 'Does the law curse me for my manifold transgressions? Christ has endured its curse for me, and therefore I have no reason to fear it! [Galatians 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.13). "There is no condemnation to me, if only I am in Christ Jesus, [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1)."

On the other hand, does the law require perfect unsinning obedience in order to my justification before God? Christ has paid it that obedience, and "brought in thereby an everlasting righteousness, [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24)," "which is unto all, and upon all those who believe, [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22)." *I renounce therefore all hope in my own obedience, and found all my hopes of salvation on the obedience of my blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!* [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9). [Romans 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.19). [2 Corinthians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.21).

To this state he is brought, partly by the law itself, which cuts him off from all possible hope from his own obedience to it, verse 19 with [Galatians 3:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.24), and partly by the death of Christ, which has totally cancelled the law as a covenant, for all those who believe in him. So that, as a woman is released from all obligation to her husband when he is dead, and may, if she please, unite herself to another; so the believer ceases to have any connection with the law of God, now that it is cancelled by Christ, [Romans 7:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.1-4); the law is dead to him; or, to use the language of our text, he is crucified to it.

***~~2. The believer then, is also dead to SIN—~~***

The believer, previous to his conversion, had no wish beyond the things of time and sense. He "walked according to the course of this world," "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." He possibly might be pure from gross acts of sin; but all his actions, of whatever kind they were, sprang from *self*, and terminated in *self*. Self-seeking and self-pleasing, constituted the sum total of his life. He possessed no higher principle than *self*; the stream therefore could rise no higher than the fountain-head.

But now he feels the influence of nobler principles, "As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. He has spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do--living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry, [1 Peter 4:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.2-3)." "Henceforth he desires to have, not only every action, but "every *thought*, brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ! [2 Corinthians 10:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.5)." He now "crucifies the flesh with its affections and lusts, [Galatians 5:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.24)." This is spoken of all true Christians without exception. They form what the Scriptures call "the old man;" and this "old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth he would not serve sin, [Romans 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.6)."

Even the things that are *innocent*, are yet among the number of those things to which the believer is crucified. He enjoys them indeed, for "God has given him all things richly to enjoy; but he will not be in *bondage*to them; he will not *serve*them; he will not regard them as constituting his happiness, nor as essential to his happiness. If he possesses (as he may very innocently do) the pleasures, the riches, or the honors of the world—he does not set his affections upon them. He regards them rather with a holy jealousy, lest they would ensnare him, and alienate his heart from God. He sits loose to them, and is willing to part with them at any moment, and in any manner, that his Lord shall call for them.

In short, he regards the world, and everything in it, as a crucified object, which once indeed was dear to him, but which he is now willing, if need be, to have buried out of his sight.

He fulfills all his duties in the world, as much, or more than ever: but since he has learned how to appreciate the cross of Christ, "the world has become crucified unto him, and he unto the world! [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14)."

Whatever is positively sinful in it, however dear it once was to him—is now renounced and mortified, [Mark 9:43-48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 9.43-48); and even the most innocent things in it have comparatively lost their value and relish. His delight in heavenly things has rendered inferior things insipid; and his joy in God has eclipsed all sublunary joy.

Nevertheless, the Christian lives: and to show the truth of the paradox, we proceed to state,

***~~II. In what manner he lives—~~***

That he has the same physical life as the unregenerate, is obvious enough: but he has also a spiritual life different from theirs; and his whole manner of life is different from theirs: he lives a new life in, and through, Christ. He lives,

***~~1. By the influences of Christ's Spirit—~~***

He once was dead in trespasses and sins:" but that same voice which bade Lazarus to come forth out of the grave, has bidden him to live. The Lord Jesus has infused into his soul a new and living principle; and has "given him that living water, which is in his soul a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." "Christ himself lives in him," and "is his very life, [Colossians 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.4)."

This accounts for his being able to do things which no other man can. In himself, he is as weak as other men; he cannot perform a good *act*, [John 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.5), or speak a good *word*, [Matthew 12:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.34), or think a good *thought*, [2 Corinthians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.5); but by the almighty operation of Christ within him, he can do all things, [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13). Being dead with Christ (as has been before shown), he is risen and lives with him; according as it is written, "Christ being raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over him: for in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he lives, he lives unto God. Likewise reckon yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord! [Romans 6:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.9-11)."

***~~2. In dependence on Christ's sin-atoning sacrifice—~~***

The atonement of Christ is the one ground of all the Christian's hopes. If he looks for reconciliation with God, it is through the blood of the Redeemer's cross. If he looks for peace with God, for strength, for any blessing whatever, he has no other plea than this: "My Lord and Savior has bought it for me with his blood!" He views everything treasured up for him in Christ, [Colossians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.19); and to him he goes, in order to "receive out of his fullness" whatever his necessities require, [John 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.16).

His whole life is "a life of faith in the Son of God." He never goes to God but in, and through, Christ. He never expects any blessing to flow down upon him, but for the sake of Christ, and through him, as the immediate channel of conveyance. The very life which he receives from Christ, he considers as purchased for him by Christ's obedience unto death: and on that very ground he presumes to "make Christ his wisdom, his righteousness, his sanctification, and his complete redemption!"

***~~3. Under a sense of Christ's love—~~***

The Christian is not contented with acknowledging the love of Christ to mankind in general; he views it especially as it respects himself; and delights in contemplating his own personal obligations to him. *O how wonderful does it appear, that Christ would ever love such an undeserving one as him, and give himself for him! That for such a wretch as him, he would submit to all the shame and agonies of crucifixion!* What incomprehensible breadths and lengths and depths and heights does he behold in this stupendous mystery!

And what unsearchable riches does he seem to possess in this blessed assurance! It is this that animates him! It is this that "constrains him." *Had he a thousand lives, he would dedicate them all to his service, and lay them down for his honor.* And though he cannot perhaps at all times say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," yet the most distant hope of such a mercy fills his soul with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who object to the Gospel—~~***

Many there are, who, when we speak of being dead to the law, imagine that we are enemies to good works, and that the Gospel which we preach tends to licentiousness. It is true, we do say, and we speak only what the Scriptures speak, that though the law is still in force as a rule of duty, we are free from it as a covenant of works to earn salvation; and that in consequence of being free from it, the believer has neither hopes nor fears arising from it.

But are we therefore regardless of the interests of morality? Does not the Apostle himself say, that "he, through the law, was dead to the law?" Yet what does he conclude from this? That he might live as he pleased? No! he was, "dead to the law, *that he might live unto God*." And then he repeats the same important truth; "I am crucified with Christ!" and again guards it against any similar misrepresentation, by showing that the believer has a *strength*for obedience which no other person possesses, and *motives*for obedience which no other person feels. Let these two things be considered, and it will appear that the Gospel, so far from militating against good works, is the only doctrine that secures the performance of them.

If this argument is not satisfactory, we ask the objector: What are those good works in which he excels the believer? Yes, we ask whether those who renounce all dependence on their good works for salvation, are not the very people who are universally censured on account of the strictness and holiness of their lives? Away then with your objections; and know that if the Gospel is excellent as a system, it is yet more excellent as advancing the interests of morality.

***~~2. Those who profess the Gospel—~~***

*Saving religion does not consists in the adoption of any creed, but in a radical change both of heart and life.*The words before us sufficiently show, that it is a matter of *experience*, and not of mere talk and profession. Hear the Apostle: "I am crucified with Christ;" "I live;" "Christ lives in me;" "I live by faith;" "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." All this has its seat, not in the head, but in the *heart*. Know therefore that, in order to ascertain the real state of your souls, you must inquire, not what *principles*you have imbibed, but how they operate; and whether in these respects you resemble this holy Apostle?

Beloved, we entreat and charge you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, not to deceive yourselves with respect to this matter. To form a just estimate of your state, you must examine whether you are really dead to the law, and dead to sin; and whether, by the almighty operation of the Spirit of God within you, you are enabled to live to the glory of our blessed Lord and Savior? These are the true tests of vital religion; and, according as your experience accords with them or not, your state will ultimately be determined at the final judgment.

***~~3. Those who obey the Gospel—~~***

It appears to others, and may sometimes even to ourselves, a painful thing to experience a continual crucifixion. I confess, that the right eye being plucked out, and the right hand cut off, does imply a considerable degree of pain and self-denial. But we would ask, whether, in those seasons when the indwelling of Christ is plainly felt, and his unspeakable love in giving himself for you is distinctly seen—the exercise of self-denial is not both easy and pleasant? We ask, whether the joy arising from these discoveries do not far more than counter-balance any joy which you may be supposed to lose by abstaining from the gratifications of the flesh?

We are sure that no difference of opinion can exist respecting these things, among those whose experience qualifies them to form a just judgment about them. We therefore hesitate not to say, "Be more and more crucified to the world and to sin!" "Live more and more by faith in the Son of God," and let a sense of your personal obligations to him lead you to a more entire devotedness of yourselves to his service, until you are taken to serve him without ceasing in the world above!

***~~#2059~~***

***~~DEPARTING FROM THE SIMPLE GOSPEL~~***

**[Galatians 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.1)**

"You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified."

THE method of a sinner's *justification*is plainly revealed in the Gospel: nor is any doctrine more worthy of attention. An error with respect to many other points may consist with our salvation, but to err in this, is to destroy all hope of acceptance with God. Hence Paul devotes even an angel from Heaven to a curse, if it could be supposed that one would be found who would introduce a gospel different from that which he himself had preached.

Unhappily, however, the Galatians had been misled. The Apostle writes this epistle in order to reclaim them: he tells them that he had reproved even Peter himself, and that, too, before the whole Church at Antioch, for dissembling the truth, [Galatians 2:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.13-14). He then proceeds to reprove their declension also.

We shall consider,

***~~I. Wherein their disobedience to the truth consisted—~~***

***~~The Galatians had formerly "received the love of the truth"—~~***

They had entertained the highest respect for him who first evangelized them, [Galatians 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.14); they had been knit to him with the most cordial affection, [Galatians 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.15); they had found much blessedness by means of the Gospel, [Galatians 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.15); they had been enabled to adorn their profession, by a suitable life and conduct, [Galatians 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.7); they had even endured many sufferings for their attachment to the truth, [Galatians 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.4).

***~~But they had lately imbibed the doctrines of some Judaizing teachers—~~***

Many of the Jewish converts were still zealous for the law of Moses; hence they labored to make proselytes wherever they came. Many of the Galatian churches were induced to embrace their doctrines; hence, though Gentiles originally, they put themselves under the yoke of the Jewish law, [Galatians 4:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.8-10).

***~~Thus they, in fact, "disobeyed and renounced the truth" itself—~~***

They had been taught to expect justification by faith in Christ alone, [Galatians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.16), but now they superadded an obedience to the law as a joint ground of hope: by this they declared that faith in Christ was insufficient for their justification. They did not indeed intend by this to reject Christ entirely; but the Apostle tells them repeatedly that God considered their conduct as equivalent to an utter rejection of the Gospel, [Galatians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.21); [Galatians 5:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2-4); and hence he warns them that they were turned altogether to "another Gospel, [Galatians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.6)."

Their defection therefore involved them in the deepest guilt; as will appear more fully, if we consider,

***~~II. The particular aggravation with which it was attended—~~***

***~~Paul himself had preached among them in a most lively and affecting manner—~~***

Wherever he went, his constant subject was Christ crucified, [1 Corinthians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.2); he fully opened to his hearers the nature and ends of Christ's death: he always declared the efficacy of it as an atonement for sin: he earnestly exhorted all to trust in it for their acceptance with God: he had dwelt so much, and in so affecting a manner, on this subject, that the crucifixion of Christ might be said to have been depicted, or even exhibited before their eyes.

***~~This was a great aggravation of their guilt in departing from the faith—~~***

Had they heard less of Christ, they would have been less culpable; had they heard of him in a less affecting manner, they would have not been without a plea; had they seen no particular effects flowing from the Apostle's preaching, they might have had some excuse; had the subserviency of the law to the Gospel never been opened to them, their defection from the truth might have been accounted for. But to renounce the truth, after it had been set forth with such energy, and attended with such effects, was extreme folly and wickedness: their conduct was no less than a crucifying of Christ afresh! [Hebrews 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.6).

What censure their disobedience merited we may see in,

***~~III. The reproof which the Apostle gave them on account of it—~~***

***~~Paul ascribes their declension to the subtlety of their false teachers—~~***

*Sin has an astonishingly fascinating power! Error, whether in faith or practice, soon insinuates itself into our hearts.* Whenever people are drawn from the truth, they are first beguiled by the specious appearances of false principles. Apostates therefore may be justly considered as deluded creatures; and if at any time they are recovered, they wonder at themselves how they ever could have been so "bewitched," so blinded, so befooled!

Nevertheless Paul deservedly censures their compliance with them.

He was far from indulging a contemptuous or vindictive spirit—yet he judged it his duty to "rebuke them sharply." He therefore spoke of their conduct with holy indignation: he expressed his wonder that they could be so soon turned from the truth [Galatians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.6); he seems at a loss to represent their folly in terms sufficiently humiliating. Yet his question evidently imports also a mixture of pity: he felt deeply in his soul for their spiritual welfare, [Galatians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.19); he therefore expostulated with them in order to reclaim them.

***~~Inferences—~~***

***~~1. How great is the evil and danger of self-righteousness!~~***

The Galatians intended to honor God's own institutions; but by laying an undue stress upon their works, they endangered their own salvation. How careful then should we be not to trust in any righteousness of our own!

Let us remember in what light our own righteousness would be viewed, [Isaiah 64:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.6).

Let us bear in mind our Savior's direction, [Luke 17:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 17.10).

Let us cultivate the disposition of the great Apostle, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9).

***~~2. What need have even the most eminent Christians to watch against apostasy!~~***

The attainments of the Galatians seemed to be very eminent: yet they were soon seduced from the simplicity of the Gospel. Who then are we, that we would be over confident? Our dearest friends may well regard us as Paul did the Christians at Corinth, [2 Corinthians 11:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.3). Let us attend then to the advice which he gives us, [1 Corinthians 10:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.12). Nor let us despise that beneficial admonition of Peter, [2 Peter 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.17).

***~~3. What cause of thankfulness have those who are kept steadfast in the truth!~~***

Those who know their own instability will wonder that they are kept at all. Surely such will adopt the grateful acknowledgment of David, [Psalm 26:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 26.12), and these are the persons in whom that declaration shall be verified, [1 Peter 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.5).

We conclude with that suitable doxology, "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy--to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." [Jude 1:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jude 1.24-25)

***~~#2060~~***

***~~THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO ABRAHAM~~***

***~~[Galatians 3:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.8-9)~~***

"The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith."

THE point which Paul above all things labors to establish, especially in his Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, is the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The *Jews*universally were adverse to this doctrine, because it derogated, as they thought, from the honor of their law. And the *Gentiles*also were hostile to it, because it cut off from them all occasion of boasting in themselves. But the more the unbelieving world set themselves against it, the more this holy Apostle strove to place it beyond all contradiction or doubt. And well he might, since *on the reception or rejection of 'justification by faith alone,' depends the everlasting salvation of every man*. Let it not therefore be deemed superfluous, if on a point of such infinite importance we follow him, and bring it before you in a variety of views.

If we have already received it, we still need to be confirmed in it from time to time, lest by any means we be drawn aside from it. There is something "bewitching" in the idea of meriting salvation at the hands of God; and we are but too apt to listen to any statement which shall so flatter the pride of our hearts.

Many converts belonging to the Churches of Galatia, after having been for a time established in the truth, were at last turned aside from it; and drew from the Apostle this spirited remonstrance; "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?" He appeals to them, that the miracles which he had wrought among them, as also the miraculous powers which they had received through his instrumentality, were all in confirmation of this doctrine; by which, in fact, Abraham himself had been saved; and by which alone they could ever be partakers of Abraham's felicity. This, he tells them, was the unvaried testimony of Scripture; and it had been declared two thousand years before to Abraham, in those most memorable words, "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

In discoursing on these words, we will show,

***~~I. What was that Gospel which the Scripture preached to Abraham—~~***

***~~Abraham was informed, that "in his seed (Christ) all the nations of the earth would be blessed"—~~***

This was repeatedly declared to him, and at an interval of nearly fifty years, [Genesis 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 12.3); [Genesis 18:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 18.18); [Genesis 22:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 22.18). The full import of this promise was not clearly revealed in the declaration itself; but it was doubtless made known to him by the Spirit of God, and was *typically represented to him in the sacrifice of his son Isaac*. By the command of God, he took his own son, the child of promise, in order to offer him up as a burnt-offering to the Lord. On this his son he laid the wood which was to reduce him to ashes; he led him to Mount Moriah (the very place where the Promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, was afterwards offered!); he bound him, and, in purpose and intention, offered him up a sacrifice to God. And then, having actually offered up the ram which God had substituted in the place of Isaac, he received his son as from the dead Hebrews, 11:17-19; and thus was taught, that, by the death and resurrection of the Promised Seed, the blessings of salvation were to be brought to a ruined world. Such was the view given him of this great mystery; and by his faith in the Promised Seed so "dying for our offenses, and so raised again for our justification," he was justified, as all his believing posterity shall also be, [Romans 4:22-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.22-25).

Here it is particularly to be remembered, that the law bore no part in his justification; for it was not given until four hundred and thirty years after the promise of a Savior had been made to him, and *by faith in that promised Savior he had been justified*. It must be remembered also, that circumcision bore no part in his justification; for no less than twenty-four years elapsed between the period of his being justified by faith, and the appointment of that rite. Compare [Genesis 12:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 12.3-4) with [Genesis 17:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 17.1); [Genesis 17:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 17.7); [Genesis 17:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 17.10); [Genesis 17:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 17.23-24).

It is of the utmost importance that these things be borne in mind: for, if we once admit the idea of his being either in whole or in part justified by anything but faith, we shall subvert the Gospel altogether; seeing that *there is but one method of a sinner's justification before God for him and for us!*See [Romans 4:9-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.9-14).

True it is, that before men he was justified by his obedience, as James has truly said, [James 2:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.21-23); for it was by the fruits which his faith produced, that it was seen to be a living, and not a dead, faith. But in the sight of God he had nothing of his own whereon to place the least dependence: it was by faith only, without any work whatever of his own, that he was counted righteous before God. If it had not been so, his salvation had been, not a gift of grace, but a reward of debt, to which he was entitled, and in which he would to all eternity have had a ground of glorying before God, [Romans 4:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.1-5).

***~~In this promise "the Gospel was preached to him"—~~***

This way of salvation is emphatically and exclusively called "the Gospel." It was glad tidings to Abraham, when taken out of an idolatrous state, and ignorant of any means of acceptance with God, to be informed, that God had provided a Savior for him; and that, through a person who would descend from his loins, a righteousness would be brought in, fully adequate to the necessities of the whole world, and certainly effectual for all who would believe in him. To that event he looked forward; and, beholding it by faith, he greatly rejoiced in it, [John 8:56](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.56).

This is glad tidings to us also: for where would we find a Savior, if this promised Seed had not been given? Or what hope would we have had of ultimate salvation, if we had been required to earn it in any measure by our own works? Were it required of us to produce only one single work on which to rest our claim of Heaven, where would we find one? But, blessed be God, we are taught to rely on the Promised Seed, and on him alone: and it is this very circumstance which warrants us to expect eternal happiness; since, unworthy as we are, the free promise of God, duly apprehended by faith, can never fail of its accomplishment! [Romans 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.16).

Such was the Gospel which the Scripture preached to Abraham: nor does it differ at all from,

***~~II. What it preaches unto us also—~~***

It declares to us,

***~~1. That salvation by faith alone, is the way which God has ordained for us also—~~***

"The Scripture," that is, the Holy Spirit who spoke by it, "foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached this Gospel to Abraham." There was not to be one way of salvation for him, and another for us; but one and the same for both. And as God foresaw that men would be ready to catch hold of anything that might afford in ever so slight a degree a ground of glorying, he took care to cut off all occasion for glorying, by justifying Abraham solely through faith, while yet he remained in an uncircumcised state: thus showing to the uncircumcised of all nations, that, in relation to the great matter of their justification before God, they were on a perfect equality with the circumcised; and that, as faith alone was available for Abraham's salvation, so it would avail for the salvation of all who truly relied upon the Promised Seed! [Romans 3:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.30).

True it is, we are to "walk in the steps of our father Abraham," and not to imagine that we can be saved by a dead inoperative faith, [Romans 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.12) with [James 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.20); [James 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.24); [James 2:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.26); but still it is by faith alone that we become children of Abraham, and by faith alone that we become partakers of his blessings [Galatians 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.7); [Galatians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.9). If we seek these benefits in any other way, "we frustrate the grace of God, and cause the death of Christ to be in vain, [Galatians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.21)." In the very same promise then that the Gospel was preached to Abraham, it is preached to us: to every one of us it is said, "In the Promised Seed shall you be blessed." And with this agrees the testimony of Paul, who, specifying distinctly all the great blessings which the Gospel offers to us, tells us, about nine times in eleven, verses, that it is all "in Christ," "in Christ," "in Christ," [Ephesians 1:3-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.3-13)."

***~~2. That all who embrace salvation by faith alone, shall be partakers of its blessings—~~***

There is no exception whatever; no difference between Jews and Gentiles: if only we "be of faith, we are from that moment blessed with all the blessings which Abraham himself enjoyed."

Was he "justified?" So shall we be.

Was he made "the friend of God?" So shall we be.

Was God to him "a shield, an exceeding great reward?" Such will he be to us also.

Is Abraham now "in the kingdom of his God? We also shall, with him and Isaac and Jacob, sit down there," yes, and shall be "in Abraham's bosom" to all eternity!

All this, and infinitely more than we can either utter or conceive, shall we receive, if we truly believe in Christ: for "all things are ours, if we are Christ's, [1 Corinthians 3:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.22-23)."

***~~From hence we may see,~~***

***~~1. The antiquity of the Gospel—~~***

In every age the doctrine of justification by faith alone is stigmatized as a new doctrine: it is very generally represented as such among ourselves: and so it was by the Papists at the time of the Reformation: in the apostolic age it was regarded in the same light. When "Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection, it was asked, what this new doctrine meant, [Acts 17:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 17.18-19)." But it is as old as Abraham, to whom it was distinctly preached: yes, it must be traced to the time of Adam; for to him also was it preached, when he was told that "the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head!"

That persons who have the Scriptures in their hands would speak of this as a new doctrine, is perfectly surprising; since it is written in every page of the sacred volume as with a sun-beam: but that a member of the Established Church would be so ignorant, is yet more astonishing; since it is that essential and fundamental doctrine on which the very edifice of our Church is built. Let not any therefore reject this doctrine; or at least let them not call themselves Christians, if they do. The way of *justification by faith alone*is "the good old way," in which all the saints of God have gone from the foundation of the world; and it is the only way in which any man can "find rest unto his soul."

***~~2. The excellency of the Gospel—~~***

The idea of being saved by faith alone, is so simple, that the world can see no excellency in it: but this very *simplicity*constitutes a very distinguished part of its excellency. Supposing that salvation had been by works, or by faith and works united, who would ever have been able to ascertain what measure of good works would suffice for us, or what measure of imperfection would consist with their ultimate acceptance? Truly, under such uncertainty, no human being could enjoy one hour's peace in the prospect of his great account. But when we are told that salvation is by faith alone, then, whatever our works may have been in times past, we have peace in our souls the very instant we believe; because we know that Christ is "able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him!" We know that "by faith we are Abraham's children;" and that "all the blessings of Abraham are ours," and shall be ours forever, verse 7-9.

But the excellency of the Gospel appears no less in the *fruits*that it produces. Abraham was justified the first moment he believed. And did he on that account become indifferent to good works? See his conduct: he immediately went forth from his family and country at the command of God, though he knew not where he was to go. In every place where he went, he built an altar to his God: and, even when called to sacrifice with his own hands his beloved Isaac with his own hands, he hesitated not, but for three successive days prosecuted his journey to the place where the offering was to be made, and executed without reluctance the Divine command.

So shall *we*do, if we truly believe in Christ. There will be no reserves in our hearts; nothing which we will not do, nothing which we will not sacrifice, nothing which we will not suffer—if only our God may be glorified thereby. Let the world produce a list of worthies like those recorded in the Epistle to the Hebrews, or like the holy Apostles, and show that they were actuated by a different principle from that of faith in Christ, and then we will confess that the Gospel is not so excellent as it is said to be: but until that is done, we must affirm, that in point of practical efficacy it has no rival; and that in comparison with it, the whole world is only as dung and dross.

***~~#2061~~***

***~~THE SPIRITUALITY AND SANCTIONS OF THE LAW~~***

***~~[Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10)~~***

"All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

THE reason that Christianity is so little understood, is, that men are not aware of the occasion which there is for such a dispensation as the Gospel contains. They know not the state in which they are by *nature*; and therefore they cannot comprehend the provision made for their recovery from it by *grace*. If the generality of Christians were asked what God requires of them in his law, or what is now the proper use of the law, they would be able to give, at best, a very imperfect, and probably a very erroneous, account of these things. But it is of the utmost importance that we would understand the law: for, until we do, we can never understand the Gospel.

Now, in the words which we have read, we see,

***~~I. The requirements of God's law—~~***

The law is contained in the Ten Commandments; and the *summary*given of it by our Lord is, that we must love God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves, [Matthew 22:37-40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.37-40).

Now consider what is comprehended in these two commandments: and remember, the obedience to be paid to them must be: *perfect*("in all things"); *personal*(by "every one of us"); and *perpetual*(we must "continue in" it, from the first to the last hour of our life).

It is not sufficient that we wish to do them: we must "do them;" do them "all;" "every one of us;" and "continue" so to do, even to the end. This was written under the law, [Deuteronomy 27:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 27.26); and it is confirmed to us by the Apostle's citation of it under the Gospel.

Now we must remember, that on our perfect obedience to it all its promises are suspended; and if, in any one instance, even in thought or desire, we fall short of it—we must then be considered as violators of the law. This is a point not sufficiently considered. Paul himself did not clearly understand it, previous to his conversion. He interpreted the law only in its literal sense; and could not conceive that such a one as he had ever violated its commands. But when he saw that it forbade an inordinate desire as much as an overt act, he then saw that he was condemned by it, and had forfeited all hope of acceptance by his obedience to it, [Romans 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.7); [Romans 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.9).

But, to understand the law aright, we must know,

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

It denounces a curse on every, and the least, violation of its commands: "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

What this curse is, we may know from other passages of Holy Writ. It was said to Adam, in reference to the forbidden fruit, "In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die." Now, from the moment of his transgression he became mortal as to his *body*: (for "death entered by sin;" and never would have entered, if man had not sinned.) His *soul*, also, became spiritually dead to God; and he was doomed to "the second death," in "the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." To this the Apostle Paul bears testimony, when he says, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord! [Romans 6:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.23)."

Perhaps it may assist us more, if we consider what the penalty of transgression was to the fallen angels: they were cast out of Heaven from the presence of their God; and were consigned to "a lake of fire prepared on purpose for them," there to endure for ever the vengeance of their offended God! Thus man, on his fall, lost the favor and presence of God, and was subjected to his heavy and everlasting displeasure. Being a partaker with the angels in their *offense*, he became a partaker with them in their *punishment*.

Now let every one who has transgressed the law in ever so small a degree, though it may have been only once, consider what the law says to him: it says, "Cursed is every one who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them."

This, I say, is,

***~~III. The tremendous inference that must be drawn in relation to every one of us—~~***

We all are under the law. The law was given to man in Paradise. It was written in his heart, when he came out of his Creator's hands. We all, therefore, are under it; and, consequently, "every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God! [Romans 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.19)."

If this inference be not true, I would ask, which of the premises is erroneous?

Does the law require less than I have stated? If anyone think so, let him tell me where God has dispensed with any one of its commandments? Where has he authorized us to alienate from him any measure of that love which he had required in his law? Or where has he lowered the standard of our love to man; and permitted us to act otherwise towards him, than we, in a change of circumstances, would think it right that he would act towards us?

If the requirements of the law are not reduced, are its sanctions altered? Has God any where revoked them? Has he not, on the contrary, expressly said, "The soul that sins, it shall die! [Ezekiel 18:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 18.20)."

If its *requirements*are not altered, nor its *sanctions*revoked, can you say you are not under it? The whole race of mankind are under it, and must continue under it, until they lay hold on that better covenant which God has given us in his Gospel.

There is, then, no possibility of evading the inference that is here drawn; namely, that as many as are under the law, and consequently the whole race of mankind, are under the curse! O! remember this,

You who are old—it curses you!

You who are young—it curses you!

You who are moral—it curses you!

There is not a child of man to whom it does not say, "You are cursed!"

***~~Who, then, must not see,~~***

***~~1. The folly of seeking to be justified by the works of the law!~~***

If you had sinned but once, and then only in thought, you would be cursed, as a violator of God's law; and, consequently, you would be without hope of obtaining salvation by it. For, if you would be saved by it, you must first atone for your offenses against it; and then obey it perfectly in the future. But which of these can you do? *If you were to shed rivers of tears, they could never wash away one sin. The whole race of mankind would never be able to atone for one sin.*

And suppose your past offenses forgiven; which of you, for a single day or hour, could fulfill the law perfectly in the future? Know that this would be a hopeless attempt; and that, consequently, "by the works of the law can no flesh living be justified, [Romans 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.20)." Paul himself renounced all hope of acceptance with God by any righteousness of his own, and sought it solely by faith in Christ, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9); and so must you, if ever you would obtain mercy at the hands of God, [Romans 9:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.31-32); [Romans 10:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.3-4).

***~~2. The happiness of those who have obtained a saving interest in Christ!~~***

They are dead to the law; and the law is dead to them, [Romans 7:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.1-4); [Romans 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.19). To them is no condemnation, [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1). On the contrary, they have, and ever shall possess, eternal life [John 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.16); [John 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.18). In all the book of God there cannot be found one curse denounced against them! To them belong nothing but blessings, even all the blessings of *grace*and *glory*. Say, beloved, Are not these happy? Seek then, this happiness. Flee to Christ: believe in Christ: and then you "shall never perish, but shall have eternal life."

***~~3. The reasonableness of a life devoted to Christ!~~***

Contemplate the benefits you receive by faith in Christ; and say, whether any return that you can make can ever be too great? To tell you, that, if you believe in Christ, you must obey him, is, I had almost said, to degrade human nature below the beasts. Does "the ox know its owner, and the donkey his master's manger;" and shall a believer not know, and love, and serve, his heavenly Benefactor? Shall the Lord Jesus Christ have "bought you with his blood, and you not desire to glorify him with your bodies and your spirits, which are his?"

O! brethren, do not oblige me to say that you must obey him; but "be forward of yourselves," and give yourselves wholly to him; and let the inquiry of your soul, every day and hour, be, "What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits conferred upon me?"

***~~#2062~~***

***~~REDEMPTION BY CHRIST~~***

***~~[Galatians 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.13)~~***

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

THE law, which subjects all mankind to a curse, is the *moral*law; that is principally intended in the passage before us. It is that law, from the curse of which Abraham and the Gentiles were redeemed, verse 10; and consequently, though the ceremonial law is not entirely excluded, the text must be understood principally in reference to the moral law; it remains unalterable in its demands of obedience or punishment. But in the Gospel a remedy is provided for transgressors: this remedy is proposed to us in the text.

***~~I. I will clear up some points relative to redemption—~~***

The most important truths of Christianity are often denied; but we must be established in them, if we would receive the blessings of redemption. We should know clearly,

***~~1. What is that "curse" from which we are redeemed—~~***

Many suppose it to be annihilation, or at most a temporary punishment; but the Scriptures represent it in a far different light. We cannot precisely declare the exact quality of it; it consists, however, partly in banishment from God, [2 Thessalonians 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.9), and partly in inconceivable anguish both of soul and body, [Luke 16:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 16.23-24). Its duration certainly will be eternal; it will continue coexistent with the happiness of the righteous [Matthew 25:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.46). Never shall the *curse*cease, nor shall *sinners*cease to endure it. Our Lord repeats this no less than five times in six, verses, [Mark 9:43-48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 9.43-48).

***~~2. Who is it that redeems us from it—~~***

It is thought by many that we must deliver ourselves by repentance, etc. But it is impossible for fallen man to deliver his own soul. He cannot redeem himself by *doing*, because he cannot perfectly obey the law in the future; and if he could, his obedience would not atone for past sins. *The ceasing to increase a debt will not cancel a debt already incurred*, see [Luke 17:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 17.10). He cannot redeem himself by suffering, because the penalty of one sin is eternal death. Nor could the highest archangel redeem the world; if he could, God needed not to have sent his own Son. None but "Christ" was sufficient for so great a work; but his obedience unto death has effected our redemption; he "made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness! [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24)."

***~~3. Who they are that shall enjoy the benefits of redemption—~~***

Many imagine that, because Christ has died for for the world, then the whole world shall be saved; but redemption is by no means so extensive as the curse. With respect to heathen we know little how God will deal with them; but we know what will be his conduct towards the Christian world: those who believe in Christ, and they only, will be finally saved! [Mark 16:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.16). The faith here spoken of is not a *mere assent*to the truths of Christianity, but a living, operative, and purifying faith, [Acts 15:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 15.9). [James 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.20); [James 2:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.26). Such alone were comprehended under the term "us."

These points being cleared up,

***~~II. I will now show by what means we are redeemed—~~***

By the Mosaic law persons hanged were deemed accursed, [Deuteronomy 21:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 21.23). Hence Christ, in his death, was "made a curse" or held accursed.

***~~In becoming a curse, he was our substitute—~~***

Christ did not die merely for our good; he endured the curse in our stead. This was typically represented under the Mosaic law, [Leviticus 16:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 16.7-10); [Leviticus 16:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 16.21-22). It is impossible not to see in this passage that the scape-goat had the iniquities of the Jewish nation transferred to him, while the goat that died made atonement for them; the prophets concur in establishing this truth, [Daniel 9:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.26).

"Not for himself," [Isaiah 53:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.5); the Apostles confirm it in the plainest terms, [2 Corinthians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.21). [1 Peter 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.24); [1 Peter 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.18); His curse indeed was not the same with ours, either in quality or duration; yet it was fully adequate to all the demands of law and justice; and it was such as God appointed for him, and accepts on our behalf.

***~~This substitutionary atonement of Christ was the means of effecting our redemption—~~***

God ordained it for this very end, [Romans 3:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.25).

He was pleased with it in this view, [Ephesians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.2).

He was reconciled to man on account of it, [Romans 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.10).

Our redemption is expressly ascribed to it, [Ephesians 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.7).

Our deliverance from the guilt and power of sin is effected by it, [Hebrews 9:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.13-14).

It was the price paid for the salvation of the elect church, [Acts 20:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.28) with [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20).

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How great was the love of Christ towards us!~~***

That he who was happy in the bosom of his Father would become a curse! That he would submit to such misery in our place and stead! Let us then study to "comprehend the heights and depths of his love."

***~~2. What folly and impiety is it to seek justification by the law!~~***

When the moral law was once broken, it was absolutely impossible that any man would be justified by it, [Galatians 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.21). There remained no way of escaping its curse but by embracing the Gospel, [Galatians 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.22).

What *folly*then is it to reject salvation when it is freely offered, and to seek it in a way in which it cannot be found!

Nor is the *impiety*of the conduct less than the folly. It declares that the sacrifice of Christ was unnecessary, or ineffectual. This conduct proved destructive to the bulk of the Jewish nation, [Romans 9:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.31-32); [Romans 10:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.3). May we never imitate them to our eternal ruin!

***~~3. How strong are the Christian's obligations to holiness!~~***

Christ did not die to deliver us from the *curse*only, but from sin also, [Titus 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.11). Shall we hope to attain one end of his death while we defeat the other? We should reject such a thought with the utmost abhorrence! [Romans 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.1). Let every one then strive to attain the disposition of Paul in [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14-15), "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

***~~#2063~~***

***~~THE PURPOSES OF THE LAW~~***

***~~[Galatians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.19)~~***

"What, then, was the purpose of the law?

It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come."

PERHAPS, of all the subjects connected with religion, there is not one so rarely unfolded to Christian auditories as the law. We are ready to suppose, either that men are sufficiently acquainted with it; or that it is antiquated, and unnecessary to be known. But the law lies at the foundation of all true religion; and it ought to be studied, in the first place, as alone opening the way to the true knowledge of the Gospel.

The mistakes which obtain in reference to the law are very numerous. In truth, there are but few persons who have just views respecting it: and, on that account, I propose to call your attention to it throughout this series of discourses.

I am aware that persons deeply impressed with any particular subject are apt to magnify its importance beyond due bounds: and, being aware of this, I will endeavor to avoid that error on the present occasion. But I feel that it is scarcely possible to speak too strongly respecting the importance of the law. Those, indeed, who have never considered it, will possibly be somewhat staggered at the positions which I shall be necessitated to maintain, and the rather, because the full proof of my assertions must, of necessity, be deferred to those discourses wherein the several parts will be more largely considered. But would this impression be unfortunately made on any of my hearers, I must request that their ultimate decision be suspended, until the subject has undergone the proposed investigation. As for those who are conversant with the subject, I have no fear but that they will go along with me in my statement, and concur with me in the opinions which shall be submitted to them.

In the epistle before us, the Apostle Paul is maintaining a controversy with the Judaizing teachers; who wished to combine the Law with the Gospel, as a joint ground of hope of acceptance with God. In order to rectify their views, he shows that, if they would make their works, whether ceremonial or moral, in any degree the ground of their hopes, they must stand altogether on the footing of the law, which prescribed perfect obedience as the way to life; and must renounce all interest in the covenant which was made with their father Abraham, and which *promised life to men by believing in the Promised Seed*. Upon this, they naturally ask, "What, then, was the purpose of the law?" That is, 'If we are not to be saved by the law, for what end did Moses give us the law? What end can it answer?'

Now, to this inquiry I purpose to address myself. My first point will be, to show the incalculable importance of the inquiry itself; and then, in my future discourses, to give what I conceive to be the true answer to it.

To mark the vast importance of the inquiry will sufficiently occupy us at this time. But, really, I scarcely know in what terms to state it, if indeed I would state it with befitting fidelity. I have already said that the knowledge of the law is at the foundation of all true religion: and I hope to convince all who will candidly investigate the subject, that without a clear, distinct knowledge of the law we can have no just opinions, no proper feelings, no scriptural hopes. And, while I attempt this arduous discussion, may Almighty God pour out upon us his Holy Spirit, to give to every one of us the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the understanding heart, and ultimately to guide our feet into the way of peace!

**First, then, let me say, that without a distinct knowledge of the law, we can have no just OPINIONS.** Of course, I confine this, and all my observations, to religion; for of things that are merely civil or moral it is beside my purpose to speak at all. And I wish this to be borne in mind, throughout my whole discourse, for otherwise I shall appear to run into a very erroneous excess.

It must be remembered, that I speak only of the moral law; as I shall show more fully in my next discourse. For with the ceremonial law there is no such connection as I am about to trace, nor any necessary reference to it in my text.

I say, then, that without a distinct knowledge of the moral law we can have no just opinions respecting **GOD**and his perfections, or Christ and his offices, or the Holy Spirit and his operations.

Let us proceed to illustrate this.

It will be readily acknowledged, that the holiness of the Deity is, and must be, marked in the law, which he has given for the government of his rational creation: and, if we suppose that law to be a perfect transcript of his mind and will; if we suppose the law to extend to every action, word, and thought, and to require, that in the habit of our minds we shall retain all that purity in which we were originally created, and preserve to our last hour God's perfect image upon our souls; if the law admits not of the slightest possible deviation or defect, no, not even through ignorance or inadvertence; if the law promises nothing to us but after a spotless adherence to its utmost demands from first to last; it will, of course, be seen that God is indeed a holy Being, who cannot look upon iniquity without the utmost abhorrence.

But, if we suppose his law to require anything less than this, and to admit of anything short of absolute perfection, we must, of necessity, conceive of him as less abhorrent of sin, in proportion to the degree in which he lowers his own demands, and in which he leaves us at liberty to depart from this high standard, the standard which he proposed to man in Paradise, and which he still ordains for the angels that are around his throne.

In like manner, if we suppose that the sanctions with which he enforces his law are strong and solemn; if we suppose that they involve nothing less than the everlasting happiness or misery of every child of man; if we suppose that one single defect, of whatever kind, forfeits all title to happiness, and involves the soul in irremediable guilt and misery; if we suppose that these sanctions can never be set aside, never mitigated, never cease to operate through all eternity; then we shall, of necessity, have a high idea of God's justice, which will never relax the smallest atom of its demands, either in reference to the obedience of man, or the execution of the threatenings denounced against him.

But, if we have an idea that God will overlook some slighter imperfections, or punish them only for a time, and that too in a way which may be found supportable by feeble man; we, of course, proportionally lower our ideas of divine justice, and accommodate our views of it to the standard of human imperfection.

Respecting his **MERCY**, also, we may make the same observations. If we suppose the guilt that man has contracted to be beyond all measure and conception great, and the judgments to which he is exposed to be commensurate with his deviations from God's perfect law; if we suppose his sins to be more in number than the sands upon the seashore; and every one of those sins to be deserving of God's eternal wrath and indignation; then we shall indeed stand amazed at the mercy of God, who, instead of executing his threatened vengeance, has provided a remedy for the whole world; a remedy suited to their wants, and sufficient for their necessities; a remedy, whereby he may restore them to his favor, not only without compromising the honor of his other perfections, but to the everlasting advancement of them all.

Yes, truly, with such views of his law, we shall magnify his *mercy*that can pardon so much guilt, and relieve from so much misery, and exalt to glory such unworthy creatures.

But, if we suppose man's offenses to have been comparatively few, and his desert of vengeance to be comparatively light, who does not see that we reduce almost to nothing the mercy of our God, which has been so little needed, and which has effected for us so inconsiderable a deliverance?

I think that there is nothing strained in this statement, nothing which must not approve itself to every candid mind: and I am the more concerned that this view would be clearly understood, because it will open the way for a just apprehension of what I have yet further to offer under this head.

I proceed then to observe, that, without a clear knowledge of the law we can have no just views of **CHRIST**and his offices. From whence arose a necessity for a Savior? Was it not because we were condemned by the law, and incapable either of atoning for our past sins, or of restoring ourselves to the Divine image?

Now, suppose our guilt to have been exceeding great, and that every deviation from God's perfect law brought upon us a curse—an everlasting curse under the wrath of Almighty God. Suppose, too, that the demands of law and justice could never be satisfied without the punishment of the offender, either in his own person, or in the person of an adequate surety.

Then, in exact proportion as you magnify our guilt and misery, you magnify the Savior, who by the sacrifice of himself has restored us to the Divine favor. And in proportion as you diminish our necessities, you depreciate the value of his atonement.

Again, conceive of the law as never satisfied without a perfect obedience to its commands, and as requiring every soul to possess, either in himself or in his surety, a righteousness commensurate with its highest demands; then will Christ be proportionably exalted, in that he has wrought out a righteousness for all who shall believe in him, and that, through his righteousness, a way of salvation is opened for every child of man. But reduce that righteousness to any lower standard—say, to sincere, but imperfect, obedience; then your need of Christ for this end is proportionably reduced, and your obligation to him almost altogether cancelled.

But take a larger view of his offices: conceive of him as:

a *Prophet*, who is to instruct us;

a *Priest*, that is to atone for us;

a *King*, that is to rule over us.

What comparative need is there of his instructions, if so defective a knowledge of his religion will suffice?

What need of his sin atoning sacrifice, if repentance and reformation can restore us to God's favor?

And what need of his government, if so little is to be effected in our behalf, either in a way of deliverance from sin, or in a way of effective renovation?

The less that is required of man himself, the less must of necessity be required of his Surety: and, consequently, the whole work of Christ, whether *for*us or *in*us, must be reduced, in proportion as we reduce the demands of the law, and the necessities of man.

The same reasoning must be applied to the **operations of the HOLY SPIRIT.**The less there is required of us, the less there is for him to do within us. And hence it is, that many deny the necessity of his influences altogether, either for the *illumination*of our minds, or the *sanctification*of our souls.

The truth is, that the whole denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of all the doctrines dependent on it—the doctrine of the atonement, of imputed righteousness, and of divine influences of the Spirit—must be traced to this source.

Men feel not their need of a Divine Savior: they feel not the need of an Almighty Agent, to work in them the whole work of God. Hence their principles of theology are brought down to the low standard of the Pelagian, Arian, and Socinian hypotheses.

Let but a person obtain a thorough insight into the spirituality of the law, he will see that their meager systems can never supply his wants, never afford a remedy suited to his necessities. If any one less than God himself undertakes to effect his salvation, he sees that he must inevitably perish: and, if he had none but a creature to rely upon, glad would he be to be permitted to take his portion under rocks and mountains.

Having established, I trust, the truth of my first position, namely, that without a knowledge of the law we can have no just opinions; I proceed to show, in the second place,

**II. Without a knowledge of the law, we can have no just proper GRACES.**Of course, I must make the same limitation as before, and be understood as speaking only of feelings so far as religion is concerned.

Without the knowledge of the law there can be no true **HUMILITY**. This is a matter of vast importance.

What is humility? It is not a mere sense of our weakness as creatures, nor a general acknowledgment that we are sinners; but a deep and abiding consciousness of our guilty and undone state; a consciousness, that darkness itself is not more opposite to light, than we are to the pure and holy law of God. It is a sense of our utter alienation from God, yes, and of enmity against him; insomuch, that "every imagination of the thoughts of our heart is only evil continually!" It is such a sense of this as makes us really to "loath and abhor ourselves, and to repent before God in dust and ashes." This is that "broken and contrite heart which God will not despise."

But where do we find persons penetrated with this contrition, and smiting on their bosoms, and crying for mercy as sinners deserving of God's wrath and indignation? Or, if we saw one under such distressing apprehensions, who among us would not be ready to think that he carried matters to excess; and that, unless he had been guilty of some sins beyond what were commonly committed, he had no need for such excessive griefs and sorrows?

It is well known that such penitents are few; and that such comforters, if indeed disgust did not preclude any attempt to administer comfort, would be found in every company we meet with.

But to what is all this owing? It arises from men's ignorance of the law: they try not either themselves or others by so high a standard: and, being insensible of their departures from it, they see no cause for such humiliation on account of those departures.

In fact, the very idea of such humility enters not into the mind of the natural man: and, as copious as were the languages of Greece and Rome, they had no word whereby to express it. With the word which they used to express their idea of humility, they associated rather the notion of baseness, than of an exalted virtue: and, though all of us profess to admire humility as a grace, there is not in the universe a man, in his natural state, that either possesses or approves of it, according to its real import.

The same may be said of **GRATITUDE**. What is gratitude, but a thankful sense of mercies received? A truly enlightened Christian will view himself as a poor slave redeemed from sin and Satan, death and Hell; redeemed, too, by the precious blood of our incarnate God! He will be altogether, in his own apprehension, "a brand plucked out of the burning." An apostate fiend would not, in his estimation, be a greater monument of grace than he. Hence he blesses his redeeming God, and calls upon all that is within him to bless his holy name.

But where do we find this transport? Where do we see persons oppressed under the weight of the obligations conferred upon them? Were we to behold a person so elevated with joy, or so depressed with a sense of his great unworthiness, the generality among us would call it extravagance, and perhaps ridicule it as the height of absurdity.

To the generality, some faint acknowledgments are quite sufficient to express their sense of redeeming love. But how different is this from the feelings of those around the throne of God! They, angels as well as saints, are penetrated with the devoutest admiration of this stupendous mystery: the angels, as viewing its transcendent excellency; the saints, as themselves experiencing its richest benefits. They are all prostrating themselves before the throne of God!

And why is it that men are so cold and insensible? Is it not because they see not the depths from which they have been redeemed? Did they see in the looking-glass of God's law the depth of the misery from which they have been delivered, they would have far other thoughts of their Deliverer! But, having reduced to almost nothing their obligations to him, no wonder if their gratitude to him is proportionably weak and vapid.

Of holy **ZEAL**, also, I must say the same. Who feels it in any measure corresponding with what the Scriptures require at our hands? We are represented as being "bought with a price;" and therefore are called to "glorify God with our body and our spirit, which are God's." To a man sensible of his obligations to God, no service under Heaven would appear too great. All that he can do for the Lord is nothing in his eyes: and all that he can suffer for the Lord is accounted light. His time, his talents, his property, his influence, his whole life, appear of no value, but as they may be made subservient to the advancement of the Divine glory.

But how little of this is seen! And how little is it approved, when seen! What names are too harsh, whereby to stigmatize such a life as this? How infinitely below this is the standard of those who value themselves upon their morality!

To the same cause must this also be traced. In fact, humility, and gratitude, and zeal, must of necessity rise and fall together: and according as our views of the law are deep or superficial, will all of these evince themselves to accord or disagree with the standard proposed to us in the Gospel of Christ.

**III. I come now, in the third place, to show, that without the knowledge of the law we can have no scriptural HOPES.**The faith which alone justifies the soul, is that which brings us simply to the Lord Jesus Christ as our only hope and refuge. If we attempt, in any measure or degree, to blend with his merits anything of our own, we make void all that he has done and suffered for us: "Christ himself is from that moment become of no effect unto us." As far as respects us, "his death is in vain."

But who will exercise this faith? Who will condescend to accept salvation on such terms? Who will bear to renounce his good works in point of dependence on them, and to enter into Heaven at the same gate with tax collectors and harlots? All this is too humiliating for our proud hearts! We will not endure it—we will have something of our own, whereof to boast. We cannot, we will not, allow ourselves to be stripped of all self-righteousness. We will not glory solely in the cross of Christ.

And why is all this reluctance to comply with the terms of the Gospel? It proceeds from our ignorance of the law. We do not see that *our very best deeds stand in need of mercy, as much as our vilest sins!* We do not see that our smallest sins entail a curse upon us, as truly as our most enormous transgression! When these things are clearly seen, all the difficulty vanishes; and we are contented to be saved altogether by grace. But, until we have obtained this knowledge of the law, nothing under Heaven can prevail upon us to exercise faith with befitting simplicity.

As to an entire devotedness of heart to God, as his redeemed people, we shall be equally defective in that also. We shall be contented with a low standard of obedience, and never aspire after a perfect conformity to the Divine image. To "walk altogether as Christ walked," will appear a bondage. To tread in the steps of the holy Apostles, will be regarded as being "righteous over-much." To glory in the cross for Christ's sake, and to "rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame" and death for him, will be thought fit only for Apostles, and a culpable excess in us.

But nothing less than this will prove us to be sincere Christians: nothing less than this will be an acceptable sacrifice unto the Lord. If we would be really Christ's, we must "live, not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and rose again;" "purifying ourselves, even as he is pure;" and being "perfect, even as our Father who is in Heaven is perfect."

This, let it be remembered, is inseparable from a scriptural hope: and, inasmuch as nothing but a scriptural hope can constrain us to it, and nothing but the grace of Christ effect it in us—we must remain destitute of it: our ignorance of the law will keep us from Christ; and our lack of union with Christ will keep us far lower in our attainments than the Gospel requires, and, consequently, destitute of the hope which the Gospel only can inspire.

I think enough has now been spoken to show the *importance*of the inquiry in my text. I am sensible that many strong things have been spoken; and spoken, it may be thought, without sufficient proof. I candidly acknowledge, that if I had not, in prospect, further opportunities of unfolding the subject, I would gladly have lowered, as far as Christian fidelity would have admitted of it, my statement.

But my desire is, to impress your minds with the *importance*of the subject. I wish, if it may please God, to prepare the way for a careful and impartial investigation of it. I certainly do feel that it is not sufficiently considered by Christians in general; and that, in comparison with other subjects, it is very rarely discussed. Most assuredly do I know, that an ignorance of it is at the root of all those superficial views and statements, with which the Christian world rests satisfied.

O, that it might please God to accompany our investigation of it with his Holy Spirit, and to bring home the subject with power to all our hearts! Certainly, if the representation which I have given of it is true–then a more important subject cannot occupy our attention. And there is need of much candor in the consideration of it. I wish it to be weighed by Scripture. I know, that, if not founded in truth, and supported by clear convincing argument, it can have no weight with my audience. But I know, at the same time, that if, in some respects, it appears strange, it will not therefore be discarded as unworthy of attention. From the experience of many years do I know, that statements proposed with modesty are in this place heard with candor: and God forbid that I would affect to dogmatize, where it befits me to speak with deference and humility! Yet I must admit that my whole soul goes along with the subject; because I believe that the salvation of all your souls depends upon your acceptance or rejection of the truths essentially connected with it.

Let me ask, therefore, that all among you, who know what it is to have access to God in prayer, will aid me with their supplications for an out-pouring of his Holy Spirit upon us in all our future discussions. It is but a little time that I have to speak for the Lord, or you to hear. O, that all of us may so improve the present hour, that, in that great day, when we shall stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, we may be accepted of our God; and that I who speak, and you who hear, may rejoice together!

***~~#2064~~***

***~~THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE LAW~~***

***~~[Galatians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.19)~~***

"What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come."

[Romans 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.14), "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin."

WE now enter upon the second part of our subject. We proposed to inquire into the use of the law. But, without entering distinctly into that point, we endeavored to call your attention to it by an exposition of its vast importance. We were aware that we would anticipate much which would afterwards be brought forward; and that we would assume, for the present, some things, which, though partially proved, would remain to be afterwards more fully established. Yet we would hope that nothing was adduced without sufficient proof; and nothing asserted, which those who are at all acquainted with the subject would not readily concede. We think it highly probable, that in our subsequent discussions there may also be somewhat of repetition. If we were content to prosecute all the separate parts of the subject without pointing out their bearing upon the heart and conscience, we might easily keep them all distinct, without anticipating anything, or repeating anything. But you should, of course, wish me to discharge my high office with a due attention to your eternal interests: and, consequently, you will be prepared to allow me the liberty which is necessary to the attainment of this great object. Of course, I shall not trespass more in this respect than necessity shall require: but, if I am found to need your indulgence in this matter, you are now apprised of the reason of it, and will no doubt readily grant to me the liberty I request.

I am now about to answer the inquiry which I have instituted, and the importance of which I have already shown. But, previous to my entering upon the distinct answer, there is one point which must, of necessity, be settled.

You will ask me, 'Of what law are you speaking?'

Let me understand that first; for, otherwise, all that you shall speak about its use will be in vain!' I am aware that this must be first clearly and distinctly stated. I was constrained, in my former discourse, to pass over this point; and to assume that the Apostle was speaking of *the moral law*. But now, as I then gave you reason to expect, I will address myself to that consideration; and will show,

First, what is that law which the Apostle spoke of?

Secondly, what bearing this part of my subject has upon the question before us?

***~~I. First, what is that law which the Apostle spoke of, and respecting which he instituted his inquiry?~~***

The word "Law," in the New Testament, is used in several different senses. But as in this place *it can mean only the law as given to Moses*, it must, of necessity, mean the moral, or the ceremonial, or the judicial law; or a compound of them all together. But of the judicial law the Apostle makes no question. He is speaking of a law which appeared to stand in competition with the promise which had been made to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before. But between the promise and the *judicial law*, which I may call the *common law*of the land, there could be no such competition: for the promise made to Abraham will be equally in force in every country under Heaven, whatever be its code of laws, or the outward form of its administration.

Of the *ceremonial*law he does speak; and that frequently: because it was to that that the Jews adhered with such inveterate pertinacity. But still, if we admit that to be included in the passage, it is only included as being that outward form which the Jews supposed to be inseparable from the moral law; and the performance of which they regarded as an obedience to the moral law.

It is of the *moral law*chiefly, if not exclusively, that the Apostle speaks here. The line of his argument is this: God promised to Abraham and his seed—life, by faith in the Messiah, who would spring from his loins. Four hundred and thirty years afterwards he gave to Moses a law of works, which were partly moral, and partly ceremonial. It may be asked, then: In publishing this law of Moses, did God intend to set aside the promise? No! he did not, and he could not. He could not, because the promise made to Abraham was made to him and to his believing seed, whether of Jews or Gentiles, to the end of the world. But the law given to Moses was given only to a small portion of Abraham's seed; and that only for a time: and, consequently, as no covenant can be annulled but by the consent of both the parties interested in it, and only one of those parties was present at the transaction on Mount Sinai, nothing that was done there could supersede what had been done with others four hundred and thirty years before.

Then, it would be asked, 'For what end was this law given?' The Apostle answers, "It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come." That is, it was given to show to what an extent transgression had abounded; and how greatly they needed the Promised Seed, to recommend them to God. Instead of setting aside the promises, then, as a person unacquainted with its uses might be ready to suppose, it was intended rather to be subservient to them; by showing to men, that, being condemned by the law, *they must seek for life as a free gift of God, through faith in the Promised Seed.*

Let it then be observed, that, if we admit the ceremonial law to be in part intended, it is only in part: it is only as showing that *works of every kind, whether ceremonial or moral, are equally excluded from the office of justifying the soul before God*. This is the whole scope of the Apostle's argument, whether in the Epistle to the Galatians, or in that to the Romans. To say, that, though ceremonial works cannot justify us, moral works may, is to oppose the whole line of his argument throughout both the epistles, and to set it aside altogether.

The great question in both is: Whether we are to be justified by works or by faith? And his whole argument, in both, goes to prove this one point, that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes, [Romans 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.4)."

Further proofs of this point will be adduced in their proper place. What I have here stated is quite sufficient to establish the point proposed; namely, that the *moral law*is that chiefly respecting which the Apostle's inquiry is instituted.

Now, then, let me say what I mean by the moral law. It is that law which was given to Moses on Mount Sinai. It was the law of the ten commandments only that God wrote on tables of stone, or that was given to Moses at that time amidst the ministry of angels. Compare [Acts 7:53](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 7.53) with [Deuteronomy 5:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 5.22). All the ceremonial law was revealed to Moses afterwards, and in private, without any of the attendant pomp with which the moral law was given.

But what was this law? and in what light was it to be considered? It was the very law which was originally written upon the heart of man in Paradise; and which, having been effaced in a great measure by the fall, and altogether obliterated from the minds of men through forgetfulness, and the love of sin—needed now to be republished; in order that men might know how transgression had abounded; and how greatly they stood in need of that Promised Seed, whom God had before taught them to expect, and "in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed." It was intended to show them on what terms life had been originally promised to man in Paradise; and on what terms alone it could give life to man.

But, inasmuch as all had transgressed it, none could obtain life by it now; but all must seek for life in the way which God had provided, even by faith in the Promised Seed; to which way of salvation the law was now intended to shut them up.

Now, then, we come to show the true nature of this law. We have shown, that it is of the moral law that we are speaking: and to that we are more especially also directed in the words of my text. The Apostle says in my text, "We know that the law is spiritual, [Romans 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.14)." Now, that is not true respecting either the judicial law or ceremonial law. Not of the judicial law; for that was only a code of laws for the regulation of the *state*, just like any other code of laws that exists in any other state. Nor of the ceremonial law; for that the Apostle expressly calls, "a law of a carnal commandment," and he represents it as consisting altogether of "carnal ordinances, [Hebrews 7:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 7.16); [Hebrews 9:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.10)."

We are arrived, therefore, at the point where we desired to come; namely, to show the spirituality of the moral law: and this we will show by an examination of it in all its parts.

The moral law, if we merely attend to the words in which it was promulgated, seems to refer only to external acts; whereas, in reality, it was intended to bind us to the performance of everything connected with those acts, either in word or thought; and to prohibit everything which could in any way, even by inclination or desire, prove an incentive to transgression.

The duties of the first table did not merely forbid outward idolatry, such as the serving of gods of wood and stone; but the inward respect of the soul, as paid to any creature in comparison with the Creator. Nothing, either within us or without us, is to stand in competition with him. Nothing is to be made, in any respect or any degree, an object of our alliance. Our own wisdom, strength, righteousness, must be altogether renounced as objects of dependence; and God alone be acknowledged as the source of all good. So neither must we seek our happiness in any creature, except in entire subserviency to God. For though "he has given us all things richly to enjoy," our enjoyment must be, not so much of the creature itself, as of God in it; that God may be to us our "all in all."

The reverence of his great name, and the observance of his Sabbaths, come in as component parts of the regard we are to show towards him. They must not be limited to words or acts, but must extend to the entire habit of our souls: for, as I have said, the prohibition includes an injunction of all that is contrary to the thing prohibited. We must not only have no other gods besides him, but must love him with all the heart, and all the mind, and all the soul, and all the strength: and this frame of mind must pervade our every action, every word, every thought. And, inasmuch as every seventh day is set apart for him, the body, as well as the soul, must on that day be devoted to his service, not only according to the measure prescribed for other days, but exclusively, even as the soul itself.

If we come to the duties of the second table, we shall find them of equal extent, whether as commanding what is good, or as prohibiting what is evil.

The fifth commandment enjoins all that can attach to us, as superiors, equals, or inferiors: it seems, indeed, to comprehend only one relation, and that of the inferior only: but it extends to every relation in which man can stand to his fellow-man; and to every possible expression of mutual love.

The sixth and seventh commandments seem extremely limited; but we are warranted to affirm that they extend as much to the dispositions of the soul as to the actions of the body. Our blessed Lord has explained them to us in his Sermon on the Mount. The Scribes and Pharisees had narrowed their import, and reduced them to mere bodily acts. But our Lord and Savior showed that an angry thought was a transgression of the one, and an impure look was a violation of the other. Exceeding thankful would we be for this infallible exposition of their meaning: for this throws the true light upon the whole; and serves as a clue, whereby to find our way through every commandment of the decalogue.

If the letter of them only were to be taken, the great mass of us, I would hope, might congratulate ourselves as innocent in relation to them: but if an angry word, even to the saying to a brother, 'Raca,' subjects us to the danger of hell-fire; and an impure look, even the looking on a woman to lust after her, is a commission of adultery with her in the heart; then who has not need to humble himself before God, and to tremble for the judgment that awaits him!

The eighth and ninth commandments must be understood as reaching, in like manner, to every injury that may be done to our neighbor's property or reputation; and to every act, or word, or thought, whereby either the one or the other may be endangered.

But the key to the whole is the tenth commandment. That, even in words, goes beyond the mere act, and prohibits the sinful disposition of the mind. It was this which opened the eyes of the Apostle Paul, in reference to his state before God. Having been educated a Pharisee, he rested in the exposition which the Pharisees were accustomed to give of the commandments; and knowing that, according to their literal import, he was innocent, he thought himself, as "touching the righteousness of the law, blameless." But, when he came to consider more attentively the tenth commandment, he knew not how to withstand it, or to justify himself any longer as one who had truly observed it. He perceived that an*inordinate desire of any kind*was an actual violation of it; and he was conscious, that though he had withstood any unlawful acts, he had not been free from the motions of them in his heart. Hence he was constrained to acknowledge, that he had transgressed the law, and was consequently condemned by it; and needed to cry to God for mercy, as much as the vilest sinner upon earth! Hear his own account of this matter: "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died: and the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death [Romans 7:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.9-10)."

The law, as given to man in Paradise, was ordained to life; but as continued to man in his fallen state, it is invariably unto death; and every man upon the face of the whole earth is condemned by it.

Thus I have, as briefly as possible, marked the spirituality of the law: and I am sure that all who consider it aright must subscribe to that saying of the Psalmist, "I have seen an end of all perfection; but your commandment is exceeding broad," far beyond the reach or comprehension of any finite intelligence! [Psalm 119:96](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.96).

Now, at the hazard of anticipating some future remarks, I propose to show,

***~~II. Secondly, What bearing this part of our subject has on the great question before us.~~***

It will be remembered what that question is, What are the uses of the moral law? And had I been content with amplifying my foregoing observations, I would have been under no necessity to trespass at all on the ground which we shall hereafter occupy. But it is not to the understanding alone that I would speak, but to the heart and conscience; humbly imploring of God to clothe his word with power, and to make it the means of everlasting salvation to every soul that hears it.

Now, who that has attended to the foregoing statement does not see, in the first place, What abundant grounds the best among us have for deep humiliation before God.

I will readily admit, that, as to gross outward violations of this law, many among us may be blameless. But who among us has rendered unto God the honor due unto his name; loving him, serving him, glorifying him, as it befits us?

Who has despised everything in comparison with him, and walked as in his immediate presence; reverencing everything in proportion as it appeared to proceed from him, or to lead to him; and wholly devoting to him the Sabbath-day; and having, on that sacred day especially, the entire rest of his soul in him, as a pledge and foretaste of the eternal Sabbath?

Who among us will venture to say that he has so lived, not unto himself, but unto his God; doing his will on earth as it is done in Heaven? Nay, who has come near this standard? Who has ever come up to it for so much as one day in his whole life?

Again, if we look at the duties of the second table, wherein men are particularly ready to vaunt themselves as innocent, where is there one who has fulfilled all that is required of him, as a husband or wife, as a parent or child, as a master or servant, as a magistrate or subject? Were we to trace the line that is required in all the different relations, and compare our conduct with it—who must not acknowledge that his transgressions have been multiplied, even as the hairs of his head, and as the sands upon the sea-shore?

If we come to the *tempers*and *dispositions*that we have exercised, and to the *thoughts*that we have harbored, and consider the interpretation which our Lord himself has put upon them—then who among us must not blush to lift up his eyes unto Heaven, and be ashamed and confounded in the presence of that God who searches the heart? We are not sufficiently observant of the desires which break not forth into outward acts; but God notes them all, and imputes them to us as transgressions of his holy law.

But, in truth, if we look at our words and actions, we shall not find ourselves so blameless as we are ready to imagine. For, where our own interest has stood in competition with our neighbor's, who has not felt a leaning to *self*? Who has, in all things, viewed his neighbor's claims with the same impartiality that he would a competition between others, in which he had no interest? And, in speaking of our neighbor, especially if he has shown himself adverse to us, who will venture to say that he has at all times evinced the same candor and charity as, in a change of circumstances, he would have judged due to him?

We may not be conscious of having been under a sinful influence in these matters: but, when we see how all are affected around us, we may be sure that we have felt the general contagion, and been but too deeply imbued with the sin that pervades our fallen nature.

And what shall we say to the last command? If even the Apostle Paul was slain by that–then who shall stand before it? Who must not acknowledge, that, times without number, he has been under the influence of irregular and inordinate desires? And who, under a sense of his guilt, must not put his hand on his mouth, and his mouth in the dust, crying, "Unclean, unclean! [Leviticus 13:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 13.45). [Lamentations 3:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lam 3.29)."

Perhaps you will think that I have borne somewhat hard upon your consciences; and availed myself of the spirituality of the law to inflict, unnecessarily, a wound upon your minds. But the truth is, that I have spoken nothing yet in comparison with what I ought to speak, in order to do justice to my subject. Forgive me, then, if I proceed to put this matter in its true point of view.

To call to mind what we have done, or what we have left undone, will give us a very inadequate view of our sinfulness. If we would estimate ourselves aright, we must take the high standard of God's holy law, and see how infinitely short of our duty we have come, in every act of our lives, and in every moment of our existence. We must not inquire merely, whether we have loved God at all; but how near we have come to what his law requires, and his perfections demand. We must trace the whole state of our souls from the beginning, and estimate it by this rule.

We shall then see that our attainments have been as nothing, in comparison with our shortcomings and defects; literally, I say, as nothing. The poorest bankrupt that ever existed has paid as great a proportion of his debt as we have of our debt to God: yes, he is in a far higher state than we: for he, if he discharges nothing of his debt, adds nothing to it; but we have been augmenting our debt every day, every hour, every moment. *The very best deeds of the best of men, while in their unconverted state, if weighed in the balance of the sanctuary—have been lighter than vanity; and if tried by the touchstone of God's perfect law, have been no better than splendid sins!*Or, rather, they have been one continued accumulation of guilt and misery against the day of wrath!

If we try ourselves only by the *letter*of the law, we shall see nothing of this: but if we enter into the *spirit*of it, and examine ourselves by that, there will be no terms too humiliating for us whereby to express our sinfulness and our desert of God's wrath and indignation!

Permit me, then, to call you to this self-abasing state. Permit me to wrest out of your hands that delusive plea, that you have done no harm. I beg you to take justice as your line, and righteousness as your plummet, and to judge of yourselves as God judges. It is by *his*judgment, and not by your own, that you must stand or fall: and his judgment will be according to truth.

Were the condemnation that awaits men to affect only this present life, we might be contented to leave them under their delusions. But we must shortly appear before the heart-searching God, to receive our final doom. Then the book of his remembrance, wherein all our actions, words, and thoughts, were written, will be opened. Then will our own consciences also attest the truth of every accusation that shall be brought against us. Then above all, shall we see the equity, both of the test whereby we shall be tried, and of the sentence that shall be pronounced against us. And then there will be no respect of persons with God. The learned and the dignified will stand on the same footing with the most illiterate peasant; or rather, will have a severer judgment, in proportion to the advantages which they have neglected to improve.

May the Lord grant that these considerations may be duly laid to heart; and that all of us, while yet the opportunity is afforded, may abase ourselves before God, with all humility of mind, and with that brokenness of heart which God will not despise!

I must not close this subject without observing, in the second place, **What a folly it is ever to think of establishing a righteousness of our own by the works of the law.**

If God required only an observance of the *letter*of his law, then indeed we might entertain a hope of this kind. Yet even then, when we reflected on the tenth commandment, we would see how vain and hopeless would be the attempt. But *when we see that there is not so much as one commandment, either of the first or second table, which we have not violated, it seems a perfect delusion to stand on the ground of our own righteousness*.

Persons, I know, have an idea that Christ has lowered the terms of the law, and brought down its demands to the standard of human infirmity. But where can they find anything that sanctions such an idea as this? Which of the commands has the Lord Jesus lowered? The whole decalogue he has summed up in two commands, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength; and your neighbor as yourself." Which of these two has he set aside? Which has he dispensed with? Or what measure of abatement has he made in either of them?

I would speak with reverence on every subject wherein the Deity is concerned: but I must say, that God cannot reduce the demands of his own moral law: it would be to divest himself of his own glory, and to give liberty to man to violate the obligations which every rational creature must, of necessity, owe to his Creator. His moral law is as immutable as he himself is: it is a perfect transcript of his mind and will. With the exception of the Sabbath, which has no foundation but in the will of God, the law exists of necessity, and independent of any revelation of it whatever. It must, of necessity, be the duty of a creature to love and serve his Creator; and to love, in subordination to him, all the works of his intelligent creation. I must say, then, that this law is unalterable; and that, if any would obtain righteousness by it, they must obey it perfectly, from first to last: and as this is impossible, since we all are transgressors of it, the thought of obtaining righteousness by the law must be relinquished by every man. We must, if ever we would be saved at all, look out for some other righteousness more commensurate with the demands of the law, and more consistent with the honor of the Lawgiver.

But here I must stop, because this would lead me to what must occupy a separate discourse. I conclude, therefore, with commending these thoughts to your attentive consideration; and with entreating, that you would seek to make yourselves acquainted with this all-important subject. The Apostle says, "We know that the law is spiritual:" would to God that all of us could say the same! But, indeed, it is not generally "known." On the contrary, a very general and lamentable ignorance of it prevails in the Christian world. Every one is desirous of moderating the demands of the law to his own standard. Every one is desirous of lessening his own criminality before God: and, to effect this, he lowers the standard whereby to test his obedience.

But I beg you to settle it in your minds, as an indisputable fact, that the law is, and ever must remain, spiritual. Unless this is thoroughly understood, it will be impossible for you to go along with me in my future discourses: for how can you comprehend the uses of the law, if you know not what the law itself is? Indeed, if you get not a clear insight into this as the first step, I shall appear to you to be bringing forward things strange and unwarrantable. But let the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians be attentively read with this particular view; and I dare affirm, that the spirituality of the law will be found written in them as with a sun-beam: and, that once seen, you will be prepared to understand the uses of the law, as they shall be more fully developed in my future discourses.

You will not then be ready to exclaim, as otherwise you possibly may, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" You will see that our future statements necessarily grow out of this: and you will find no difficulty in adopting that sentiment, which is the ultimate drift of my whole argument, namely, that if ever you are saved at all, you must renounce all dependence on your own righteousness, and must possess a righteousness corresponding with the utmost demands of the law, even that righteousness which the Lord Jesus Christ wrought out by his own obedience unto death, and which he confers on all his penitent and believing people!

***~~#2065~~***

***~~THE FIRST USE OF THE LAW~~***

***~~[Galatians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.19)~~***

"What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come."

NOW we begin to enter fully on our subject. Not that we could have omitted our last statement: for it was necessary that the spirituality of the law should be fully known; since, without the knowledge of that, it is impossible for any man to understand the truths that are founded on it. But, having thus prepared the way, we may now state what we conceive to be the chief uses of the law; namely,

**1.** As a *monitor*, to guard us against adhering to the first covenant of works.

**2.** As an *instructor*, to guide us to a better covenant.

**3.** As a *rule*to govern us, when we have laid hold on that better covenant.

These three uses will form the subject of our present and two future Discourses.

At this time, I am to show, that **the law is intended as a monitor, to guard us against adhering to the former covenant of works.**

The law was originally given to man in Paradise, as a covenant between God and him. It was not, indeed, written in a book; but it was written on his heart. The terms of it were, that man was to obey whatever God would command; and then both he and his posterity would live. But if he transgressed in any particular, he and all his posterity would die.

This, indeed, is but obscurely intimated in the history of man's creation. It was there said to him, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." It is, however, most fully opened in the New Testament. There it is said, "By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners." "By the offense of one, many died; and judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Now it is a plain indisputable fact, that death came upon all men from the very moment that Adam sinned: it has come, not on those only who have sinned like him, but on millions who never have committed *actual*sin; whose sufferings, therefore, must have been the punishment of his transgression. If sin had not been imputed to *infants*, they would never have been called to bear the penalty of sin. But they do pay that penalty even from the womb; and therefore it is manifest that they are considered as having fallen in Adam, and as being in some way chargeable with his transgression.

That is the covenant, under which every child of man is born into the world. The terms of the covenant having been forgotten, God was pleased to publish it by Moses, and with his own hand to write it upon tables of stone. The obligations of it were stated in the Ten Commandments: and the sanctions of it were added, "Do this, and live! Transgress, and die!"

It is true, that to Israel in the Wilderness it was published in somewhat of a mitigated form: because it was introduced by that gracious declaration, "I am the Lord your God." But still the terrors with which the publication of it was accompanied, showed, that it was "a fiery law," "a ministry of death," "a ministry of condemnation." It is from Paul's reasonings chiefly, that we gain a clear insight into it.

Though published in the form of a covenant, it is not really intended to be a covenant of life to man, now in his fallen state: it is intended only to show him what this covenant is which he is under, and how impossible it is for him to obtain salvation by it. This will appear clearly, if we attend to its requirements and its sanctions, as they are expressed in my text: "Do this," is the command given. Do it all; all without exception! Continue to do it from first to last. On these terms you shall live. But a curse awaits you, even an everlasting curse, if you violate it in any one particular. Plead what you will, its denunciations are inflexible and irreversible.

'I wish to obey it.'  
'Tell me not of your wishes; but do it.'

'I have endeavored to obey it.'  
'Tell me not of your endeavors: but do it; or else you are cursed.'

'I have done it in almost every particular.'  
'Tell me not of what you have done *almost*—have you obeyed it altogether? Have you obeyed it in all things? If not, you are cursed.'

'I have for a great number of years obeyed it; and but once only, through inadvertence, transgressed it.'  
'Then you are cursed. If you have offended in one point, you are, as James informs you, guilty of all! [James 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.10). If you have not continued to obey it from the first moment of your existence to the last, you are cursed.'

'But I am sorry for my transgression.'  
'I know nothing of your sorrows—you are cursed.'

'But I will reform, and never transgress again.'  
'I know nothing of your reformation—you are cursed.'

'But I will obey it perfectly in the future.'  
'I know nothing of what you may do in the future—you are cursed. I cannot alter my terms for any one. My declaration to all, without exception, is, "Cursed is every one who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." If you have risen to these terms, I will give you life! If you have fallen short of them, in any one particular, nothing remains for you but "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

This, let it be observed, is no inference of mine; but the deduction of the Apostle Paul, for he says, "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." And on what does he ground this sweeping sentence of condemnation? He grounds it on the declaration of the law itself: "As many as, etc. etc. For it is written, Cursed is every one that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them."

There is no human being that ever has obeyed the law thus perfectly: and therefore all, without exception, are under to the curse; and all, who are yet looking to the law for justification, are actually "under the curse;" and must, if they die in their present state, endure it for evermore!

Such, then, are the terms of the covenant, even of that covenant under which we all are born.

***~~Now let us see how the law, as a monitor, guards us against adhering to this covenant.~~***

It opens to us what that obedience is which the covenant requires. It shows us it, indeed, chiefly in prohibitions, and in prohibitions of gross overt acts: and, if it included no more than these acts, it would rather encourage us to cleave to that covenant, and to hope for salvation by it. But, as I showed earlier, *it comprehends in its requirements perfect love to God in its utmost possible extent, and perfect love to man*, even such as a man bears to himself: and it charges us with guilt, not merely on account of open violations of its commands, but on account of the defectiveness of our best actions.

I will suppose, at this moment you are filled with love to God. This is well: but does your love rise to the full extent that is due unto him? I will take your word at this, the best moment that you ever lived: Are all the powers of your soul called forth in these acts, so that there is no more defect in you than in Adam before the fall? If this is not the case, you are guilty; and these your most exalted virtues, instead of being meritorious in the sight of God, stand in need of his pardon on account of their defects!

The same must be said of the best moment that you ever passed in reference to your fellow-creatures: Did your actions carry with them the whole soul in love to God, and to man for God's sake? And were they so perfect, that there was not in them the smallest blemish or defect? If not, you stand in need of pardon for your defects; and, consequently, can claim nothing on the score of merit.

Now, if the law is so rigorous in its demands as this, and admits of no deviation, no weariness, no defect even for a moment, under any circumstances, to the very end of life—then what must it, of necessity, be considered as saying unto us? 'Do not think of obtaining life by the covenant of works. You see its demands; you see how impossible it is that they would ever be relaxed; you see how inexorably it denounces its curse against the least transgression. You see that it makes no abatement on account of your weakness: it offers no assistance for the performance of any one duty: it knows nothing of repentance or reformation: it exacts perfect obedience from first to last: and that not paid, even though the failure be only once, and in the smallest point, it does nothing but denounce its curses against you.

And will you seek life by such a covenant as this? Oh! flee from it; and dread lest you continue under it one hour longer. The terrors of Mount Sinai did but faintly represent the fearfulness of your state. And the strict injunctions relative to the touching of the mount did but faintly mark the impossibility of your ever gaining access to God by that covenant: and, truly, if Moses himself said on that occasion, "I exceedingly fear and quake," then much more may you in the contemplation of the danger to which you are exposed, and of the judgments that await you!'

I am aware that this counsel of the law appears harsh. But it is not really so: nay, it is a statement in which the Israelites of old were expected cordially to acquiesce. The very passage which, with some slight alterations, the Apostle quotes in [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10), are contained in the words which the Levites, as God's representatives, were to deliver to all the people of Israel from Mount Ebal: "Cursed be he who confirms not all the words of this law, to do them: and all the men shall say, Amen! [Deuteronomy 27:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 27.26)." Let me hope, therefore, that, instead of exclaiming, 'God forbid!' as some perhaps would ignorantly be disposed to do, in reply to the statement before given, there shall be but one sentiment pervading this whole assembly; and that all, in a way of cordial approbation, as well as in a way of intellectual acknowledgment, shall with one voice cry, 'Amen, Amen!'

Now, the Scripture bears ample testimony that this is indeed the first use of the law. "It was not possible that a law would be given to fallen man whereby he would have life: if it had, truly," says the Apostle, "righteousness would have been by the law, verse 21." *The law, therefore, must not be regarded as intended to give life; it was given to show how sin abounded*. As Paul says, "The law entered, that the offense might abound, [Romans 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20);" that is, might appear to abound. And again he says, "By the law is the knowledge of sin, [Romans 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.20)." And this view of the law will-explain what he means, when he says, "I, through the law, am dead to the law, [Galatians 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.19)." In fact, this expression comprehends and illustrates this entire part of my subject.

The Apostle saw that the law did nothing but condemn him; and therefore he renounced it utterly in point of dependence for acceptance with God, and determined to seek salvation in some other way. And the same effect must the knowledge of the law produce on us; it must destroy all our hope by the covenant of works; and lead us to inquire after the way of salvation which God has provided for us in the Gospel of his Son.

Having pointed out this first use of the law, I now come to recommend it in that particular view, and for that express end.

It is well known that *men have a great propensity to cleave to the law, and to seek salvation by it.*This was the besetting sin of the Pharisees of old: "they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; for, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they would not submit to the righteousness of God, [Romans 10:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.2-3)." This was the fault also of the Judaizing teachers: they were always blending the law with the Gospel, as a joint ground of hope before God; not being aware, that, if they relied upon the law at all, they must stand or fall by it altogether. The moment they did anything with a view to obtain justification by it, they became "debtors to do the whole law! [Galatians 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.3)." And, not having discharged their whole debt to that, nothing awaited them but chains of darkness for evermore.

The same propensity there is in us, though it is indulged by men in very different degrees. Some look for their justification altogether upon the footing of their good works: these know not for what end good works can be required at all, but with the view of our obtaining justification by them. And, when they are told that they can never be justified by their works, they suppose that we set aside the observance of good works altogether, and encourage all manner of licentiousness.

Others see, that some honor is due to Christ; and that if he came to save us, we must, in part at least, stand indebted to him for salvation. Hence they are willing to rely in part on his vicarious sacrifice, and in part on their own obedience to the law. They do not perceive that the one makes void the other; and that salvation must be wholly of works, or wholly of grace; and therefore they unite the two as the foundation of their hope. But they see not that their foundation is only like the image of iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's vision; the parts of which could never cohere, nor form any permanent basis for the superincumbent weight.

Others rather think to enter into a contract with the Lord, and agree to render him service, if he will impart to them salvation. Thus, though they do not expressly unite their merits with his, they make their obedience the ground on which they hope for a saving interest in him; and, to a certain degree, a price, which they propose to pay for it. It never occurs to them, that *they have nothing but sin and misery to present to him*; and that therefore their entire hope must be in his sovereign grace and mercy. They forget that they are to receive all "without money and without price."

Others refine yet more; and, conceiving themselves willing to give to the Lord Jesus all the glory of their salvation, they only look to themselves for their warrant to believe in him: either they dare not go to him, because they are so vile, and therefore they will endeavor to make themselves better, in order that they may venture into his presence, and indulge a hope of acceptance with him.

Or, they have a good hope that he will apply to them all the benefits of his sin-atoning death, because they have not transgressed beyond the common bounds of human frailty.

But the plain answer to all these delusions is this: Salvation must be wholly of works—or wholly of grace. As the Apostle has said, "If it is of grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it is of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6)."

You perceive, therefore, that you must not attempt to *blend*the two covenants in any respect. If you cleave in any degree to the covenant of *works*, you can have nothing to do with the covenant of *grace*. If you come not solely, and with your whole hearts, to the Lord Jesus Christ, to be saved by his blood and righteousness, laying aside and renouncing every other hope, you must go back to the covenant of works, and seek for acceptance through it.

But do you not hear the law? Do you not hear how *inflexible*it is in its demands, and how *inexorable*in its denunciations? Alter it you cannot, in any respect. Obey it you must, if you will still found your hopes on it in any measure or degree. Therefore it is your wisdom to adopt the determination of Paul, and to seek henceforth to "be found in Christ; not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9)."

What now befits us in this view of the law? What, indeed, but humiliation and contrition in the deepest degree? We must see how many curses hang over our guilty heads. We must not merely look at our grosser violations of the law, but at our defects: for "the wrath of God is revealed against *all*ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;" and every transgression, whether by commission or omission, whether by excess or defect, will receive its just recompense of reward.

Let it be granted, then, that our lives have been blameless, as far as respects *gross outward*sin. Still, if we judge ourselves by the perfect law of God, our sins will be found more than can be numbered, and greater than can be conceived. When we compare ourselves with some of our fellow-creatures, who trample under foot all the laws of God and man, we appear to be very worthy characters; and such we are in the sight of man; but in the sight of God there is by no means so great a difference between us as we are apt to imagine.

In estimating our character, and weighing our comparative worth, God may see less indeed of *gross*iniquity, but a far more abundant measure of spiritual sins, which are not a whit less hateful in his eyes.

Suppose it all true which the self-applauding Pharisee affirmed, that he had been no extortioner, not unjust, and no adulterer; did he not make ample compensation for this, by his pride, his self-delight, his uncharitableness? Yes, in truth; these weighed as much in the scales of Heaven, as the grosser evils from which he was exempt. Had he tried himself by a just standard, he would have found but little reason for his self-preference and self-applause. He would have seen that his boasted righteousness was as defective as that of the poor Publican: and the only difference between the two, supposing the one to have been as good as he imagined, and the other as evil as was supposed, was, that the*one was a painted sepulcher, and the other a sepulcher without paint*.

I must not, indeed, be understood to say, that gross carnal sins do not add to the criminality of the person in whom they are found; but only, that, supposing one person to abound more in carnal filthiness, and another in heart-sins—the latter, to say the least, has as little reason to glory in himself, or to trust in his own righteousness, as the former. The point to which we must all look for real humiliation is, the defectiveness of our obedience.

Let this be seen, and seen too in all its aggravated character, as against a God of infinite love and mercy; against a Savior who has assumed our nature, and laid down his life for us; against the Holy Spirit, who, by his gracious influences, has striven with us all our days, to guide us aright, and to bring us to repentance. Let it be seen, also, as against light and knowledge, against vows and resolutions, against judgments and mercies; and, further, as *continued*in, for years, without any shame or remorse. Let our impenitence also be marked, and our proud rejection of God's offered mercy in Christ Jesus. Let all this be viewed, and we shall see little reason to value ourselves on not having committed some of the grossest sins: we shall see that *our iniquities have grown up unto Heaven; and that they must sink us into everlasting perdition*, if God does not, in the multitude of his tender mercies, interpose for our deliverance, and make "his grace to super-abound, where our sins have so greatly abounded."

We shall see, that to call ourselves the chief of sinners, is not merely a kind of modest and befitting saying, which, while it sounds well from the lips, needs not be felt in the heart; but that it is a character which belongs to the very best among us; since *the best man in the universe knows more evil in himself than he can know of others*, except where the evils have been made notorious by overt acts. If the law is properly used, the person who thus tries himself by it will see himself exposed to God's heaviest judgments, no less than the most flagrant transgressor in the world: and he will cry for mercy, precisely in the same manner as Peter did, when sinking in the waves, "Save, Lord, or I perish!"

Others, who have not such views of the law, will wonder at him, and say, 'What can you have done, to call for such remorse and fear?' But he knows his own desert before God, and will therefore lie low before him, in the deepest self-abasement.

This, then, is what I would wish you to do. It is for this end that I bring the subject before you. It is for this end that I hold up thus the looking-glass of the law before your eyes, that you may know your true character before God. I would not have it be said of us, as of the Jews of old, that "we seek righteousness, and cannot attain to it, because we seek it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law, [Romans 9:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.31-32)." I wish that it would be a settled principle in all our minds, that "by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified! [Romans 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.20)."

O, if we could but listen to this monitor! If the warnings which he gives us be alarming, they still are beneficial: and it were surely better be warned that our house is built on sand, than that we would be left to perish under its ruins! And were a person who perceived our danger to withhold the warning, he would be justly considered by all as an accessary to our destruction.

I am aware that there has been an aspect of severity about this part of my subject; of severity, which I would gladly have avoided, if it had been compatible with that fidelity which befits me. But I speak to an audience who can distinguish between the harsh anathemas of man, and the authoritative declarations of Almighty God. If, indeed, I have put a harsher sense upon God's word than it manifestly imports, I will be contented that all the blame, which such an inconsiderate proceeding would deserve, shall attach to me. But, if I have spoken only what God himself has authorized and enjoined, and what will assuredly be found true at the last—then let me hope, that the beneficial warning will be kindly received; and that you will be the better prepared for our next subject, wherein a *balm*will be applied to every wound, and a *refuge*opened for every one that would flee from the wrath to come.

To that I look forward, as to a subject far more congenial with my feelings than the terrors of the law. To bring forward the glad tidings of salvation, and to proclaim mercy through the sufferings of our incarnate God, is, I trust, the joy and delight of my soul. From the first moment that I was committed to me to preach the Gospel, "I have determined to know nothing in my ministrations but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." O that in my next sermon I may be enabled to commend Him to you, as a suitable and all-sufficient Savior! And if, through what has been already spoken, any of you be pricked in your hearts, and be stirred up to cry, "What shall we do to be saved?" May the answer, that shall be given you in my next sermon, be accompanied with a blessing from on high, and prove "the power of God unto salvation to every one that hears it, [Romans 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.16)."

***~~#2066~~***

***~~THE SECOND USE OF THE LAW, AS A SCHOOLMASTER TO BRING US TO CHRIST~~***

***~~[Galatians 3:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.24-25)~~***

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

WE are now arrived at the second use of the law, which is very strongly pointed out in the passage before us. The law itself has been explained as spiritual; and as extending to the whole of man's duty, whether to God or man. This, as you have heard, was originally given to man as a covenant of life: and, if man had obeyed it perfectly, it would have given him a title to life. But to man in his fallen state, "that which was ordained to life is found to be unto death."

The first use, therefore, of the law now is, as a monitor, to guard us against adhering to the first covenant.

The second use is as an instructor, to guide us to a better covenant, verse 24. And it is in this view that I am to speak of it at this time.

You will perceive that I exclude from my discussion everything which does not immediately belong to my argument. The subject itself is exceedingly extensive, and might easily be pursued through a great variety of branches, all useful and important in their place. But to prosecute it to this extent would be to weaken the general impression. I wish the whole of what I shall have to offer to be an answer to the question specified in the words before us, "What, then, is the purpose of the law?"

To show what the law is, was necessary of course: so that the exhibition of that was no deviation from my plan, but rather indispensable to the prosecution of it. And my strict adherence to this line, if it appear to leave out much which might enrich the subject, will have this advantage at least, that it will simplify the subject. And, in truth, after having so solemnly prepared your minds for it in the first discourse, I would feel that I were criminally inattentive to your feelings, if I did not labor to the uttermost to keep that alone in view which I then described to be of so much importance.

To open, then, that part of the subject on which I am now entering, I must, show, in the first place,

What we refer to as that better covenant; and then,

How the law, as an instructor, guides us to it.

**First, What do we mean by that better covenant?** What better covenant has God given us? You will naturally say, Let us know, distinctly, what the covenant is? With whom it was made? In what respects it is a better covenant? And, after all, what it has to do with the subject before us?

To these points I will briefly address myself in succession.

*What*the covenant is, the Prophet Jeremiah will inform us:

"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." [Jeremiah 31:31-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.31-33)."

But has this anything to do with us under the Christian dispensation? Yes: twice does the Apostle quote that very passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, [Hebrews 8:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.8-10); [Hebrews 10:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.15-17); expressly declaring, in both places, that it is that very covenant which we, under the Gospel dispensation, are supposed to have embraced.

But *when*, and *with whom*, was this covenant made? It is that covenant which God made with Abraham, when he promised to him, that "in his seed would all the nations of the earth be blessed, [Genesis 18:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 18.18); [Genesis 22:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 22.18); [Genesis 26:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 26.4)." Peter, addressing the Jews of his day, says, "You are the children of the Prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in your seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed! [Acts 3:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 3.25)."

But what have *we*to do with it? Paul tells us, it is the Gospel covenant, whereby we, and every one under the Gospel dispensation, must be saved: "The Scripture," says he, "foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed, [Galatians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.8)."

But in what respects is this a *better*covenant? It is by God himself called "a better covenant:" and well does it deserve that name; since, as he tells us, it is "established upon better promises."

The covenant, so far as it was a *national*covenant, made with the Jewish people, promised nothing but temporal blessings.

The covenant, as made with Adam in Paradise, and with all mankind in him, it promised nothing but upon perfect obedience.

But *the New Covenant engages to supply our every need*. It points out a Savior to us; and makes over to us, not pardon only, but purity; assuring us, that God will send to us his Holy Spirit, to renew us after the Divine image; and to give us, not Heaven only, but also a fitness for the enjoyment of it.

One of its principal provisions is, "A new heart will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you." In a word, the covenant of *works*required everything, and imparted nothing: whereas the covenant of *grace*imparts everything, and requires nothing, except that we would receive thankfully what God offers to us freely, in the Son of his love. (Of course, in the free offers of God I include the new heart, of which I have just spoken, and the entire sanctification of the life as flowing from it.)

I may add, too, that the New Covenant has a *better Mediator*. Moses, the mediator of the covenant of works, could do nothing for his people, but make known to them what God had revealed to him. Whereas our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, is ever living to intercede for us with the Father; and has in himself a fullness treasured up for us, a fullness of all that we ever can stand in need of. In fact, he is not a Mediator only of the covenant, but a "Surety of it, [Hebrews 7:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 7.22)" also. He engages with us for God, and with God for us. With us for God, that "he shall never depart from us to do us good." And with God for us, that "he will put his fear in our hearts, so that we shall never depart from him, [Jeremiah 32:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.40)." This, I say, is the very covenant which he makes with us: and it is from this that we derive all our hopes both of grace and glory. See [Hebrews 10:14-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.14-17).

You will still ask, What, after all, has this to do with the argument before us? I answer, It is the covenant which Paul declares to have been made with Abraham for the benefit of himself and all his believing posterity; and which he therefore calls us to lay hold on, in order that we may be delivered from the curse entailed on us by the first covenant. Hear his own statement, in the passage which on the last occasion we considered: "All," says he, "are cursed by the law:" but "Christ has redeemed us from that curse, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ."

Then, lest we would think that the Abrahamic covenant was superseded by that which was afterwards made with Moses, he observes that it could not be disannulled by any transaction that took place with Moses on Mount Sinai, because only one of the parties that were interested in it was present on that occasion.

Then comes his question, "What, then, is the purpose of the law?" And this he answers by observing, that "it was added because of transgressions, until the Seed would come to whom the promise was made;" or, in other words, that it was to be introductory to a New Covenant, and to prepare men for their admission into it.

Still, however, as there was, in appearance, an opposition between the two covenants, he asks, "Is the law then against the promises of God? No! God forbid!" says he: "for if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has concluded (shut up) all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept (kept in close custody) under the law, shut up unto the faith which would afterwards be revealed. Why the law, so far from keeping us from Christ to be justified by works, was actually our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Hence he concludes, that, "faith being now come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster, but are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

We see, then, what the better covenant is, and wherein its superiority consists; the one being a covenant of *works*, and the other, of *grace*. We see, also, that the covenant of works, though re-published four hundred and thirty years after the covenant made with Abraham, was not intended to supersede the covenant of grace, but to be subservient to it, and to shut up men to it, and to constrain them to embrace it.

I am fearful of obscuring the subject by multiplying citations of Holy Writ. I will, therefore, close this part with merely adducing one passage as explanatory of the whole. Paul, contrasting the two covenants, represents each of them as declaring to us its own terms, precisely in the way that I have done: "Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. [Romans 10:5-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.5-10)."

Having then shown what this better covenant is, I now come to **show how the law, as an instructor, guides us to this better covenant**; or, as my text expresses it, how it is "a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."

It must ever be borne in mind, that the law can never be set aside: in its requirements, and in its sanctions, it is unalterable, even as God himself is. It is *holy*, and can never abate of its commands; it is *just*, and can never mitigate its sanctions; it is good, and must eternally continue so, whatever may become of those who are subject to its dominion. In everything which it requires, its direct tendency is to promote the honor of God, and the happiness of man; and, if it becomes an occasion of unhappiness to any, it is only through their own perverseness in violating its commands.

Being, then, thus immutable, what does it say to us? It says, 'The curse I have denounced, must be inflicted; and the commands I have given must be obeyed. If there be any person found to endure the one for you, and to fulfill the other, and God is pleased to accept him in your be-half, it is well. But without such a deference to my rights, and such a regard to my honor, shall no flesh living be saved. I must "be magnified and made honorable, [Isaiah 42:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.21)" in the eyes of the whole creation, before any child of man shall find acceptance with Him from whom I proceeded, and whose authority I maintain.

The *dialogue form*, which the Apostle makes use of in this passage, has been adopted by the Author in this and the preceding Discourse, in order to compress a great mass of materials into the smallest possible space, and to employ them, as he hopes, to the greatest possible advantage, he is aware that the style is unusual in this species of composition (it is unusual even in his own writings) but if it conveys the truth more forcibly, he hopes it may on this occasion be excused. The same form of dialogue, with all its abruptness, is used also by the Apostle, in the third chapter to the Romans.'

Thus, so to speak, the law puts us upon looking out for a Savior. But where shall one be found that answers to this character, or can by any means sustain this office? *Where shall we find one who is capable of bearing the wrath of Almighty God?*Where shall we find one that is capable of obeying in all things the perfect law of God? And, above all, where shall we find one that can do these things for us?

A mere creature must sink under the wrath of God, for that wrath is everlasting. There can never come a period when that curse shall end, and the cup which the sinner is doomed to drink of shall be exhausted.

So also, if a creature, even the highest archangel, were to subject himself to the control of the law, he could obey only for himself. As a creature, he would be bound to fulfill all that the law has enjoined: he could do nothing beyond what was absolutely required; and therefore, after all, he would be only an unprofitable servant. He could not obey for others: he could not exceed what was due from himself.

The only thing that could give the slightest hope to man, so far at least as has ever been revealed, would be, for God himself to put himself in the place of sinners, and in their nature to suffer and obey for them. But how could this be hoped? How could such a thought as this be entertained, for a moment, in the bosom of God, or in the mind of any of his creatures? Were this possible, there might indeed be a hope; because *the dignity of the sufferer would put a value on his sufferings, sufficient to overbalance the eternal sufferings*of the whole world; and the obedience paid by the Lawgiver himself, who could be under no obligation to obey it, until he had assumed our nature for that very end, would be sufficient to form a justifying righteousness for all the sinners of mankind.

But how can such a thing be contemplated for a moment? How can it come within the verge of probability—I might almost say, of possibility? But, whatever is thought of this matter, the law says, 'I can consent to no lower terms than these. Suppose such a plan sanctioned, approved, and executed by the Almighty himself, then I can consent to the salvation of sinners. Yes, I can not only consent to it, but highly approve of it; because, by having Jehovah himself enduring my penalties, and executing my commands, I shall be infinitely more glorified than I ever could have been either by the obedience or condemnation of the whole human race. Let but such a covenant as this be made and executed on God's part, and I consent that you shall be saved by it; yes, and that you shall receive a weight of glory far beyond what you ever could have received, if you had never fallen.'

Such hints we may suppose to be given by the law. And now we look into the Gospel, to find whether such an idea ever was, or could be, realized. And behold, with what amazement must we see that such a plan has actually been devised and executed by Almighty God! Can it be indeed, that God has assumed our nature, and obeyed and suffered in our stead, and wrought out a righteousness for us, that, being clothed in it, we may stand without spot or blemish before him? Yes, it is true! "God has been manifest in the flesh," and "made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted:" he has also fulfilled the law in its utmost possible extent: he has, moreover, "borne our sins in his own body on the tree," and for our sakes "become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "To redeem us from the curse of the law, he has actually become a curse for us!" Yes, "He, who knew no sin, has become sin for us; that we, who had, and could have, no righteousness, might be made the righteousness of God in him." This point, then, being clearly ascertained, let us hear our divine instructor, and sit at the feet of this heavenly "schoolmaster."

Methinks I hear the law saying to me, 'You have heard the strictness of my demands, and the awfulness of my denunciations: now hear the end for which I have so proclaimed both the one and the other: it has been to show you your need of a Savior; it has been to make you welcome this Savior, and embrace him with your whole hearts! Had I been less strict in my demands, or less awful in my denunciations, you would still have adhered to me, and founded your hopes on me. But I have thundered thus, in order to drive you to despair of ever finding acceptance through me; and to urge you, with all possible speed and earnestness, to lay hold on the hope set before you in the Gospel.'

Let me now suppose one to ask, 'But how shall I go to the Savior? How shall I obtain a saving interest in him? How shall I procure his favor? What would he have me do, in order to recommend myself to him? [John 6:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.28).'

In reply to all these anxious inquiries, our "schoolmaster" gives us this important information: 'You must not attempt to recommend yourselves to him by any works whatever; you must go:

*ignorant*, that you may be enlightened;

*guilty*, that you may be pardoned;

*polluted*, that you may be purified;

*enslaved*, that you may redeemed.

You must carry nothing to him but your sins and miseries; and expect nothing at his hands but as the fruit of his mediation, and as the free gift of God for his sake. You must renounce everything of your own; and desire to "have him made all unto you, your wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that to all eternity you may glory in the Lord alone! [1 Corinthians 1:30-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30-31)."

If you entertain the idea of meriting or earning anything at his hands by your own good works, you will only come back to me, and be dealt with according to the terms proposed by me. You must disclaim all thought of *merit*; and be content to be saved by grace alone, and to receive everything out of the fullness that is treasured up in Christ. For this end, you must trust in him, and live altogether by faith in him. You well know how a branch receives everything from the stock into which it has been engrafted: precisely thus must you receive from him all the blessings both of *grace*and *glory*. You must by faith abide in him: and, by virtue derived from him, bring forth fruit to the glory of his name.

This is a way of salvation both suited to you, and honorable to God. It is suited to you, because it provides everything for you as a free gift: and it is honorable to God, because, while it preserves my honor inviolate, it exalts and glorifies every perfection of the Deity. I charge you, then, to embrace the covenant which Christ has ratified with his blood: exercise faith in him: look to him as the procuring cause of all your blessings. Be not discouraged by any sense of your own unworthiness; but go to him as the very chief of sinners, that you may be made the brightest monuments of his grace. "It was for *sinners*that he came, to call them to repentance!" It was "the lost, and them alone, whom he came to save!" The more deeply you feel your need of him, the more readily will he receive you to the arms of mercy: for his address to persons in your very state is,

"Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest!"

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool!"

"Him who comes unto me, I will never cast out!"

And now, after having heard the advice given by the law, shall I go too far, if I entreat you all to sit at the feet of this schoolmaster, as his disciples? I grant, that there is an aspect of severity about him: but he will teach you aright. He is sent by God himself for your instruction: and all who will obey his dictates shall assuredly be guided into the way of peace. Other instructors, beside the law, you will find in great numbers, who will speak to you in milder terms, and accommodate themselves more to your carnal minds. But O! listen not to them. Many pleasing statements they will give, about the value of good works, and the mercy of God, and about the Savior having lowered the terms of salvation to *sincere obedience*. But they will only deceive you to your eternal ruin. Take their favorite term, of *sincere obedience*: no matter whether it be to the moral law, or to a reduced and mitigated law of their own formation: let it be a law of any kind that can possibly be conceived to have proceeded from God; and then suppose yourselves to stand or fall by your sincere obedience to that law: where is there one among you that ever could be saved?

If this is the standard by which you are to be tried, it has been so from the beginning of your life: and where is there one among us that has from the beginning of his life sincerely striven with all his might to mortify every inclination which his judgment condemned; and to fulfill, to the uttermost, every duty, both to God and man, so far as he was acquainted with it, or might have been acquainted with it, if he had sincerely improved every opportunity of gaining instruction?

Who has from his earliest youth acted up fully to the light that he has enjoyed, and done everything which he knew or believed to be required of him?

Nay, who would dare to stand upon this ground for any one day of his life, and consent that his everlasting doom would be determined by the outcome of such a trial?

Know, then, that these *blind instructors*will, if listened to, betray you to your everlasting ruin!

Some there are, who, "unable to endure sound doctrine," will labor to show, that all which is spoken in the Gospel about faith in Christ means no more than a general belief of his word; and that, after all, salvation is, and must be, in part at least, by the works of the law. But, if any man will say that Christ has either repealed or mitigated, let him show us what law that is which Christ has repealed, or mitigated, and reduced to the standard of human capacity to obey it. But this no man on earth can show.

The law is unalterable, both in its demands and sanctions; and if we will but listen to it as our instructor, it will guide us infallibly to the Savior of the world. It will tell you plainly: 'I cannot save you, either in whole or in part; but the Lord Jesus Christ both can, and will, if you will believe in him. And, if you needed an intercessor with the Father to receive you for Christ's sake, I myself, if permitted to be heard, would become your friend: yes, I, who have denounced so many curses against you, would willingly become your advocate. If allowed to address the Most High, I would say, You yourself, O God, did appoint your Son Jesus Christ to be their Surety: and He has paid to me the utmost farthing of their debt.

Did I demand, that all the curses which the violation of my precepts merited, would be inflicted? they have been borne by him.

Did I require that perfect obedience would be rendered to my commands? it has been rendered by him.

Only admit Him, therefore, as their Surety, and I have nothing to demand at their hands: or rather my demand must be, that those who plead the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ for them, may stand accepted through his righteousness; and may be rewarded with eternal life, precisely as they would have been, if they had themselves fulfilled all that I required of them.

Nay, I would even go further, and ask that they may be recompensed with a higher degree of glory than they ever could have attained by their own obedience; because the obedience and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ their Savior have done infinitely greater honor to me than ever could have been done either by the obedience or sufferings of the whole world.'

Listen, then, I entreat you, to the counsels of this instructor. They are safe: nor can they be resisted, but at the peril of your souls. Only get a clear understanding of that question, "What, then, is the purpose of the law?" and then you will be prepared for all the blessings of the Gospel, and find in Christ all that your necessities require.

An illustration of my whole subject shall now place it in a point of view in which it cannot possibly be misapprehended. O that God may be graciously pleased to open all our hearts, to discern, to embrace, to realize the truth as it shall now be exhibited before you!

We have supposed you all to be condemned by the law; and to be precisely in the condition of the Israelites when bitten by the fiery serpents—incapable of restoring yourselves to health, or of finding any healing balm in the whole universe. What now shall be done? Death is sweeping you off in quick succession; and, ah! where is it bearing *you?*

But for you, who are yet alive, can no remedy be found? Yes! Moses shall point out a remedy; that very Moses, who gave the law, and denounced the curse against all who would transgress it; that very Moses, I say, shall be your instructor and counselor: and "if you believe Moses, you shall believe in Christ."

By God's command Moses erected a brazen serpent; and proclaimed the joyful tidings, that all who would look unto it would be saved. The opportunity was gladly embraced by the perishing multitudes, and the means were instantly crowned with the desired success.

And happy am I to say, that at this very moment is that transaction renewed in the midst of you. You are all dying of the wounds of sin. Not a creature in the universe can render you the least assistance towards a recovery from your perishing condition. But the Lord Jesus Christ is this day "set forth crucified in the midst of you!" and the law itself, yes, the law itself, I say, directs you to Him, as God's appointed ordinance for your salvation. This day does the law proclaim itself as your instructor, "to bring you to Christ, that you may be justified by faith in him." And is this an illustration of *mine*? Is the comparison between the two a mere accidental coincidence? No! the one was intended, by God himself, to be an illustration of the other.

Hear the application of this record, as it was made by our Lord Jesus Christ himself: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him would not perish, but have everlasting life." View, then, the Savior this day erected on the cross; and hear him addressing you in these gracious terms, "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth! for I am God, and there is none else," "no Savior beside me! [Isaiah 45:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.22)."

Thus, then, you see that both the law and the Gospel, if properly understood, speak the same language. Both the one and the other say,

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!"

"All who believe in him are justified from all things!"

"In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

May God Almighty reveal to us all this blessed truth, and give us the sweet experience of it in our own souls! I am sure, that, if our last discourse placed the law in a dreadful view, you cannot now do otherwise than behold it as a most faithful counselor and friendly instructor: and, if it pleases God to accompany his word with power to your souls, you will have reason to bless God for every wound that has been inflicted; and will enter fully into our next discourse, with a determination, through grace, that, *while you flee from the law as a covenant, you will not neglect it as a rule of life*; but will rather "delight in it in your inward man," and aspire after the most perfect conformity to it in the whole of your deportment.

***~~#2067~~***

***~~THE THIRD USE OF THE LAW, AS A RULE OF LIFE~~***

***~~[Galatians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.19)~~***

"What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come."

THE third and last use of the law being now to be contemplated, we shall set before you the law as *a rule to govern us*, when we have embraced the New Covenant. And it is with peculiar pleasure that I enter upon this subject, because there exists at this day, precisely as there did in the apostolic age, a jealousy upon the subject of good works, and a fear lest the free salvation of the Gospel would render men indifferent to them.

You will remember, that Paul's statements gave occasion to men to ask, "Shall we, then, continue in sin, that grace may abound? [Romans 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.1)." And the same thoughts may possibly have arisen in your minds, while I have with all the clearness in my power, shown, that we are not, in any degree whatever, to seek justification by the works of the law, but solely and exclusively by faith in Christ.

I did, indeed, endeavor to guard against such thoughts, by intimating, in the very first instance, that there was a third end and use of the law, namely, to be a rule of life to the believer: but had I been less guarded in this respect, and left this point to be developed afterwards, without any previous intimation of my purpose, I fear that the same objections, as were urged against the Apostle's statements, would have greatly enervated mine, and prevented that favorable reception which I hope, through the tender mercy of God, they have met with in your minds. But I have longed for the present occasion, that I might vindicate the Gospel from the charge of licentiousness; and prove, to the satisfaction of you all, that it is indeed, what the Apostle calls it, "*a doctrine according to godliness.*"

Paul was at all times most anxious to guard against a misconception of his opinions and conduct on account of his neglect of the *ceremonial*law. The one great object of his ministry was, to win souls to Christ. For the advancement of this end, he conformed, in all matters of indifference, to the views of those among whom he ministered: "to the Jews, becoming a Jew; to those who were under the law, as under the law; and to those who were without law, as without law." But, fearing lest these compliances of his might be construed as a contempt of the divine authority, he took care to remove all ground for such an idea, by declaring, that he still considered himself as much bound to obey God as ever. Or, rather, that he felt himself under additional obligations to fulfill all the divine commands, in consideration of the unbounded mercy that had been given to him through Jesus Christ. He had, it is true, neglected the *observances*of the law: but it had not been from any disrespect to God's commands, but because that law was in fact abrogated; whereas the *moral*law was as much in force as ever: and to the last hour of his life he would look upon himself as "under that law to Christ, [1 Corinthians 9:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 9.21)."

This acknowledgment of his comes fully to our point. It shows, that he still regarded the law as a rule of life; and it gives me a fair opportunity,

First, To establish the perpetuity of the law, as a rule of life; and,

Secondly, To enforce its obligations.

**I. In order to establish the perpetuity of the law as a rule of life, let it be remembered that the law is a perfect transcript of the mind and will of God.** It arises necessarily out of the relation which we bear to him and to each other. It did not depend on any arbitrary appointment of the Deity, (except, indeed, so far as the Sabbath is concerned,) but would have been equally in force whether it had been the subject of a particular revelation or not. Allowance, indeed, will, as Paul informs us, be made for those, who, for lack of a revelation, have but very imperfect conceptions respecting the Divine will, [Romans 2:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.14-15); but, wherever that is known, it must be a rule of conduct to man, and will be a rule of judgment to God. No change of circumstances whatever can alter its demands. In whatever situation we are, it must be our duty to love God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves: nor can this law by any means be dispensed with. In truth, God cannot dispense with any part of this law; for if he did, he would authorize men to despoil themselves of his image, and to rob him of his glory.

That the law is still a rule of duty to the people of God, appears from that injunction of Paul, in the thirteenth chapter to the Romans: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for*he who loves another has fulfilled the law*." Then, specifying the duties contained in the second table of the law as essential constituents of true love, he adds, "Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law, [Romans 13:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.8-10)." Consequently, if it is our duty to exercise love, it is our duty to fulfill the law, which is in all respects identified with love.

But to insist on this is needless: for, instead of the law being superseded by the Lord Jesus Christ, it is in his hand more imperative than ever, and comes to us with tenfold obligations to obey it: and this is the point to which I mean to call your particular attention. To say that "we are not without law to God," is comparatively a small matter: the point I am to establish is, that "we are under the law to Christ."

In confirmation of this, I assert that our obedience to the law was contemplated by God himself:

first, in all that Christ did and suffered for us;

next, in his liberating of us from the law as a covenant of works;

lastly, in his admission of us into a New Covenant—the covenant of grace.

**First, our obedience to the law was one great object which our Lord and Savior had in view, in all that he did and suffered for us.** It was not from death only that he came to save us, but from sin. Indeed, he was on that very account "named Jesus, because he was to save his people from their sins, [Matthew 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 1.21)." Hear how plainly this was declared concerning him, even before he came into the world: "Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, when filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us.…to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life, [Luke 1:67-75](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.67-75)." This clearly shows, that, instead of "making void the law, Christ has established" its authority to the very end of time.

And to this agrees the testimony of Paul: "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

And again, expressly adverting to the government which Jesus still maintains over his people, he says, "None of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself: for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's: for to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living! [Romans 14:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.7-8)."

Next I say, that our obedience to the law was a most important end, for which we are liberated from the law as a covenant of works. This is repeatedly asserted by Paul. In the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, he says, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death:" (that is, the Gospel has freed me from the law,) "for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh:" (and now observe for what end)—"that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, [Romans 8:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.2-4)." The law could neither justify nor sanctify us—the Gospel does both: and the very end for which Christ has liberated us from the law, was, that both these ends might be accomplished in us.

To this I will add a passage, which needs no explanation: it is so clear, so precise, so full to the point, that it leaves no doubt upon the subject. Paul, speaking of his own experience, says, "I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God! [Galatians 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.19)." Here you perceive that *it was the law itself which made him dead to the law*. It was so rigorous in its demands, and so awful in its sanctions, that he utterly despaired of obtaining salvation by it; and, in this view, became wholly dead to it. But did he therefore neglect it as a rule of life? Quite the reverse: "Through the law, he was dead to the law, that he might live unto God," and serve him in newness of life.

But there is an illustration of this matter given us by the Apostle, which places it in a still clearer point of view; in a view at once peculiarly beautiful, and unquestionably just. In the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he observes, that, as a wife is bound to her husband by the nuptial contract as long as he lives, and would be justly called an adulteress if she were to connect herself with another man during his life, so are we united in the closest bonds of the law. But, by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his satisfying all the demands of that law for us—its power over us is annulled, and it becomes, from the very moment of our believing in him, dead with respect to us; so that we are at liberty to be united to Christ, and to enter into a New Covenant with him. This benefit, he observes, we derive from Christ.

But for what end? That our obligations to holiness may be vacated? No, by no means; but the very reverse: he conveys this benefit, in order that, in our new-covenant state, we may bring forth that fruit, which we never did, nor could, bring forth in connection with our former husband.

Hear his own words in [Romans 7:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.1-4), "Do you not know, brothers--for I am speaking to men who know the law--that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order *that we might bear fruit to God*."

If there were no other passage in all the Scriptures than this, it would be quite sufficient, not only to establish the point in hand, but to silence, forever, all jealousies respecting the practical intent and tendency of the Gospel.

But I must go on yet further to observe, in the last place, that **our obedience to the law is one of the chief blessings conferred upon us by the New Covenant, the covenant of grace**. You will remember, that the first covenant merely says, "Do this, and live." It condemns for disobedience; but never does anything towards enabling us to obey. But what does God say to us in. the New Covenant? "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law into their mind, and write it in their hearts [Hebrews 8:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.10)." And again, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and to keep my judgments and do them, [Ezekiel 36:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.26-27)." Here, by the very terms of the New Covenant, is obedience to the law infallibly secured; because God himself undertakes to work it in us by the influences of his Spirit. His assured promise to every one that embraces the New Covenant is, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace, [Romans 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.14)."

Hence, then, you see the perpetuity of the law fully established. It is only in its covenant form that it is cancelled: as a rule of duty, it is, as I have before observed, altogether unchangeable: and its authority, instead of being invalidated by the Gospel, is confirmed and strengthened by it: since our obedience to it was, as I have distinctly shown:

first, the end for which Christ came into the world;

next, the end for which he delivered us from the law as a covenant of works;

lastly, the end for which he has brought us into the New Covenant, the covenant of grace.

In answer, therefore, to everyone who doubts the practical tendency of the Gospel, we are prepared to say, with the Apostle Paul, "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid! [Romans 6:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.15)."

Having thus endeavored, with the utmost plainness, to show that we are still under the law to Christ, I come,

***~~In the Second place, to enforce its obligations.~~***

Is the law designed to be a rule to govern us after we have laid hold on the covenant of grace? Then let us use it for that end, without attempting to lower any one of its demands, and with the utmost cheerfulness and zeal. Let us, first, use it for that end. Doubtless, its primary uses must be carefully kept in remembrance.

We must never forget, that its first office is, to convince us of sin, and to show us our undone state, according to the covenant of works. In this view it must produce in us the deepest humiliation, and an utter renunciation of all dependence on our own works, either in whole or in part, for justification before God.

Its next use must be, to drive us to the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may obtain salvation through his meritorious death and passion. There is no righteousness but his, that is commensurate with its demands; and there is no other in which we can ever stand accepted before God. These things, I say, we must ever bear in remembrance; and be careful never to make, in any degree, our obedience to the law a ground of our hope.

But, having this well settled in our minds, we must address ourselves to a diligent performance of all that the law enjoins. It is by this that we are to show ourselves to have experienced a work of grace in our souls: for "we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we would walk in them." If we profess to hope that we have been "chosen of God" and "predestined unto life," shall we make these mysterious truths an occasion of remissness in the path of duty?

God forbid! On the contrary, we must ever bear in mind, that, if we have been chosen of God at all, "we have been chosen that we may be holy, and without blame before him in love;" and if we have been predestined by God at all, we have been predestined "to be conformed to the image of his Son." And if we glory in the finished work of Christ (take notice that I am following the Antinomian into all his strongholds), we must remember what his end was in accomplishing salvation for us: "We have been bought with a price, that we may glorify him with our body and our spirit, which are his."

There are two great errors from which we must keep equally remote; namely,

from legal dependence on our own obedience to the law, and, at the same time,

from an Antinomian contempt of the law's commands.

We must distinguish between the motives and principles by which we are actuated, and which determine the true quality of our actions.

Whatever we do, in order to earn salvation by it, will be rejected of God, and will disappoint our hopes.

But, whatever we do from a sense of duty to God, and with a view to honor the Savior and evince the sincerity of our love to him, will be accepted for his sake, and will receive a proportionable reward of grace. Only take care that your obedience be from faith and love, and not from a vain hope to purchase the Divine favor; and then will you answer the true ends of your *deliverance from the law as a covenant of works, and of your subjection to it as a rule of life*.

In enforcing the obligations of the law, I would next say, Attempt not in anything to lower its demands. We have before shown, that, as a *covenant*, it recedes not from its commands of perfect obedience; no, not in one jot or tittle of its requirements.

And, as a *rule*, its requirements are of equal extent. It enjoins us to love God with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our soul, and all our strength; and to love our neighbor as ourselves: and no lower standard must we propose to ourselves for our daily walk. *We must not be satisfied with the world's standard*; we must not be contented with a round of duties, and the performance of a few kind and charitable acts. "We must die unto sin altogether, and live unto righteousness." We must seek to have "the whole body of sin crucified within us;" and must "delight ourselves in the law after our inward man," and strive to "perfect holiness in the fear of God."*Nothing must satisfy us, but the attainment of "God's perfect image in righteousness and true holiness.*" If the law is our rule, Christ himself must be our pattern: we must endeavor to "walk in all things as he walked," and to "purify ourselves even as he is pure." Nothing short of absolute perfection should satisfy our minds: we would strive to be "holy, as God himself is holy," and to be "perfect, even as our Father who is in Heaven is perfect."

Now, need I say that these efforts are very rarely seen? and that, when seen, they are almost universally discountenanced and discouraged? Cautions in plenty are given, "not to be righteous over-much." But who ever hears the friendly caution, to "be righteous enough?" If we are outwardly decent and moral, we may be as regardless of the state of our souls before God as we please, and no one will warn us of our danger: but, if the love of Christ constrains us to devote ourselves altogether unto him, there is a general alarm respecting us; and nothing is heard but cautions and warnings on every side.

Let it not be imagined that I would recommend anything that savors of fanaticism: so far from it, I would discourage these evils to the utmost of my power: but, if love to God and love to man is, by common consent, as it were, branded with these names, I say, let not any man be deterred from the performance of his duty by any opprobrious names whatever; but let every one aspire after universal holiness, and seek to "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, [Colossians 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 4.12)."

One thing more would I say; namely this: In your obedience to the law, be willing servants. We are not to serve the Lord "grudgingly, or of necessity," but "with a willing heart." What Paul has spoken on this head deserves peculiar attention. He says, "now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held: that we would serve God in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, [Romans 7:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.6)." Here he refers to the same image as before, the dissolution of marriage by the death of our husband; and the consequent termination of those restraints, in which, during his life, we were held.

But what is to be the effect of this liberty? an abandonment of ourselves to sin? No! but an obeying of our new husband, not in the servile way to which we have been accustomed, but with real pleasure and delight, panting after the highest possible perfection both of heart and life. This service we are to account perfect freedom: and we are to live altogether for him, "running in the way of his commandments with enlarged hearts."

Now, "wherever the Spirit is, there is this liberty, 2 Corinthians 3:17." But, alas! how little of this liberty is seen in the Christian world! Instead of panting to attain "the full measure of the stature of Christ," we are satisfied with our own stinted growth; so that, in the course of several years, scarcely any improvement is visible in us! The little we do for the Lord, is rather "from constraint, than willingly." Our *defects*create in us no real humiliation. Our *weakness*stimulates us not to earnest cries for help. Our *inability*to fulfill our duty leads us not to exult and glory in the work of Christ, or to clothe ourselves from day to day with his perfect righteousness. No! of these feelings, respecting which I spoke largely in my first discourse, the generality of professors are wholly destitute; and therefore destitute, because they understand not the law either in its condemning or its commanding power. Ignorant of the law, they are of necessity ignorant of the Gospel also; and, consequently, are strangers to all those high and holy feelings which the Gospel inspires. Be it however remembered, that if, "through the knowledge of the law, we are, as we must be, dead to the law," we shall account it our first duty, and our truest happiness, to "live unto our God."

Before I close my subject, I think you will not deem me presumptuous if I venture to address a few words to my brethren who either are already in the ministry, or are preparing to engage in that sacred office. I think it must strike you, that this subject has by no means that prominence in our public addresses which its importance demands. If it is true, that without the knowledge of the law we cannot understand the Gospel, the neglect of opening the law is most injurious to the souls of men. I know, indeed, that God may, by convincing men of sin, supply that defect; and lead them to a simple reliance on the Savior, even while they are ignorant of the spirituality of the law, and of the uses for which it was promulgated. But still, they cannot be truly enlightened Christians; nor can their faith be so firm as it would be, if they had more enlarged views of the Gospel. But how can we hope that this work of conviction would prevail among our hearers, when we withhold from them God's appointed means of producing it in their souls?

In truth, this accounts, in a great measure, for the inefficiency of our ministrations. In numberless places, during a whole course of years, not so much as a single instance is found of a sinner being "pricked to the heart, and crying out: What must I do to be saved?" Or, if such an instance occurs, it is found only in someone who is condemned by the mere letter of the law. But it would not be so, if the law were preached by us in all its spirituality and extent, and the Gospel were represented as God's only remedy for the salvation of men. A simple exhibition of these truths would reach the heart, and would be accompanied with power from on high. Let me then entreat you, for your own sake, and for your people's sake, to study the law; and to make the use of it which God has especially ordained, even to drive them, like the pursuer of blood, to the refuge that is set before them in the Gospel.

If there are among us any who yet cannot understand this subject, let me next, address them, and entreat that they will not too hastily dismiss it from their minds: for truly, it demands from every man the most attentive consideration.

I know that prejudices do exist, even as they have in all ages existed, against both the Law and the Gospel; against the Law as severe, and against the Gospel as licentious. But, to every one of you I must say, Take heed to this subject: for "it is your life!" In unfolding it to you, I have, with all possible fidelity, "set life and death before you."

Let the law, I beg you, have its first work in convincing you of sin.

Let it then operate effectually to bring you to Christ.

And, lastly, let it serve you as a rule, to which your whole life shall be conformed.

Set not yourselves against it in any one of these views: set not yourselves against it, as too harsh in its covenant form, or too lax in its abrogated state, or too strict in its requirements as a rule: but improve it for all the ends for which it has been given; so shall it work its whole work within you, and bring you in safety to God, to holiness, to glory!

But I trust there are among us not a few who really "know the law," and approve of it in all its uses. And to them, lastly, I would address myself. To them, in particular, I would say, Be sure that you unreservedly give yourselves up to God. Those who enter not into your views, *will judge both of you and of your principles by the holiness of your lives*. Let them see in you what the tendency of the Gospel really is: let them see, that "the grace of God, which brings salvation to you, teaches you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, and soberly, and godly, in this present world."

You will forgive me, if I feel a more than ordinary concern about you. On you the honor of God and his Gospel pre-eminently depends. I am earnestly desirous that you would "walk worthy of your high calling; yes, and worthy of the Lord himself also, unto all pleasing." I would that there would not be a duty either to God or man in which you would be found remiss. Whatever your situation particularly requires, that would be an object of your most diligent attention; that, if a comparison is instituted between you and those who make no profession of religion, you may at least be found to stand on equality with the best among them; and be able to say, "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they exemplary in the whole of their deportment? So am I."

It must never be forgotten, that the duties of the second table are as necessary to be observed as those of the first table: and if there be one among you who would set the two at variance, I must declare my testimony against him, as greatly dishonoring the Gospel of Christ.

But of the great mass of religious characters among you, "I am persuaded better things, though I thus speak." Go on then, I entreat you, and abound more and more in everything that is excellent and praiseworthy: and, in reference to every duty that is required of you, let it be seen that you are "under the law to Christ." This is expected at your hands, and may well be expected: for if you are remiss in these things, then who will be attentive to them? Remember, it is "by well-doing that you are to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:" and never forget, that there is no other way of proving yourselves Christ's disciples indeed, but by doing his will, and keeping his Commandments, [John 14:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.15). [1 Corinthians 7:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 7.19). [1 John 2:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.3-4)."

The reader, after reading these sermons on The Law, is recommended to read those sermons on The Gospel, in [1 Timothy 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.11).

***~~#2068~~***

***~~THE TRUE USE OF THE LAW~~***

**[Galatians 3:21-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.21-26)**

"Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

THE true nature and intent of the moral law is by no means generally understood: and, if the question put by the Apostle into the mouth of an objector, "What is the purpose of the law?" were addressed to the great mass even of considerate Christians, very few among them would know what answer to return to it.

Hence it is that such opposition is everywhere made to the free offers of the Gospel. We have continually the very same contest to maintain against the generality of Christians, as the Apostle had against the Jews. The Apostle preached that the Messiah, the Seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, was come: and that all were now to be justified by faith in him, precisely as Abraham had been two thousand years before.

The Jews maintained, that this could not be the true way of salvation; for that God had given a law to Moses; and that law was of perpetual obligation; and, if we were now to be justified by faith alone, the law would be made void, and had in reality been given to no purpose.

To this the Apostle answers, that the law, which was given to the Jews alone, could not invalidate the promise which had many ages before been given to Abraham and all his believing seed, whether among the circumcised Jews, or the uncircumcised Gentiles; and that there was no such opposition between the two as the Jews imagined; the law being in fact designed to introduce the Gospel with more effect, and to endear it to all, when it would come to be more fully revealed.

This was the state of the question between the Apostle and his opponents; to whom a complete answer is given in the words before us. The question simply was, 'Is there any real opposition between the law as given to Moses, and the promises as given to Abraham?' No! says the Apostle: there is a subserviency of the one to the other; and both the one and the other proclaim to us, in fact, the same salvation—salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and by faith alone.

To make this clear to the comprehension of all, I will distinctly mark what he says respecting,

***~~I. The use of the law—~~***

The law, when originally given to Adam in Paradise, "was ordained to life, [Romans 7:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.10)," and would, if perfectly fulfilled by him, have given him a title to eternal life: but, having been once broken, it is no longer capable of giving a title to life, and is only "a ministry of condemnation and death, [2 Corinthians 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.7); [2 Corinthians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.9)." Had it been possible to have given a law which would have rendered the salvation of fallen man consistent with the Divine attributes, God would never have given his only-begotten Son to take our nature and die for us: the publication of a new law would have been so obvious and so easy, that he would undoubtedly have preferred that, verse 21. But no such law could be given: for, if it required the same as the original law did, namely perfect and perpetual obedience, it was impossible that that would ever be rendered to it by fallen man, [Romans 8:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.3); and, if it required less, it would dispense with obligations, which of necessity exist between the creature and the Creator, and should, in fact, give a license to sin: which it is impossible for a holy God to do. The law then, as given to Moses, was not intended for any such purpose as this. It was intended:

***~~1. To prepare men for the Gospel—~~***

The Gospel is a revelation of mercy through the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God: and that mercy is freely offered to all who will believe in Christ. Previous to the coming of Christ, this mystery was but very imperfectly understood: but the law as published on Mount Sinai was well calculated to prepare the minds of men for the fuller manifestation of it. For it made known to men the true extent of their duty: it showed that we were bound to love God with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our soul, and all our strength; and to love our neighbor in all respects as ourselves. Nothing less than this was to be paid by us from the earliest moment of our existence to our last breath.

Revealing this, it further showed to men the inconceivable depth of their guilt. By this standard are we to be tried every moment: yet in no one moment of our lives have we acted up to it, either towards God or man. On the contrary, we have been at an infinite distance from it, having been altogether engrossed by *self*, and caring nothing either for God or man, any farther than the interests of *self*might he promoted by them.

Thus, not to speak of any particular actions, the whole state and habit of our minds, every day, every hour, every moment—has been as contrary to the law as darkness to light, and Hell to Heaven.

Hence the law proceeds still further to show men their infinite desert of wrath and condemnation. For every single deviation from this perfect standard, the wrath of God is denounced against us; agreeably to that sentence of the law, "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." Consider then our duty as ramified in all its extent, and in one single day our sins against it are more numerous than the stars of Heaven, or the sands upon the sea-shore; and of course, a proportionable weight of wrath and condemnation is entailed upon us.

Such is the light which the law reflects on our state before God: and does it not endear to us the offer of a free and full salvation? Doubtless it does: and for this end it was given, that we might the more thankfully accept the promises made to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

***~~2. To shut men up to the Gospel—~~***

Men naturally go to the law, having no idea of obtaining salvation in any other way than by obedience to its commands. Hence the sinner, when once awakened to a concern about his soul, and sensible that he has not obeyed the law in its full extent, hopes as it were, to be accepted by God on paying a part for the whole. But the law thunders in his ears, 'You must obey me in *all*things.' He then hopes, that the law will accept his repentance for past transgressions, and sincere obedience for the time to come. But the law replies, 'I know nothing of repentance, or of sincere obedience—you must pay me my full demands, and "continue obedient in all things" from first to last. I have stated the extent of your duty; and I have said, "Do this, and you shall live." These are the only terms on which I can offer you anything: if you can not bring perfect obedience with you, it is in vain to come to me—you must seek a remedy elsewhere: for I can afford you none.'

Thus the law, being *inflexible in its demands*, and *inexorable in its denunciations*, compels the sinner to look out for some other way of escape from the wrath to come, and "shuts him up" to that which is revealed in the Gospel: it declares to him, that, as long as he continues to found his hopes on the law, he is, and must be, under its curse: and, just as at the first promulgation of the law, the people, trembling with apprehensions of immediate death, entreated that God would give them a mediator, through whom they might venture to approach him; so now the terrors of Mount Sinai constrain men to look for mercy solely through the mediation and intercession of the Lord Jesus! [Deuteronomy 5:23-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 5.23-28). In this view "the law was to be a schoolmaster to us, to bring us to Christ:" it was by instruction to inform us, and by discipline to constrain us; so that the promises made to us in the Gospel might become available for their destined end.

The law thus viewed, opens to us in all its grandeur,

***~~II. The benefit of the Gospel—~~***

"Before faith came," and while the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer was but darkly and partially disclosed, the law kept men in a state of bondage, like prisoners shut up, and looking forward to a future deliverance. But "when faith did come," and the Gospel was fully revealed, then it appeared what unspeakable mercy God had kept in store for the sinners of mankind: for by the Gospel,

***~~1. We are liberated from the law—~~***

The very instant we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and lay hold on the covenant of grace, we cease to be any longer under the covenant of works. The law, as a covenant, has no longer any power either to command, or to condemn: it is abrogated with respect to us; yes, it is dead: and has no more power over us, or connection with us, than a man who is dead has with the widow whom he has left behind him.

This is not only affirmed by the Apostle, but is illustrated also by this very image. "If," says he, "her husband is dead, the woman is loosed from the law of her husband: so we are become dead to the law and the law is become dead to us, by the body of Christ; yes, we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held [Romans 7:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.1-6)." And this effect is produced by the law itself; as he also tells us in the chapter preceding our text: "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God, [Galatians 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.19);" that is, the law so utterly condemns me, that I can have no hope from it whatever, and am forced, whether I will or not, to renounce all dependence upon it, and to live no longer as one who hopes to earn life for himself, but as one who seeks only to honor and glorify his Redeemer.

Hear the account which Paul gives of this matter in another epistle. Speaking to those who had believed in Christ, he says, "You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel, [Hebrews 12:18-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.18-24)."

In a word, the moment we believe in Christ, "we are no longer under a schoolmaster," or, as it is elsewhere said, "we are no longer under the law, but under grace, [Romans 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.14)."

***~~2. We are brought into possession of all spiritual and eternal blessings—~~***

"We are justified by faith, verse 24;" we are "justified freely from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses, [Acts 13:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.39);" Our "sins, whatever they may have been, are put as far from us as the east is from the west, [Psalm 103:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 103.12);" "nor shall they ever more be remembered against us, [Hebrews 8:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.12); [Hebrews 10:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.17)." Nor is this all: we are brought into the very family of God, and "made the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, verse 26." Nor are we children only, but children of full age, who are "no longer under tutors and governors," but already admitted to the most intimate communion with our God, and enjoying, as far as in this world we can enjoy, the inheritance prepared for us, [Galatians 4:1-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.1-7).

And here we cannot but call your attention in a more especial manner to the *means*by which all these blessings are secured. It is again and again said, that they become ours "by faith in Christ Jesus." There is no other way: it is simply and solely by faith: there is no mixture of works: works, so far from augmenting our title to these things, or contributing to the acquisition of them, will, if wrought for this end, cut us off from all hope of ever coming to the possession of them. So inconsistent with each other are the covenants of grace and of works, that the smallest portion of works utterly excludes grace, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6); and the slightest imaginable dependence on them invalidates all that Christ has done and suffered for us. The instant we blend anything with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we make "the promise of no effect," and "Christ," with respect to us, "has died in vain, [Galatians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.21); [Galatians 5:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2-4)."

***~~And now, in conclusion, let us inquire,~~***

***~~1. Whence is it that there is so much occasion to insist on these truths?~~***

Is it that there is any difficulty in them? No; in all personal matters we find it easy enough to distinguish between a gift and a debt. We are at no loss to make this distinction, if a man, who has never done one thing for us in all his life, claims a reward at our hands. It is to little purpose that he compliments us with an appeal to our generosity: the single circumstance of his founding his hope, though in a small degree, on services which he professes to have rendered to us, especially if, instead of having done us any service, he has all his days been adverse to our will and hostile to our interests, is quite sufficient to cut him off from all hope of receiving the benefits which he expects.

And much more may this be the case when a sinner presumes to prefer a claim of merit before his God. For what is this but the most abominable pride?

Take an illustration, which will serve to place the matter in its true point of view. A prince offers pardon to his rebellious subjects, provided they will sue for it through the mediation of his son, to whom he has committed the whole government of his kingdom. Some apply in the appointed way, and are pardoned: but others say, 'We will not accept of pardon on the terms he offers it: if the king will levy a fine upon us, we will pay it; or, if he will appoint us a service, be it never so difficult, we will perform it: but to stoop to the method which he has prescribed, namely, that of asking pardon through the mediation of his son, is a humiliation to which we will not submit.'

Who does not see, that pride is the principle by which these persons are actuated; and that, if they perish as rebels, it is altogether through their own fault? Know then, that it is pride, and pride alone, that keeps any from seeing the excellency of Gospel salvation. It is pride that makes any so averse to be saved entirely by faith without the works of the law: and, until the proud hearts of men be humbled, the Gospel will always be to them a stumbling-block, and rock of offense. But be it known to you, that, however desirous you may be "to establish a righteousness of your own," you can never do it, but "must submit to the righteousness of God, [Romans 10:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.3)."

***~~2. Why are we so earnest in enforcing them?~~***

If the present life only were concerned, we might be content to let you go on your own way. But on your acceptance or rejection of Gospel salvation depends your happiness both in this world and the world to come. This accounts for Paul insisting so much on this doctrine in his Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians; and for his declaring so repeatedly, that, if they did any work whatever with a view to recommend themselves to Christ for justification, "Christ himself would profit them nothing."

See what he says on this subject respecting his Jewish brethren. He tells us, "What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone! [Romans 9:30-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-32)."

So it will be with all who will not submit to the righteousness of faith. If they would "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they would never be ashamed:" but if, through an ignorant zeal for the law, they will not embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as their only hope, they must inevitably and eternally perish.

This is the reason that, in going through this epistle, we bring the matter before you in such various points of view, and with such a pledge desire to fasten a conviction of it on your minds: and we entreat all to bear in remembrance the importance of the subject, and not to give sleep to their eyes or slumber to their eye-lids, until they have embraced the Lord Jesus Christ with their whole hearts, and made him "all their salvation and all their desire!"

***~~3. Are the promises any more against the law, than the law is against the promises?~~***

The law, as has been shown you, is subservient to the promises, and was given on purpose to make us more earnest in apprehending them, and more simple in relying on them. So the promises in return secure obedience to the law; as Paul has said, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yes, we establish the law, [Romans 3:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.31)." To this truth the whole Scriptures bear witness. "The grace of God which brings salvation, teaches us obedience, [Titus 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.11-12);" and the faith that apprehends that salvation, secures it; for it "works by love," and "purifies the heart," and "overcomes the world."

The state into which we are brought by the promises, precludes a possibility of our living in any willful sin, [Romans 6:1-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.1-7); it would be contrary to the very idea of our being servants of Christ, to render service to that which he so abhors. A spiritual man cannot endure the thought of so grievous an inconsistency, [Romans 6:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.15-16). On the contrary, the promises afford him encouragement to aspire after universal holiness, because, while they set him free from all slavish fears, they assure him of a constant supply of grace and strength proportioned to his necessities, 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Hence, apprehending and living upon the promises, he will "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God, [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.1)." Let this then appear in all our lives: so shall it be seen beyond all contradiction, that, though we build not on our works, we diligently perform them; and that the doctrine we profess is in truth "a doctrine according to godliness."

***~~#2069~~***

***~~BENEFITS AND OBLIGATIONS OF BAPTISM~~***

**[Galatians 3:26-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.26-29)**

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

[Editor's note: We find Simeon's *Anglican theology*expressed in this section to be unbiblical.]

TO enter fully into these words, the whole scope of the Apostle's argument should be duly considered. He has been insisting upon justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law. This, to a Jew, was a most unpalatable doctrine, because it set aside the observance of all those ceremonies which had been ordained of God under the Mosaic dispensation. Hence many, after they had embraced the Christian faith, were still zealous for the law; and desirous of blending the law with the Gospel, as a joint-ground of their hope before God. Persons of this stamp had come among the Galatian converts, and had perverted the minds of many.

Hence the Apostle, in this Epistle to the Galatians, expostulates with those who had been drawn aside, as having acted a most foolish and unreasonable part. "O foolish Galatians! who has bewitched you, that you would not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth as crucified among you?" He then proceeds to reason with them: 'Have you not had among yourselves an evident proof and demonstration that the Gospel which I preached to you is true? The Holy Spirit set his seal to the truth of it, by his miraculous operations: but did he ever, in one instance, so confirm the doctrines opposed to it? verse 2-5. Besides, with my doctrine agree the declarations of God himself; who says, that as Abraham was justified by faith, so by the same faith the whole heathen world shall be justified, verse 6-9.

But to the law no power of justifying is ever ascribed. That can do nothing but condemn: and it is only by pleading what Christ has done and allowed to deliver us from its curse, that any one of us can ever escape its curse, and obtain the blessings which are accorded to us by the Abrahamic covenant, verses 10-14.'

To make this matter clear, he illustrates it by a well-known fact. 'If,' says he, 'a covenant is made between men, it cannot be disannulled, except by the consent of both the parties that are interested in it. But Abraham, and all his believing seed throughout the whole world and to the very end of time, were interested in the covenant made with Abraham. Whereas, in the covenant made four hundred and thirty years afterwards on Mount Sinai, none but Abraham's natural descendants, and a very small portion even of them, were interested: and therefore this latter covenant can never supersede the former, or in any degree change its gracious provisions, verse 15-18. In truth, the Mosaic covenant, so far from superseding that which had been made with Abraham, was intended rather to be subservient to it, and as a schoolmaster, to educate persons for it, and to bring them to a participation of its blessings, verse 19-24. Consequently Christ, with whom, as well as with Abraham, the covenant of grace was made, verse 16, having now come, and fulfilled in our behalf all that was required by that covenant, we, of whatever nation we be, have nothing to do but to believe in him; and then all the blessings of the covenant will become ours. *Being united to him by faith, we shall be regarded as one with him; and be made partakers of all the benefits which he, as our Great Surety, has purchased for*us, verse 25-29.

This is, in few words, the general scope of the Apostle's argument in the chapter before us. But, for the more particular elucidation of the words of my text, I will show,

***~~I. What, in the judgment of charity, we possess, the very instant that we profess ourselves to be Christ's—~~***

The covenant of grace made with Abraham and his seed is that under which we live: and we are admitted to a participation of its blessings now by baptism, as, previously to the coming of Christ, men were by circumcision. To be "baptized into Christ," is to be baptized in the name of Christ; and by baptism, to be initiated into his religion. As the Jews were "baptized unto Moses" by passing through the sea and being sprinkled with its spray, and so became his disciples; so do we, by descending into the water in baptism, or by being sprinkled with it in the name of Christ, become the followers of Christ, [1 Corinthians 10:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.2).

Now, respecting persons baptized into the religion of Christ, compare [Matthew 28:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 28.19) and [Mark 16:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.15-16), the Apostle says, "They have put on Christ." And what are we to understand by this? I conceive it refers, not to any change of garments which was made by persons at their baptism; for we hear of no such custom in the apostolic age: but it refers to the change of garments which was made by Aaron, and all succeeding priests, at the time of their consecration to the priesthood. The persons consecrated to the priesthood were first washed with water, and then had the coat, and the robe, and the ephod, and the breast-plate, put upon them; and were girded with the belt of the ephod; and the mitre, with the holy crown upon it, was put upon their head. "Thus were the priests of old consecrated unto God, [Exodus 29:4-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 29.4-9);" and thus are we, in our baptism, made "a holy priesthood" to the Lord, [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9). [Revelation 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.6).

But, though this gives us a general idea of what is meant by putting on Christ, it falls very far short of the full import of the expression, as used in my text. In another place, the expression is used to signify the putting on the moral character of Christ, [Romans 13:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.14); but here it signifies the putting on of his complete and entire character; so that God may view us altogether as in him, clothed with his righteousness from head to foot, and transformed into his image in righteousness and true holiness, [Ephesians 4:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.23-24).

Now, this the Apostle represents as taking place at our baptism. And, not content with so representing it in some cases, or in many, or in most, or generally in all—he speaks as if this change were absolutely universal, without any exception: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Here is, if I may so express myself, a distributive individuality; by means of which he comprehends every baptized person separately, and without any exception. Yet, in this very epistle, he speaks of some of whom "he stood in doubt, [Galatians 4:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.20)." How, then, are we to understand this? The Apostle here spoke according to the judgment of charity; even as he does in many other places, where he addresses whole collective bodies, and Churches, as "saints, and faithful in the Lord, [Colossians 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.2)."

And I cannot but think, that in this passage we have a complete justification of the language used by our reformers in the baptismal service. After having baptized any child, we are there taught to return thanks to God in these words: "We yield you hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it has pleased you to *regenerate*this infant with your Holy Spirit, to receive him for your own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into your holy Church."

Now this strikes many as too strong; and they scarcely know how to utter it before God. I grant that it is strong: but is it stronger than the Apostle's language in my text? No, not in the least: and if it is said that the prayer in our Liturgy refers to each individual separately; I answer, so does the Apostle's language also: for it is equivalent to saying to every individual of the Christian Church, 'Have you been baptized? Then you have put on Christ: for as many as have had the sacrament of baptism administered to them, have been made partakers of this benefit.'

But, as strong as this language is, the Apostle is not content: for he goes on to say, that, in the attainment of these exalted privileges, there is no distinction of persons whatever; none arising from nation, or rank, or gender; as there was, to a great degree, under the legal dispensation: "There is neither Jew nor Greek," says he; "there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female: but you are all one in Christ Jesus," so that, inasmuch as all, without exception, are baptized into one body in Christ; all, without exception, enjoy the benefits conferred by that ordinance.

Let me not, however, be mistaken. I do not mean to say that the Apostle's words are to be taken strictly in this unlimited extent: but I mean to say, that he spoke thus, according to the judgment of charity, respecting those who had been consecrated to God in baptism; and that our reformers studiously followed the Apostle, both in his spirit and language: and that, if we do not complain of the Apostle, or refuse to read his words, neither ought we to complain of our reformers, or refuse to use their words; when their only fault has been, if fault it may be called, in adhering so closely to the example and the language of an inspired Apostle.

I make not these observations wantonly, to provoke controversy; but in a spirit of love, with a view to satisfy the minds of any, if such there be among us, who have been stumbled in any respect at the expressions referred to in our baptismal service. And I shall think my pains well bestowed, if I may produce in any scrupulous mind the peaceful conviction which the foregoing thoughts have imparted to my own bosom. In this passage, precisely as we in our Baptismal Service, the Apostle uses distributive individuality. If a person wishes to prosecute this subject further, he may compare the first answer in our Catechism with [Romans 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.4); where the Apostle's language is the evident ground-work of that which our Reformers have used.

If it is thought that the foregoing observations are liable to abuse, they will be found effectually guarded by the Apostle himself, who proceeds to show,

***~~II. What in reality we possess, when once we become really Christ's—~~***

"If we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Now, let us, for a moment, return to the Apostle's argument. He shows, *that Christ being the Seed to whom the promises in the Abrahamic covenant were made, all who are in Christ must, of necessity, inherit those promises*: and that, as Abraham partook of those promises simply by faith, while yet he was in an uncircumcised state, so all his believing posterity also are entitled to a participation of them simply by faith, without any legal observance whatever.

***~~Now, by believing in Christ, we become perfectly one with Christ—~~***

This is affirmed in my text: "We are all one in Christ Jesus." It is also frequently declared in other places. I will specify one, where the union which is formed with Christ in baptism is represented as equivalent to that which exists between the head and members of the same body; so that the persons baptized are actually called by his very name, as being altogether identified with him: "As the body is one, and has many members; and all the members of that body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ;" that is, so also is the Church of Christ. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free." "We are indeed many members—yet are we but one body, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13." Thus it appears, that, inasmuch as we become one with Christ by faith in him, we become in and with him the seed of Abraham, and heirs of all the promises that were made to him.

***~~And being united unto Christ by faith, we need nothing to be superadded to us by the works of the law—~~***

The natural descendants of Abraham, as such, have no title to these benefits: for "all are not Israel who are of Israel; neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children;" for it was said to him, "In Isaac shall your seed be called: that is, those who are the children of the *flesh*are not the children of God: but the children of the *promise*are counted for the seed, [Romans 9:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.6-8)." Now, by union with Christ we become the children of promise, and consequently heirs of all that God has promised.

But how is this union effected? It is effected simply by faith. No work of the law can contribute to it. Even if we were of Abraham's natural posterity, it would avail us nothing: nor, if we were to keep the whole law, would it avail us anything. We must believe in Christ, and by faith be made one with him; and then the benefits are ours: nor shall all the powers of darkness prevail to rob us of them. Only let these two things be remembered, and our whole argument will be clear:

First, no lack of external privileges can deprive us of these benefits;

next, no observances whatever can augment our title to them, if only we believe in Christ: for "If we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

***~~Now let me address myself,~~***

***~~1. To those who are Christ's in profession only—~~***

You perceive, that, as "baptized into Christ," you profess to have "put on Christ." Now, then, permit me to ask, have you ever felt your need of Christ? Have you ever been conscious of the nakedness of your soul by reason of sin; and of *the utter insufficiency of the fig-leaves of your own righteousness to cover your nakedness*; and of the indispensable necessity of your being clothed in Christ's righteousness, in order to your acceptance before God? Have you, under a deep sense of your need of his righteousness, gone to him, and apprehended him, and put him on by faith? and does all your hope of happiness in the eternal world arise from this thought, that *God views you, not as you are in yourselves, but as you are in Christ, clothed from head to foot with his unspotted robe, and therefore standing without spot or blemish in the sight of the heart-searching God?*

Let but conscience return a candid answer to these inquiries, and you will have a perfect insight into your real state before God. You will then see, that, though baptized into Christ, you have never really availed yourselves of your privilege to "put him on." You are in the state of a widow, who, though entitled to a certain portion of the estate of her deceased husband, neglects to take out administration according to law: she cannot turn any part of the estate to her own account; and must perish with hunger, even as if she had no title whatever to the estate, if she continue to neglect the appointed means of coming to the possession of it.

Just so, you must perish under the guilt of all your sins, if you neglect to put on Christ by faith, and to cover yourselves with the robe of his unspotted righteousness. You may be as observant of the law as ever Paul was in his unconverted state: but yet will you perish for ever, as he also would have done, if you apply not to Christ, that you may "be found in him, not having your own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in him."

As for your baptism, it will avail you nothing without this: for he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God, [Romans 2:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.28-29)." On the other hand, let me say, that if only you will believe in Christ, though you were the most ignorant of Gentiles or the most abandoned of sinners, you would be accepted in him, and be made partakers of all his blessings, both of *grace*and *glory*.

***~~2. To those who are Christ's in reality and truth—~~***

I trust there are many such among you. And what shall I say to you? What but this: Survey the covenant which was made with Abraham, and all the promises contained in it; and say, 'All these are mine.' Survey all that Abraham ever possessed, or possesses at this moment at the right hand of God; and then say, 'As Abraham's seed by faith, and Abraham's heir, I am entitled to all of this.' Go further still, and survey all that Christ himself ever enjoyed, or at this moment enjoys, as the promised Seed of Abraham, and the great Heir of all; and then say, 'All this also, so far as I am capable of enjoying it, is mine! God is my God, even as he is Christ's, [Genesis 17:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 17.7) with [John 20:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 20.17). Christ's throne is my throne: Christ's kingdom is my kingdom; Christ's glory is my glory; for "the glory which God has given him, he has given me [Revelation 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.21). [John 17:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.22)."

What then shall I do, to show my sense of the benefits conferred upon me? This will I do, to the utmost of my power: I will "put on Christ:" I will put him on daily; so that God shall never see me but as I am in him, covered with the robe of his righteousness; nor shall my fellow-creatures ever see me but as possessing "the very mind which was in Christ, [Philippians 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.5)." I will "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," even as a man puts on his garments. This is the precise import of [Romans 13:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.14) and refers to the moral image of Christ; so that all who see me shall say that I resemble him. I will, God helping me, be "a living epistle of Christ, that shall be known and read of all men, [2 Corinthians 2:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.2-3);" so that all may know how he walked when on earth, and how he wills that we would walk, 1 [John 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 2.6).

This, my beloved brethren, is the true way to prove yourselves Christ's believing people; and this will bring down to you a Heaven upon earth!

***~~#2070~~***

***~~THE TIME AND MANNER OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION~~***

***~~[Galatians 4:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.4-5)~~***

"When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

THE advantages which we as Christians enjoy above the Jews are exceedingly great. The Jewish Church was like an heir to a large estate during the years of his minority: he has indeed bright prospects before him; but at present he receives no more than what his guardians judge necessary for his use, and suited to his condition. "He, in fact, differs nothing from a servant, though he is lord of all:" for he is altogether "under the control of tutors and governors, until the time appointed by his father," whose possessions he is to inherit.

We, on the contrary, are like the same person when arrived at full age, having perfect liberty from servile restraints, and entering into the complete enjoyment of the inheritance, to which by our Father's will we are entitled.

In this view Paul himself has illustrated the subject in the chapter before us. Having in the preceding, verses described the state of the Jewish Church, he declares, in the words of our text, the superior privileges which, through the incarnation of the Son of God, we enjoy.

To bring the whole subject under your consideration, it will be proper to notice the time, the manner, and the end of our Savior's incarnation.

***~~I. The time of our Savior's incarnation—~~***

It may seem strange that, when God had promised to send his Son into the world, he would delay the execution of that promise four thousand years. But *it does not befit us to sit in judgment upon God's proceedings; it is sufficient for us to know that he cannot err*. But, in relation to the point before us, we may observe, that the time when our Lord came into the world, was,

***~~1. The time fixed in the Divine counsels—~~***

When the promise of a Savior was given to our first parents, nothing was specified respecting the *time*. Hence Eve (as it would seem) imagined that her first-born child was he: for she named him Cain (which signifies getting); intimating, that "she had gotten a man from the Lord," or rather, that *she had gotten the man, the Lord*, [Genesis 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.1). Nothing seems to have been declared concerning the time of the Messiah's arrival, until it was revealed to Jacob, that "the scepter would not depart from Judah until Shiloh would come, [Genesis 49:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 49.10);" and it is remarkable, that a separate jurisdiction did depart from all the other tribes several hundred years before Christ's advent; but that Judah retained it, in a measure, even during the captivity in Babylon; and never completely lost it, until Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the whole Jewish polity was dissolved.

After the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, it was revealed to the Prophet Haggai, that the Messiah would come while that temple was standing; and by his presence in it would add greater glory to it, than the former temple, with all its magnificence and peculiar appendages, possessed, [Haggai 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Haggai 2.7); [Haggai 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Haggai 2.9).

But that which marked the period with most precision, was the prophecy of Daniel, which declared, that in seventy weeks (of years), or four hundred and ninety years, from the command given by Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem, the Messiah would be cut off, [Daniel 9:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24-25). This determined the time with such accuracy, that the expectation of the Messiah's advent was very general among the Jews, when our Lord made his appearance upon earth.

Thus the fullness of the time was come, because it was the time ordained by God in his eternal counsels, and made known to the world by his holy prophets.

***~~2. The fittest time—~~***

If our Lord had come into the world at an earlier period, several valuable purposes would either not have been answered, or not in so eminent a degree. By the delay, there was abundant proof given, how little could be done by reason, with all its improvements; or by the law, with all its sanctions; or by the most signal judgments and mercies.

Reason had attained its summit. The learning of Greece and Rome had left nothing to be added for the perfecting of the human intellect. Yet what did all their boasted philosophy effect? Were the habits and dispositions of men meliorated? Was the dominion of sin broken, or virtue made more generally prevalent throughout the world? Read the account which Paul gives of the heathen world; and judge, [Romans 1:22-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.22-32).

God has been pleased to republish his law, in a way calculated to awe his people, and secure their obedience to it. He had enforced it with the most solemn sanctions; and had himself written it on tables of stone, in order that it might not any more be mutilated and forgotten, as it had been when left to the uncertainty of oral tradition. And did this succeed? No. The Jew had nothing to boast of above the Gentiles. Paul draws their character also, and shows that they, with all their advantages, were as far from God and righteousness as the heathen themselves, [Romans 2:17-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.17-29).

The interposition of the Deity had also been displayed in a visible series of mercies and judgments, correspondent to the moral conduct of his people. Not only had thousands and tens of thousands been struck dead at a time for some great offense, but even the whole nation were sent into a miserable captivity for seventy years. On the other hand, their restoration from captivity had been so miraculous, as evidently to bear the stamp of Omnipotence upon it. These things led the Jews to renounce idolatry: but how far they prevailed to introduce general habits of piety and virtue, may be seen in the awful unanimity which prevailed among them in rejecting and crucifying the Son of God.

No fitter time therefore could have been chosen for the sending of this last remedy, than when all other remedies had been fully tried, and their inefficacy had incontrovertibly appeared.

The next thing to be noticed respecting the incarnation of Christ, is,

***~~II. The manner of our Savior's incarnation—~~***

Though Christ was God equal with the Father—yet in his mediatorial capacity he acted as the Father's Messenger or Servant. The Father sent his Son,

***~~1. "Made of a woman"—~~***

This expression would have been superfluous if applied to any mere man; but, as applied to the Lord Jesus, it is peculiarly important. Our adorable Savior was not born like other men; but was formed in the womb of a pure virgin by the operation of the Holy Spirit: and this was necessary on many accounts.

If Christ had been born in the ordinary way of generation, he would have been comprehended in Adam's natural posterity, and would therefore have been involved in the same curse as all others are on account of the first transgression: for "in Adam all died;" and "through his disobedience many were made sinners," even all who were represented by him as their covenant-head. Moreover, he would have been corrupt, as all others are; for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" But, not deriving his existence from man, he could not be ranked among the sons of Adam; and, being formed by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, he was perfectly immaculate.

This miraculous mode of conception and birth was farther necessary, in order to fulfill the prophecies: for in the very first promise that announced God's gracious intentions to the world, it was said, that "the Seed of the woman (not of the man, but of the woman) would bruise the serpent's head, [Genesis 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.15)." It had afterwards been more plainly declared, that "a virgin would conceive, and bear a Son, whose name would be called Emmanuel," God with us! [Isaiah 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 7.14). [Matthew 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 1.23).

Hence the expression in the text marks at once, that Christ was fitted for his mediatorial office; and that he is the very person fore-ordained from the foundation of the world to sustain and execute it.

***~~2. "Made under the law"—~~***

Not being represented by Adam, and not inheriting his defilement, Christ was not under the curse of the law; but, being born of a Jewish parent, he was under the authority of the law, as well the ceremonial as the moral. The law was to him, as it was to Adam in Paradise, a covenant of life and death. The covenant made with Adam was for himself and all his natural posterity: that which was made with Christ, was for himself and all his spiritual seed.

Now, Adam, by violating the covenant, had entailed a curse on all his descendants. To remedy this evil, two things were to be done: the curse due to us was to be endured; and a new claim to Heaven was to be established for us. For these two purposes Christ was fitted, when he was sent into the world. He was sent "made of a woman only," that, not being himself obnoxious to the curse of the law, he might bear the curse for us; and that, fulfilling all the demands of the law, he might "bring in an everlasting righteousness," which would be imputed to us, and placed to our account, [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24). [Romans 3:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.21-22).

If we attend to the various circumstances of his life and death, we shall find that *he actually fulfilled the law in every particular*. He fulfilled the ceremonial law both actively and passively: actively, by submitting to circumcision, by attending the stated feasts, and by complying with the Mosaic ritual in all its parts: he fulfilled it also passively, by accomplishing everything which was there prefigured, and by exhibiting in himself the substance of everything which the Mosaic ritual had shadowed forth, [Colossians 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.17).

He fulfilled also the moral law, obeying it in its utmost extent, insomuch that not a spot or blemish could be found in him. In short, as "it became him to fulfill all righteousness," so he did fulfill it; and, being "made under the law," he resigned not his breath until he could say in reference to all that the law required of him, "It is finished! [John 19:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 19.30)."

The incarnation of our blessed Lord remains yet further to be considered, as it respects,

***~~III. The end of our Savior's incarnation—~~***

We may say in general terms that he was sent,

***~~1. To redeem us from guilt and misery—~~***

The Jews alone were under the ceremonial law, and therefore they alone can be said to have been delivered from the yoke which that law imposed upon them. But the whole human race are under the moral law: they are under it as a covenant, which, having been once violated, denounces only its curses against them, without affording them the smallest hope of mercy, [Romans 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.19). [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10).

Now the Lord Jesus Christ came to redeem us from the law; and to establish a New Covenant for us, which by embracing, we are released from the covenant of works, and brought into a perfectly new state. This New Covenant offers us life upon totally different terms from those which were proposed under the Old Covenant: the Old Covenant said, "*Do*this and you shall live!" The New Covenant says, "*Believe*on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, [Romans 10:5-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.5-9) with [Acts 16:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.31)." The very instant we lay hold on the New Covenant, the Old Covenant is cancelled with respect to us. It cannot condemn us, because its penalties have been inflicted on our Surety. It cannot command us, because we are not under its jurisdiction. As a rule of duty, it retains its authority; but, as a covenant, it is altogether abrogated and annulled, [Galatians 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.19). [Romans 7:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.1-4). Thus through the incarnation and death of Christ we are redeemed from the condemnation we have merited by our past transgression of the law, and from all obligation to stand or fall by the terms which that law prescribes.

***~~2. To exalt us to happiness and glory—~~***

Our blessed Lord had yet higher ends in view when he became incarnate. He came to restore us to all the blessedness from which we had fallen. By creation we were children of God: but, when sin entered, that relation ceased, and we became "children of the devil." This being our state, Christ came, that through him we might again return to the family of God. Though we are by nature strangers and aliens, we may receive through him the adoption of sons, and be regarded by God as dear children. We are expressly assured that this privilege is given to all without exception who believe in Christ, [John 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.12). What is implied in this privilege, the Apostle states in the two verses following the text. He specifies both the present and the future benefits of this adoption.

In *this*world, instead of having any occasion to dread the wrath of God, we may look up with filial confidence to him, crying, "*Abba, Father!*" and may expect from him all that care, and love, and mercy which are suited to the relation of a father.

In the *eternal*world, we shall be raised to such dignity and glory as no words can express, no imagination can conceive. "Being sons, we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ!" Whatever God or Christ possess either of happiness or glory, shall be possessed by us, according to the degree of our fitness for it, and the measure of our capacity to enjoy it.

"This honor have all the saints;" and that they might enjoy it in its fullest extent, was the design of God in sending his dear Son into the world.

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. The folly of adhering to the law—~~***

Men, in seeking salvation by the works of the law, have no idea what folly they are guilty of. What would we think of a man, who, when offered an estate which had been purchased for him at an immense price, would decline accepting it as a gift, and would prefer the making a stipulation to earn it, and that too by labors which a thousand men were not able to perform? Yet that would be wisdom when compared with a rejection of the Gospel, and a seeking of salvation by the works of the law; because it is impossible for fallen man to be saved by the covenant of works: and, if Christ had not redeemed us from that covenant, we must all have perished together.

Will any of you then be so mad as to adhere to that covenant, now that God has sent his own Son to redeem you from it? You think indeed by this to show your zeal for good works; but it is a zeal which is not according to knowledge, [Romans 10:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.2-3); and a zeal which will only leave you, as it left the self-righteous Jews, destitute of any part in the salvation of Christ, [Romans 9:30-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-32)." We would not discourage your zeal for good works: we only wish to give it a right direction. Obey the law; but obey it with proper views. Renounce your dependence upon it as a covenant of works, and seek salvation by faith in Christ. Then shall you receive that spirit of adoption, which will make the service of God to be perfect freedom, and afford you ample scope for your most active exertions.

***~~2. The blessedness of receiving the Gospel—~~***

What an astonishing transition does that soul experience, which is delivered from the terrors of Mount Sinai, and brought into "the liberty of the children of God!" From being harassed with the dread of God's wrath, and impelled by servile fears to irksome, unsatisfying, ineffectual labors, *how delightful to behold the face of a reconciled God and Father, to feel a holy boldness and confidence before him, and to anticipate the joys of Heaven!*This is not a picture which is drawn by a warm imagination: it is a reality; it is the experience of thousands; it is in a greater or less degree known to all who believe in Christ. Seek then, my brethren, this happiness. You can easily conceive the difference between the labors of a slave under the lash of the whip, and the services which an affectionate child renders to an affectionate parent—you can see that even at present their states are exceeding different. Such is the difference between those who are under the law, and those who embrace the Gospel.

But what will be the difference hereafter? "Now, believers are the sons of God: but it does not yet appear what they shall be: but we know that, when they shall see Christ in glory, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is, [1 John 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.2)." Let all of us then believe in Christ, that "we may see the good of his chosen ones, and rejoice in the gladness of his nation, and give thanks with his inheritance, [Psalm 106:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 106.5)."

***~~#2071~~***

***~~THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION~~***

***~~[Galatians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.6)~~***

"Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, *Abba, Father!*"

IF we were to judge by the exterior of men's lives, we would be ready to think that Christianity had done but little hitherto for the world: for it must be confessed, that, of those who profess our holy religion, the greater part differ very little from heathen. But then it must be recollected, that there is much wrought by the Gospel, which, though to a certain, degree visible in its effects, is seen clearly only by God himself. There is in every one, who receives the Gospel aright, a change, both in his state before God and in the secret habit of his mind. From an enemy to God, he is made a friend and a son; and from serving God by constraint, as a slave, he comes to him with a spirit of adoption, as a beloved child. Now, the acts of this person may be, in many respects, what they were before; so that one who looks only on the outward appearance, shall see no great difference between him and others: but God, who has made all this difference, discerns it; and appreciates the obedience that is paid to him, not according to the mere act, but according to the motive or principle from which it flows. Now, taking this view of Christianity, we must say, that it has been, and yet is, productive of incalculable good: for still, as well as in the apostolic age, God begets sons to himself by means of it; and "when they are made sons, he pours forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

In illustration of these words, I will show,

**I.** The relation which every true Christian bears to God—

Every Christian, from a rebel and an enemy, becomes "a son."

In this we have the advantage of those under the law—

The Jews, though God's peculiar people, were not his sons, but his servants: or, if we call them his sons, (for doubtless he was a Father unto them,) still they were only as "minors, who differed very little from servants." They were under severe and burdensome restraints: they had but a small portion of their inheritance in actual enjoyment; and they performed their duties altogether in a servile spirit, verse 1-3. But under the Gospel we are regarded as adult sons, who are freed from those restraints, and enjoy a spirit of liberty in the whole of our life and conduct. This is not only affirmed in our text, but taken, as it were, for granted, and assumed as the ground of those further blessings which are bestowed upon us.

And to this we are introduced by our Lord Jesus Christ—

He has redeemed us from that bondage in which we were once held. Though, as Gentiles, we have never been bound by the ceremonial law, we have, of necessity, been subject to the moral law, which is equally binding on every child of man: and under that we have been exposed to the most tremendous curses for our violations of it. But the Lord Jesus Christ, by his obedience unto death, has both fulfilled its demands, and suffered its penalties, for us; and has thus freed us from it as a covenant, and has brought us into a better covenant, the covenant of grace. Hence it is that we receive a Spirit of adoption: for, in this better covenant, God grants all the blessings of salvation to us freely, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; and, as soon as ever we believe in Christ, admits us into his own family, as his beloved children This the Apostle carefully marks, by using the Hebrew word for Father, as well as the Greek; showing thereby, that whether we be Jews or Greeks, we are placed on the same footing by the Gospel. Thus are we brought to God in the relation of sons, and have all the benefits of children conferred upon us.

But that which we are chiefly to notice, concerning the Christian, is,

**II.** The privileges, which, by virtue of this relation, he enjoys—

The Spirit of Christ is sent forth into his heart—

The Holy Spirit is here, as in many other passages of Scripture, called, "the Spirit of Christ [Romans 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.9). [1 Peter 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.11)." Not that we are to conceive of the Godhead as consisting of persons of unequal majesty and glory; for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are in glory equal, and in majesty co-eternal. But each person in the ever-blessed Trinity sustains a distinct office in the economy of redemption; the Father sending the Son to work redemption for us; and the Son sending the Holy Spirit to apply that redemption to us. It is in their official character alone that this subordination consists; and, agreeably to this distinction, we must go to the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit; and expect blessings from the Father in the very channel by which we gain access to him [Ephesians 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.18). Now, if we go to God in this way, he will send his Holy Spirit into our hearts as a Spirit of adoption; giving us thereby,

**1.** Liberty of access to him—

The Jews dared not to draw near to God within the limits that were assigned them, whether on Mount Sinai, or in the temple. But, at the death of our blessed Lord, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, to intimate to us, that now there was "opened for us a new and living way into the holiest of all," even for every child of man [Hebrews 10:19-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.19-22); and that the nearer we came to God's mercy-seat, the more certainly we would find acceptance with him.

**2.** Boldness to spread our wants before him—

To the Jews there were many things which, however they might desire them, they dared not ask. Korah and his company were consumed for affecting the priesthood, and presuming to offer incense to the Lord. But to our requests no limit whatever is assigned, provided they be in accordance with God's will, and have a tendency to advance his glory. With these obvious and necessary distinctions, we may "ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us:" however wide we open our mouths, God will fill them. If we are "straitened at all, it is in our own affections;" we are not straitened in God: for he is both "able and willing to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can either ask or think."

**3.** Confidence in his care—

A servant may hope for kind attentions from his master in a day of necessity, though still to a very limited extent; but a son is assured, that whatever relief his father can afford him shall be readily bestowed. His necessities may be great, and his troubles of long continuance; but he has no fear that the tender sympathy of his father shall fail. Now this is what "a Spirit of adoption" gives to every true Christian. "He knows in whom he has believed; and that he is both able and willing to keep that which he has committed to him." He knows not, indeed, how God shall interpose for him, or when: but he is persuaded that "God will never leave him nor forsake him;" but "will make all things work together for his ultimate good," and "cause his light and momentary afflictions to work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Hence, without doubting of a happy outcome to his afflictions, "he casts his care on God, who cares for him."

**4.** An assured expectation of his inheritance—

Of this a servant can have no hope. But a son knows that he has a title to his father's inheritance; and that his father has assigned it to him in his will. But stronger far is the Christian's assurance of his title to Heaven, and of his ultimate possession of it. God has promised to him, not grace only, but glory also; and has begotten him to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for him, who is also kept by the power of God for it. And who shall rob him of this inheritance? "Who shall separate him from his Father's love?" He can look on the innumerable hosts of men and devils, and boldly defy them all [Romans 8:34-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.34-39). The Spirit of adoption, which enables him to "cry, Abba, Father," assures him of the victory, and is to him a pledge of his future glory.

Observe—

**1.** How little is the true nature of Christianity understood among us!

Men conceive of Christianity as a system of restraints; or, at best, as a system of doctrines and duties. But, though it partakes of all these things, it is in reality a system of privileges: it "takes men from the dunghill, to set them among princes;" and "translates them from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son." Contemplate Christianity in this view; as taking "strangers and foreigners; and not only bringing them into the household of God," but making them "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty." Well might John express his wonder, saying, "Behold, what manner of love is tills with which the Father has loved us, that we would be called the sons of God!" Truly, this is the light in which we would view the Gospel; and this is the end for which we would receive its gracious declarations.

**2.** What enemies to themselves are the unbelieving world!

It is to bring you to this very blessedness that we preach unto you the Gospel of Christ. For this we set forth all the wonders of redeeming love. For this we invite you to come to Christ, and believe in him. It is not to make you melancholy, as foolish people imagine; but to make you blessed in the enjoyment of your God and in the possession of his glory. Why then will you put these things far from you? Why will you pour contempt upon them, as if they did not deserve the attention of any considerate man? Be assured, that, in rejecting the salvation offered you in the Gospel, you are your own enemies—you rob yourselves of happiness, of which not all the universe could deprive you; and plunge yourselves into misery, which all the universe would be unable to entail upon you. Tell me, is it so light a matter to he sons of God, that you will despise it; and to have a sweet sense of this sealed by the Holy Spirit upon your soul, that you will reject it? Ah! who can make you amends for the loss of these privileges; or console your minds, when they are irrecoverably placed beyond your reach? Be wise, I beg you; and seek these blessings, before they are for ever hidden from your eyes.

**3.** How earnestly would we hold fast the blessings thus accorded to us!

Great as these blessings were, the Galatian Christians were soon prevailed on to abandon the possession of them, and to go back again to the bondage in which they had formerly been held. And the same disposition remains in us. We all have a measure of servility in our minds; and are ready to bind on ourselves burdens from which Christ has made us free. Legal hopes, legal fears, legal endeavors, are quite in consonance with our depraved hearts. But do not dishonor our blessed Lord by indulging such propensities as these: strive rather to get rid of them, and stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made you free. Then will you find the service of your God to be perfect freedom; and the enjoyment of him, on earth, a foretaste of that complete fruition of him that awaits you.

***~~#2072~~***

***~~MINISTERS LABORING IN VAIN~~***

***~~[Galatians 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.11)~~***

"I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain."

MINISTERS are, in the Scriptures, compared to gardeners. Now, no one can doubt, for a moment, what the object is of those labors which the gardener pursues. Whether he prosecute the initiatory work of manuring and plowing his ground, or cast upon it, and harrow in, the seed, every one knows that he looks to the harvest, as the compensation of his toil: and so far as the produce abounds, he considers himself as well repaid; but so far as it fails, he regards himself as having labored in vain. Thus a faithful minister rests not satisfied with having discharged his duty: he looks for the effects of his labors in the conversion of souls to God, and in the salvation of his fellow-men. If, in these respects, his ministrations are crowned with success, "he sees of all his travail, and is satisfied." But if the people to whom he ministers remain in a state of ignorance, or, while they profess to have received the Gospel, they walk unworthy of it, he feels constrained to adopt the language of Paul, and to say, "I am afraid of you, that I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."

Now I propose to show you,

**I. When a minister may be said to have "labored among his people in vain"—**

This complaint he may justly utter,

**1.** When they cleave to the law, as a ground of their hopes—

What is the one great object of ministers, but to bring men to Christ, that through him they may find reconciliation with their offended God? In this view, their ministry is called "the ministry of reconciliation." But, in order to effect this great work, they must detach persons altogether from their dependence on the law. Men, by nature, are born under the law: and they invariably look to their obedience to the law as the ground of their hope towards God. But, as it is impossible for fallen man ever to render to the law that perfect obedience which it requires, God has given him a Savior, through whom he may obtain a perfect righteousness, fully commensurate with all the demands of law and justice. But, in order to his obtaining a saving interest in this, every other ground of hope must be renounced. He must be saved wholly, either by works or by grace. The two grounds of hope cannot exist together. If a man attempt to blend them together, even in the smallest possible degree, he will fail: the slightest dependence on his works will altogether invalidate the work of Christ, and make void all that he has done for the salvation of men [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2); [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4). If, therefore, a person still practice any works of the law, in order to obtain, either in whole or in part, justification by them, all the labor that has ever been bestowed on him will be in vain. Paul said to the Galatian converts, "You observe days, and months, and times, and years." And on this he grounded the complaint in our text. The observance of days was not evil in itself: it was only evil, as arguing an affiance in the law, and a consequent departure from the Christian faith. But this being the proper construction to be put upon it, he regarded it as a dereliction of the Gospel; and therefore expressed his fears, that all the labor he had bestowed on them had been in vain.

**2.** When they depart from the law as the rule of their life—

The law, though set aside by the Gospel as a ground of our hope, remains, in all its pristine force, as a rule of life. It must be obeyed, and obeyed from the heart too, as much as if we were to obtain justification by it: nor is there any other standard by which our lives must be regulated, in order to please and honor God. The Gospel proposes nothing new in respect of morals. It adds to our motives for obedience, and gives us a more complete pattern: but it enjoins nothing beyond the requirements of the law. The law enjoins us to love God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves: and beyond that we cannot go. The Gospel informs us, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" and, consequently, all the faith and love which we are taught to exercise towards God, we exercise towards our adorable Emmanuel; and all the love which we manifest to man, we manifest it for Christ's sake, and in conformity to the pattern which he has set us: but beyond the demands of the law we cannot go; nor short of those demands are we allowed to stop. If, therefore, we see any one relaxing in his obedience to the law, we declare to him, that "faith has not in him its perfect work." His heart must be right with God: he must labor to "walk in all things as Christ walked:" he must, if not in absolute attainment—yet in desire and endeavor, be "holy as God himself is holy, and perfect as his Father who is in Heaven is perfect." There must be no sin, though dear as a right eye or useful as a right hand, retained: and if we see a man proposing to himself any lower standard than this, we must, of necessity, "stand in doubt of him;" and fear, so far as he is concerned, that we have bestowed on him labor in vain [Mark 9:43-47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 9.43-47) with [James 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.10).

Let me, then, point out to you,

**II. The awful state of a people that are so circumstanced—**

Truly,

**1.** Their responsibility is great—

It is here taken for granted, that the Gospel has been faithfully preached to them. And I hope this may be said with respect to you, my brethren. Yes; you will bear me witness, that "Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth crucified among you, even as it were before your eyes [Galatians 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.1)." Now, our blessed Lord said to his hearers, that "if he had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but that now they had no cloak for their sin [John 15:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.22)." What, then, must I say to you? You well know, that "many prophets and kings have in vain desired to hear and see the things which have been made familiar to you; and that, at this moment, many would account themselves "blessed," if they could possess the privileges which you enjoy [Luke 10:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 10.23-24); but you cannot but know also, that on these grounds a proportionable responsibility attaches to you. Yet, is there not reason to fear, that many of you are still so ignorant both of the Law and of the Gospel, as not to understand their respective offices, and not to render to them that peculiar honor which they severally demand? Is there not reason to apprehend, that many have never yet come to Christ, as helpless, hopeless sinners; discarding every other ground of hope, and glorying in him as all their salvation and all their desire? Yet, if you have never been brought to this, O! think how much you have to answer for! If the fate of Chorazin and Bethsaida was made worse than that of Tyre and Sidon, yes, than that of Sodom and Gomorrah, by their abuse of the Gospel, judge, I beg you, what the criminality of those is, who, like you, have slighted all the blessings of salvation, which have been so freely offered, and so fully set before you? Jehovah himself appealed to his people of old: "Judge, I beg you, between me and my vineyard: what could have been done more for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? And why, when I looked that it would bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes [Isaiah 5:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.3-4)." The same appeal I must, in Jehovah's name, make to you also. The various means of grace you have enjoyed in rich abundance; and they must be accounted for as talents which you were bound to improve.

**2.** Their danger is imminent—

It is a solemn truth, that "the word preached, if it is not a savor of life to those who hear it, proves to them a savor of death unto their death [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.16)." In fact, it is sometimes sent, to a people in judgment, rather than in mercy: "Go, and tell this people, Hear you indeed, but understand not; and see you indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed [Isaiah 6:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.9-10)." No less than six times is that passage quoted in the New Testament, to show us the immense importance of it, and to put us on our guard, lest it be realized in us. We are warned, that "the earth which drinks in the rain that comes oft upon it, and brings forth herbs fit for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God: but that which bears thorns and briers is rejected, and is near unto cursing; whose end is, to be burned [Hebrews 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.7-8)." Ah! think "how near the curse may be!" and how tremendous it will be, when it shall fall upon you! You know what was said to the barren fig-tree; "Cut it down: why cumbers it the ground?" And you also, though spared for the present, through the intercession of your Lord, must soon expect that doom, if you continue to make no return for all the labor bestowed upon you [Luke 13:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.6-9).

**APPLICATION—**

**1.** Improve, then, the opportunities which are yet afforded you—

"The seed is sown on your hearts: look to it, that it be not taken away by Satan, before the process of vegetation has taken place at all Beware too, lest, if it spring up, it be not soon withered for lack of root; or, if it continue to grow, it be not choked by thorns, so as not to bring forth fruit to perfection." Prepare your hearts, by meditation and prayer, before you come to the house of God: and when you have received the good seed, harrow it in by a repetition of the same process: and bear in mind, that you are to requite the labors of cultivation, by bringing forth fruit, according to the measure of divine grace bestowed upon you [Matthew 13:18-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.18-23).

**2.** Look forward to your great account—

It is but a little time, and both you and I must give account of our stewardship: I, of my ministrations; and you, of your improvement of them. If I have omitted to warn you, and you perish through my neglect, woe be unto me; for "your blood will be required at my hands [Ezekiel 33:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.8)." But if I have been faithful to my high calling, then shall I have the joy of presenting you to God; saying, "Here am I, and the children you have given me [Isaiah 8:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.18)." O blessed day, if I may "have many of you as my joy and crown of rejoicing in that day [1 Thessalonians 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.19-20)." On the other hand, how painful is the thought, that against those who have not improved the opportunities afforded them, I shall "appear as a swift witness [Malachi 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.5)." and every sermon I have ever delivered will testify against you, to your confusion [Deuteronomy 31:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 31.21). But let us hope that such shall not be the result of our meeting, my beloved brethren: no; let me entreat you to give yourselves unto prayer; for me, that the blessing of God may be upon my labors; and for yourselves, that "you may not receive the grace of God in vain [2 Corinthians 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.1)."

***~~#2073~~***

***~~THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN ZEAL~~***

**[Galatians 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.18)**

"It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good"

*MEN act with energy and zeal in things that are agreeable to them.* But while some are earnest in the support of religion, others are no less active in opposing it. This was the case with the false teachers, who sought to exclude the Apostle, that they might extend their own influence in the Churches of Galatia, verse 17. But the Apostle justly condemns them, and recommends zeal in a better cause.

The text will lead us to consider,

***~~I. The nature of Christian zeal—~~***

Zeal is a strong affection of the mind; and is good or evil, according to the object towards which it is directed, and the manner in which it is exercised. It is more frequently in Scripture spoken of as *evil*, [Acts 5:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.17-18); [Acts 13:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.45); [Acts 17:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 17.5); but there is also a *Christian*zeal; which is distinguished by two things:

***~~1. It is good in its object—~~***

Some spend their zeal in things that are in themselves *sinful*, [Philippians 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.6). [John 16:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.2); and others on things *indifferent*, [Mark 7:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 7.3-4). And those among ourselves who raise fierce disputes about secondary religious trifles; but the Christian's zeal is directed to what is good; he maintains with steadfastness the faith of the Gospel. He follows the injunctions and examples of the apostles, Jude verse 3. [Galatians 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.8-9). 2 John, verse 10; and engages heartily in the practice of its precepts, [Titus 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.11-12); [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14).

***~~2. It is uniform in its operation—~~***

The zeal of many is only occasional and partial. It shows itself only in things that require little or no self-denial; but the Christian's zeal is uniform and universal. It "affects us always" not as a feverish, but a vital, heat; not as a meteor, but as the sun. It has respect to every duty; stimulating to private and personal, as well as public and official, duties. Christian zeal does not, however, lay the same stress on trifles, as on the weightier matters of the law; but proportions its exercise to the importance of the things about which it is engaged.

That such a zeal is truly praiseworthy, will appear, while we point out,

***~~II. Its excellence—~~***

The text pronounces it to be "good;" and not without reason; for,

***~~1. It is that which stamps a value on all other graces—~~***

What are the most excellent graces without this Christian zeal? *Faith*without zeal, is only a cold assent.

*Hope*without zeal, is a mere doubtful expectation.

*Love*without zeal, is a general good-will, or rather, an empty name.

The best of services without zeal is a worthless formality. But, on the other hand, the poorest and basest service accompanied with zeal, is pleasing to God. The widow's mite surpassed the rich donations of the wealthy, [Mark 12:41-44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 12.41-44); nor shall a cup of cold water lose its reward, [Matthew 10:42](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.42). [2 Corinthians 8:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.12).

***~~2. It is by zeal alone that we can honor God—~~***

Lukewarm services declare, in fact, that God is not worthy of any better testimony of our esteem; and hence it is that they are so odious in his sight, [Revelation 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.16). But, if we act with zeal, we silently—yet powerfully, proclaim to all, that God is worthy of all the love and honor we can render him. We must act in zeal in every duty we perform.

***~~3. By zeal we may ensure success—~~***

Exertion does not always command success in an earthly race or warfare. But in spiritual things none can fail who exert themselves with zeal in God's appointed way. "They shall know, who follow on to know the Lord, [Hosea 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 6.3)." Those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, shall eternal life assuredly be given, [Romans 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.7). Many seek to enter into the kingdom of Heaven, and are not able: but none ever yet strove in vain, [Luke 13:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.24).

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who have no zeal at all in religion—~~***

Whatever zeal men exercise in their worldly callings, few, alas! are much in earnest about religion. The natural man has no heart, no life or spirit in anything he does for God. But *will the heart-searching God be pleased with mere formal services?*We ourselves do not accept them favorably at the hands of a fellow-creature; and shall God from us? [Matthew 15:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 15.8-9). If we would ever be approved of God, let us follow that injunction, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might! [Ecclesiastes 9:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 9.10)."

***~~2. Those who have declined in their zeal—~~***

"When iniquity abounds, the love of many will wax cold." And are there none among us who have "left off to behave themselves wisely;" none who have lost their first love? Let the solemn charge addressed to such persons in the primitive churches, be duly considered, and obediently regarded, [Revelation 2:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.4-5); [Revelation 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.19); for "it were better never to have known the way of righteousness, than, having known it, to turn from it! [2 Peter 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.21)."

***~~3. Those who feel the importance and necessity of zeal—~~***

As good as zeal is in a good cause, it may become pernicious both to ourselves and others, if it is not properly directed.

There is "a zeal without knowledge, [Romans 10:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.2)," which may easily be mistaken for Christian zeal. Let all then who would serve God acceptably, endeavor to have their zeal well regulated, both with respect to its objects, and the manner of its operation. Let their own sins, rather than the sins of others, and their own duties, rather than those of others, be the first objects of their regard. Let not a proud, bigoted, or vindictive spirit be cherished by them under the cloak of zeal, [Luke 9:54](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 9.54); but let every duty to God or man be tempered with meekness, humility, and love. Let nothing bear such a preponderance in their mind as to make any other duty appear light and insignificant. Let the world, the family, and the prayer-closet, have each its proper portion of attention: and, with increasing ardor, let them follow Christ, whose "food was to do the will of him who sent him, [John 4:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.34)."

***~~#2074~~***

***~~A MINISTER'S CHIEF WISH FOR HIS PEOPLE~~***

***~~[Galatians 4:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.19-20)~~***

"My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you; how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!"

THE pastoral relation is described in the Scriptures by images well calculated to convey an idea of genuine concern, and fond endearment. Paul sometimes speaks of himself as "the father" of his converts, as "having begotten them through the Gospel [1 Corinthians 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.15);" and sometimes as their mother "travailing in birth with them."

Corresponding with these images, are the feelings of a minister's heart in reference to his people. If he sees them in a sick and dying state, he will not be indifferent about their recovery, but will, with parental tenderness, administer such instruction and advice as may conduce to their welfare. There are too many indeed, who, from an affection of candor, hope well concerning the states of all their people. But the faithful minister dares not to act on such delusive principles; he knows the danger to which the unconverted are exposed, and the solemn responsibility of his own office; and therefore he will faithfully discharge his duty, and "divide to every one the word of truth," consoling or reproving them as occasion may require.

In the words before us, we see,

***~~I. What a minister chiefly desires on behalf of his people—~~***

As a parent rejoices to see his children prospering in bodily health and worldly circumstances, so a minister is glad to see his people free from sickness and distress. He is thankful too, if he beholds an outward reformation among them, and a diligent attendance on ordinances, and the establishment of family prayer, and a decided approbation of the Gospel. But all this falls very far short of his wishes. He never is satisfied respecting them, until he has a clear evidence that "Christ is formed in them,"

***~~1. As a vital principle in their hearts—~~***

Whatever they may have, or whatever they may do, they have no spiritual life, until "Christ lives in them, [Galatians 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.20)." If "Christ dwells not in their hearts, they are no other than reprobates, [Ephesians 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.17). [2 Corinthians 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.5)." "Christ is the life" of the soul, as much as the soul is the life of the body, [Colossians 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.4). He animates all our faculties; and without him they are as incapable of spiritual exertions as a breathless corpse is of performing the functions of a living body, [John 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.5). "Christ in us is the hope of glory, [Colossians 1:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.27);" and all profession of religion, without the indwelling of his Spirit in our souls, is only like the motion and reunion of the dry bones, before God has breathed into them a principle of life, [Ezekiel 37:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.7-10).

***~~2. As a visible character in their lives—~~***

Concerning the quickening of a soul, we can judge only by its actions. While therefore a minister desires that his people may be really alive to God, he looks for the fruits of righteousness as the proper evidence of their regeneration. He expects to find "Christ formed" in their tempers, their desires, their whole conduct. He is not contented to behold such virtues as may be found in heathen: he longs to see in them a victory over the world, a supreme delight in God, an unwearied exercise of all holy and heavenly affections. He is satisfied with nothing but an entire "renovation after the Divine image, [Ephesians 4:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.24). [Colossians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.10)," and a "walking in all things as Christ walked, [1 John 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.6)."

But as this change is rarely so satisfactory as might be wished, we proceed to show,

***~~II. When he has reason to stand in doubt of them respecting it—~~***

In every place where the Gospel is faithfully preached, there are some of whom the minister may enjoy a full and confident persuasion of their acceptance with God. But there will also be some respecting whom he must feel many serious fears. This will be the case, wherever he sees them,

***~~1. Fluctuating in their principles—~~***

The Galatians had been warped by means of Judaizing teachers, and turned from the simplicity of the Gospel, [Galatians 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.6-7); [Galatians 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.1); and on this account the Apostle "feared he had bestowed upon them labor in vain, verse 9-11."

It is much to be regretted, when godly persons are distracted by "matters of doubtful disputation." They always, in a greater or less degree, "suffer loss" by means of it, because their attention is divided, and the energy of their minds, in reference to their more important concerns, is weakened.

But when, as in the case of the Galatians, their doubts relate to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, their danger is exceeding great. They show that they are only "children, when they are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, [Ephesians 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.14);" and their lack of establishment in the faith gives reason to fear lest they would be finally overthrown, [Hebrews 13:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.9).

***~~2. Unsteady in their conduct—~~***

Such was the state of the Galatians. When the Apostle was with them, they were "zealous for good things, verse 18;" but now he was absent from them, their love to him, and to the truth itself, had cooled; and their zeal was turned into a very different channel, verses 14-17. No wonder then that "he travailed in birth with them again," since they betrayed such fickleness of mind.

Thus, wherever we see a zeal that is only *occasional*in its exercise, or *partial*in its operation, we may well stand in doubt of such persons. If the ardor of their minds and hearts decays, or is called forth chiefly about the non-essentials of religion; if they are more occupied about church-government than about the government of their own tongues; and more offended at the falls of their brethren than at the evils of their own hearts; if they are violent about non-essential doctrines, and remiss in practice; there is but too much reason to groan and tremble for them. They are "like a cake not turned," (doughy on one side, and burnt on the other,) alike unacceptable both to God and man, [Hosea 7:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 7.8). And it is to be feared that they will prove at last to be only hypocrites and apostates! [Matthew 23:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 23.23-24).

Such doubts must needs be painful in proportion to the regard we feel for our people's welfare, and the importance of the object which we desire on their behalf. Every minister therefore should inquire,

***~~III. By what means he may most effectually promote it in them—~~***

Waving other things which might be mentioned, we shall notice two, which more immediately arise from the text; namely,

***~~1. A personal fellowship with them—~~***

The evils arising from the non-residence of ministers is incalculable. But a minister may reside in the same place with his people, and yet profit them very little, if he has not a private acquaintance with them, and frequent conversations with them on the concerns of their souls. His public ministrations cannot be sufficiently particular to enter into the views and feelings of all his congregation. Errors may become inveterate in their minds, before he knows anything about them.

We do not impute blame to the Apostle for not abiding with the Galatians; because his commission was to preach the Gospel throughout the world: but we are well assured that the Judaizing teachers would never have gained such an ascendency over them, if he had abode with them as their stated pastor. His presence would have been more advantageous to them than a hundred letters; on which account he says, "I desire to be present with you now." Let ministers then avail themselves of this advantage; and the people give them every opportunity of access to them.

***~~2. A suiting of his teaching to their respective cases—~~***

When the Apostle was with the Galatians, he comforted and encouraged them. Now in this epistle he warned and reproved them: and if, by conversing with them, he could restore them to their former state, he would gladly "change his voice," and speak to them again in terms of approbation and confidence. He would adapt himself to the state of every individual, distinguishing the different degrees of criminality that were found in each, and "giving to each his proper portion of consolation or reproof, as the season" or occasion required, [Luke 12:42](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.42). In this way ought ministers to address their people.

*The speaking only in generalities leaves the greater part of our hearers in an ignorance of their real spiritual state.*We should descend to men's lives and bosoms. We should "warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak, [1 Thessalonians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.14)." We should answer the objections, solve the doubts, and rectify the errors, of our people; and, by suitable instructions, confirm them in the faith. It is in this way only that we can enjoy much satisfaction in them, or expect to have them as "our joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of judgment! [1 Thessalonians 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.19-20)."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those of whom we stand in doubt—~~***

Think us not uncharitable on account of the fears we express: "we are jealous over you with a godly jealousy, [2 Corinthians 11:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.2)." If we felt as we ought, we would be pained and distressed as a woman in her travail, while we see any of you in a doubtful spiritual state. We must desire to see in you what we know to be essentially necessary to your salvation: and while we behold any allowed and habitual deviations from the Gospel, whether it be in principle or practice, we must warn you of your danger!

Would you have us tell you that you are safe, when we are doubtful whether Christ be formed in you? When we observe one proud, another passionate, another covetous, another unforgiving, another censorious, another formal—would you have us satisfied respecting you? Surely our concern about you is the best proof of our love: and we earnestly entreat you all "to judge yourselves, that you may not be judged of the Lord, 1 Corinthians 11:31."

***~~2. Those of whom we entertain no doubt—~~***

Where shall we find persons of this description? Where? alas! in every place. Can we stand in doubt about the swearer, the whoremonger, the adulterer? Can we stand in doubt of those who live without secret prayer; of those who never felt their need of having Christ formed in them, nor ever endeavored to conform themselves to his example? [Galatians 5:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.19-21). [Ephesians 5:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.6). The state of all such persons is as clear as the light at noon-day; and their inability to see it, only proves how awfully "the god of this world has blinded their eyes." We must declare unto you, brethren, and would speak it with tears of pity and of grief, [Philippians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.18), that, if you die before Christ has been formed in you, "it would have been better for you that you had never been born! [Matthew 26:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.24)."

But there are others also of whom we cannot doubt; I mean, the humble, spiritual, devoted "followers of the Lamb." But they have also the word of Jehovah on their side: and, if we were to stand in doubt of them, we must doubt the states of all the holy Prophets and Apostles, whose faith they follow, and whose example they imitate. In such as them are found "the things that accompany salvation, [Hebrews 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.9)." We encourage them therefore on the safety and happiness of their state: and "we are confident that He who has begun the good work in them, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, [Philippians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.6)."

They may indeed have sometimes doubts and fears in their own minds: but we say unto them, in the name of the Most High God, "Fear not, little flock; for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom! [Luke 12:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.32)."

***~~#2075~~***

***~~SARAH AND HAGAR TYPES~~***

***~~[Galatians 4:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.22-24)~~***

"For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar."

THERE are many things in the Old Testament which we would have passed over as unworthy of any particular notice, if their use and importance had not been pointed out to us in the New Testament. Such is the occurrence which is here referred to; and which the Apostle found to be of singular use to illustrate the nature of the Gospel covenant. He was endeavoring to counteract the influence of those Judaizing teachers, who had perverted the faith of the Galatians: with this view he expostulates with those who had turned aside to a compliance with the ceremonial law; and shows them, by an allegorical explanation of the history before us, that the law itself might have taught them a very different conduct.

To understand the allegory in all its parts, we must attend carefully to the main scope of it, which is to show that, as both Sarah and Hagar brought forth children to Abraham—yet those children differed widely from each other; so the old and New Covenants bring forth, as it were, children to God; but there will be found, between their respective offspring, such a difference as may well deter men from returning to the covenant of *works*, and make them resolutely adhere to the covenant of *grace*.

We may observe then a corresponding difference between the two women and their offspring, and the two covenants and their offspring,

***~~I. In their nature—~~***

*Ishmael*, the son of the bond-woman, was born according to the common course of nature: but *Isaac*, the son of the free-woman, was born in a supernatural way, through the more immediate agency of God himself.

Thus those who are under the *law*, have nothing but what they derive in a natural way from their parents. They may possess strong intellects, and reveal many amiable qualities; but whatever they have, it is all carnal; no part of it is spiritual; their reason is carnal reason; their affections are carnal affections.

But those who are under the covenant of *grace*, are "born of God;" their faculties are all renewed; their views and desires are spiritual; they have "put off the old man, and put on the new;" yes, they are partakers, as far as flesh and blood can be, of a divine nature, [2 Peter 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.4). Hence they are called "new creatures;" and are as much distinguished from the mere natural man, as light is from darkness, or Christ from Belial, [2 Corinthians 6:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.14-15).

This is the first point of distinction which the Apostle himself notices; and it is confirmed by the declaration of our Lord, that whatever is born of the flesh is carnal; whereas, that which is born of the Spirit (as all who embrace the New Covenant are) is spiritual, verse 23 with [John 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.6).

***~~II. In their disposition—~~***

*Ishmael*, being born of the bond-woman, was himself a slave; and therefore must, of necessity, have a servile spirit. But *Isaac*, the child of promise, felt all that freedom of spirit which an affectionate and beloved child is privileged to enjoy.

Thus the children of the *Old*Covenant are "brought forth to bondage." They may obey in many respects the will of their Father; but they are invariably actuated, either by self-righteous hopes, or slavish fears. Whatever they do for God, it is "grudgingly and of necessity:" his work is irksome to them; or, if at any time it is pleasant, their satisfaction arises from pride and self-delight, and not from any delight they feel in his service.

But the children of the *New*Covenant are enabled to walk before God with holy confidence and joy. They serve him, not from fear, but from love; not that he may save them, but because he *has*saved them. Whatever they need, they make known their requests to him, assured that he will gladly do for them more than they can ask or think. Thus they maintain sweet fellowship with him, regarding him in all things, not as a master or a judge, but as a father and a friend.

This distinction is also marked by the Apostle, who says also in another place, that believers have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry *Abba, Father!*, verse 24, 25 with [Romans 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.15).

***~~III. In their conduct—~~***

Whatever outward conformity Ishmael might show to his father's will, it is certain he was averse to it in his heart; for he persecuted Isaac on account of his superior piety, and derided him for claiming an exclusive right to his father's inheritance: but Isaac patiently endured the trial, "knowing in whom he had believed," and that "He was faithful who had promised."

Thus it is with all the children of the *Old*Covenant: they may obey the law in many points; but they do not really love it in any respect: on the contrary, they hate those whose superior piety is a reproach to them, and who profess that the children of promise shall exclusively inherit their Father's kingdom. "The saints and the elect" are with them terms not of respect and honor, but of mockery and derision. Our Lord teaches all his followers to expect this treatment, and to expect it on this very account from those, who are merely born after the flesh: "if," says he, "you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you, verse 29 with [John 15:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.19)."

The children of the *New*Covenant, in the mean time, meekly bear the cross; "being defamed, they entreat; being persecuted, they suffer it;" "committing themselves to him who judges righteously," and waiting the accomplishment of all his promises.

***~~IV. In their end—~~***

*Ishmael*, by his conduct, brought upon himself that very exclusion, which he had confidently supposed would never take place.

*Isaac*in due time inherited the portion, which, in dependence on God's word, he had professed to expect.

Nor was the difference made merely through the partiality of the parents, but by the express order of God himself, [Genesis 21:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 21.10); [Genesis 21:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 21.12).

Thus shall they, who are under the *law*, be, before long, banished from their Father's house. In vain shall they plead their carnal relation to God and his people: they belong to a covenant that entails on them a curse, and not a blessing, [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10). And though they will not be persuaded of their danger now—yet will they find at last, that their confidence was presumption, and their hope vanity, verse 30 with [John 8:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.35) and [Matthew 8:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 8.11-12).

On the contrary, those who are under the covenant of *grace*will inherit the promised land: their professions shall be vindicated, their expectations realized, their hopes accomplished: and to eternity shall they dwell with God, as monuments of his sovereign grace, and his unchanging faithfulness!

***~~We shall still continue to follow the Apostle in the improvement of this subject. It is useful,~~***

***~~1. For examination—~~***

There cannot be a more vital inquiry than this: Am I a "child of the bond-woman, or of the free woman? verse 31." Nor will it be at all difficult to attain a satisfactory knowledge of our state, if we will but follow the clue which this instructive allegory affords us.

Let us ask ourselves then, What have I that nature cannot give, and that evidently marks me as born of God? Am I walking with God in the daily exercise of filial affection, accounting his service to be perfect freedom; or am I rendering him only a formal, partial, and constrained obedience? Do I look for Heaven as the free gift of God through Jesus Christ; and expect it solely on the humiliating terms of the New Covenant: or am I ready to take offense at the electing love of God, and to deride as deluded enthusiasts those who found all their hopes upon it?

According to the answer which conscience gives to these queries, we may determine to which covenant we belong, and consequently, what our end must be when we go hence. Let our inquiries then be prosecuted with care and diligence, that, when our state is ascertained, we may tremble or rejoice, as the occasion may require.

***~~2. For direction—~~***

When we are brought under the covenant of grace, we are ever in danger of returning, as many of the Galatians did, to the covenant of works. We are prone to indulge self-righteous hopes, and servile fears. We are ready to confound the covenants by associating works with our faith as joint-grounds of our hope of salvation. But we must carefully avoid this, and watch against every approach towards it. We must "stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made us free; and never more be entangled with the yoke of bondage, [Galatians 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.1)."

"Salvation is by grace through faith:" and "it is by faith, that it may be by grace." The very instant we mix any work of ours with Christ's obedience unto death, we fall from grace, and Christ becomes of no effect to us! [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2); [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4). Faith and works, as grounds of our justification before God, are opposites, and can no more be blended than light and darkness! [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6) with 4:14. Let us then hold fast the covenant of grace; and, in spite of all the persecution which our profession may bring upon us, let us "maintain our confidence, and the rejoicing of our hope, firm unto the end."

***~~#2076~~***

***~~JUSTIFICATION FAITH MAINTAINED~~***

**[Galatians 4:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.30)**

But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."

THE whole of God's blessed word is highly instructive; and the Old Testament is an excellent preparative for the New. Indeed, those who are at all conversant with Scripture, expect to find mysteries in the ceremonial law, because that is confessedly a shadow of good things to come: but few are aware how much is to be found in the historical parts of the Old Testament.

We are, however, in no danger of erring, if we say that the *sacrifice which Abel offered*was not a mere accidental difference from that of Cain; but a typical exhibition of the sacrifice of Christ, to which, by faith, the pious offerer had respect, [Hebrews 11:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.4).

In my text, there is reference to what we might have supposed to be an accidental disagreement in Abraham's family. We might naturally suppose that a wife and a concubine would not agree very well, and that their children would prove a source of mutual animosity. And so it turned out. But was this a mere accidental circumstance? No! it was permitted by God, in order to afford a good occasion for illustrating the covenant of grace, and the exclusive blessedness of those who adhered to it.

You will perceive, that, in my text the words of Hagar are cited as a general rule of procedure in reference to the souls of men at the last day: and as they are somewhat intricate, and have at the same time an appearance of harshness and severity, I will endeavor to explain and vindicate the declaration contained in them.

Here is evidently a sentence denounced, and my endeavor shall be,

***~~I. To explain the sentence—~~***

To understand it aright, we must consider what was the subject in dispute between the Apostle and his opponents.

Some Judaizing teachers had drawn away his Galatian converts from the pure Gospel which he had taught them—to an affiance in the ceremonial law. And, to bring them back to the truth of Christ, he showed them, throughout this whole epistle, that salvation is by faith alone; and that to attempt to build our hopes in any measure on the law of works, was to "pervert the Gospel," and, in fact, to introduce "another Gospel, [Galatians 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.6-7)." In confirmation of this sentiment, he proves, at large, that salvation is by faith alone; he proves it, I say,

***~~1. In a way of argumentative discussion—~~***

In the beginning of the preceding chapter, after reminding them that through the preaching of faith, and not by any works of the law, they had obtained the miraculous influences of the Holy Spirit, [Galatians 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.2); [Galatians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.5), he reminds them of the way in which Abraham was justified. This was by faith, as the Gospel preached to Abraham had foretold, in relation both to himself and all his spiritual seed. Consequently, we must be saved in the same way as he, [Galatians 3:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.6-9).

He then proves the same from the very terms in which the Law and the Gospel are promulgated; the Law requiring obedience, and the Gospel faith; the Law killing, and the Gospel giving life [Galatians 3:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10-12).

He next adduces the end for which Christ came into the world. This was not to give men an opportunity of saving themselves by the law; but to redeem them by his own death, from the curses of the law; and to open a way for the blessing which had been promised to Abraham to descend upon them through the exercise of faith, [Galatians 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.13-14).

From thence he leads them to the contemplation of the covenant in which all the blessings of salvation were contained. This covenant had been made with Abraham, four hundred and thirty years before the law was given to Moses; and in it, all the *believing*seed of Abraham were savingly interested. Now, this covenant could never be annulled, except by the consent of all the parties contained in it. But a very small part of those who were savingly interested in that covenant were present when the law was given. That Mosaic law was only given to Abraham's children after the flesh: his spiritual children had nothing to do with it: and therefore to them is the covenant of grace as valid as ever; the publication of the law having made no difference in it whatever, [Galatians 3:15-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.15-18).

Here, supposing naturally that his opponent would ask, "Of what use then was the law?" he proceeds to show, that it was not given in order to establish anything in opposition to the Gospel, but to operate in subservience to the Gospel; showing men their need of it; and, like a schoolmaster, disciplining them for the grateful reception of it, [Galatians 3:19-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.19-24). And, consequently, now that the Gospel was fully revealed they would adhere to it, and look for acceptance solely by faith in it, [Galatians 3:25-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.25-29).

Here another question would arise. If the law was given to the Jews from the time of Moses, then in what state were those Jews? Were they under the covenant of grace, or under the covenant of works? This he answers, by showing that they were, in fact, under the covenant of grace. But yet, that they were like minors, who, while they are under age, differ but little from servants; not having any further enjoyment of their inheritance than their tutors and governors judged expedient for them. The time, however, being now come for them to enter on their possessions without restraint, he exhorts them to avail themselves of their liberty, and to walk no more as servants under bondage; but as sons and heirs, at perfect liberty, verses 1-7.

Thus he has made it appear, that to live under bondage to the law, is to abandon our dearest privileges, and to violate our most solemn duties.

He now proceeds, after some suitable admonitions, to establish the same truth,

***~~2. In a way of allegorical illustration—~~***

In the history to which the Apostle refers, we would not, I confess, have seen any confirmation of the doctrine before us, if one who was inspired of God himself had not explained it to us. The transaction was this: Sarah, Abraham's wife, saw Ishmael, who was Abraham's son by Hagar, mocking her son Isaac. I apprehend that Ishmael derided Isaac, the younger son, for presuming to assert his title to his father's inheritance, in preference to him, who was the elder. Sarah, indignant at this behavior, asked Abraham to expel Hagar and her son from his presence; saying, "Cast out the bond-woman and her son; for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." This was exceedingly grievous to Abraham, who felt a paternal love for Ishmael, and knew not how to part with him: but God himself confirmed the word that had been spoken; and enjoined Abraham to comply with his wife's request, since it was his determination that "in Isaac would Abraham's seed be called, [Genesis 21:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 21.9-12)."

Now, in my text we are told that under this domestic occurrence a great mystery was veiled; for that it represented the distinction which, would, to all eternity, be made between those who cleaved to the covenant of *works*, and those who would lay hold on the covenant of *grace*.

*Hagar*, a bond-woman, represented the legal covenant which would in due time be made on Mount Sinai; as her son Ishmael did the persons who would adhere to it.

Whereas *Sarah*, the married wife, represented the covenant of grace which had already been made with Abraham; and her son Isaac, the persons who would obtain a saving interest in that.

Now, all persons, by nature, live under the covenant of works: but divine grace, where it operates, brings men under the covenant of grace. But all the former will be cast out from God; and the latter only will be partakers of his inheritance; this distinction, we are told, was intended to be marked in the foregoing history. It may appear hard that such a distinction would ever be made: but made it shall be; God having declared this to be his sovereign will, his irrevocable decree: "Cast out the bond-woman and her son; for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman, verse 21-31."

Shall it be said, that this is too figurative and too obscure to add any weight to the preceding argument? I answer: This very circumstance, of its being so figurative and so obscure, gives it, in my mind, even greater weight than if it had been more plain and obvious; because it shows the unspeakable importance of that truth which it is brought to confirm. Had not the doctrine of justification by faith alone been of prime and indispensable necessity to every child of man, the Apostle would have been satisfied with establishing it by the train of argument which he has pursued. But, feeling that the rejection of it would prove fatal to the soul, he would omit nothing that could contribute to the enforcing of it on men's consciences, or the impressing of it on their minds.

Aware, however, that, in the opinion of many, there are strong objections to this doctrine, I will proceed,

***~~II. To vindicate it—~~***

Against the very act itself, which is referred to in my text, we would have been rather disposed to object, if it had not been approved by God himself: we would have thought Abraham would have been better employed in pacifying the rage of Sarah, than in lending himself as an instrument to give it energy and effect. We would have thought it more worthy of him to use his influence for the purpose of allaying domestic feuds, than to exert his authority for the rendering of them irreconcilable and eternal. But God commanded it; and therefore it must, of necessity, have been right, whether we can explain the reasons of it or not.

The doctrine which it was intended to shadow forth is right, whether we can understand it or not. To exclude from salvation all who adhere to the covenant of *works*, and to save those only who lay hold on the covenant of *grace*, may appear unjust, severe, and partial: but we will undertake to vindicate it from all that can be said against it, even from every charge,

***~~1. Of injustice—~~***

If it had pleased God to deal with fallen man precisely as He had dealt with fallen angels—then what injustice would he have done to any? Wherein did we merit an interposition in our favor more than they? Why, when we had violated the Old Covenant, would he enter into a New Covenant, whereby we might be restored to his favor? Why, in order to render this measure consistent with his glorious perfections, would he give us his only-begotten Son to bear our sins, and to effect a reconciliation for us through the blood of his cross? Could we claim any such mercy at his hands? Or, could anyone have had reason to complain, if no such mercy had been ever manifested? What injustice, then, can be done to anyone, by confining mercy to this particular channel; and by requiring this New Covenant in Christ Jesus to be made our only hope and our plea, in order to our participation of its benefits? If we neither had, nor could have, any claim for mercy at all, we certainly can have no ground for complaint against God, for offering it in a way honorable to himself; and not granting it in a way of our own, which would reflect dishonor on every one of his perfections.

***~~2. Of severity—~~***

Though the shutting up of mankind to one only way of salvation may not be altogether unjust—yet it may be deemed somewhat unmerciful and severe; because it makes the rejection of that salvation a fresh ground of offense, and involves the offender in deeper guilt and misery than he could otherwise have incurred. But there is no undue severity in this.

Let us suppose that God had acted towards the fallen angels as he has towards us. Let us suppose that he had sent his only dear Son to bear *their*punishment in his own person, and to work out a righteousness whereby *they*might be justified: and that he had offered to restore to his favor every soul among them who would accept it in his Son's name; but would account all who would reject this overture as having added pride and ingratitude to all their other sins, and make them answerable for this their augmented guilt. Is there one of us that would conceive God to be acting with severity towards them? Is there one who would not regard this as a stupendous effort of love and mercy, and acknowledge that all who would despise this offered mercy would deserve their appointed doom?

But there is another evil, which the despisers of the New Covenant are guilty of: they invariably "mock" and deride those who found all their hopes upon it. They may not, indeed, be open scoffers, like Ishmael; but in their hearts they do of necessity "mock at the counsel of the poor, who puts his trust in God, [Psalm 14:1-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 14.1-7)."

At this hour, as well as in the Apostle's days, it may be said, "As, then, he who was born after the flesh persecuted him who was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." How then can it be supposed that these despisers of God's people would be made heirs together with them? Or, what severity can there be in refusing to them a portion which they so wantonly despise? The sentence, as denounced by Sarah, might have been deemed severe; but, as inflicted by the Most High God, it is merited in its full extent: for not *even Satan himself was ever guilty of rejecting a Savior, and pouring contempt on redeeming love!*

***~~3. Of partiality—~~***

It is not persons, but characters, that are rejected by God: nor is it from descent, but from choice, that they fall short of the promised inheritance. In this respect, the parallel between the history and the doctrine established by it must be drawn with a due attention to all the circumstances, and must not be pressed too far. That was but a shadow; and we must distinguish between resemblance and identity.

Ishmael shadowed forth those who are born after the flesh.

Isaac represented those who are born after the Spirit.

Ishmael therefore characterizes all of us in our natural state.

Isaac characterizes those who are regenerated by the Spirit of God.

The latter, it is true, owe all their happiness to God's electing love: but the former can never ascribe their misery to any decree of absolute reprobation. The blessings of salvation are offered equally to all: the sins of all were equally borne by the Lord Jesus Christ in his own body on the cross: for "he is an atoning sacrifice, not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the world." "The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all."

Though born of the bond-woman, we may by grace become children of the free woman. If we will not avail ourselves of this offered mercy, the fault is altogether our own. In the parable of the Marriage-supper, the man who was cast out for not having on the wedding-garment, is represented as "speechless," having not a word to utter in his own defense. He, it is true, was poor, and had been brought in suddenly from the highways and hedges: but a wedding-garment had been provided for him by the Master of the feast, and would have been given him if he had asked for it: and therefore he was justly punished for presuming to appear at the feast without it. Just so is salvation provided for every child of man: and he who neglects to seek it, must trace his failure to that neglect.

The word of our blessed Lord is decisive upon this point: "him who comes unto me, I will never cast out." If therefore the sentence be passed on us, "Cast out that son of the bond-woman," we know whom alone we have to blame: the fault is not in God, as unwilling to save us; but in ourselves, as neglecting to seek salvation at his hands.

***~~From this subject we may see,~~***

***~~1. What is the one standard and test of truth—~~***

Men place reliance on their own opinions, and cite as authority the opinions of others. But man is weak and fallible. Even in relation to things which come most under his cognizance, he is apt to err: but in the things of God, which, of necessity, are so remote from his apprehensions, he is entitled to no confidence at all; seeing that *he can know nothing, any further than it has been revealed to him by God himself*. But it is in the sacred volume alone that we have any revelation from God; and therefore that must, of necessity, be the only standard and test of truth. "To the word and to the testimony," says the prophet: "if men speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them, [Isaiah 8:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.20)."

Tell me not then, O vain disputer, what your opinions are. "What says the Scripture?" You imagine that you can lay down laws for God, and tell how he shall regulate his proceedings in the day of judgment. But I must declare to you, that "your wisdom," however great you may imagine it, "is foolishness with God;" and that his counsel shall stand, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear.

***~~2. On what ground our eternal destinies shall be fixed—~~***

I well know that men shall be judged according to their works. But we greatly mistake, if we suppose that our faith shall not become a ground of decision, either against us or in our favor, as much as any other work. It is as much "a command from God, that we believe in his Son, as that we would love one another, [1 John 3:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.23);" and our compliance with it must equally be made a subject of inquiry at that day.

We may think it strange, perhaps, that God would take such matters into account in the final judgment: but, whatever opinion we may form respecting it, God will then say, "Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman."

It will not be found a matter of such indifference, then, whether we believed in Christ or not, and whether we embraced the covenant of grace. No! this New Covenant contains all the wonders of Divine wisdom, and love, and mercy: and, if we flee not to it from the terrors of the broken law, and from the fallacious hopes which are engendered by pride, his sentence will come forth against us, to our irreparable and eternal ruin!

Take care then, beloved, that you deceive not your own souls. Examine diligently whose children you are, and to which family you belong. Renounce all dependence on your own works, and lay hold on the promises of God in Christ Jesus. So shall "you, like Isaac, be the children of promise, verse 28;" and with him be partakers of an everlasting inheritance!

***~~#2077~~***

***~~LIBERTY OF THE CHRISTIAN~~***

***~~[Galatians 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.1)~~***

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."

THE doctrine of *justification by faith*is inculcated throughout all the Holy Scriptures, even in parts where we would never have thought of looking for it. Not only was it fully and explicitly declared to Abraham; but it was allegorically set forth by his putting away of Hagar and her son Ishmael, and his constituting of Isaac his sole heir. This was intended by God to shadow forth to us that we cannot be saved by the legal covenant, the covenant of works; but that we must embrace, and be saved by, the New Covenant, the covenant of grace. By the covenant of grace we are liberated from the bondage of the covenant of works; and "in this liberty it befits us all to stand fast."

We shall be led from these words to notice,

***~~I. The Christian's privilege—~~***

The Christian is a believer in Christ: and by his faith he is made a partaker of all that Christ has procured for him. He was formerly under the law; and by that law was condemned. As long as he continued under that law, he continued under the curse. But "Christ has freed him from that law, [Romans 8:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.2)." and brought him to a state of perfect liberty.

***~~1. By suffering the penalty due to his transgressions, Jesus has released us from the law—~~***

Christ became the Surety and Substitute of sinful man. Did we owe a debt which it was impossible for us to pay? He discharged it for us, even to the uttermost farthing. Were we under the curse of the broken law? "He became a curse for us, [Romans 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.13)," and endured all that was due to our sins. Hence there remains "now no condemnation to us [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1)." "If only we believe in Christ, we are justified from all things Acts, 13:39," and "our sins are blotted out as a morning cloud."

***~~2. By giving us faith, Jesus has brought us into a better covenant—~~***

There is a New Covenant, which is a perfect contrast with the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant cursed us for one transgression, and provided no remedy for us whatever. The New Covenant provides for us all that our necessities can require—pardon, and peace, and holiness, and glory. Into this covenant all are brought, who believe in Jesus. He therefore, by imparting faith to our souls, translates us from the one to the other; and both liberates from all the evils of the former, and conveys to us all the blessings of the latter!

From the very instant of our believing in Christ, we cease to have anything either to hope or fear from the covenant of works; we are dead to it, and it is dead to us: it is abrogated and annulled: and, like a woman released from her nuptial bonds by the death of her husband, we are at liberty to "unite ourselves to Christ, that through him we may bring forth fruit unto God, [Romans 7:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.4)." Thus, "being made free by Christ, we are made free indeed! [John 8:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.36)."

We may easily conceive, from hence, what is,

***~~II. The Christian's duty—~~***

*Privilege and duty comprehend all that constitutes religion*. In themselves they are widely different; but they are never to be separated from each other. Possessing this high privilege of freedom from the law, we are to "stand fast in it,"

***~~1. Against the influence of false teachers—~~***

There were such among the Jews, who were extremely zealous in propagating their opinions, and in endeavoring to subvert the Christian faith. And such there are at this day. What is the whole system of *popery*, but an establishment of the covenant of works? It inculcates, in all its ordinances, the merit of good works, and teaches men to expect salvation by their works.

And what do those who teach that we are justified by the act of baptism; and those who administer the Lord's supper to dying persons as a passport to Heaven? I deny not the use or efficacy of the sacraments, when duly received: but, to teach men to rely on the mere administration of them, irrespective of the manner, and mind, and spirit in which they are received, is as fatal an error as ever was broached: it is nothing but popery revived among us!

Against all such errors, by whoever they are inculcated, you must be on your guard. If *Peter*himself make such a use of a sacrament, he must be reproved, as a traitor to the cause of Christ, [Galatians 2:11-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.11-16); and "if an *angel*from Heaven were to bring such a doctrine as that, he must be held accursed, [Galatians 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.8-9)."

***~~2. Against the devices of Satan—~~***

That great adversary is ever fighting against Christ; and endeavoring to "blind men, lest the light of Christ's glory would shine unto them, [2 Corinthians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.4)." But you must "resist him, steadfast in the faith, [1 Peter 5:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.8-9)." It is impossible for you to be too much on your guard against his temptations. As he beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so will he, if possible, turn you from the simplicity that is in Christ, 2 Corinthians 11:3." He will, both by his emissaries and by his suggestions, pervert the Scriptures themselves, just as he did when he tempted Christ. You must "take the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith," and, "in the strength of Christ, resist him" to the uttermost, [Ephesians 6:10-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.10-17); that you "may never be moved away from the hope of the Gospel, [Colossians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.23)," or be induced to "make shipwreck of your faith in Christ, [1 Timothy 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.19)."

***~~3. Against the treachery of your own hearts—~~***

*There is no evil whatever more deeply rooted in the heart of man than self-righteousness! It will assume in you ten thousand shapes.*Sometimes it will put on the garb of holiness; and make you fearful of exalting Christ too much, lest you would depreciate and discourage morality. Sometimes it will assume the form of humility; and make you stand aloof from Christ because of your own unworthiness: 'You are not good enough to come to him: he will never receive so vile a sinner as you.' *There is no end to the delusions which your own deceitful hearts will suggest, to sanction, in some degree or other, a dependence on your own works*.

But you must put away every thought that may interfere with the honor of Christ, to whom the glory of your salvation must be given, whole and entire, from first to last. It is altogether the purchase of his blood, and the gift of God for his sake: and it must be received, by every creature under Heaven, "without money, and without price." Paul tells you, that if you do the best act in the world with a view to augment your interest in Him, "he shall profit you nothing, verse 2." The least attempt of this kind will invalidate the whole Gospel, verse 3, 4; and therefore look well to yourselves, that you "receive not the grace of God in vain!"

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who are yet cleaving to the covenant of works—~~***

What works will you ever do, that shall be effectual for your salvation? Or what single act have you ever done, that will bear the test of God's law? O, think of your folly and your wickedness! your folly, in preferring bondage to liberty; and your wickedness, in so requiting the grace of Christ.

***~~2. Those who are enjoying the liberty with which Christ has made them free—~~***

Enjoy it, and be thankful for it: but "do not turn it into a license to sin." Show, by your lives, that the Gospel is "a doctrine according to godliness:" and let the world see that, while you "contend earnestly for the faith delivered to the saints," you are "careful to maintain good works."

***~~#2078~~***

***~~SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS REPROVED~~***

***~~[Galatians 5:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2-4)~~***

"Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised, that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by law, have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace."

ON matters of morality, men will permit us to speak with the utmost freedom; but, on points of faith, they would have us use none but the mildest possible expressions, lest we would appear dogmatic and severe. Paul, where moral offenses had been committed, was lenity itself, 2 Corinthians 2:7. [Galatians 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.1); but when the fundamentals of our faith were endangered, his energy rose even to intolerance. I mean not to say that he disregarded morality, or that we would think lightly of it: but I mean, that we ought to entertain far different thoughts about the leading doctrines of religion, than those which generally prevail.

Hear the Apostle, when he found that some of the Galatian Church had been drawn from the pure Gospel to a reliance on the observances of the Jewish ritual: "Though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed! As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preaches any other Gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed! [Galatians 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.8-9)."

I grant, that he, as inspired, was authorized to speak in terms that would be unseemly for one who is not under an infallible guidance: but, *so far as our doctrines accord with those of the Apostle, we may, yes, and must, maintain them, with a measure of the firmness which he uses in the promulgation of them*. The passage which we have selected for our meditation this day contains nothing but what must be affirmed by every servant of Christ. But who that reads it must not tremble, lest he be found in the predicament there referred to? That we may fully understand the mind of the Apostle, I will, with all possible plainness, state,

***~~I. What was the conduct here reproved—~~***

***~~It was not the mere practice of circumcision—~~***

This was a rite which had been ordained by God himself; and the neglect of which had so incensed God against his servant Moses, that, if his wife Zipporah had not instantly, and without delay, performed the rite with her own hands, that favorite of Heaven would have been destroyed! [Exodus 4:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 4.24-25). And though the ceremonial law was now abolished, the observance of this rite was innocent: for Paul himself, in condescension to the prejudices of the Jews, had circumcised Timothy; and in this very place, where he so decidedly condemns the observers of it, speaks of it as a matter of perfect indifference: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith, which works by love, verse 6 and again, [Galatians 6:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.15)." It is clear, therefore, that it was not of circumcision, as an act, that he spoke, when he declared it to be incompatible with a saving interest in Christ.

***~~It was self-righteousness to which the advocates of circumcision were strongly inclined—~~***

Circumcision, when first appointed by God, was given to Abraham as "a sign and seal of that righteousness which he possessed in his uncircumcised state," and which he had obtained solely by faith, [Romans 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.11). But the Jews had altogether perverted it from its original intention, and had made it a fundamental article of the Mosaic ritual: they regarded it as connected with the Law, rather than with the Gospel; and founded their hopes of salvation, in a considerable measure, on their observance of it.

This it was which Paul so severely reprobated; because it undermined the Gospel itself, and led the people to look to the law for righteousness, which the Gospel alone could impart. Nor was it without just reason that he so strongly guarded them against this error: for it prevailed very generally among the Jews; and was the great stumbling-block over which they fell, to the utter destruction of their souls! [Romans 9:30-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-33); [Romans 10:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.2-3).

That we may see how circumcision could by any means be so injurious to their souls, I will proceed to show,

***~~II. Wherein the evil of it consisted—~~***

***~~1. It was a return to the law—~~***

So the Apostle interprets it: "As many of you as are justified by the law." This shows, that the Apostle viewed the act as performed in order to their justification before God: and such was really their end in performing it. There were many who insisted upon it as still obligatory upon all: and maintained, that "unless men were circumcised, they could not be saved, [Acts 15:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 15.1)." And it was Paul's firm opposition to this tenet that so greatly incensed the Jews against him. If he would have yielded to them in this one particular, they would have laid aside their hostility against him, and have left him at liberty to make as many converts as he could. But "he would not give place, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might be kept inviolate."

And to those who wished to represent him as still favoring their opinions, he appealed: "If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offense of the cross ceased, verse 11."

Viewing, then, this rite as a recurrence to the law for salvation, he declared to every person who submitted to it, that he "became a debtor to do the whole law:" for if the law was obligatory in one part, then it was in all: and, if they looked for salvation by obedience to any law whatever, whether ceremonial or moral, they must go back to the covenant of works altogether, and stand or fall by that.

But this would be to involve themselves in inevitable and eternal ruin; since "it was written, Cursed is every one who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them:" and, consequently, in going back to the law, they must bring down all its curses upon their souls. This, then, was one reason why it was wrong to practice circumcision in the way they did.

***~~2. It was a renunciation of the Gospel—~~***

All who had been baptized into the Christian faith had professed to accept salvation as the free gift of God for Christ's sake. But, in going back to circumcision, and insisting upon that as necessary to salvation, they did, in fact, declare that *they considered the work of Christ as incomplete, and as insufficient for their salvation, without this work of the law super-added to it.*

All therefore who had imbibed this error were "fallen from the grace" of the Gospel altogether. They thought, indeed, to combine the law with the Gospel; but this was impossible. Salvation must be wholly of the one or the other: works and grace, as foundations of hope before God, were absolutely contrary to, and inconsistent with, each other: as the Apostle says, "If salvation is by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it is of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6)." Would they, then, be content to forego all hope by the Gospel, and to abandon as worthless all the promises of grace? This was, in fact, their conduct, while they thus placed their reliance on this abrogated rite: and the folly of such conduct once seen, must deter them, for ever, from the prosecution of it.

But we are yet further taught by the Apostle,

***~~III. What was, and must in all cases be, the outcome of it—~~***

"Christ would become of no value to them," and "would profit them nothing." Never, to all eternity, would they derive any benefit from him,

***~~1. As their sin-atoning sacrifice—~~***

He died indeed for sinners, and offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world: but, in renouncing him, and going back to the law, they cut themselves off from all participation of the benefit: so that, as far as they are concerned, "he died altogether in vain, [Galatians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.21)."

***~~2. As their great High-priest—~~***

For *his people*, he has gone within the veil, there to make continual intercession for them: and through his intercession their peace is maintained with God.

But never does he make mention of *their*name; never does he one request in their behalf. If he were once to bring their case before his Father, it would be rather to "make intercession against them;" and to say, 'How long do you, O my Father, forbear to execute vengeance on those ungrateful creatures!' "How long do you not judge, and avenge my blood upon them! [Revelation 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 6.10)."

***~~3. As their Federal Head and Representative—~~***

To those who are united to Christ by faith, he is, under the New Covenant, what Adam was to his posterity under the Old Covenant. "In Adam, all" his natural posterity "died:" and "in Christ all" his spiritual children "are made alive, [1 Corinthians 15:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.22)."

But those who return to the law, renounce the covenant of grace, and go back to the covenant of works made with Adam in Paradise; according to the tenor of which they shall be justified or condemned. Having no other representative than Adam, "in whom they have sinned," they have no one through whom they can obtain any better title than what they have derived from him, or any other portion than what is entailed upon them as his descendants.

***~~4. As their Head of vital influence—~~***

Believers in Christ derive from Him all that they need for life and godliness, as branches of the living vine. But those who, in any measure or degree, transfer to the law their dependence, become as branches that are broken off, and that derive from Him no benefit whatever. To their impotence they are left; and as destitute of all spiritual good, they perish eternally!

What a fearful thought is this! But let me dwell somewhat upon it, in a way of more direct

**Application.**See, I beg you:

***~~1. How indispensable to our eternal happiness is a saving interest in Christ—~~***

The Apostle represents the being without any profit from Christ, as the sum of human misery. And so, indeed, it is: for what can he possess who has no part in Christ? He may have wealth and honor in the richest abundance; but he has no spiritual life, no hope in this world, no portion but misery in the world to come!

Can you reflect on this, my brethren, and not desire a saving interest in Christ? My brethren, seek him, lay hold on him, "cleave unto him with full purpose of heart;" and let no consideration under Heaven induce you for a moment to draw back from him!

***~~2. What need we have to examine the state of our minds towards him—~~***

The persons who laid so great a stress on circumcision little thought what evils they were bringing on their own souls: and it is highly probable that they thought the affirmations of the Apostle needlessly severe. But this very circumstance rendered it the more necessary that he would deal faithfully with them, and declare to them the danger to which they were exposed. And so it is, when we declare the danger of self-righteousness, we are thought harsh and uncharitable. But we must declare, and "testify to everyone" who relies on the works of the law, or blends anything whatever with the merits of Christ, that he makes void the whole work of Christ, and cuts himself off from any part in his salvation!

Examine yourselves, therefore: for *self-righteousness is deeply rooted in the heart of man*; and it has many specious pretexts for its acting. But be on your guard against it, and watch against it in every form; and determine, through grace, that you will henceforth trust in nothing, and "glory in nothing, but the cross of Christ!"

***~~#2079~~***

***~~THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH~~***

***~~[Galatians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.5)~~***

"We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

THE object of Paul, in this epistle is, to maintain and establish the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law. This doctrine had been assailed and controverted by Judaizing teachers, who had gained such influence in the Church, as to draw multitudes after them, and to intimidate even the Apostles themselves.

We are told that *Peter*, through fear of the circumcision, dissembled, and drew *Barnabas*also, his friend and fellow-laborer, into a participation of his sin. *Paul*, with befitting zeal, set himself to stem the tide. He felt for the honor of God, whose Gospel was thus perverted; and for the welfare of immortal souls, whose salvation was endangered; and, without partiality, he rebuked Peter in the face of the whole Church; showing that *all mixture of the Law with the Gospel was a fatal error*; and that *all who would be saved must seek salvation wholly and exclusively by faith in Christ*.

Having concluded his argument, he enforces the truth he had established; and declares, that all who were under the influence of the Spirit of God would wait for the hope of righteousness, not by works, but by faith alone.

The words before us will lead me to show,

***~~I. To what every true Christian looks, for justification before God—~~***

***~~The context makes known to us the Apostle's views—~~***

The energy of the Apostle on this subject is such as must, on no account, be overlooked. He declares, in opposition to the Judaizing teachers, that the blending of the Law with the Gospel, in any respect, would make void all that Christ has done and suffered for us; that it would bring us back altogether to the covenant of works, which promised nothing but to perfect obedience; and that it was, in fact, an utter renunciation of the Gospel, and a contempt of all the grace contained in it. "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ has become of no effect unto you: whoever of you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace!"

Now, of all works that could be performed, circumcision was the most innocent: for it had been expressly commanded of God, from the first moment that Abraham had been admitted into covenant with him: it was enjoined under the penalty of death: Moses himself was in imminent danger of being slain by God for the neglect of it: and, though abrogated by the Gospel, Paul had sanctioned the observance of it in the case of Timothy. 'Yet,' says Paul, 'the observance of this rite, with a view to increase or confirm your saving interest in the Gospel, will invalidate the Gospel altogether, and plunge your souls into inevitable perdition.'

Having solemnly asserted and testified of these things, he goes on to declare what he himself, and all true Christians, looked to for their justification before God: "We," we Apostles, we who are truly under the influence of the Spirit, "wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." We renounce every other hope whatever: we blend nothing with the merits of Christ: we look for acceptance through His righteousness alone: and we expect to obtain a saving interest in it, and to be made partakers of it, simply and solely by faith in Him.'

***~~In accordance with these, are the views of every true Christian—~~***

Every one who is but a babe in Christ knows that he neither has, nor can have, any righteousness of his own. Having transgressed the law, he feels that he is deserving of its curse denounced against him; and that he must obtain some better righteousness than his own, if ever he would find acceptance with God.

He looks into the Scriptures, and learns, that the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, the co-equal, co-eternal Son of God, has left his throne of glory, and assumed our nature; and in that nature has suffered the penalty which we had merited, and obeyed the law which we had broken; and has thereby "brought in an everlasting righteousness" for all who believe in him.

Convinced of this, he casts himself entirely on the Lord; calling him "The Lord our Righteousness;" and saying, "In the Lord alone have I righteousness and strength." Thus, renouncing all hopes by the works of the law, he "waits for the hope of righteousness by faith" alone. He considers that righteousness as wrought out on purpose for him: he regards it as promised to him the very instant he believes in Christ: he looks to him by faith, in order to obtain a saving interest in it; and he "waits for" it God's appointed time: he waits for it here, even for the manifestation of it to his soul; and he waits for it hereafter, as the ground of his acquittal at the bar of judgment, and as the ground of his elevation to the throne of glory. At no period does he hope for anything on the ground of his own merits: and though he knows that his works shall be rewarded, he looks for that recompense, not as a reward of debt, but as a reward of grace: and to God alone does he give all the glory of his salvation, from first to last.

As the Apostle ascribes his experience in this respect to the agency of the Holy Spirit, it will be proper for me to show,

***~~II. How far the Holy Spirit operates to the production of these views—~~***

"In God we live, and move, and have our being." But, in the economy of redemption, there is a special office assigned to the Third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, even that of *applying all the benefits* *of redemption to the souls of men, and rendering it effectual for their salvation*. It was "through the Spirit" that the Apostle waited for the hope of righteousness by faith:

***~~1. Through his teaching in the word—~~***

All the prophets, from the beginning, have spoken by inspiration of God, even as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, [2 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.16). [1 Peter 1:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.10-11) and [2 Peter 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.21). Now, from the beginning has the Holy Spirit declared, that our hope of righteousness is solely by faith in Christ.

To Adam, as soon as he had fallen, was it made known, that "the Seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus Christ, would bruise the serpent's head," and repair the evil which that wicked fiend had introduced. Abel, we are told, "by faith offered" an acceptable sacrifice unto his God. Now this presupposes a revelation from God in relation to that sacrifice: for there can be no scope for the exercise of faith, where nothing has been revealed. Here, then, it is clear, that God had made known to Abel, that a sinner could be saved through the intervention of a sacrifice, even of that Great Sacrifice which would in due time be offered upon the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ; who is therefore called, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Through all successive ages was this represented by a variety of types, and proclaimed in a variety of prophecies; to particularize which will be unnecessary, because Paul expressly affirms all that we have asserted: "Now," says he, "the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, [Romans 3:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.21-22)."

Here, I say, we are not only directed to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Author of salvation, but we are told that his righteousness is the ground of our hope; that we must obtain a saving interest in it by faith; and that to this way of salvation both the law and the prophets have borne witness from the beginning. It is clear, therefore, that if we ever attain to it at all, it must be "through the Spirit's" teaching in the word.

***~~2. Through his influence upon the soul—~~***

To this way of salvation, man is extremely averse. He wants to have something of his own whereon to trust, and something which shall serve him as a ground of glorying before God. No human power can divert him from this: no arguments can convince him; no persuasion can move him; not all the promises or threatenings of the Scriptures can induce him to renounce all self-confidence, and rely on Christ alone.

"God himself must make him willing in the day of his power." And this work the Holy Spirit effects. "He convinces the man, of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, [John 16:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.8)."

Of *sin*, so as to make him feel himself lost and utterly undone.

Of *righteousness*, so as to show him that in Christ there is a sufficiency for the very chief of sinners.

Of *judgment*, so as to assure him, that, by faith in this Savior, Satan himself shall be vanquished, and bruised under his feet.

But, as man, while ignorant of his own sinfulness, disdains to accept of mercy in God's appointed way; so, when his eyes are opened to see how unworthy he is, he is ready to think that God never can show mercy to one so vile as he. Here, therefore, the Holy Spirit's operations are again called for: and here he exerts himself effectually for the production of the desired end. Having first inclined the person, and made him willing to submit to God's method of justifying a sinner, he next encourages and enables him to repose his confidence in God, and to accept the offered mercy. This the Holy Spirit does, by revealing Christ unto his soul, in all the fullness of his sufficiency, and in all the freeness of his grace. He glorifies Christ: he takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them unto the trembling soul, [John 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.14); and thus overcomes his reluctance on the one hand, and his distrust on the other. In this way the person is brought to see, that "righteousness is by faith" alone; and to "hope" for that righteousness, yes, and to "wait for" it, until it shall please God to make known to him his interest in it, and to speak peace unto his soul.

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those whose views of this subject are indistinct—~~***

All have "a hope of righteousness," which, in some way or other, shall prove sufficient for their acceptance, when they go hence. But, if we come to examine the *grounds of their hope*, we find that few, very few, have their views clear, decided, scriptural. To renounce all dependence on our own works, to have no leaning whatever to any righteousness of our own, is a very rare attainment.

If we were told, that the smallest measure of self-righteousness would make "Christ himself of no effect to us," and leave us in the very state of the fallen angels, who have no Savior, we would account it harsh. We are willing that the Lord Jesus Christ would have the *principal*share of the glory arising from our salvation, but not *all*.

Beloved brethren, I beg you, examine into this matter: see whether you can be content to be saved precisely as one of the fallen angels would be, if he were now plucked as a brand out of the burning.

You must be brought to this. *Why was it that so many millions of moral and religious Jews have perished, while millions of immoral and idolatrous Gentiles have been saved?*It has arisen from this: the Jews could not be brought to renounce all dependence on the law; while the Gentiles have thankfully accepted the righteousness provided for them in the Gospel. "The Jews have stumbled," as thousands of Gentiles also do, "at that stumbling-stone:" for, on this account, Christ has proved to them no other than "a rock of offense;" while to those who have believed in him he has invariably proved a rock of salvation! [Romans 9:30-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-33). And this is the peculiar danger of those who are most moral, and most religiously inclined. It was the Jews, who "had a great zeal for God," who fell into this unhappy snare, and would not submit to the righteousness provided for them in the Gospel, [Romans 10:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.2-4).

I pray God, that you, my brethren, may not reject the overtures that are now made to you. I believe that there are many of you who have a zeal for God: but I fear that, in many cases, it is not a zeal "according to knowledge." You do not clearly see that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness;" and that he is so to those alone who "believe, [Romans 10:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.2-4)."

I beseech you, leave not this matter unexamined, and undecided, in your minds: but beg of God to reveal his Son in you; and that you may never be allowed to rest, until you can say, with the Apostle, "I desire to be found in Christ, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9)."

***~~2. Those who, while they have these views, are afraid fully to rely upon them—~~***

A free and full salvation, even to the chief of sinners, and simply by faith in Christ, seems to be so rich a blessing, that it would be presumptuous in any human being to entertain a hope of it: and, from this feeling, many are led to put it away from them, as too great ever to be obtained.

But, my brethren, if God has revealed it, and absolutely appointed it as the *only*way in which he will receive sinners to himself, who are we that we would refuse it? This is a false humility.

If we could see ourselves possessed of some worthiness, then we would be content to receive salvation at God's hands: but, because we see our utter unworthiness, we put it from us. But this is greatly to dishonor God, and grievously to insult the Lord Jesus Christ; yes, and to do despite also to the Holy Spirit, who has revealed this salvation to us. Be content to receive all freely from God, as you receive the light of the sun, and the very air you breathe.

Remember, that *the more unworthy you feel yourselves to be, the more will his grace be exalted and magnified*. There is a righteousness already wrought out for you, and ready to be imparted to you. It is appointed to be received simply and solely by faith. It is "the hope laid up for you in Heaven:" and you are to "wait for" it, in the exercise of earnest and continual prayer. O! beg of the Holy Spirit to reveal it fully to your souls, and to overcome all your doubts and all your fears; and so to work faith in your hearts, that you may be filled with peace and joy in this world, and attain, in the eternal world, "the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls!"

***~~#2080~~***

***~~THE OFFICE AND OPERATION OF FAITH~~***

***~~[Galatians 5:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.6)~~***

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."

THE peculiar character of the Gospel is that it shows how a sinner may be justified before God; yet the generality of professing Christians are far from entertaining just views of this most fundamental point: they confound the different offices of faith and works. But Paul distinguishes them with much accuracy and precision; he invariably declares that *our justification is by faith alone*. Yet, though he denies to works the office of justifying, he invariably insists on them as the *necessary fruits and evidences of our faith*. Nothing can be more decisive than the declaration before us. We shall:

***~~I. Explain it—~~***

***~~Man is prone to trust in outward rites and ceremonies—~~***

The Jews confided in the ordinance of circumcision: the Judaizing teachers also among the Christians inculcated the observance of that rite as a ground of hope. Among ourselves also, many think it sufficient that they have been baptized, or expect to find admission into Heaven because they have attended regularly at the Lord's table.

***~~But no outward observances can avail for our salvation—~~***

*An external conformity with the rule of duty may proceed from the basest principles*: it may spring from a desire to obtain man's applause, or to establish a righteousness of our own; and it may consist with the indulgence of evil tempers and appetites. It cannot therefore of itself characterize the true Christian, nor can it "avail anything" towards procuring the Divine favor. If indeed it proceeds from faith and love, it will be rewarded; but if it is made the ground of our hope, it will prevent, rather than procure, our acceptance with God, [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2).

***~~That which alone can avail for our acceptance with God, is "faith"—~~***

All the promises of God are made to faith, [Mark 16:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.16). [Acts 10:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.43). It is by faith that all the saints of old obtained salvation, [Romans 4:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.3); [Romans 4:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.6-7). Paul and James do not really differ respecting this. *Paul*([Romans 4:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.1-5)) speaks of Abraham as being justified before God. *James*(2:21-23) speaks of Abraham as manifesting his faith before man, and as justifying his pretensions to the Divine favor by a suitable conduct, nor do any passages of Scripture really contradict it. There are many expressions both in the Old and New Testament which seem to assert salvation by works: but they are only declarative of the character of those that shall be finally saved, or of God's gracious determination to reward those works which flow from faith. If they were interpreted in any other way, they would invalidate the whole Gospel. If salvation be of grace, then it must be by faith, [Romans 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.16).

***~~Yet saving faith must be productive of good works—~~***

Saving faith is not a mere notional assent to certain doctrines, nor is it a confident assurance respecting the safety of our own state; but it is a living and operative principle in the heart. It is, on our part, the bond of union between Christ and our souls, and it cannot but reveal itself by "works of love. If it produces not holy tempers, and a sincere regard for the bodies and souls of men, it is no better than the faith of devils! [James 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.19).

The declaration in the text being explained, we shall,

***~~II. Improve it—~~***

Every part of Scripture, rightly understood, is profitable for the directing both of our faith and practice, [2 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.16).

***~~We will improve this before us:~~***

***~~1. "For doctrine," that is, for the establishing of true doctrine—~~***

The way of salvation is simply by faith in Christ, and not by any kind of work, religious or moral. The Apostle does not deny that circumcision is of any avail merely because it is a ceremonial work, but because it is a work; and because dependence on it would rob Christ of his glory. His argument therefore excludes works of whatever kind they be. Compare [Galatians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.16). Works must be considered as of no avail with respect to justification before God. However necessary, however valuable, our obedience may be if performed aright, it ceases to be valuable the moment we *depend*upon it for acceptance with God. This is clearly stated in the text and context, [Galatians 5:2-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2-6); and Paul himself was practically persuaded of this doctrine, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9). *Let us then renounce all confidence in our own works, and rely wholly on the blood and righteousness of Christ*.

***~~2. "For reproof," that is, for the refuting of false doctrines—~~***

Some have argued from the text, that faith saves us as an operative principle. Thus they affirm that we are justified by something within ourselves. But faith, as a principle, is not of more value than love, [1 Corinthians 13:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.13); and if we were justified by it as an operative principle, we would have room to boast, just as much as we would if we were justified by love or any other principle.

The reason of our being justified by faith is, that faith unites us unto Christ, which is a property not common to any other grace. Our works do not make our faith to be good or saving, but only prove it to be so. Just as fruit does not *make*a tree good, but only *manifests*it to be so. If our faith is genuine, we shall discover it to God by a simple dependence upon Christ, and to man by the practice of good works.

***~~3. "For correction" of unrighteous conduct—~~***

It must be confessed that many profess faith in Christ while their lives are utterly contrary the Gospel: but such persons stand condemned even by their own profession. No faith is of any avail, but such faith as "works by love."

Let professors then weigh themselves in the balance of the sanctuary; let them examine their tempers, dispositions, and actions; let them acknowledge that a proud, envious, passionate, unforgiving, covetous, or selfish Christian, is as much a contradiction in terms, as an adulterous or murderous Christian! Let them put away either their profession or their sins!

***~~4. "For instruction in righteousness"—~~***

To point out all the offices of love would be tedious. Let us contemplate it as set forth by the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 13; and, not content with any measure that we have attained, let us abound in it more and more!

***~~#2081~~***

***~~OFFENSE OF THE CROSS~~***

***~~[Galatians 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.11)~~***

"Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished."

THE Gospel, in the first ages, was an object of hatred and persecution both among Jews and Gentiles: to the Jews it was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. [1 Corinthians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.23);" and it was the one constant labor of them both to corrupt it; the one by their traditions; the other by that which was falsely called philosophy. Hence, while those opposite parties felt the utmost contempt for each other, they united their efforts against Christianity; as Herod and Pontius Pilate had done for the destruction of its Founder.

In the passage before us, Paul is guarding his converts against the attempts of the Judaizing teachers; who sought to bring back their brethren to a dependence on the law, and who labored even to subject the Gentile converts also to an observance of the Mosaic ritual. Circumcision, in particular, was that which these teachers insisted on as ordained by God and as of perpetual obligation.

Paul tells the Galatians, that the whole of the Mosaic ritual was abrogated; and that they must never allow anyone to bring them into subjection to it, verse 1. If he would have consented that the Jews would blend the Law with the Gospel, they would have been well pleased with him and with his doctrines too: "If," says he, "I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished."

From these words I will endeavor to show,

***~~I. Whence it is, that the doctrine of the cross gives offense—~~***

The doctrine of the cross is simply that declaration, that Christ died upon the cross for our redemption, and that through his obedience unto death we must obtain favor with God.

Now this doctrine uniformly gives offense to those who hear it, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. For it is,

***~~1. A humiliating doctrine—~~***

It brings down all men upon a level; so far, at least, that they must renounce all dependence on themselves, and seek for salvation solely through the righteousness of another. It leaves no room for any man to boast, or to glory in anything that he possesses. The best, as well as the worst, must owe their salvation simply and entirely to Christ, from first to last.

***~~2. An unaccommodating doctrine—~~***

It will not bend to men's prejudices or passions: nor must its advocates "give way to anyone, no, not for an hour." Moral works, as well as religious, must be excluded utterly from the office of justifying the soul; and the whole glory must be given to Christ alone.

***~~3. A peremptory doctrine—~~***

It appeals not to our reason, but demands assent to its dictates. It requires the most perfect submission to all that it inculcates; and threatens with eternal damnation every one who withholds his assent from its truths, or his obedience to its commands. Its plain declaration is, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." [John 3:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.36)

On these grounds, I say, it is hated. It is esteemed licentious, bigoted, and severe:

*Licentious*, as denying any merit to works, and therefore cutting off all motives for the performance of them.

*Bigoted*, as admitting of no relaxation, but binding all persons to receive it simply as it is.

*Severe*, as denouncing such heavy judgments on all who cannot bring their minds to embrace it.

The Apostle clearly supposes that this character is essential to the Gospel; and that it will, to the remotest ages, give the same offense. We inquire therefore,

***~~II. Why the gospel can never cease to give offense—~~***

Two reasons may be assigned:

***~~1. The Gospel must ever remain the same—~~***

No alteration has ever taken place in it, or ever can take place. It is a revelation of the way which God has devised for the salvation of fallen man. He gave up his only-begotten Son to die for us, and by his own blood to make an atonement for our sins. The Lord Jesus Christ has executed this great work, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. "That cross we preach," as the one only means of reconciling man to God: and all the servants of God have but this one testimony to bear; namely, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, [2 Corinthians 5:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.18-20)."

We have nothing to announce about the merits of man: we are not authorized to make any distinction between one man and another: we are to bear the same testimony to all, whether Jews or Greeks, bond or free: and without hesitation must we declare to all, that "no other foundation of hope for sinful man can ever be laid, than that which God has laid, which is Jesus Christ! [1 Corinthians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11);" and that "there is no other name given under Heaven whereby any man can be saved! [Acts 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.12)."

Now, if this could admit of any change, or any modification, we might hope to please men, but we are shut up to this. We can preach nothing else; and they must hear nothing else: and if they will not receive this, there is no alternative left them: perish they must, and under an accumulated condemnation too: for *they will be judged, not only as transgressors of the law, but as despisers of the Gospel also*; and, consequently, will have a far sorer punishment to bear, than if they had never heard of the way of salvation.

***~~2. Human nature ever remains the same—~~***

People are born into the world with all the same propensities as they were in the apostolic age. All people have, by nature, the same pride of heart, that rises against the humiliating doctrines before specified. Everyone wishes to have within himself some ground of glorying. To be stripped naked, as it were, without so much as one "rag of righteousness," as the Scripture expresses it, to cover him, [Isaiah 64:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.6), is more than he can endure. *To be nothing, that Christ may be all, is a hard lesson.*

Again, the heart of man is as worldly as ever: it affects not the things that are above, but the things only of time and sense. But the same Gospel which requires such self-renunciation in its principles, requires no less self-denial in its practice. We must "live not in any degree to ourselves," but wholly "unto Him who died for us, and rose again."

To this our carnal hearts will not submit: and until the heart be changed by grace, it will ever quarrel with these appointments, as unreasonably precise. *In no point of view whatever is the Gospel palatable to the carnal mind—but let a new heart be given to a man, and all will be well!*

But, while the heart of man continues what it is, "the offense of the cross can never cease."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Let none reject the Gospel on account of the offense attaching to it—~~***

Many conceive that the doctrine of the cross must be erroneous, because it is everywhere spoken against. But, if this is any argument against the doctrine now, it was so equally in the apostolic age; for the enmity of mankind against it was most inveterate and universal.

I will certainly grant, that the existence of enmity against any doctrine will not of itself prove that doctrine to be true; for then the most pernicious tenets of the wildest enthusiasts would have a claim to our belief. But this is certain, that *any Gospel which gives no offense, must be false.*

There are multitudes who hear what they call the Gospel, and are extremely well pleased with it: the worldly approve it: the self-righteous approve it: even the most profligate find no fault with it. Can that, I ask, be the Gospel which Paul preached? It is impossible! I know, indeed, that there is a way of preaching even truth itself without offense: but the truth, the whole truth delivered with authority as the truth of God must give offense. Men have no alternative left to them, but to be offended with the preacher, or with themselves. And the very offense which they take is so far from being an argument against the doctrines they have heard, that it is a presumptive argument in their favor.

If, then, you hear the doctrine of the cross firmly stated, and find that it gives offense, take it and compare it with the doctrine which Paul delivered: and, if you find that it accords with his, then embrace it, and hold it fast, and glory in it, saying, "God forbid that I would glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!"

***~~2. Let none cause others to reject it, by giving any needless offense—~~***

Many who have embraced the Gospel are sadly inattentive to the feelings and prejudices of those around them. They will run into many absurdities, without ever considering what stumbling-blocks they lay in the way of their unconverted brethren. Some give great offense by the crude and partial statements which they make of the Gospel; and others, by the harsh, uncharitable, and contemptuous way in which they speak of those who do not accord with their views.

It is a great misfortune to the world to have such persons connected with them; because *they are almost of necessity led to impute to the Gospel itself the indiscretions and absurdities of those who profess it*.Let these incautious professors consider what evil they do, and what guilt they contract: for if there is a "woe to the world because of offenses, there is a double woe to those by whom the offense comes."

As for those who cause "the way of truth to be evil spoken of" by their inconsistent conduct, by their neglect of their own proper calling; for instance, by a lack of truth in their words, or integrity in their dealings; "let them look to it;" for evil is before them: and *the very Gospel which they so dishonor will plunge them into tenfold perdition!*

Let all who profess the Gospel see to it, "that they give no needless offense in anything." Let them rather be far more observant of the whole of their duty, that they may "give no occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully," and let it be their one continued care to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things!"

***~~#2082~~***

***~~WALKING IN THE SPIRIT, A PRESERVATIVE FROM SIN~~***

***~~[Galatians 5:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.16)~~***

"This I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

IN the Church of God, no less than in the ungodly world, there have always been found persons ready to foment divisions, and to kindle animosities between man and man. It was so in the apostolic age: it is so at this day: and it must of necessity be so, as long as tares are left growing among the wheat, or persons professing godliness allow themselves to be led captive by a proud, unmortified, and contentious spirit.

In the Galatian Church, persons of this description abounded: and to such a height did their contentions arise, that the Apostle was constrained to give them this solemn warning: "If you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed by one another! verse 15."

Now, how shall this propensity be counteracted? The Apostle tells us, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." Let us consider then,

***~~I. The direction here given—~~***

Before we can enter fully into the passage before us, we must explain the terms which the Apostle uses to convey his opinions. The whole context shows that there are two principles in the regenerate man; one which is called flesh, and another which is called Spirit: the *flesh*comprehending all which we bring into the world with us, and which is common to the natural man; the *spirit*importing that better principle which is infused into the soul by the Spirit of God, when he quickens us to a new and heavenly life: as our Lord says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, [John 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.6)."

Sin of every kind is the fruit of the flesh; and holiness of every kind is the offspring of the Spirit. Among "the works of the flesh," the Apostle numbers "idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, jealousy, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, verse 20;" which shows, that we are not, when speaking of "the lusts or desires of the flesh," to confine our views to sins which are acted in and by the body; but to take in *all the corruptions of our nature, in mind as well as body*. With this explanation, we shall the more easily see, that, to "walk in the Spirit," we must walk,

***~~1. In a constant attention to the new principle infused into us—~~***

I cannot give a more just idea of this new principle, which the Spirit of God imparts to us in our conversion, than by comparing it with the modern invention of the *compass*. Before the invention of the compass, mariners, in a dark night, were unable with any precision to direct their course. While they were in sight of land, or had a view of the sun or stars, they could proceed with some degree of certainty: but, in the absence of these, they were altogether at a loss. But it is not so with mariners at this time. By the help of the *compass*they can by night steer the ship, as well as in the day; having constantly at hand, as it were, a sure directory.

Now this is the difference between the natural and the spiritual man.

The *natural*man has reason and conscience, which, to a certain degree, are capable of directing his path. But numberless occasions arise whereon they fail him utterly.

The *spiritual*man has, superadded to these, a new and living principle abiding in him; a principle infused into him by the Spirit of God, and in exact accordance with his mind and will: and by this principle the Spirit himself guides him in all his way. The spiritual man, therefore, in every doubt or difficulty, would consult this divine principle within him; and see its bearings, and follow its directions. And as the mariner, while he observes his compass, consults also his chart and maps; so must we, while attending to the motions of this principle, consult also the directory which God has given us in the Holy Scriptures: and by means of these observations we shall be kept from any great aberrations from the way of truth. This process, however, must be continued throughout all our way: we must not only live in the Spirit, but must "walk in the Spirit," every step we take! verse 25.

***~~2. In a humble dependence on that Divine Spirit who has infused it—~~***

The new principle within us may suggest what is right; but it cannot enable us for the performance of it: for all power to do the will of God, we must be indebted altogether to the Spirit of God. Our blessed Lord expressly says, "Without me you can do nothing, [John 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.5)." There is no surer cause of failure than self-confidence and self-dependence. Peter, and with him all the other disciples, declared that they would follow their Lord even unto death: but no sooner did the trial come, than "they all forsook him and fled." And we, too, if we make resolutions in our own strength, shall learn, by bitter experience, that "he who trusts in his own heart, is a fool! [Proverbs 28:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 28.26)."

We must be careful, too, not to make any difference between matters of greater or lesser difficulty, as though we were competent for the one any more than the other. We must, in the whole course of our journey, depend on God alone: we are never, for a moment, to feel strong in ourselves, but "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, [Ephesians 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.10);" and in every step that we take, we must cry, "Hold me up, and I shall be safe! [Psalm 119:117](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.117)."

To this direction the Apostle adds,

***~~II. Our encouragement to the observance of it—~~***

We have before shown that by the "lusts of the flesh" we are to understand all the motions of our corrupt nature: and from these we shall be preserved, if we follow the direction given us in our text. But here we must carefully distinguish between what is promised, and what is not.

***~~1. It is not promised that we shall not be tempted by the lusts of the flesh—~~***

The carnal principle still remains with us after we are renewed; as the Apostle says, "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit, against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other; so that you cannot do the things you would, verse 17." If, on the one hand, our spiritual principle keeps us from following the evil bias of our nature; so, on the other hand, the remainder of the carnal principle within us keeps us from following so fully as we could wish, the dictates of our renewed mind. The Apostle Paul himself complained, that "when he would do good, evil was present with him;" and that, notwithstanding he delighted in the law of God after his inward man, "he had still a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and at times bringing him, in some degree, into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members, [Romans 7:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.21-23)." And we, too, shall find the same, even to our dying hour. But,

***~~2. It is promised that we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh—~~***

God will "strengthen us by his Spirit in our inward man, [Ephesians 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.16)," and enable us to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, verse 24." Weak as we are in ourselves, "nothing shall be impossible to us," if we trust in Him, [Matthew 17:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 17.20); he will "give us more grace, [James 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.6)," and "strength according to our day, [Deuteronomy 33:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.25)." Whatever be our temptations, "the grace of Christ shall be sufficient for us, 2 Corinthians 12:9;" and "we shall be enabled to do all things through Christ who strengthens us, [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13)."

***~~From this subject we may clearly learn,~~***

***~~1. What is the great work we have to do—~~***

The one employment which we have daily to attend to, is to be putting off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and to be "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)."

We are here in this world, as in a great hospital, where the process of healing is going forward, and many are convalescent; but we need still to apply the same remedies; and we are none of us possessed of that measure of health which we hope to attain previous to our dismissal. We still follow the prescriptions of our physician; and we hope, in so doing, to obtain, in due season, a perfect recovery.

***~~2. The need we have of constant vigilance and exertion—~~***

The old principle, as has been observed, still remains within us: and, if we are not constantly on our guard, it will regain its former ascendency over us. A stronger army, if the sentinels fall asleep, may be surprised and vanquished by troops that are far inferior: and we too, notwithstanding the power given us by the indwelling Spirit, shall surely be overcome, if we are not constantly on our watch-tower. We must be prepared to meet our adversary at his first approach.

Our blessed Lord says, "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation:" and the sad consequences of sleeping on our post may be seen in the disciples, when they failed to observe this important admonition, [Matthew 26:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.41); [Matthew 26:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.43); [Matthew 26:56](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.56). Corruption will often put on the appearance of virtue, and Satan will assume the garb of an angel of light, [2 Corinthians 11:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.14); but if we are on our guard, we shall detect his devices; and "if we resist him manfully, he will flee from us! [James 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.7)."

***~~3. The security that is afforded us, if we are only faithful to walk in the Spirit—~~***

God assures us of success, if only we follow his directions. "If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption: but if we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, [Galatians 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.7-8)." In two respects shall we be placed on a totally different footing from that on which we stood before: we shall not be judged according to the perfect law, which condemns us for the smallest act of disobedience; for, "if we walk in the Spirit, we are not under the law, verse 18;" on the contrary, our imperfect obedience shall be eternally rewarded: for God would deem himself "unrighteous, if he were to forget" anything that we do for his sake, [Hebrews 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.10). With boldness, then, I say to every one among you, "Be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and you may rest assured that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord! [1 Corinthians 15:58](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.58)."

***~~#2083~~***

***~~THE PRINCIPLES OF FLESH AND SPIRIT CONSIDERED~~***

***~~[Galatians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.17)~~***

"The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you should."

IT might be naturally imagined, that, from the moment of our conversion to God, the transformation of the soul into the Divine image would proceed so rapidly, as soon to extirpate sin altogether. But God has not seen fit so to carry on his work in his people's hearts. The Canaanites were not rooted out of the land at once, but "little by little, [Deuteronomy 7:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 7.22) with [Numbers 23:55](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 23.55)." Just so it is with our spiritual enemies: they have strongholds, from which they cannot be expelled, but by means of a long-protracted warfare. They remain, to be "thorns in our eyes and in our sides;" and ultimately in a more conspicuous manner to subserve the glory of God in their final extirpation.

The best of men have yet within them two contrary and contending principles; the one being used by Satan as an instrument for the defeating of God's gracious purposes towards them; the other being employed by God for the furthering and securing of their eternal welfare. To what an extent the conflict between the two is sometimes carried, may be seen in the Galatian converts, many of whom betrayed by their contentious dispositions how great an ascendant the evil principle yet retained over them, notwithstanding all the professions of piety which they made, and the distinguished advantages they enjoyed.

The Apostle did not mean to extenuate, and much less to excuse, the sinfulness of their unstable and contentious conduct; but he exhorts them to walk more entirely under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as the only means of securing them against the evil propensities which they had manifested, and of carrying on unto perfection the good work that had been begun in them, verse 16.

In speaking of the two principles mentioned in our text, we shall notice,

***~~I. Their united existence—~~***

***~~There yet remains in God's people an evil principle, which is here designated by the name of "flesh"—~~***

Man, since the fall of our first parents, is born into the world as a corrupt creature: for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" He is depraved in all the members of his body, and in all the faculties of his soul; there is no part which is not defiled and debased by sin:

the *understanding*is dark;

the *will*is perverse;

the *affections*are sensual;

the *conscience*is seared;

the *memory*is keenly retentive of things that are gratifying to the carnal mind.

However this depravity may be checked by grace, it is not extirpated: it remains like the infection in the leprous house, and will remain until the house itself is leveled with the ground!

***~~But there is also in them a new heaven-born principle, which is called "Spirit"—~~***

This is spoken of by our blessed Lord as contradistinguished from the other, and in precisely the same terms: "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit, [John 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.6)." Under the term "flesh," he includes all that we bring into the world with us, and all that characterizes us as men: but the "Spirit" is that which makes and designates us new men, or "new creatures in Christ Jesus." Indeed, it is called "the new man," as the other is "the old man;" and is "a renewal in the spirit of our mind," after the "very image of our God, in righteousness and true holiness, [Ephesians 4:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.22-24)."

This new principle is infused into the soul at the time of our regeneration; and it is, if I may so speak, the seminal principle of our conversion. At the instant of its infusion into the soul, we are "quickened from the dead," and "pass from death unto life." Previously to the communication of it to us from above, we are like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision: we may have the form of men, but we are not living men: it is not until we have received that, that "Christ lives in us," but then "Christ himself becomes our life, [Galatians 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.20); [Galatians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.19) and [Colossians 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.4)."

Now this new principle co-exists with the former: it does not at once expel the former; nor is itself barred out by the former: but it enters into, and occupies, the whole man, even as the former did; and, according to the measure in which it is imparted, it communicates:

light to the understanding,

submission to the will,

heavenliness to the affections,

tenderness to the conscience,

and a tenacious apprehension of what is good to the memory.

From the time of its existence in the soul, it becomes a second self—a *spiritual*self as distinguished from the *carnal*self; agreeably to what the Apostle has repeatedly said for the purpose of distinguishing the more fully the actings of the two contrary principles: "It is no more I who do this evil, but sin that dwells in me! [Romans 7:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.17); [Romans 7:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.20)."

Both of these principles being strong and active in the soul, we will consider,

***~~II. Their contrary operations—~~***

***~~The flesh is always striving to regain its former ascendency over us—~~***

The members of our bodies are but the agents and instruments of the sinful principle: the chief seat of its residence is the soul; in every faculty of which it works to "bring forth fruit unto death."

In the understanding, it suggests proud reasonings against the revealed will of God, prompting us to dispute the authority of his precepts, the truth of his promises, the justice of his threatenings, and the wisdom of that mysterious plan of redemption which he has devised for the recovery of fallen man.

In the will, it stirs up rebellion against him, and a determination to follow "its own corrupt and deceitful lusts."

In the affections, it magnifies the things of time and sense, so as to make them, if not the only, at least the chief, objects of its pursuit.

In the conscience, it produces such blindness and partiality, as to force from it a sentence of condemnation or acquittal, not according to truth, but according to its own predominant habits and inclinations.

Nor does the memory escape its baneful influence, being filled by it with all manner of corrupt images, which from time to time it presents to the imagination, as the means of corrupting the heart, and enslaving the soul.

The better principle, on the other hand, protests against all the workings of the flesh, and presents to the mind such considerations as are calculated to awaken the tempted soul to a sense of its guilt and danger. Especially it reminds the soul of the obligations it owes to God the Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ for all the wonders of redeeming love; and provokes it to high and heavenly pursuits.

What is said of the Holy Spirit may also be said of this divine principle which is formed in the soul; namely, that "when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit lifts up a standard against him." The *standard of the cross*especially is that by which it calls forth into activity all the powers of the soul, and unites them in the service of their God.

The reflux of a tide may fitly illustrate its operation on the soul. The flesh, like a majestic river, runs with irresistible impetuosity towards the ocean, until the tide begins to flow; and then, from an invisible but mighty influence, its waves are stayed, until by degrees its current is turned back again towards the source from whence it emanated. This in the material world is but the process of a few hours; but in the spiritual world it is the work of the whole life.

The dominance of the flesh is exhibited in the progress of the river to the ocean; the conflicts and triumphs of the Spirit are depicted in the reversal of its course, and the progress towards the fountain-head. In this however the illustration fails, that when the tide has once overcome the resistance of the river, the conflict ceases: but it is not so with the Christian's conflicts: they continue to the end; and may perhaps be better compared with a conflagration which is opposed by fire engines, where the supply of water is scarcely equal to the demand: sometimes the fire yields to the well-directed stream; and at other times it breaks forth with renewed fury, and seems to defy the efforts of those who would arrest its progress. This, I say, will place in the most just view the operations of the two principles within us, and enable us to comprehend,

***~~III. Their combined effects—~~***

Acting always in opposition the one to the other, they prevent us from following either to the extent that we should, if there were but one principle within us. Through the simultaneous actings of each,

***~~1. We do not serve sin as we once did—~~***

We once followed sin with constancy and alacrity, and without remorse. But not so now. The better principle will not admit of it. Like the angel that was sent to Balaam, it presents itself in our way to obstruct our course; and, if we overcome it on one occasion, it will meet us again, and renew its opposition until it has prevailed.

Nor can we now so easily run into evil. Sin now appears to he sin, and consequently to be an object of aversion and dread: and, though its solicitations may prevail, we yield to them rather as a captive that is dragged against his will, than as persons following the bent and inclination of their own hearts.

Now too we can no longer wipe our mouth, like the adulteress, and say, What evil have I done? [Proverbs 30:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 30.20). Remorse and shame are now the followers of transgression: and an evil *thought*now occasions more pain in the soul, than formerly the perpetration of the *act*. Thus the corrupt principle, though not extirpated, is obstructed, and ceases to maintain an undisputed sway.

***~~2. Nor do we serve God as we desire—~~***

The renewed soul pants after universal holiness: it would be pure as God is pure, and perfect as God is perfect. It would believe every word of God without the smallest hesitation or doubt: but unbelief creeps in, and weakens the energy of our faith. We would love God with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; but the contracted soul cannot expand itself to the occasion. We would draw near to him in prayer and praise, and hold most intimate fellowship with the Father and the Son; but the heart "starts aside as a deceitful bow," and, like a bird entangled in a snare, is incapable of executing its most ardent desires.

In a word, the renewed soul would be satisfied with no exertions, however great; no services, however eminent; no enjoyment of God, however intimate. It aspires after absolute perfection, and a total transformation into the Divine image.

But, alas! its attainments fall infinitely short of its desires, and it is constrained to cry, "O that I had wings like a dove! Then would I flee away and be at rest!"

That this is no false representation of the Christian's state, may be seen from the account which Paul himself gives of his own experience. Of the united existence of these two principles, and of their contrary operations within him, and of their combined effects, he speaks at large in the seventh chapter to the Romans: "He had a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, which was in his members." "When he would do good, evil was present with him;" so that "the good which he would do, he did not, and the evil which he would not do, that he did." "To will indeed was present with him; but how to perform that which was good, he found not."

Hence, feeling himself like a poor captive chained to a putrid corpse, which he was compelled to drag about with him to the latest period of his existence, he broke forth into this mournful complaint, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death! [Romans 7:14-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.14-24)."

***~~From this subject we may draw many important lessons. It is of use,~~***

***~~1. For instruction—~~***

How shall I know whether I am a Christian indeed? Shall I know it by a freedom from all anxieties, or by a deliverance from all sin? No, but by a pledge of concern about the soul, and an *incessant conflict*with sin and Satan. A body, when dead, is insensible, whatever be the state to which it is reduced: and, if the soul be insensible of its state, it is a proof that it is dead also. A living soul:

trembles at the Divine judgments;

labors to obtain a well-founded hope of peace with God;

flees to the Lord Jesus Christ for refuge, and

cleaves to him with full purpose of heart.

Being united unto Christ by faith, the believer enlists under his banner, and, as a good soldier, heartily engages in a conflict with all his enemies. Never for a moment will he turn his back; he may be wounded, but he will not yield; he may be beaten down, but he will rise again to renew the combat: he will never take off his armor, until he is crowned with victory, and beholds "Satan himself bruised under his feet."

Now, if we will ascertain our real state before God, let us inquire what we know of this spiritual warfare? Is it begun? Is it carried on daily? Are we like soldiers in a camp, watching with all care, withstanding firmly the assaults of our enemies, and in our turn vigorously pursuing them to their strongholds, and allowing none to approach us with impunity? Yes, truly, if we are Christians indeed, we are "warring a good warfare," and "fighting the good fight of faith."

There may be, as in earthly campaigns, short seasons of comparative ease: but if we truly belong to Christ, this is our one business, our one employment: to walk in the Spirit, and to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts! [Galatians 5:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.24-25).

***~~2. For consolation—~~***

No man can be engaged in this warfare without feeling deeply humbled on account of the strength and number of his corruptions. Many will be his sighs, his tears, his groans. Yes, "those who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even they will groan within themselves," will "groan, I say, being burdened, [Romans 8:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.23)," longing to get rid of their corruptions, and to have "mortality, with all its attendant evils, swallowed up of life! [2 Corinthians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.4)."

But, if sin is our burden, it is at least a comfort to us to reflect, that we are enabled to feel it a burden: for there was a time, when it was harbored and indulged without remorse. This too is a source of comfort, that, in this struggle within us, the younger shall prevail, [Genesis 25:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 25.23). [Romans 5:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.12); "however sin may have abounded, grace shall much more abound; and as sin has formerly reigned unto death, so shall grace ultimately reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord! [Romans 5:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20-21)." Doubtless the conflicts will be painful to flesh and blood: but by them shall the soul be trained for Heaven, and be made "fit for the inheritance of the saints in light."

Go on then, stripling as you are, believer, against the Goliath that menaces your existence. Know that you may enter into the combat, singing, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

***~~3. For direction—~~***

Whatever your attainments are, "walk humbly with God." Were you as perfect as Job, it would still befit you, on account of your remaining corruptions, to acknowledge yourselves "vile," and to "repent and abhor yourselves in dust and ashes."

Be watchful too against your spiritual enemies. With hearts so deceitful and corrupt as yours, and in the midst of an ensnaring world, surrounded too by myriads of evil spirits, whose devices none but God can understand, how can you hope to maintain your steadfastness, if you stand not upon your watch-tower, and guard against every motion of your corrupt nature?

And never for a moment turn away your eyes from the Lord Jesus Christ. Where can you wash away your past iniquities, but in the fountain of his blood? Or where can you obtain grace sufficient for your daily necessities, but out of the fullness which is treasured up for you in him?

Lastly, continue instant in prayer. Nothing good can come to you but in answer to prayer; (for "if you ask not, neither will you have,") nor shall anything be lacking to you, if only you ask it of God for Christ's sake. Examine your own hearts, or inquire of others what their experience has been, and you will find it invariably true, that your victories or defeats have been proportioned to your urgency in prayer, or your remissness in that holy duty.

As in the days of old, while Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed; but when his hands hanged down, success was transferred to Amalek; so it is in every age, with every saint. Watch therefore unto prayer; continue in prayer: "give unto your God no rest day or night:" plead with him: wrestle with him as Jacob did: and you shall find "your inward man renewed day by day," until the work of grace that has been begun in you is perfected, and consummated in glory!

***~~#2084~~***

***~~THE CHRISTIAN FREED FROM THE LAW~~***

***~~[Galatians 5:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.18)~~***

"If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."

TO understand these words aright, we must notice, first the general scope of the whole epistle; and then, the particular scope of the more immediate context.

The epistle itself was written to establish the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law; in opposition to the Judaizing teachers, who insisted on the necessity of observing the Jewish ritual, in order to form a justifying righteousness, or, at all events, to increase and confirm their interest in Christ. In support of his argument, the Apostle shows, that though *the Law was, as a preparatory dispensation, subservient to the Gospel, it was, as a ground of hope before God, directly opposed to the Gospel*; so that they could not consist together, either in whole or in part; and any attempt to blend the Law with the Gospel would invalidate the Gospel altogether, and render "Christ himself of no effect, verses 2, 4." But, as this controversy had been carried on with great vehemence, and had produced a very grievous irritation in the minds of the contending parties, Paul, after establishing the truth on a basis that could not be shaken, and enjoining his converts to "stand fast in the liberty with which Christ had made them free, and on no account to allow themselves to be entangled any more with the yoke of bondage," goes on to say, "Brethren, you have been called unto liberty: only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another: for all the law is fulfilled in one word, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But, if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another. This I say, then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that you cannot do the things that you should; but, if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."

This, you perceive, is the immediate context, wherein the Apostle cautions the Galatians against either abusing their liberty, or maintaining it with an unchristian spirit; since, if they acted as became their holy profession, they would exercise nothing but love, either towards their friends or their enemies. And this he trusted they would do; because they had within themselves a spiritual principle, which, though strongly and perseveringly opposed by the carnal principle yet remaining in them, would ultimately prevail: and the effectual operation of that better principle would be sufficient of itself to prove that they were not under the law; since the law could never accomplish so blessed a work; whereas the very design of the Gospel, and its invariable effect, was to produce it. The dominance of the better principle was a proof that they were "not under the law, but under grace, [Romans 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.14)."

This I apprehend to be the precise import of the passage before us: wherein we see a *state*presumed; namely, that the true Christian is "led by the Spirit:" and a *privilege*inseparably connected with that state; namely, that the person so living is not under the law.

To these points I will now address myself, in their order.

Let us first notice,

***~~I. The state presumed—~~***

It is here taken for granted, that every child of God "is led by the Spirit." But, whether we are to understand this expression as referring to the Holy Spirit, or to that spiritual principle which is infused into us by the Spirit of God, it is not easy to determine. I rather prefer the latter sense, as more immediately suggested by the context: and it is certain that our Lord speaks of that divine principle under the very term which is here used; "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit, [John 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.6)." By being "led by the Spirit," then, I understand the *being under the influence of a spiritual principle, in opposition to that carnal principle which directs and governs the natural man*. And this really characterizes every true Christian. Not only does he possess a new and spiritual nature; but in him,

***~~1. It gains the ascendant—~~***

We acknowledge, that in him the old man still remains; and that the law of sin still works in his members, to bring forth fruit unto death. But there is in him a new man, a law in his mind, which counteracts his evil propensities, and enables him finally to overcome them. True, indeed, the conflict is often severe; and the saint will at all times be constrained to say, "The good which I should do, I do not; and the evil which I would not do, that I do." Still, however, through grace he gains the victory over his corruptions, and is daily renewed in the spirit of his mind after the Divine image. Though tempted by the world, the flesh, and the devil, "he triumphs over them all in Christ, Jesus [2 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.14);" and with his groans for more entire deliverance mingles this song of praise, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, [Romans 7:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.21); [Romans 7:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.25)."

***~~2. It forms his taste—~~***

Outward victory may be gained to a great extent, while yet the heart remains unchanged. But *where this new principle really exists, the man will hate the things which once he loved, and love the things which once he hated*. Though he may still be tempted in a variety of ways, he will feel, in a measure, as our Lord himself did under the temptations of Satan.

There will be less of the inflammable matter in his soul for the fiery darts of Satan to fix upon; and a greater plenty of water at hand, even of the Spirit of God, to counteract the first action of the fire upon his soul. There will also be a greater delight in heavenly things; so that he will engage in them with greater ease, and find himself more in his element, when employed in holy exercises. We may conceive what would be the taste of an angel, if sent down to sojourn for a time on earth; with what indifference he would behold the things of time and sense; and with what a zest he would perform the will of God: and thus the true Christian, though far, alas! from anything like angelic attainments, *will lose his relish for the things which he once affected, and will savor those things only which are suited to the spiritual mind*. This will serve him as a criterion whereby to judge of his state before God.

He may for a time be driven, by the force of temptation, from that which his soul supremely affects, even as the needle may be forced from its usual rest: but let the opportunity once return for the discovery of his real feelings, and he will turn to his God, even as the needle to the pole: and by that he will show whose attractions he delights in, and whose motions he obeys.

***~~3. It regulates his life—~~***

The aberrations of the more advanced Christian will be comparatively small and transient. Though in the world, he will not be of the world. Whether he moves among the higher classes, or in the humblest walk of life, there will be a consistency about him: he will be "the man of God" in all places, and in all situations: "he will shine as a light in a dark world;" and "his light will shine more and more unto the perfect day."

The spiritual principle within him is compared by our Lord to a fountain of water; which pours not out its streams like an engine wrought upon from without; but sends them forth by a power from within, and "springs up, as it were, unto everlasting life." Behold him day or night, and he is still the same; a blessing to the world, an ornament to his profession, an honor to his God.

Let not any one suppose that this is an imaginary character, drawn only to serve a purpose: it is a real character; and, though doubtless it exists in different degrees, it really distinguishes every child of God. In my text we see,

***~~II. The privilege inseparably connected with it—~~***

***~~He is not under the law—~~***

He has nothing to fear from its curses; because the Savior, in whom he has believed, and from whom he has received the gift of the Holy Spirit, has borne them for him. He has no dependence on its promises; seeing that he has a better righteousness than that can ever be attained by fallen man; even the righteousness of Christ himself imputed to him, and made his by faith. Not even its commands have the same terrific influence on his mind which they had in his unconverted state. For though he still feels bound to obey them, he does not obey them with the same slavish fear which once oppressed his mind: they are no longer to him the terms of salvation, on a perfect compliance with which his everlasting happiness depends: they are to him rather the expressions of his Father's will, which it is the joy of his soul to fulfill and execute.

His real state in relation to the law, is like that of a woman to her deceased husband. He was once altogether under its authority, while in his unconverted state; but when he embraced the Gospel, the Law became dead with respect to him, and he became dead with respect to it: and, though he still makes it the rule of his life, he obeys it through grace communicated to him by the Lord Jesus; to whom, as a woman on her second marriage, he now bears fruit unto holiness, [Romans 7:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.1-4).

***~~Of his liberation from the law, he has within himself a clear and decisive evidence—~~***

This I conceive to be the true meaning of my text. He is under the prevailing influence of the Holy Spirit, and of a new nature implanted by him: but "whence did he receive the Holy Spirit? Was it under the law—or by the hearing of faith? [Galatians 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.2)." It was by the hearing of faith, no doubt; that is, by the Gospel of Christ, who purchased for his people the gift of the Holy Spirit, and who sends forth his Spirit upon all who believe in him, [Galatians 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.14). "What the law could not do for him, in that it was weak through the flesh, the Gospel has done: "it has destroyed the power of sin" within him; and enabled him to "walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, [Romans 8:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.3-4)."

Hence he is assured that "there is no condemnation to him:" for if "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free from the law of sin," it has also freed him from "death," which is the consequence of sin, [Romans 8:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1-2). Behold, then, the liberty into which he is introduced: "Being delivered from the power of darkness, he is translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, [Colossians 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.13);" and, "being made free by him, he is become free indeed, [John 8:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.36)."

***~~From this subject, I cannot but urge upon you two words of advice:~~***

***~~1. Take care that your principles are pure and evangelical—~~***

It is thought by many, that if our outward *conduct*is correct, we need not he under any concern respecting the *principles*which we profess. But, is it of no consequence whether we continue under the law, or whether we embrace the Gospel? Are we not expressly told, that "as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse? [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10)." Are we not also told, that "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons? [Galatians 4:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.4-5)."

Is it of no importance, then, whether we lie under this curse, or are redeemed from it? Would God have used such means for our redemption, if it had been a matter of indifference whether we were redeemed or not? Take the Apostle Paul in his unconverted state: "he was, as touching the righteousness which was in the law, blameless [Philippians 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.6);" but yet he found afterwards, that, had he died in his unconverted state, he must have perished for ever! [Romans 7:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.9-10).

So, indeed, must all of you, who cleave to the law as a covenant of works, instead of laying hold of the covenant of grace. Nothing can be more clearly declared than this: Be your advantages or attainments what they may; if you go about to establish your own righteousness, instead of submitting to the righteousness of God, you must perish, [Romans 9:30-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-33); [Romans 10:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.3). The very law itself is intended to "lead you to Christ, [Galatians 3:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.24);" and "He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes, [Romans 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.4)." I call you, then, to believe in Christ for salvation, and, like the Apostle, to renounce your own righteousness altogether, that you may be found in Christ, and be accepted through "the righteousness which is by faith in him [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9)."

***~~2. Take care that your conduct be such as befits the Gospel of Christ—~~***

You clearly see, in my text, that principles and conduct must go together: neither will stand without the other. Without faith in Christ, you can never hope to receive the Holy Spirit, or to be renewed in the spirit of your mind: nor, on the other hand, will any change whatever avail you, if you rely not entirely on the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and salvation. It is in vain to build a superstructure, if it is not founded on Him; and it is in vain to think you are founded on him, if your faith does not manifest itself by a superstructure of good works.

You must never forget, that "faith without works is dead." You must "be led by the Spirit of God, if ever you would approve yourselves sons of God, [Romans 8:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.14)."

The world, as I have before shown you, must be put under your feet. Sin, in all its actings, must be mortified and subdued. The whole soul must be given up to God; and holiness become the very element in which you breathe and live. Indeed, it is not a mere formal observance of duties that will suffice: we must "have the very mind that was in Christ," and "walk in all things as Christ himself walked." This will be our evidence, that we are really his: for then only can it be known that "we are not under the law, but under grace, when Christ himself lives in us, and no sin whatever is permitted to have dominion over us, [Romans 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.14) with [Galatians 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.19-20)."

***~~#2085~~***

***~~THE FRUITS OF THE FLESH, AND OF THE SPIRIT CONTRASTED~~***

**[Galatians 5:19-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.19-24)**

"The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

THROUGHOUT this whole epistle we have mention made of two covenants, under the one or other of which all mankind are of necessity comprehended: the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. Those who are under the covenant of *works*are under the curse of God as transgressors. Those who are under the covenant of *grace*, are delivered from that curse through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has become a curse for them, [Galatians 3:10-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.10-14). The transition from the one state to the other is effected solely by faith, [Galatians 3:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.25-26). But faith is an operation of the mind wholly invisible to men, and but too liable to be mistaken even by ourselves. How then shall it be ascertained either by others or ourselves to which of these covenants we adhere?

We are told, that, on the transition from the one to the other, we are endued with a new and vital principle, under the influence of which we from that moment begin to live. The principle which rules in us under the former state, is called "flesh;" and that which animates us under the latter, is called "Spirit." Not that on the transition from the one state to the other, the former principle is taken away. No; it lives, and acts, and withstands with all its might the latter principle, and prevents it from operating so successfully as we could wish. But still it is progressively weakened in its operations: and by the dominance of the better principle we know that we are no longer under the law, nor exposed to the curse which the legal covenant entails on all who are cleaving to it.

Thus we have somewhat of a criterion whereby to judge of our state: but still that criterion is of no farther use than as we have a distinct view of the fruits which the two opposite principles will produce: let these be clearly marked, and then no further difficulty will arise: we have only to examine our works, of what kind they are; and then we shall arrive at a certain conclusion as to our state before God: for, as "a good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit, nor a corrupt tree good fruit," we shall know the quality of the tree by the fruit which is produced by it.

This satisfaction then is afforded us by the Apostle in the words before us, in which we see,

***~~I. The works of the FLESH—~~***

In enumerating them, the Apostle mentions,

***~~1. Those which stand in more immediate connection with the body—~~***

"Adultery" is an evil against which even heathen in all ages have felt the deepest indignation. "Fornication" was not regarded by them in so heinous a light: would to God the malignity of it were duly appreciated even by the Christian world! But God views these evils with the utmost abhorrence; and not the acts only, but the dispositions from which they spring: "Impurity and lasciviousness," if cherished in the heart, are marked by him with the same displeasure as the acts to which they lead; because the indulging of them, in word, in look, in thought, indisputably proves, that it is not the fear of God that keeps them from breaking out into more open acts, but some other consideration totally distinct from a regard to him. Since *the fear of God, if operating at all, would operate as much to the suppression of the desire, as to the non-indulgence of the act*. Hence the mere looking on a woman to lust after her, is declared, on infallible authority, to be an actual commission of adultery with her in the heart. Now all these acts and dispositions proceed from a corrupt principle within us, even from that principle which is called "flesh," and which is the true source of all the other evils we commit.

***~~2. Those which more properly have their seat in the mind—~~***

Of these, some have a more immediate reference to God, and others are called forth only in our interactions with men. Of the former kind are "idolatry and witchcraft," which being specified as "works of the flesh," clearly show what we are to understand by "flesh," namely, not merely any corporeal propensity, but that general propensity to evil which operates throughout the whole extent of our fallen nature.

"Idolatry" is a total rejection of God; "witchcraft" is an application to evil spirits, to impart to us something which we have no hope of obtaining from the true God: and both the one and the other of these is properly a "work of the flesh," inasmuch as it betrays a total alienation of heart from God, and an entire subjection to that "carnal mind," which, as God himself declares, "is enmity against him [Romans 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.7)."

The other evils which are called forth by our interactions with men, as "hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like," form such a picture of our fallen nature as may well humble us in the dust before God. It is unnecessary to enter into a distinct consideration of them: it is in the aggregate only that we can stop to notice them at this time: but what an accumulation of evil do they present to our view! Yet is it no other than what we may see in every community under Heaven.

Look at the *seditions*that agitate states; the *divisions*and *heresies*that disturb the Church; the *feuds*and *quarrels*that set man against his fellow man, and often terminate even in "murder" itself—whence do they all arise? Come they not hence, even from the lusts that war in our members, [James 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.1); or, in other words, from the corruption of the human heart?

There are some evils which pass under the milder name of good fellowship, and conviviality; some which, like the "ravelings" that were common among the heathen, consist of feastings, dancings, and excess of every kind: but, *however we may soften them down by specious names, and plead for them as innocent amusements, they are all hateful to God, and destructive to man*: insomuch that the man who finds his pleasure in them "can never enter the kingdom of Heaven." Often had the Apostle entered his protest against such carnal indulgences, so unworthy of a rational being, and so unsuited to persons standing on the brink of eternity. Can we conceive, that if man had retained his original innocence, he would have found delight in any such things as these? If the ungodly themselves saw pious people seeking their happiness in such things as these, would they see no incongruity between their professions and their occupations? Yes, they would be the first to proclaim the hypocrisy of such professors: which is itself an acknowledgment that the things themselves are adverse to piety, and inconsistent with it.

Know then, that all these and "such like" evils, whether arising from the body, or emanating from the mind, are decidedly to be ranked under "the works of the flesh," "which whoever practices them, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Unwelcome as this declaration was to the carnal man, Paul hesitated not to make it repeatedly, and in the strongest terms: and we ministers also, if we will approve ourselves faithful to God and to the office committed to us, must proclaim the same awful truth, and forewarn all, that, if they continue under the power of any of the hateful dispositions before specified, or seek their happiness in the things of time and sense, they will inevitably and eternally exclude themselves from the kingdom of Heaven.

In contrast with these, the Apostle proceeds to enumerate,

***~~II. The fruits of the Spirit—~~***

And here he mentions,

***~~1. Those which have their sphere of action chiefly within our own bosoms—~~***

The very mention of them marks at once their nature and their origin—"Love, joy, peace!" Whence do they come? Are they the offspring of our corrupt nature? No! nature never bore such fruits as these: these spring from that divine principle, which is imparted to us by the Spirit of God at the time of our regeneration and conversion. Then love springs up in the soul: love to God; love to Christ; love to man for Christ's sake. Then also does a "joy with which the stranger intermeddles not," a "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ," a joy in the testimony of a good conscience, a joy in the prospect of a glorious immortality, transport the soul: and its ebullitions, which, if continued, would exhaust the strength of our animal frame, subside into a peaceful composure, a sweet serenity of mind, a "peace of God which passes all understanding."

*These are the never-failing fruits of divine grace in the soul.* A variety of circumstances may occur which may impede the exercise of these holy affections; especially the workings of a corrupt nature, still striving to bring us into captivity to sin, may occasionally prevail to damp our joy and interrupt our peace; but according to the measure of the grace given unto us, will be the fruits of that grace abounding in the soul.

***~~2. Those which have a more immediate relation to our fellow-creatures—~~***

Towards them, both the active and passive virtues are called forth by incidents of daily occurrence. "Long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness" have a constant scope for exercise, as also "temperance" has, both in the desire of earthly things, and in the enjoyment of them. Here again it is not necessary to enter minutely into these different virtues: it is the collective body of them which characterizes the true Christian, and marks, beyond a possibility of doubt, the excellence of the principle from which they spring.

"Against these there is no law." Not one word is there to be found in all the Holy Scriptures that condemns the production of these fruits. Were they condemned, our blessed Lord and Savior must fall under condemnation; since he maintained and exercised these virtues to a degree never equaled by mortal man. It is impossible to yield these fruits too much: *the more we abound in them, the more we resemble the Lord Jesus Christ, and the more do we evince a fitness for the heavenly inheritance.*

Now comes the point to be determined: namely, What is,

***~~III. The Christian's state in reference to them both—~~***

***~~The description given of Christians must not be overlooked—~~***

There is no periphrasis by which they can be more fitly described, than that given in our text, "Those who are Christ's." This is their title universally; and it belongs to them alone. They were from eternity given unto Christ by the Father; as Christ himself says, "Yours they were; and you gave them to me [John 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.6); [John 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.9); [John 17:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.11-12); [John 17:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.24)." *They have been purchased by Christ himself, as his peculiar possession: and they have given up themselves to him by a willing and deliberate surrender of all that they are and have*. By a vital union also are they his, being, as it were, "one spirit with him." Hence in many parts of Scripture are they designated as in the words of our text: "All things are yours; and you are Christ's! [1 Corinthians 3:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.23);" and again, "If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's, [2 Corinthians 10:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.7)." Blessed distinction! glorious privilege! Believer, think of yourself under this character, and then see what obligations you owe to God for this unspeakable mercy, and "what manner of person you would be in all holy conduct and godliness,"

***~~Their state is suited to this high character—~~***

"They have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Crucifixion, it must be remembered, is a lingering death. The thieves who were crucified with Christ poured forth their venom against him, even while they were suspended on the cross. Thus also, "the old man in believers is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth they would not serve sin! [Romans 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.6)." Nevertheless sin is not utterly extinct: it still lives; and still rages and rebels against Christ; and would, if allowed to come down from the cross, regain its former ascendency. But there it is fixed: and thence it never shall come down, until the body itself shall cease to live. All its affections and all its desires, though still possessed of considerable strength, are checked in their operation, and restrained in their exercise; "the Spirit" now reigns: the new affections now put forth a vigor, which "the flesh" can no longer withstand. The warfare is indeed continued: but victory declares itself on the side of the better principle; so that, whereas the believer formerly "walked after the flesh," he now in his daily life and conduct "walks after the Spirit," and progressively advances in his heavenly course as long as he continues in the world, [Romans 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.20); [Romans 6:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.22) with 8:1, 4. "His path is like the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day."

***~~See then from hence,~~***

***~~1. How blessed is the influence of the Gospel!~~***

*By the Gospel this change is wrought.* And, to form an estimate of the change, paint to yourselves the countenances of the Jews when they met on the day of Pentecost with their hands yet reeking with their Savior's blood; and the same persons on the evening of that day, when they were "eating their bread with gladness and singleness of heart, blessing and praising God:" methinks, Heaven and Hell scarcely present a greater contrast, than those very persons within that short period.

Yet *such is the change which the Gospel will produce, wherever it is received in deed and in truth*. Hear how the Prophet Isaiah describes it: "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed."

[Isaiah 55:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.12-13)." O, beloved, see that this change take place in you: for to effect it is the glory of the Gospel; and no further than this change is wrought in you, have you any evidence that you belong to Christ.

**2.** How vain are the expectations of carnal professors!

Frequently does the Apostle characterize as "carnal," those who are yet under the power of unholy tempers and affections. Look, O professor of godliness, and see what your conduct is, in the family, the Church, the state. Are you a favorer of feuds, of heresies, of seditions? Take off your mask, and proclaim yourself a hypocrite. You have no part nor lot in the salvation of God. Yet rest not hero: but go on to examine how far all holy tempers and heavenly affections abound in you: see whether you live in the habitual exercise of love, joy, peace; and whether your whole walk be marked by long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance?

See whether in these things you resemble Him whose property you profess yourself to be, even that blessed Jesus who requires you to walk as he walked? Know of a certainty, that, "if you walk after the flesh, you shall die; but *if through the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the body, then, and then only, shall you live [Romans 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.13)."*

***~~3. How desirable is it to obtain a saving interest in Christ!~~***

All this will he do for those who truly believe in him. Came he, do you think, to save you from Hell only? No; he came to "save you from your sins." He came to make you new creatures; and to transform you into the Divine image, in righteousness and true holiness. Seek then a saving interest in him. Give up yourselves to him, to be washed in his blood, and to be renewed by his Spirit. Do this, and you shall have no cause to complain that your corruptions are invincible: for his grace shall be sufficient for you, even though your corruptions were ten thousand times more powerful than they are. Nor imagine that the maintenance of holy tempers and affections shall be such an impracticable task as Satan would represent it to be: for the love of God shed abroad in the heart shall render everything easy.

Only receive the Lord Jesus Christ into your hearts by faith, and he will work effectually within you, as he does in all his saints: "He will fulfill in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; and so shall the name of our Lord Jesus Christ be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ [2 Thessalonians 1:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.11-12)."

***~~#2086~~***

***~~WALKING IN THE SPIRIT~~***

**[Galatians 5:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.25)**

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

MEN, as *creatures*, may be called "the offspring of Jehovah," "in whom they live, and move, and have their being, [Acts 17:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 17.28)." But, as created anew in Christ Jesus, we have a nearer relation to God, seeing that his Spirit dwells in us: and consequently, we are bound in a more peculiar manner to glorify him by a suitable life and conduct. This is strongly intimated in the words of our text: in which we see,

***~~I. The Christian's character—~~***

It is here assumed that the Christian "lives in the Spirit." That the Christian's character, as here described, may be fully understood, let us mark,

***~~1. The import of the assumption—~~***

Two things are implied in the expression "living in the Spirit," namely, that the Christian is endued with the Spirit; and that he lives under the influence of the Spirit. The Christian has not merely the powers and faculties which he brought into the world with him, and which a heathen possesses as well as he; but he has received the Spirit of God, by whom he has been quickened from a death in trespasses and sins, and been made a partaker of a new principle of life, whereby he is enabled to live to God.

This new principle is distinct from anything which man, by any powers of his own, can acquire, and from anything which can by any means be derived from man. It is a sovereign gift of God, as much as the natural life is: and those who have received it, are said to have "been born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Those who have experienced this heavenly birth, have the Spirit of God dwelling and abiding in them:

enlightening their minds,

directing their steps,

sanctifying their hearts, and

"fulfilling in them all the good pleasure of their God".

***~~2. The truth of this assumption—~~***

It is taken for granted by the Apostle, as an unquestionable truth, that every real Christian "lives in, and by, the Spirit." And well may this be taken for granted; since the Spirit of God is to the soul of man, what the soul itself is to the body. Without the soul, the body is dead; and the body, when bereft of it is no more a man, but a mere corpse. So the soul without the Spirit of God is dead; and the person destitute of the Spirit, is not a Christian, but a mere man, like any heathen man.

This is expressly asserted by the Apostle Paul: "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his [Romans 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.9)." To the same effect. also, our blessed Lord most solemnly affirms, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, [John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.3); [John 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.5)."

The point, then, is clear and indisputable: a Christian is one who is born of the Spirit, and who lives under the Spirit's influence: and if any person would estimate his own character aright, he must inquire into these two points. It is not sufficient that he has been baptized into the Christian faith, or that he gives a speculative assent to all the truths of Christianity; he must possess a principle which none but God can give him, and which regulates all his views, desires, and pursuits.

I beg you, brethren, before you go any further, examine yourselves in relation to this matter: for I must declare to you before God, that if Jesus Christ dwell not in you in this manner, you are not Christians, but *mere baptized heathen*: and so unquestionable is this truth, that Paul makes it a matter of appeal, to be decided by your own selves: "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test? [2 Corinthians 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.5)."

Answerable; to this high character are,

***~~II. His obligations—~~***

"If we are in the Spirit, we would also walk in the Spirit;" that is, we should walk,

***~~1. We should walk in compliance with the Spirit's motions—~~***

There are inward motions of the Spirit, which a person who lives near to God may discern, and which it becomes him very carefully to follow. Not that they can with certainty be distinguished from the voice of a man's own conscience, except by the quality of the suggestions themselves; (for it is in and by the conscience that the Spirit speaks,) but they are so agreeable to the mind of God, that they manifest from whom they come; and God himself, "who knows what the mind of the Spirit is," when he beholds them in us, acknowledges them to be of divine origin, [1 Corinthians 2:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.10-11) with [Romans 8:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.27).

When temptations to evil arise, the Spirit softly whispers to the soul, "O, do not that abominable thing which I hate! [Jeremiah 44:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 44.4)." So also, when doubts arise in the mind respecting the path of duty, he causes us to "hear a voice behind us, saying, This is the way; walk in it, [Isaiah 30:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.21)." And in a mind that is at all well regulated, I believe that the first intimations of conscience will be found to be, for the most part, most accordant with the mind and will of God: and though I would on no account discourage the closest possible examination of what is so suggested, and the trial of it by the touchstone of God's word—yet I cannot but say, that in our subsequent reasonings the voice of the Spirit is too often silenced, and his suggestions are superseded by the dictates of prejudice, or fear, or interest, or passion.

***~~2. We should walk in obedience to his will—~~***

God's will is revealed in the written word; and to that we must refer, on every occasion. In that is our whole course distinctly marked; and by that must our every step be regulated: as says the prophet; "To the word and to the testimony: if we speak not according to that word, there is no light in us, [Isaiah 8:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.20)." By that must the suggestions, of which we have before spoken, be tried. For it is possible that suggestions may come even from the wicked one: and if we were to place implicit confidence in them, we might run into the most fatal errors, while we supposed ourselves under heavenly guidance.

Of this we are sure, that *the Spirit of God never moves us to anything which is contrary to the written word*. In following the voice of inspiration, we are safe: and to that we would yield the most implicit obedience. When we combine the two, and are simultaneously directed by the light within and the light without, we may reasonably hope that we are in the right way, and "walking in the Spirit," as God requires.

***~~From the passage thus explained, I would take occasion to commend to your constant aim:~~***

***~~1. Consistency—~~***

This is the primary point suggested in our text: our practice must accord with our profession: if, as we profess, we "live in the Spirit," we must take care to "walk in the Spirit." We must "walk worthy of our high calling;" or rather, I would say, we must "walk worthy of the Lord himself." We must attend equally to both tables of the law; and never make a respect for the one a plea for neglecting and violating the other. Our conduct must be uniform, at all times, in all places, under all circumstances. What we are in the public assembly, and in the society of God's people—that we must be in the world, the family, the closet. All our tempers and dispositions must resemble those of Christ; so that everyone who sees us may bear testimony to us, that we "have both the Spirit of Christ," and "the mind of Christ." Dear brethren, it is in this way alone that we can honor God, or approve ourselves his children indeed.

***~~2. Advancement—~~***

We must be making a continual progress in the divine life; and never think ourselves so advanced, but that we need to be going forward in our Christian course. Our "path must be like that of the sun, which shines more and more unto the perfect day." Even Paul thought not that he had yet "attained, or was already perfect:" but this one thing he did, "forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth unto those that were before, he pressed forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And we also, if we would be mature Christians, must "be thus minded, [Philippians 3:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.13-15)."

***~~3. Rest—~~***

To this it is our privilege to look forward; even as Israel did, when journeying in the wilderness. In truth, *this life, with all its labors and conflicts, would be a very miserable life, if we had no prospect of a better one*. But "there is a rest that remains for the people of God:" and with that in view, we may well exert ourselves with all our might. That will richly recompense all our labors. What will men not do, even for a corruptible crown? But ours is incorruptible. "Be not weary, then, in well-doing: for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not."

***~~#2087~~***

***~~BENEVOLENCE RECOMMENDED~~***

***~~[Galatians 6:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.2)~~***

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

TO open and unfold the mystery of the Gospel, is doubtless an employment which, in point of utility to others, or of comfort to ourselves, may vie with any other in which a human being can be engaged. But to inculcate the morality of the Gospel is also a most delightful office: and a minister of Christ, who feels averse to it, gives reason to fear that he has never yet entered into the spirit of the doctrine which he professes to teach. Paul manifestly delighted in this good work; for, in the close of all his epistles, he paid the most marked attention to it. See [Galatians 5:19-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.19-24). Nor did he rest in general instruction, but descended to the most minute particulars; omitting nothing that could tend to advance the honor of God, or the welfare of mankind.

That we may enter into the precept before us, we will consider,

***~~I. The duty enjoined—~~***

***~~Burdens of some kind, every man is called to sustain—~~***

Some may be comparatively freed from afflictions; nor do they lie on any with the same weight and pressure at all times: but no child of man is altogether exempt from them. The body is subject to diseases, the mind to trials, and the outward estate to disasters, which no human foresight can prevent, no power on earth can avoid. They greatly mistake, who think that trouble is the exclusive portion of the poor. The rich, in their respective spheres, are as liable to afflictions as the poor; and, for the most part, by reason of their keener sensibility, they feel it more acutely.

***~~Nor can any support their burdens alone—~~***

The king upon the throne needs the assistance of others, as much as the beggar upon the dunghill. The very necessities of our nature call for mutual aid. No one could support himself alone. It is by the division of labor that society is kept together, and every individual that composes it is made happy. All, taking on themselves someone office for the benefit of others, promote, at the same time, both their own welfare, and the welfare of the whole community. The artisan, the man of science, the practitioner in any useful line, supply the needs of others in common with their own; and, while depending on their employers for their own support, administer support in return to them. It is thus that the hungry are fed, the naked are clothed, the sick are healed, and the weak are protected in their rights.

But, not confining ourselves to the duty of our own particular station, **we should endeavor, as God may enable us, to bear the burdens of all—**

This may be done in a way of sympathy, and in a way of support. As members of the same body, we ought all to care for each other, [Philippians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.4). [1 Corinthians 12:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.25), and to sympathize with each other under our several circumstances, whether of joy or sorrow. The Divine command is, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep [Romans 12:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.15)." But *sympathy must show itself in deeds, and not in words only*. It will be to little purpose to "say to our destitute and naked brother, 'Be warmed,' or, 'Be filled,' while we withhold from him what is needful for his support, [James 2:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.14-16)." True, indeed, we cannot all administer relief to others in the same way, or to the same extent: but what we can do, we should with alacrity and joy. The eye, the ear, the tongue, the hand, the foot, cannot all render the same service to the body: but, if they improve their respective energies and powers for the good of the whole, they answer the end for which they were formed.

Thus we should consider what service we are best capable of rendering to every afflicted brother: and to that we should address ourselves with all diligence; blessing and adoring God, who has put it into our power to show love to our fellow-creatures, and fidelity to Him.

The word which Paul used, to express the assistance which the Holy Spirit affords to us in our necessities, marks the precise office which we are to occupy in assisting all who stand in need of help from us: we should take hold on the opposite end of their load, and bear it together with them, [Romans 8:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.26). And this we may all do in some measure, yes, and must do, if we would approve ourselves faithful to the trust reposed in us.

That we may be stimulated to this duty, let me endeavor to impress upon your minds,

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

***~~In executing this office, we "fulfill the law of Christ"—~~***

The Lord Jesus Christ has enjoined it as our duty: "These things I command you, that you love one another, [John 15:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.17)." He has gone further; and proposed himself to us as the pattern to which, in our exercise of love, we should be conformed: "A new command I give unto you, that you love one another: as I have loved you, that you also love one another, [John 13:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 13.34)." He has gone further still; and declared that *the love which we are here called to exercise is the distinctive badge of all his followers:*"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another."

Nay more; he has told us that it is the test whereby he will try our fidelity to him in the day of judgment: to those who have administered to the necessities of others he will give a suitable reward; and to those who have neglected this great duty, he will give a just and fearful doom, [Matthew 25:34-46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.34-46).

Now, if he had only expressed it as a wish that we would perform such services for him, methinks it were abundantly sufficient to call forth all our exertions in his service. But when he issues it as his command, as his command which we must obey at the peril of our souls, who will venture to disobey it?

Think but a moment what Christ has done for you: "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich—yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich! 2 Corinthians 8:9." Has He, the God of Heaven, left his throne of glory, that, through his own sufferings unto death he might exalt you to it: and will not you, a redeemed sinner, forego some small comforts, in order to administer to the necessities of your afflicted brethren; and especially when called to it by your Redeemer himself?

***~~This law, then, I now call you to obey—~~***

Let the affluent bear the burdens of the poor.

Let the healthy bear the burdens of the sick.

Let the enlightened bear the burdens of the ignorant.

Let the saved bear the burdens of those who are perishing in their sins.

And let those who are not able to engage actively in the duties of benevolence, spread the cases of their afflicted brethren before God in *prayer*, and bring down from God the help which they themselves are unable to impart.

***~~#2088~~***

***~~AGAINST SELF-DECEIT~~***

**[Galatians 6:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.3-5)**

"If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load."

*SELF-KNOWLEDGE is at the root of all true religion.*Without that, we shall have no right disposition, either towards God or man. Without that, we shall not be able to pity the fallen, or sympathize with the afflicted; but shall be alike unfeeling towards the failings and the necessities of our fellow-creatures. But if we are duly conscious of our own weakness, we shall be ready to "restore in meekness any brother that has been overtaken with a fault:" and, if we know our own desert, we shall most willingly labor to "fulfill the law of Christ, in bearing the burdens of others," as He has borne ours.

To cultivate self-knowledge therefore is, in this view, extremely important: but more especially is it so in the prospect of that judgment which God himself will shortly pass on every child of man: for, *whatever our estimate of our own character is, it is not by that, but by God's view of us, that our state shall be determined to all eternity*. This is plainly declared in the words before us; in which we may see,

***~~I. An evil complained of—~~***

*The entertaining too high an opinion of ourselves is a common evil*. I should rather say, is an evil co-extensive with the human race, with those at least who have not been converted by the grace of God. If it is asked, Whence does this evil arise? I answer,

***~~1. From judging ourselves by a defective standard—~~***

The generality take no higher standard than that which custom has established in the place where they live: and if they conduct themselves agreeably to that, they consider themselves as having fulfilled all that can reasonably be required of them. They never once suspect, that to "walk according to the course of this world is to walk according to the prince of the power of the air," or that "the broad road is that which leads to destruction." They have satisfied others; and therefore they have satisfied themselves.

But some take a far higher standard, even the law of God itself, (as far as they understand it,) and aim at obedience to the whole will of God. But they take only the *letter*of the law; and if they abstain from the actual commission of murder, adultery, and theft, they imagine that they have no reason to reproach themselves with any violation of the commandments which forbid those crimes. Hence, like the young man in the Gospel, they will recite the commandments, and say, "All these have I kept from my youth up. What do I still lack?" This was the source of Paul's self-deception, in his unconverted state. He knew not the spirituality of the law; and therefore he imagined himself to be alive, while he was really dead, with respect to all spiritual obedience, [Romans 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.9). He thought himself to be something, when he was nothing; and thereby deceived himself.

***~~2. From comparing ourselves with others—~~***

Some look at those who are of the same rank and age with themselves: and, if they fall not below them, they conclude that they are right.

Others look at those rather who live without any particular regard to morals: and, from seeing a manifest superiority in themselves to these, they will with a self-complacent air say, in their hearts at least, if not with their lips, "I thank you, O God, that I am not as other men are, or even as this Publican."

Others again will compare themselves with the religious world. They will select those who have in any respect dishonored their holy profession, and hold them forth as a proper specimen of all. Or they will take the more defective part of a good character, and represent it as exhibiting a just picture of the man himself. In doing this too they will believe all they hear, without any examination or inquiry: they will make no allowances for anything as arising out of peculiar circumstances: they overlook entirely all the humiliation and contrition which in a real saint follow the commission of a fault: they will go further still, and impute all this evil to willful and deliberate hypocrisy: and then they will bless themselves that they are at least as good, if not better than those who make so much profession of godliness; yes, therefore better, because they make no such profession.

But to these we may apply what the Apostle said of the false teachers at Corinth; "They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise, [2 Corinthians 10:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.12)." But what have they to do with others?*It is not by any comparative goodness that their character will be estimated by the heart-searching God*. Whether they are better or worse than others, they are in God's sight precisely what they are in themselves: and, while they form a judgment of themselves by the relative situation which they occupy in the scale of general goodness, they only deceive their own souls.

***~~3. From comparing our present with our former state—~~***

It may be, that at an early period of our lives we were mirthful and dissipated: and that since that time we have reformed, and become observant of many duties. Yet still we may be very far from a state that is pleasing and acceptable to God: we may even (and it is no uncommon case) be more odious in his eyes than before, by having become more inflated with pride and self-confidence, in proportion as we have reformed our external conduct! For what is this, but to exchange "fleshly for spiritual filthiness," and to acquire the image of Satan in proportion as we have relinquished that of the beast?

But, waving this circumstance, which may or may not exist, the question is, not what reformation we have experienced, but what yet remains to be reformed? *It matters little that the outward conduct is changed, if the heart remains the same*. If we are not "new creatures in Christ Jesus," then we have attained nothing to any good purpose: and, if we look with delight on any change short of that, we imagine ourselves to be *something*when we are nothing, and fatally deceive ourselves.

***~~4. From judging under the influence of partiality and self-love—~~***

*Self-love blinds us—it hides from us our faults and sins; or puts such a specious gloss upon them, that they are scarcely discerned as faults. It magnifies our virtues too, and frequently represents as virtues what in reality are grievous sins.*If there is any point in our character that is more favorable, (as generosity, or benevolence, or any other good quality,) self-love represents that to us as constituting almost the whole of our character, and then fills us with self-delight in the contemplation of it.

Thus it was with the Pharisees of old, who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous," while in the sight of God they were no better than "white-washed sepulchers." And thus it will be with all of us, until God open our eyes to see things as they really are, and give us hearts to judge righteous judgment.

But for this evil there is in our text,

***~~II. A remedy prescribed—~~***

***~~God has given to us an unerring standard of right and wrong—~~***

In the Holy Scriptures, he has revealed to us his mind and will, and shown us what is that state which befits us, as creatures, and as sinners.

As *creatures*, we ought to love him with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

As *sinners*, we ought to humble ourselves before him in dust and ashes; to lay hold on the covenant which he has made with us in the Son of his love; to seek for mercy solely through the atoning sacrifice of Christ; to live by faith in Christ, receiving out of his fullness as branches from the vine; and by the influences of his Spirit to bring forth fruit to his glory. And, to form a right estimate of our character, we must try ourselves by this standard: we must see how far we are observant of his law, and how far we are obedient to his Gospel.

But besides this written standard, *we have a copy of all perfection set before us in the example of Christ*. We see how ardent and uniform was his zeal for God, and how active and self-denying was his love for man. We see him in all situations of difficulty; we behold all his tempers and dispositions tried to the uttermost by the perverseness and cruelty of men; and we see in everything how to conduct ourselves towards God and man. In his example, we have a touchstone whereby to try our supposed virtues: and, wherein we differ from him, or come short of him, we may assuredly conclude that we are wrong.

Further, though the word of God, and the example of Christ, are the only unerring standards of truth, we have yet further what is of great advantage to us—the examples of men who were of like passions with ourselves. We see Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, all walking, as it were, before our eyes; and we learn from them how we ought to walk and to please God. If we take the life of Abraham, of Daniel, of the Apostle Paul; if we contemplate their unshaken faith, and unreserved obedience; and then inquire how we have conducted ourselves under any circumstances which have borne an affinity with theirs; we may certainly attain a pretty correct knowledge of our state and character before God.

***~~By this standard then we would try ourselves—~~***

It is of use to all persons, and under all circumstances. From the king on the throne to the beggar on the dunghill, all may find it suitable to their condition. To it therefore we would refer the whole of our conduct, and by it "everyone should prove his own work." Every particular work should be tried by it. Whatever the work is, we would examine what the written word required of us, and see how far our work fell short of the true standard. We should bring it to the test, and inquire into:

the *principle*from which it flowed,

the *manner*in which it was executed,

and the *end*for which it was performed;

and then form our judgment, after a candid and impartial survey of its defects.

But it is not our *actions*alone that should be so proved. We should examine also the entire state and habit of our *minds*and *hearts*: for it is this, and this only, that will determine our real character before God. And who that does this, will think highly of his own attainments? Who that considers what that *love*is which is due to the Supreme God; what that *gratitude*is which the Lord Jesus Christ calls for at our hands; what that *trust*is which we should place in him; and what is that zeal which we would put forth in his service; who, I say, will then vaunt himself as somebody, and swell with self-delight and self-conceit? The remedy once brought into daily and habitual use, will soon cure the evil complained of in our text.

What the Apostle thought of this remedy, appears from,

***~~III. The prescription eulogized—~~***

A more valuable prescription could not be given either,

***~~1. As it respects our present happiness—~~***

To what purpose is it to be applauded by others, even though we were held forth as patterns of all that is great and excellent? It might please our vanity; but it would afford us no solid satisfaction, while we are afraid to bring our conduct to the only true test.

What comfort would a merchant feel to hear that he was reputed to be rich, if his finances were so poor that he was on the very verge of bankruptcy?

Just so is the man, who, while he is extolled by his fellow-creatures, is averse to learn what is said of him by his God. On the contrary, the man who tries himself by the standard of God's word, and finds that, amidst innumerable defects, he is on the whole upright before God, he "has his rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." He lives not on the testimony of his fellow-creatures: his comfort is independent either of their censure or applause. He rejoices in the testimony of his own conscience, as the Apostle Paul did in [2 Corinthians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.12). He "has the witness in himself:" and "the Spirit of God also witnesses with his Spirit," that he is a "child of God." O what an advantage is this, under every situation and circumstance of life!

Are we in a state of prosperity? We shall make no account of our wealth or honor in comparison with the testimony of a good conscience.

Are we in adversity? Our spirit will be buoyant in a sea of troubles; we shall know assuredly that all things are working together for our good, and that, "light and momentary in themselves, they are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"

***~~2. As it respects our eternal welfare—~~***

Whatever others may think of us, or we may think of ourselves, it will not at all influence the judgment of our God: "For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends, [2 Corinthians 10:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.18)."*The works that are applauded of men, may be recorded in his book of remembrance as splendid sins!*And the works that are condemned by men, may be put to our account as services greatly to be rewarded. The very same judgment which the written word pronounces now, our God will pronounce hereafter. Hence, in bringing ourselves continually to this standard, we know what will be approved in the last day, and what sentence to expect at the mouth of a righteous Judge.

There will doubtless be many actions which will be erroneously judged by man, and the precise quality of which we ourselves also are at present unable to discover. But while we are conscious of a sincere desire to please and honor God, we shall say with the Apostle, "It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment; yes, I judge not my own self: but he who judges me is the Lord, [1 Corinthians 4:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.3-4)." My own heart does not condemn me; and therefore I have confidence towards God, [1 John 3:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.20-21)."

While practicing this habit, we shall be attentive to everything we do. We shall preserve a tenderness of conscience. We shall spy out readily anything that has been amiss. We shall, from a sense of the imperfection of our very best deeds, wash them daily in the fountain of Christ's blood, and never hope for the acceptance of them but through his sin-atoning sacrifice, and his all-powerful intercession.

Thus, while all, who refer their actions to any inferior standard, delude their own souls, and "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath," the careful Christian attains a just knowledge of his own state, and accumulates "a weight of glory," which "the Lord, the righteous Judge," shall confer upon him in exact proportion to the services he has rendered to his God! [1 Corinthians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.8). [Hebrews 11:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.26).

Here we are called to bear the burdens of others; and frequently to groan under burdens that are unrighteously cast upon us: but in the day of judgment, both the one and the other of these will be removed from us, and we shall "bear that only which is properly our own." "We shall reap precisely what we have sown: if we have sown to the flesh, we shall from the flesh reap corruption; and, if we have sown to the Spirit, we shall from the Spirit reap life everlasting, verse 7, 8."

***~~ADDRESS—~~***

***~~1. Those who form too favorable an opinion of their state—~~***

Do not imagine that we wish unnecessarily to disturb your peace. We would to God that "your peace might flow down like a river!" All that we are anxious to do, is, to keep you from resting in undue security, and saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." When we entreat you to stop and try yourselves, and to prove your own work, what do we but consult your truest happiness both in time and in eternity? We desire to bring every one of you to a state of holy joy, even to "a joy which no man can take from you," "a rejoicing in yourself alone, and not in another."

Let me then say to you, as the Apostle does, "Let not any man think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but think soberly, [Romans 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.3);" and again, "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith: prove your own selves, [2 Corinthians 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.5)." It is in this way only that you can attain self-knowledge, or be delivered from self-deception. *Think what you will of yourselves, "you are nothing," nor ever can be anything—but poor, weak, guilty creatures, indebted to the free grace of God alone for all your hope and all your salvation.*Even Paul, while declaring that "he was not a whit behind the very chief Apostles," confessed that "he was nothing, [2 Corinthians 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.14)." Let the same mind be in you, and you will find the salvation of the Gospel sweetly suited to your souls.

***~~2. Those who form too unfavorable an opinion of their state—~~***

Some there are, who, when they see how far they have departed from God, are ready to imagine, that they have sinned beyond the reach of mercy. But no man is warranted to say, that his state is desperate; nor ought any man to come to such a conclusion after the strictest search. There is one distinction which ought never to be forgotten; it is this; that whatever grounds sin affords for humiliation, it affords none for despondency. If there were not a sufficiency in the blood of Christ to cleanse from the guilt of all sin, we might well despair. Or, if there were not a sufficiency in the grace of Christ to rescue from the power of sin, we might justly say, *There is no hope for me.*But, while we are assured that Christ "is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him," we need not fear, but that if we go to him, he will receive us; and if we trust in him, he will glorify himself in our salvation.

Attempt not then to hide from your own eyes the extremity of your guilt; nor, when it is revealed to you, indulge any desponding fears: but flee unto Christ, and lay hold on him, and cleave to him, and determine, that, if you perish, you will perish at the foot of his cross, trusting in his sin-atoning blood, and pleading with him that promise, "Whoever comes unto me I will never cast out."

***~~3. Those who are enabled to form a just estimate of their state—~~***

These persons are a perfect mystery to all around them. The world sees them humbling themselves as the very chief of sinners, and yet exulting under a sense of God's pardoning love: and how to reconcile this they know not. 'If,' say they, 'you are so vile, how can you rejoice? And, if you have such cause for joy, how is it that you yet sigh, and mourn, and weep, as if you were the vilest of mankind?'

*It is this union of humility and confidence which characterizes the true Christian*. And the more eminent the Christian is, the more do both these graces flourish in his soul. Thus then, brethren, let it be with you: affix no limits to your self-abasement; for it is not possible for you ever to have too humiliating thoughts of yourselves. Yet, on the other hand, let there be no limits to your confidence in Christ, as able, and willing to save the very chief of sinners!

Yet, at the same time, do not imagine, that, because you are vile in yourselves, you are at liberty to indulge in sin; or because "in Christ you are complete," you are not under any necessity of practicing universal holiness: these would be fatal errors indeed. Were any such licence given you, "Christ would be a minister of sin." But this is far from being the case. It is true, that you are justified by faith alone, but by your works will you be judged: and the measure of your works will be the certain measure of your reward.

***~~#2089~~***

***~~THE GROUND OF GOD'S FINAL DECISION~~***

***~~[Galatians 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.7-8)~~***

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he who sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap destruction; but he who sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

*SIN and misery are often found to be nearly connected in this life; yet rewards and punishments are not always distributed according to man's actions.*The necessity therefore of a future state of retribution is obvious and undeniable. This was discoverable in a measure by the light of reason; but revelation establishes the certainty of such a state. The inspired writers often urge the consideration of it as a motive to virtue.

Paul is stating to the Galatians the duty of providing liberally for their pastors. He is aware that some might offer pleas and excuses for their neglect of this duty. He knew that some might even pretend a prior and more sacred obligation, [Mark 7:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 7.11). He therefore cautions them against self-deception, and reminds them that *God will hereafter pass sentence on us according to the real quality of our actions*.

***~~I. It is in vain to hope for salvation while we live in a neglect of religious duties—~~***

It is common for men to offer pleas and excuses for their disregard of religion:

***~~1. That a life of religion is needless—~~***

They see the world in a state of wickedness. *They cannot believe that so many can be in danger of perishing.*They forget that the course of this world is just such as Satan would have it, [Ephesians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.2). They recollect not our Lord's declaration respecting the broad and narrow way, [Matthew 7:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.13-14). They consider not that the care of the soul is the "one thing needful."

***~~2. That a life of religion is impossible—~~***

They hear what holiness of heart and life God requires of us. They feel how unable they are of themselves to fulfill their duty. They therefore conclude, that it is impossible to serve God aright. At least *they think that a religious life cannot consist with social duties.*But they forget that the grace of Christ is all-sufficient, [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13); nor are they aware that saving grace will stimulate us to every duty, whether civil or religious, social or personal.

Besides these, they substitute other things in the place of religion:

***~~1. Their good intentions—~~***

They purpose to amend their lives at some future period. They expect to find some "more convenient season" for repentance. They hope that their good designs, though never executed, will be accepted.

***~~2. Their moral lives—~~***

They are guilty of no very enormous crimes. They perform many commendable actions. They hope that such a life, though they know nothing of repentance, of faith in Christ, of delight in God, etc. will procure them admission to Heaven.

***~~3. Their profession of certain truths—~~***

Many receive the doctrines of Christianity as a system of truth. They trust to the mere profession of these doctrines without *experiencing*their transforming efficacy. Thus they substitute "the form of godliness, for the power of it."

But no pleas or pretenses can deceive God—

To attempt to deceive God is, in fact, to "mock" him. It is to insult him, as though he were:

too *ignorant*to discern their hypocrisy,

too *indifferent*to regard their hypocrisy,

or too *weak*to punish their hypocrisy.

But God cannot be deceived; nor will he be mocked.

Let none then deceive themselves with vain expectations.

***~~II. Our final state will be exactly answerable to our present conduct—~~***

Under the metaphor of a sower, the text affords a striking discrimination of character:

***~~Some "sow to the flesh"—~~***

To sow to the flesh, is to seek in the first place our carnal ease and interests. This we may do, notwithstanding that we are free from gross sins. Every one comes under this description who "sets his affections on things below."

***~~They whose life is so occupied will "reap destruction"—~~***

The present enjoyments they will have, are both corruptible and defiling. The future recompense will be everlasting destruction. This is elsewhere affirmed in the plainest terms, [Romans 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.13).

***~~Others "sow to the Spirit"—~~***

The Holy Spirit invariably inclines men to the love of God, and of holiness. The new nature of the regenerate, affects also spiritual objects and employments. To sow to the Spirit therefore is to seek and delight in spiritual things.

***~~They who do this will reap everlasting life—~~***

A life of devotedness to God can never outcome in misery. God has promised that it shall terminate in glory, [Romans 6:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.22); [Romans 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.13).

***~~Thus, not our pleas and pretenses—but our life and conduct, will determine our eternal state—~~***

*Our harvest will accord with the seed we sow.*These different ends are inseparable from the different means, [Romans 2:6-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.6-10). The punishment, however, will be as wages earned; the reward as a gift bestowed, [Romans 6:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.23).

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. What extreme folly it is to live regardless of God and our own souls!~~***

No gardener expects to reap wheat, when he has sown only tares. How absurd then to hope for Heaven while we seek not after it! Let us be convinced of our folly, and learn wisdom even from the men of this world.

***~~2. How absurd would it be to be diverted from our duty by any difficulties we may meet with in the discharge of it!~~***

The gardener does not regard inclemencies of weather, much less would he be deterred from his work by the advice or ridicule of the ignorant and lazy. Shall we then be discouraged, whose seed-time is so precarious, and whose harvest is so important? Let all go forward, "sowing in tears that they may reap in joy."

***~~#2090~~***

***~~STEADFASTNESS IN DUTIES~~***

***~~[Galatians 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.9)~~***

"Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

THE way of duty is difficult, while that of sin is easy. A learned man speaks admirably to this purpose: "Sin is first pleasing; then easy; then delightful; then frequent; then habitual; then confirmed. Then the man is impenitent; then he is obstinate; then he resolves never to repent; and then he is damned."

After we have received grace, we are still prone to depart from God; but the prospect of a happy outcome of our labors is a strong support. The Gospel encourages us to expect a certain and seasonable recompense.

We have here,

***~~I. A word of caution—~~***

Well-doing respects every part of a Christian's duty. We may apprehend ourselves to be weary in it, when we are not really so.

***~~We are not necessarily weary in well-doing, because our affections are not so lively as they once were—~~***

Age and infirmity may occasion a stupor of the mind. A more enlarged view of our own depravity may cast us down. Love itself may grow in some respects, even while its ardor seems to abate, [Philippians 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.9).

***~~We are not necessarily weary in well-doing, because our corruptions appear to have increased—~~***

When we are first awakened, we know but little of our own hearts. As we proceed, the Lord reveals to us more of our hidden abominations. This may be illustrated by [Ezekiel 8:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 8.6); [Ezekiel 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 8.13); [Ezekiel 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 8.15). The discovery of them, as of objects in a dark place, argues only more light from Heaven.

***~~We are not necessarily weary in well-doing, because we do not find enlargement in prayer—~~***

Excess of trouble may, for a time, distract and overwhelm the soul. Our Lord himself seems to have experienced somewhat of this, [John 12:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.27). Our prayers, perhaps, are never more acceptable, than when they are offered in broken accents, in sighs and groans, [Romans 8:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.26).

But we have reason to realize that we are weary in well-doing:

***~~1. When we do not make any progress in our Christian course—~~***

We cannot stand still in religion—we must either advance or decline. There are seasons when we grow rather in humility than in the more lively graces; but if we neither shoot our branches upward, nor our roots downward, it must be ill with us, [2 Peter 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.18). [Hebrews 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.7-8).

***~~2. When we are habitually formal in religious duties—~~***

The best of men find cause to lament an occasional deadness; but no true Christian can be satisfied in such a state. Nine times in the 119th Psalm does David cry, "Quicken me, O Lord!". Habitual formality therefore proves, either that we have never been truly in earnest, or that we are in a state of miserable spiritual declension, [Philippians 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.3).

***~~3. When we do not carry religion into our worldly business—~~***

As long as we are in the world, we must perform the duties of our station; but if our souls are prospering, we shall maintain a sense of religion even when we are not actually engaged in the offices of it, [Proverbs 23:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 23.17).

***~~4. When our consciences are not tender—~~***

It is essential to a Christian to hate evil, [Romans 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.9); he strives to "avoid even the appearance of evil." He will never allow one sinful temper or inclination, [Acts 24:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 24.16).

We cannot be too much on our guard against such a state.

To confirm what has been spoken, let me add,

***~~II. A word of encouragement—~~***

***~~If we persevere in our exertions, we shall surely reap the fruit of our labor—~~***

There will be a harvest to all who labor in God's field. It may not come as soon as we would desire; but it shall come, as the earthly harvests, "in due season." We must, however, wait God's appointed time. If we faint, we shall lose all that we have before wrought, 2 John verse 8. [Hebrews 10:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.38); but if we continue patiently in well-doing, we shall succeed at last, [Romans 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.7).

***~~Our prospects of the heavenly harvest may well encourage us to persevere, since it will be,~~***

***~~1. Certain—~~***

The gardener endures many toils for an uncertain harvest: his hopes may be blasted in a variety of ways. But God has pledged himself, that his faithful servants shall be rewarded, [Hebrews 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.10); nor shall either men or devils prevent the accomplishment of his promise, [Proverbs 11:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 11.18).

***~~2. Glorious—~~***

What are all the harvests that ever were gathered since the creation of the world, in comparison with that which the Christian will reap? Shall we faint then with such a prospect in view?

***~~3. Everlasting—~~***

However abundant our harvests here on earth may be, we must renew the same process, in order to supply our returning needs. But when once we have reaped the heavenly harvest, we shall "rest from our labors" for evermore! If then a year of toil be considered as compensated by a transient supply—then shall not an eternity of happiness be thought worth our care, during the short period of human life? Do any, that are now in glory, regret the pains they bestowed to get there? Let us "be followers of them," and we shall soon participate in their bliss! [Hebrews 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.12).

***~~#2091~~***

***~~THE CROSS OF CHRIST~~***

***~~[Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14)~~***

"God forbid that I would glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!"

*THE Christian, in whatever he does, is characterized by singleness of eye and simplicity of mind.*All others, even when they appear most zealous for God, have sinister and selfish ends in view. This may be seen in the Judaizing teachers, while they were insisting on the observance of circumcision and the Jewish ritual. They wished to have it thought that they were actuated only by a conscientious sense of duty to Moses and to God. But there were other secret motives by which they were impelled: they were themselves preachers of the Gospel; but knowing how obnoxious both to Jews and Gentiles the simple preaching of the cross was, while the blending of certain Jewish observances with it was palatable to every mind, they sought to avoid the persecution which they knew that a simple exhibition of Christ crucified would bring upon them.

They had an eye also to their own glory, for they affected to be leaders of a party in the Church, and labored to exalt themselves by augmenting the number of their followers. That they were not actuated by a real desire to approve themselves to God, was evident from hence, that they, notwithstanding all their endeavors to enforce the observance of the law on others, did not keep the law themselves.

But all such corrupt practices Paul abhorred; and, while he disdained to seek his own glory, he was armored against the fear of man, and labored only to advance the glory of his Divine Master, and the salvation of those to whom he ministered. "They," says he, "who constrain you to be circumcised, desire to make a fair show in the flesh," "but God forbid that I would glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!"

In this commendation of the cross of Christ, we behold,

***~~I. His views of its excellency—~~***

By "the cross of Christ," is here meant *the doctrine of salvation through a crucified Redeemer*. This he preached, and it was the great subject of all his ministrations. Though it was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness," yet he would "know nothing else, [1 Corinthians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.2)," and "glory in nothing else." He gloried in it,

***~~1. As displaying such wonders of love and mercy to the world at large—~~***

Here was a plan of salvation suited to, and sufficient for, the necessities of the whole world. All were involved in one common ruin: all needed an atonement to be offered for their sins: the whole universe could not present one capable of expiating their guilt; the highest archangel was as incompetent to it as was the blood of bulls and goats. But God, in his infinite mercy, had devised a way! He had entered into covenant with his only-begotten Son: he had agreed with him, that, if he would assume our nature, and "make his soul an offering for sin," his sacrifice would be accepted in their behalf, and he would have from among the fallen race of Adam a seed who would serve him, and enjoy him for ever! [Isaiah 53:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.10).

This stupendous plan has been executed: the Lord Jesus Christ has "been made in the likeness of men, and has become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," and, having "borne our sins in his own body on the tree," and been exalted to the right hand of God as the Head and Forerunner of his people, he now offers salvation unto all freely, "without money and without price." The persons sent out and commissioned by him to preach his Gospel, are empowered to declare, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them! [2 Corinthians 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.19)." To every living man is this message sent, with a full assurance that "those who believe in Christ shall never perish, but shall have eternal life! [John 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.16)."

Now in this wonderful mystery Paul saw such honor reflected on all the Divine perfections, and such blessedness secured to man, that he could not but glory in it, and determine never to glory in anything else.

***~~2. As making such ample provision for his own soul—~~***

Paul felt himself to be the very "chief of sinners," and deserving of God's heaviest indignation. But this Savior had revealed himself to him, even in the midst of all his wickedness; and by a signal act of grace had not only pardoned his sins, but had appointed him to preach to others that salvation, of which he was so remarkable a monument. By the manifestation of Christ to his soul, he was assured of mercy and acceptance with God. From that moment he no more doubted of his own salvation, than he did of his existence: and the blessing which was thus imparted to him, he had been the means of imparting unto others, even to hundreds and thousands of the Gentile world.

Could he then be insensible of the value of that which had filled his own soul with such peace and joy, and which, through his ministrations, had diffused such unspeakable blessings all around him? No! he could not but commend to others what had been so effectual for his own benefit, and glory in the cross as "all his salvation, and all his desire."

As an especial reason for glorying in the cross, he mentions,

***~~II. His experience of its power—~~***

The words "by whom," should rather be translated, "by which;" for it is to the doctrine of the cross as received into his soul, and not to Christ's personal agency upon his soul, that he traced the effects produced.

***~~The world was in the Apostle's eyes as an object that was crucified; himself also being as one crucified in respect to it—~~***

The image here used is very remarkable, and deserving of particular attention, "The world was crucified to him." A person dying upon a cross, how dear so ever he may have been to us, is no longer an object of desire. As soon as he has surrendered up his life, if his body is given to us, we bury it out of our sight. We no longer look to him for any of those comforts which are derived from social fellowship. All relation to him, all dependence on him, all satisfaction in him, are dissolved: every tie that once bound us together is broken, and "we know him no more."

The Apostle further adds, that "he also was crucified to the world." This does not mean that the world despised him, and wished him buried out of its sight (that was indeed true; but it is not the truth that is here intimated). The expression imports, that, while the world was as a crucified object in his eyes, he beheld everything in it as a man would do who was himself dying on a cross. He may have loved the world in ever so high a degree; but he now loves it no more. He may have sought its pleasures, its riches, and its honors, with the most insatiable ardor; but he has now no desire after anything that is in it. He feels himself dying; and he has now no wish but to improve his few remaining moments, for his own benefit, and the benefit of those around him.

Take the penitent thief as an example. If crowns and kingdoms could have been given him for the few remaining hours that he had to live, they would have been of no value whatever in his eyes.

Now thus the Apostle looked upon the world and everything in it. There was nothing in it that he desired: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," were all lighter than vanity in his estimation. He had now no longer any taste for them: he felt that, whether his life was of longer or shorter continuance, he had nothing to do, but to honor God, and benefit his fellow-creatures, as far as he would have opportunity, and seek the salvation of his own soul. All that the world could either give or take away, was "counted by him as dung, that he might win Christ, and be found in him."

And whence was it that he attained such extraordinary deadness to the world?

This holy feeling was wrought in him altogether by the cross of Christ; which brought such glories to his view, as eclipsed all sublunary good; and filled his soul with such joys as rendered all earthly satisfactions worthless and distasteful as the husks of swine. This it was which raised him above those vain hopes with which the Judaizing teachers were animated, and above those unworthy fears with which their fidelity to God was assailed. A sense of "love to his Redeemer constrained him;" and, when menaced with all that the world could inflict, he could say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may but finish my course with joy, and fulfill the ministry committed to me!"

Nor was this a vain boast. His whole life testified that it was his actual experience; and that the doctrine which formed the only basis of his hopes, had a transforming effect, such as no other principles under Heaven could produce.

But we must not suppose this state of mind to be peculiar to the Apostle. It is produced invariably by the cross of Christ, wherever it is surveyed and gloried in as it ought to be.

***~~We may see therefore from hence,~~***

***~~1. How sublime are the Christian's views!~~***

*The cross of Christ is that, and that alone, in which every Christian under Heaven will glory.* The very words of our text afford the best comment on that description which the Apostle gives of the cross of Christ, when he calls it, "The wisdom of God, and the power of God." So unfathomable are the *counsels*of Divine Wisdom contained in it, that all the angels of Heaven are searching into it, with a thirst that is insatiable. And such is its efficacy, that nothing can withstand its influence.

By this then, you, my brethren, may judge whether you are Christians in deed and in truth, or whether you are such in name only. A nominal Christian is contented with approving of the way of salvation by a crucified Redeemer. The true Christian loves it, delights in it, glories in it, and shudders at the thought of glorying in anything else.

Say, brethren, are such your views, and such your feelings? Do you see how base and unworthy it would be to glory in anything else? Does your spirit rise with indignation at the thought of so requiting your adorable Redeemer? Be assured, it will be thus with you, if your hearts are truly enlightened, and if you have "learned of the Father as the truth is in Jesus."

***~~2. How heavenly the Christian's life is!~~***

He is in the world; but "he is not of it: he has overcome the world; and this is the victory by which he has overcome it, even his faith." "His treasure is in Heaven;" and "his conduct is there also." Behold him, and you will see "a man of God;" a man "born from above;" a man "filled with the Holy Spirit;" a man "walking as Christ himself walked."

In Christ you see the figure which is used in our text completely illustrated. "He had nowhere to lay his head;" yet, "when the people would have taken him to make him a king, he withdrew, and hid himself from them." In the primitive Christians, too, you see the same spirit: for "they were not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world."

Aspire then, beloved, after this high and holy attainment. Walk in a holy indifference to the world: show yourselves superior to all the things of time and sense. "Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth." Let all your joys flow from the contemplation of his cross. Thus shall you "dwell in God, and God in you:" you shall be "one with God, and God with you:" and the very instant that the ties between the world and you shall be finally dissolved by death, you shall soar as on eagles' wings, to take possession of the crowns and kingdoms that await you in the eternal world!

***~~1. It unfolds to us the deepest mysteries—~~***

All the persons in the ever-blessed Trinity sustain distinct offices in the work of redemption. The Christian has, as it were, distinct communion with each of these divine persons. From each he receives that which his state requires; and from their combined influence arises his full salvation. How unsearchable are the heights and depths of this stupendous mystery!

***~~2. It opens to us the most glorious privileges and blessings—~~***

What on earth can be compared with these blessings?

Contemplate "the grace of Christ," by which the dead are quickened, the vile are sanctified, the weak are made victorious.

As for "the love of God," say, you glorified saints, what that means; or, you damned spirits, who know it only by your hopeless bereavement.

And who can declare what "the communion of the Holy Spirit" is, when the taste of it creates a very Heaven upon earth? *Would to God, that the words so often, and so carelessly repeated by us, were more deeply considered, and more richly experienced!*

***~~Learn then from hence,~~***

***~~1. The proper object of a Christian's ambition—~~***

Earthly honors and carnal pleasures are unworthy of his pursuit; he would be satisfied with nothing but the full attainment of these blessings.

***~~2. The benefit of fervent prayer—~~***

We may ask the smallest things of man, and be disappointed of our hope. We may ask all that the blessed Trinity can give us, without fear of disappointment [Psalm 81:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 81.10).

***~~3. The misery of those who are careless about religion—~~***

These blessings will not be bestowed unless we seek them; and, if we possess them not, we are poor indeed. If we die before we have attained them, it were better for us that we had never been born!