

# **HOLINESS:**

Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties,  
and Roots

by

J. C. Ryle, D.D.

Foreword by D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

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## FOREWORD

ONE of the most encouraging and hopeful signs I have observed for many a long day in evangelical circles has been a renewed and increasing interest in the writings of Bishop J. C. Ryle.

In his day he was famous, outstanding and beloved as a champion and exponent of the evangelical and reformed faith. For some reason or other, however, his name and his works are not familiar to modern evangelicals. His books are, I believe, all out of print in this country and very difficult to obtain secondhand.

The differing fates suffered in this respect by Bishop Ryle and his near contemporary, Bishop Moule, have always been to me a matter of great interest. But Bishop Ryle is being re-discovered, and there is a new call for the re-publication of his works.

All who have ever read him will be grateful for this new edition of his great book on 'Holiness'. I will never forget the satisfaction — spiritual and mental — with which I read it some twenty years ago after having stumbled across it in a second-hand book shop.

It really needs no preface or word of introduction. All I will do is to urge all readers to read the Bishop's own Introduction. It is invaluable as it provides the setting in which he felt impelled to write the book.

The characteristics of Bishop Ryle's method and style are obvious. He is pre-eminently and always scriptural and expository. He never starts with a theory into which he tries to fit various scriptures. He always starts with the Word and expounds it. It is exposition at its very best and highest. It is always clear and logical and invariably leads to a clear enunciation of doctrine. It is strong and virile and entirely free from the sentimentality that is often described as "devotional."

The Bishop had drunk deeply from the wells of the great classical Puritan writers of the seventeenth century. Indeed, it would be but accurate to say that his books are a distillation of true Puritan theology presented in a highly readable and modern form.

Ryle, like his great masters, has no easy way to holiness to offer us, and no "patent" method by which it can be attained; but he invariably produces that "hunger and thirst after righteousness" which is the only indispensable condition to being "filled."

May this book be widely read, that God's name be increasingly honoured and glorified.

D. M. LLOYD-JONES.

*Westminster Chapel.*

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## INTRODUCTION

THE twenty papers contained in this volume are a humble contribution to a cause which is exciting much interest in the present day, — I mean the cause of *Scriptural holiness*. It is a cause which everyone who loves Christ, and desires to advance His kingdom in the world, should endeavour to help forward. Everyone can do something, and I wish to add my mite.

The reader will find little that is directly controversial in these papers. I have carefully abstained from naming modern teachers and modern books. I have been content to give the result of my own study of the Bible, my own private meditations, my own prayers for light, and my own reading of old divines. If in anything I am still in error, I hope I will be shown it before I leave the world. We all see in part, and have a treasure in earthen vessels. I trust I am willing to learn.

I have had a deep conviction for many years that practical holiness and entire self-consecration to God are not sufficiently attended to by modern Christians in this country. Politics, or controversy, or party-spirit, or worldliness, have eaten out the heart of lively piety in too many of us. The subject of personal godliness has fallen sadly into the background. The standard of living has become painfully low in many quarters. The immense importance of “adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour” (Tit 2.10), and making it lovely and beautiful by our daily habits and tempers, has been far too much overlooked. Worldly people sometimes complain with reason that “religious” persons, so-called, are not so amiable and unselfish and good-natured as others who make no profession of religion. Yet sanctification, in its place and proportion, is quite as important as justification.

Sound Protestant and evangelical doctrine is useless if it is not accompanied by a holy life. It is worse than useless: it does positive harm. It is despised by keen-sighted and shrewd men of the world, as an unreal and hollow thing, and brings religion into contempt. It is my firm impression that we want a thorough revival about Scriptural holiness, and I am deeply thankful that attention is being directed to the point.

It is, however, of great importance that the whole subject should be placed on right foundations, and that the movement about it should not be damaged by crude, disproportioned, and one-sided statements. If such statements abound, we must not be surprised. Satan knows well the power of true holiness, and the immense injury which increased attention to it will do to his kingdom. It is his interest, therefore, to promote strife and controversy about this part of God’s truth. Just as in time past he has succeeded in mystifying and confusing men’s minds about justification, so he is labouring in the present day to make men “darken counsel by words without knowledge” about sanctification. May the Lord rebuke him! I cannot however give up the hope that good will be brought out of evil, that discussion will elicit truth, and that variety of opinion will lead us all to search the Scriptures more, to pray more, and to become more diligent in trying to find out what is “the mind of the Spirit.”

I now feel it a duty, in sending forth this volume, to offer a few introductory hints to those whose attention is specially directed to the subject of sanctification in the present day. I know that I do so at the risk of seeming presumptuous, and possibly of giving offence. But something must be ventured in the interests of God’s truth. I will therefore put my hints

into the form of questions, and I will request my readers to take them as “Cautions for the Times on the subject of holiness.”

(1) I ask, in the first place, whether it is wise to speak of faith as the one thing needful, and the only thing required, as many seem to do now-a-days in handling the doctrine of sanctification? — Is it wise to proclaim in so bald, naked, and unqualified a way as many do, that the holiness of converted people is *by faith only, and not at all by personal exertion*? Is it according to the proportion of God’s Word? I doubt it.

That faith in Christ is the root of all holiness — that the first step towards a holy life is to believe on Christ — that until we believe we have not a jot of holiness — that union with Christ by faith is the secret of both beginning to be holy and continuing holy — that the life that we live in the flesh we must live by the faith of the Son of God — that faith purifies the heart — that faith is the victory which overcomes the world — that by faith the elders obtained a good report — all these are truths which no well-instructed Christian will ever think of denying. But surely the Scriptures teach us that in following holiness the true Christian needs personal exertion and work as well as faith. The very same Apostle who says in one place, “The life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God,” says in another place, “I fight — I run — I keep under my body;” and in other places, “Let us cleanse ourselves — let us labour, let us lay aside every weight.” (Gal 2.20; 1Cor. 9.26; 2Cor 7.1; Heb 4.11; 12.1) Moreover, the Scriptures nowhere teach us that faith sanctifies us in the same sense, and in the same manner, that faith justifies us! Justifying faith is a grace that “works not,” but simply trusts, rests, and leans on Christ. (Rom 4.5) Sanctifying faith is a grace of which the very life is action: it “works by love,” and, like a main-spring, moves the whole inward man. (Gal 5.6) After all, the precise phrase “sanctified by faith” is only found once in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus said to Saul, “I send you, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me.” Yet even there I agree with Alford, that “by faith” belongs to the whole sentence, and must not be tied to the word “sanctified.” The true sense is, “that by faith in Me they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among those who are sanctified.” (Compare Act 26.18 with Act 20.32)

As to the phrase “holiness by faith,” I find it nowhere in the New Testament. Without controversy, in the matter of our justification before God, faith in Christ is the one thing needful. All that simply believe are justified. Righteousness is imputed “not to him that works, but believes.” (Rom 4.5) It is thoroughly Scriptural and right to say, “faith alone justifies.” But it is not equally Scriptural and right to say, “faith alone sanctifies.” The saying requires very large qualification. Let one fact suffice. We are frequently told that a man is “justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” by St. Paul. But not once are we told that we are “sanctified by faith without the deeds of the law.” On the contrary, we are expressly told by St. James that the faith whereby we are *visibly and demonstratively* justified before man, is a faith which “if it does not have works is dead, being alone.”<sup>1</sup> (Jas 2.17) I may be told, in reply, that no one of course means to disparage “works” as an essential part of a holy life. It would be well, however, to make this more plain than many seem to make it these days.

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<sup>1</sup> “There is a double justification by God: the one authoritative, the other declarative or demonstrative.” — The first is St. Paul’s scope, when he speaks of justification by faith without the deeds of the law. The second is St. James’ scope, when he speaks of justification by works.” — *T. Goodwin on Gospel Holiness. Works*, vol. vii, p. 181.

(2) I ask, in the second place, whether it is wise to make so little as some appear to do, comparatively, of the many *practical exhortations to holiness in daily life* which are to be found in the Sermon on the Mount, and in the latter part of most of St. Paul's epistles? Is it according to the proportion of God's Word? I doubt it.

That a life of daily self-consecration and daily communion with God should be aimed at by everyone who professes to be a believer — that we should strive to attain the habit of going to the Lord Jesus Christ with everything we find a burden, whether great or small, and casting it upon Him — all this, I repeat, no well-taught child of God will dream of disputing. But surely the New Testament teaches us that we want something more than generalities about holy living, which often prick no conscience and give no offence. The *details* and particular ingredients of which holiness is composed in daily life, ought to be fully set forth and pressed on believers by all who profess to handle the subject. True holiness does not consist merely of believing and feeling, but of doing and bearing, and a practical exhibition of active and passive grace. Our tongues, our tempers, our natural passions and inclinations — our conduct as parents and children, masters and servants, husbands and wives, rulers and subjects — our dress, our employment of time, our behaviour in business, our demeanour in sickness and health, in riches and in poverty — all, all these are matters which are fully treated by inspired writers. They are not content with a general statement of what we should believe and feel, and how we are to have the roots of holiness planted in our hearts. They dig down lower. They go into particulars. They specify minutely what a holy man ought to do and be in his own family, and by his own fireside, if he abides in Christ. I doubt whether this sort of teaching is sufficiently attended to in the movement of the present day. When people talk of having received “such a blessing,” and of having found “the higher life,” after hearing some earnest advocate of “holiness by faith and self-consecration,” while their families and friends see no improvement and no increased sanctity in their daily tempers and behaviour, immense harm is done to the cause of Christ. True holiness, we surely ought to remember, does not consist merely of inward sensations and impressions. It is much more than tears, and sighs, and bodily excitement, and a quickened pulse, and a passionate feeling of attachment to our own favourite preachers and our own religious party, and a readiness to quarrel with everyone who does not agree with us. It is something of “the image of Christ,” which can be seen and observed by others in our private life, and habits, and character, and doings. (Rom 8.29)

(3) I ask, in the third place, whether it is wise to use vague language about perfection, and to press on Christians a *standard of holiness*, as attainable in this world for which there is no warrant to be shown either in Scripture or experience? I doubt it.

That believers are exhorted to “perfect holiness in the fear of God” — to “go on to perfection” — to “be perfect,” no careful reader of his Bible will ever think of denying. (2Cor 7.1; Heb 6.1; 2Cor 13.11) But I have yet to learn that there is a single passage in Scripture which teaches that a literal perfection, a complete and entire freedom from sin, in thought, or word, or deed, is attainable, or ever has been attained, by any child of Adam in this world. A comparative perfection, a perfection in knowledge, an all-round consistency in every relation of life, a thorough soundness in every point of doctrine — this may be seen occasionally in some of God's believing people. But as to an *absolute literal perfection*, the most eminent saints of God in every age have always been the very last to lay claim to it! On the contrary, they have always had the deepest sense of their

own utter unworthiness and imperfection. The more spiritual light they have enjoyed, the more they have seen their own countless defects and shortcomings. The more grace they have had, the more they have been “clothed with humility.” (1Pet 5.5)

What saint can be named in God’s Word, of whose life many details are recorded, who was literally and absolutely perfect? Which of them all, when writing about himself, ever talks of feeling free from imperfection? On the contrary, men like David, and St. Paul, and St. John, declare in the strongest language that they feel in their own hearts weakness and sin. The holiest men of modern times have always been remarkable for deep humility. Have we ever seen holier men than the martyred John Bradford, or Hooker, or Usher, or Baxter, or Rutherford, or McCheyne? Yet no one can read the writings and letters of these men without seeing that they felt themselves “debtors to mercy and grace” every day, and the very last thing they ever laid claim to was perfection!

In face of such facts as these I must protest against the language used in many quarters, in these last days, about *perfection*. I must think that those who use it either know very little of the nature of sin, or of the attributes of God, or of their own hearts, or of the Bible, or of the meaning of words. When a professing Christian coolly tells me that he has got beyond such hymns as “Just as I am,” and that they are below his present experience, though they suited him when he first took up religion, I must think his soul is in a very unhealthy state! When a man can talk coolly of the possibility of “living without sin” while in the body, and can actually say that he has “never had an evil thought for three months,” I can only say that in my opinion he is a very ignorant Christian! I protest against such teaching as this. It not only does no good, but it does immense harm. It disgusts and alienates from religion far-seeing men of the world, who know it is incorrect and untrue. It depresses some of the best of God’s children, who feel they never can attain to “perfection” of this kind. It puffs up many weak brethren, who fancy they are something when they are nothing. In short, it is a dangerous delusion.

(4) In the fourth place, is it wise to assert so positively and violently, as many do, that *the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans* does not describe the experience of the advanced saint, but the experience of the unregenerate man, or of the weak and unestablished believer? I doubt it.

I admit fully that the point has been a disputed one for eighteen centuries, in fact ever since the days of St. Paul. I admit fully that eminent Christians like John and Charles Wesley, and Fletcher, a hundred years ago, to say nothing of some able writers of our own time, maintain firmly that St. Paul was not describing his own present experience when he wrote this seventh chapter. I admit fully that many cannot see what I and many others do see: viz., that Paul says nothing in this chapter which does not precisely tally with the recorded experience of the most eminent saints in every age, and that he does say several things which no unregenerate man or weak believer would ever think of saying, and cannot say. So it appears to me, at any rate. But I will not enter into any detailed discussion of the chapter.<sup>2</sup>

What I do lay stress upon is the broad fact that the best commentators in every era of the Church have almost invariably applied the seventh chapter of Romans to advanced

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<sup>2</sup> Those who care to go into the subject will find it fully discussed in the Commentaries of Willet, Elton, Chalmers, and Haldane, and in Owen on *Indwelling Sin*, and in the work of Stafford on the *Seventh of Romans*.

believers. The commentators who do not take this view have been, with a few bright exceptions, the Romanists, the Socinians, and the Arminians. Against them is arrayed the judgment of almost all the Reformers, almost all the Puritans, and the best modern evangelical divines. I will be told, of course, that no man is infallible, that the Reformers, Puritans, and modern divines I refer to may have been entirely mistaken, and the Romanists, Socinians, and Arminians may have been quite right! Our Lord has taught us, no doubt, to “call no man master.” But while I ask no man to call the Reformers and Puritans “masters,” I do ask people to read what they say on this subject, and answer their arguments, if they can. This has not been done yet! To say, as some do, that they do not want human “dogmas” and “doctrines,” is no reply at all. The whole point at issue is, “What is the meaning of a passage of Scripture? How is the Seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans to be interpreted? What is the true sense of its words?” At any rate, let us remember that there is a great fact which cannot be got over. On one side stand the opinions and interpretation of Reformers and Puritans, and on the other the opinions and interpretations of Romanists, Socinians, and Arminians. Let that be distinctly understood.

In the face of such a fact as this, I must enter my protest against the sneering, taunting, contemptuous language which has been frequently used of late by some of the advocates of what I must call the Arminian view of the Seventh of Romans, in speaking of the opinions of their opponents. To say the least, such language is unseemly, and only defeats its own end. A cause which is defended by such language is deservedly suspicious. Truth needs no such weapons. If we cannot agree with men, we need not speak of their views with discourtesy and contempt. An opinion which is backed and supported by such men as the best Reformers and Puritans may not carry conviction to all minds in the nineteenth century, but at any rate it would be well to speak of it with respect.

(5) In the fifth place, is it wise to use the language which is often used in the present day about the doctrine of “*Christ in us*”? I doubt it. Is not this doctrine often exalted to a position which it does not occupy in Scripture? I am afraid that it is.

That the true believer is one with Christ and Christ in him, no careful reader of the New Testament will think of denying for a moment. There is, no doubt, a mystical union between Christ and the believer. With Him we died, with Him we were buried, with Him we rose again, with Him we sit in heavenly places. We have five plain texts where we are distinctly taught that Christ is “in us.” (Rom 8.10; Gal 2.20; 4.19; Eph 3.17; Col 3.11) But we must be careful that we understand what we mean by the expression. That “Christ dwells in our hearts by faith,” and carries on His inward work by His Spirit, is clear and plain. But if we mean to say that beside, and over, and above this, there is some mysterious indwelling of Christ in a believer, we must be careful what we are about. Unless we take care, we will find ourselves ignoring the work of the Holy Ghost.

We would be forgetting that in the Divine economy of man’s salvation, election is the special work of God the Father — atonement, mediation, and intercession, are the special work of God the Son — and sanctification is the special work of God the Holy Ghost. We would be forgetting that our Lord said, when He went away, that He would send us another Comforter, who would “abide with us” forever, and as it were, take His place. (Joh 14.16) In short, under the idea that we are honouring Christ, we would find that we are dishonouring His special and peculiar gift — the Holy Ghost. Christ, no doubt, as God, is

everywhere — in our hearts, in heaven, in the place where two or three are met together in His name. But we really must remember that Christ, as our risen Head and High Priest, is specially at God's right hand interceding for us until He comes the second time; and that Christ carries on His work in the hearts of His people by the special work of His Spirit whom He promised to send when He left the world. (Joh 15.26) A comparison of the ninth and tenth verses of the eighth chapter of Romans seems to me to show this plainly. It convinces me that "Christ in us" means Christ in us "by His Spirit." Above all, the words of St. John are most distinct and express:

"Hereby we know that He abides in us by the Spirit which He has given us." (1Joh 3.24)

In saying all this, I hope no one will misunderstand me. I do not say that the expression, "Christ in us" is unscriptural. But I do say that I see great danger of giving an extravagant and unscriptural importance to the idea contained in the expression; and I do fear that many use it now-a-days without exactly knowing what they mean, and unwittingly, perhaps, dishonour the mighty work of the Holy Ghost. If any readers think that I am needlessly scrupulous about the point, I recommend to their notice a curious book by Samuel Rutherford (author of the well-known letters), called "The Spiritual Antichrist." They will there see that two centuries ago the wildest heresies arose out of an extravagant teaching of this very doctrine of the "indwelling of Christ" in believers. They will find that Saltmarsh, and Dell, and Towne, and other false teachers, against whom good Samuel Rutherford contended, began with strange notions of "Christ in us," and then proceeded to build on the doctrine antinomianism, and fanaticism of the worst description and vilest tendency. They maintained that the separate, personal life of the believer was so completely gone, that it was *Christ living in him* who repented, and believed, and acted! The root of this huge error was a forced and unscriptural interpretation of such texts as "I live: yet not I, but Christ lives in me." (Gal 2.20) And the natural result of it was that many of the unhappy followers of this school came to the comfortable conclusion that believers were not responsible, whatever they might do! Believers, truly, were dead and buried; and only Christ lived in them, and *undertook* everything for them! The ultimate consequence was that some thought they might sit still in a carnal security, their personal accountableness being entirely gone, and might commit any kind of sin without fear! Let us never forget that truth, distorted and exaggerated, can become the mother of the most dangerous heresies. When we speak of "Christ being in us," let us take care to explain what we mean. I fear some neglect this in the present day.

(6) In the sixth place, is it wise to draw such a deep, wide, and distinct line of separation between conversion and *consecration, or the higher life*, so called, as many draw in the present day? Is this according to the proportion of God's Word? I doubt it.

There is, unquestionably, nothing new in this teaching. It is well known that Romish writers often maintain that the Church is divided into three classes — sinners, penitents, and saints. The modern teachers of this day who tell us that professing Christians are of three sorts — the unconverted, the converted, and the partakers of the "higher life" of complete consecration — appear to me to occupy very much the same ground! But whether the idea is old or new, Romish or English, I am utterly unable to see that it has any warrant of Scripture. The Word of God always speaks of two great divisions of mankind, and only two. It speaks of the living and the dead in sin — the believer and the unbeliever — the converted and the unconverted — the travellers in the narrow way and

the travellers in the broad — the wise and the foolish — the children of God and the children of the devil. Within each of these two great classes there are, doubtless, various measures of sin and of grace; but it is only the difference between the higher and lower end of an inclined plane. Between these two great classes there is an enormous gulf; they are as distinct as life and death, light and darkness, heaven and hell. But the Word of God says nothing at all of a division into three classes! I question the wisdom of making new-fangled divisions which the Bible has not made, and I thoroughly dislike the notion of a second conversion.

That there is a vast difference between one degree of grace and another — that spiritual life admits growth, and that believers should be continually urged on every account to grow in grace — all this I fully concede. But the theory of a sudden, mysterious transition of a believer into a state of blessedness and *entire consecration*, at one mighty bound, I cannot receive. It appears to me to be a man-made invention; and I do not see a single plain text to prove it in Scripture. Gradual growth in grace, growth in knowledge, growth in faith, growth in love, growth in holiness, growth in humility, growth in spiritual-mindedness — all this I see clearly taught and urged in Scripture, and clearly exemplified in the lives of many of God's saints. But sudden, instantaneous leaps from conversion to *consecration* I fail to see in the Bible. I doubt, indeed, whether we have any warrant for saying that a man can possibly be *converted* without being consecrated to God! More consecrated he doubtless can be, and will be as his grace increases; but if he was not consecrated to God in the very day that he was converted and born again, I do not know what conversion means. Are not men in danger of undervaluing and underrating the immense blessedness of conversion? Are they not, when they urge on believers the "higher life" as a second conversion, underrating the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, of that great first change which Scripture calls the new birth, the new creation, the spiritual resurrection? I may be mistaken. But I have sometimes thought, while reading the strong language used by many in the last few years about "consecration," that those who use it must have previously had a singularly low and inadequate view of "conversion," if indeed they knew anything about conversion at all. In short, I have almost suspected that when they were consecrated, they were in reality *converted* for the first time!

I frankly confess that I prefer the old paths. I think it wiser and safer to press on all converted people the possibility of continual *growth* in grace, and the absolute necessity of going forward, increasing more and more, and every year dedicating and consecrating themselves more in spirit, soul, and body, to Christ. By all means, let us teach that there is more holiness to be attained, and more of heaven to be enjoyed on earth, than most believers now experience. But I decline to tell any converted man that he needs a *second conversion*, and that he may some day or other pass by one enormous step into a state of *entire consecration*. I decline to teach it, because I cannot see any warrant for such teaching in Scripture. I decline to teach it, because I think the tendency of the doctrine is thoroughly mischievous, depressing the humble-minded and meek, and puffing up the shallow, the ignorant, and the self-conceited, to a most dangerous extent.

(7) In the seventh and last place, is it wise to teach believers that they should not think so much of fighting and struggling against sin, but should rather "*yield themselves to God*" and be passive in the hands of Christ? Is this according to the proportion of God's Word? I doubt it.

## INTRODUCTION

It is a simple fact that the expression “yield yourselves” is only to be found in one place in the New Testament, as a duty urged upon believers. That place is in the sixth chapter of Romans, and there within six verses the expression occurs five times. (See Rom 6.13-19) But even there, the word will not bear the sense of “placing ourselves passively in the hands of another.” Any Greek student can tell us that the sense is rather that of actively “presenting” ourselves for use, employment, and service. (See Rom 12.1) The expression therefore stands alone. But on the other hand, it would not be difficult to point out at least twenty-five or thirty distinct passages in the Epistles where believers are plainly taught to use active personal exertion, and are addressed as responsible for doing energetically what Christ would have them do, and are not told to “yield themselves” up as passive agents and sit still, but to arise and work. A holy violence, a conflict, a warfare, a fight, a soldier’s life, a wrestling, are spoken of as characteristic of the true Christian. The account of “the armour of God” in the sixth chapter of Ephesians, one might think, settles the question.<sup>3</sup> — Again, it would be easy to show that the doctrine of sanctification without personal exertion, by simply “yielding ourselves to God,” is precisely the doctrine of the antinomian fanatics in the seventeenth century (to whom I have referred already, described in Rutherford’s *Spiritual Antichrist*), and that the tendency of it is evil in the extreme. — Again, it would be easy to show that the doctrine is utterly subversive of the whole teaching of such tried and approved books as *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and that if we receive it, we cannot do better than put Bunyan’s old book in the fire! If Christian in *Pilgrim’s Progress* simply *yielded himself to God*, and never fought, or struggled, or wrestled, I have read the famous allegory in vain. But the plain truth is, that men will persist in confounding two things that differ — that is, justification and sanctification. In justification the word to be addressed to man is believe — only believe; in sanctification the word must be “watch, pray, and fight.” What God has divided let us not mingle and confuse.

I leave the subject of my introduction here, and hasten to a conclusion. I confess that I lay down my pen with feelings of sorrow and anxiety. There is much in the attitude of professing Christians in this day which fills me with concern, and makes me full of fear for the future.

There is an amazing ignorance of Scripture among many, and a consequent lack of established, solid religion. In no other way can I account for the ease with which people are, like children, “tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine.” (Eph 4.14) There is an Athenian love of novelty abroad, and a morbid distaste for anything old and regular, and in the beaten path of our forefathers. Thousands will crowd to hear a new voice and a new doctrine, without considering for a moment whether what they hear is true. — There is an incessant craving after any teaching which is sensational, and exciting, and rousing to the feelings. — There is an unhealthy appetite for a sort of spasmodic and hysterical Christianity. The religious life of many is little better than spiritual dram-drinking, and the “meek and quiet spirit” which St. Peter commends is clean forgotten, (1Pet 3.4) Crowds, and crying, and hot rooms, and high-flown singing, and an incessant rousing of the emotions, are the only things which many care for. — Inability to distinguish differences in doctrine is spreading far and wide, and so long as the preacher is “clever” and “earnest,” hundreds seem to think it must be all right, and

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<sup>3</sup> Old Sibbe’s Sermon on “Victorious Violence” deserves the attention of all who have his works. — Vol. vii., p. 30.

## INTRODUCTION

call you dreadfully “narrow and uncharitable” if you hint that he is unsound! Moody and Haweis, Dean Stanley and Canon Liddon, Mackonochie and Pearsall Smith, all seem to be alike in the eyes of such people. All this is sad, very sad. But if in addition to this, the true-hearted advocates of increased holiness are going to fall out by the way and misunderstand one another, it will be sadder still. We will indeed be in evil plight.

For myself, I am aware that I am no longer a young minister. My mind perhaps stiffens, and I cannot easily receive any new doctrine. “The old is better.” I suppose I belong to the old school of evangelical theology, and I am therefore content with such teaching about sanctification as I find in the *Life of Faith* of Sibbes and of Manton, and in *The Life, Walk, and Triumph of Faith* of William Romaine. But I must express a hope that my younger brethren who have taken up new views of holiness will beware of multiplying causeless divisions. Do they think that a higher standard of Christian living is needed in the present day? So do I. — Do they think that clearer, stronger, fuller teaching about holiness is needed? So do I. — Do they think that Christ ought to be more exalted as the root and author of sanctification as well as justification? So do I. — Do they think that believers should be urged more and more to live by faith? So do I. — Do they think that a very close walk with God should be more pressed on believers as the secret of happiness and usefulness? So do I. — In all these things we agree. But if they want to go further, then I ask them to take care where they tread, and to explain very clearly and distinctly what they mean.

Finally, I must deprecate, and I do it in love, the use of uncouth and new-fangled terms and phrases in teaching sanctification. I plead that a movement in favour of holiness cannot be advanced by new-coined phraseology, or by disproportioned and one-sided statements — or by overstraining and isolating particular texts — or by exalting one truth at the expense of another — or by allegorizing and accommodating texts, and squeezing out of them meanings which the Holy Ghost never put in them — or by speaking contemptuously and bitterly of those who do not entirely see things with our eyes, and do not work exactly in our ways. These things do not make for peace: they rather repel many and keep them at a distance. The cause of true sanctification is not helped, but hindered by such weapons as these. A movement in aid of holiness which produces strife and dispute among God’s children is somewhat suspicious. For Christ’s sake, and in the name of truth and charity, let us endeavour to follow after peace as well as holiness. “What God has joined together let not man put asunder.”

It is my heart’s desire, and prayer to God daily, that personal holiness may increase greatly among professing Christians in England, But I trust that all who endeavour to promote it will adhere closely to the proportion of Scripture, will carefully distinguish things that differ, and will separate “the precious from the vile.” (Jer 15.19)

## 1. SIN

*“Sin is the transgression of the law.” — 1Joh 3.4.*

HE that wishes to attain right views about Christian holiness, must begin by examining the vast and solemn subject of sin. He must dig down very low if he would build high. A mistake here is most mischievous. Wrong views about holiness are generally traceable to wrong views about human corruption. I make no apology for beginning this volume of papers about holiness by making some plain statements about sin.

The plain truth is that a right knowledge of sin lies at the root of all saving Christianity. Without it doctrines such as justification, conversion, and sanctification, are “words and names” which convey no meaning to the mind. The first thing, therefore, that God does when He makes anyone a new creature in Christ, is to send light into his heart, and show him that he is a guilty sinner. The material creation in Genesis began with “light,” and so also does the spiritual creation. God “shines into our hearts” by the work of the Holy Ghost, and then spiritual life begins. (2Cor 4.6) — Dim or indistinct views of sin are the origin of most of the errors, heresies, and false doctrines of the present day. If a man does not realize the dangerous nature of his soul’s disease, you cannot wonder if he is content with false or imperfect remedies. I believe that one of the chief wants of the Church in the nineteenth century has been (and is) clearer, fuller teaching about sin.

(1) I will begin the subject by supplying some definition of sin. We are all of course familiar with the terms “sin” and “sinners.” We talk frequently of “sin” being in the world, and of men committing “sins.” But what do we mean by these terms and phrases? Do we really know? I fear there is much mental confusion and haziness on this point. Let me try, as briefly as possible, to supply an answer.

I say, then, that “sin,” speaking generally, is, as the Ninth Article of our Church declares, “the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that is naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone (*quam longissime* is the Latin) from original righteousness, and is inclined to evil by his own nature, so that the flesh lusts always against the spirit; and therefore, in every person born into the world, sin deserves God’s wrath and damnation.” Sin, in short, is that vast moral disease which affects the whole human race, of every rank, and class, and name, and nation, and people, and tongue; a disease from which there never was but one born of woman that was free. Need I say *that One* was Christ Jesus the Lord?

I say, furthermore, that “a sin,” to speak more particularly, consists in doing, saying, thinking, or imagining, anything that is not in perfect conformity with the mind and law of God. “Sin,” in short, as the Scripture says, is “the transgression of the law.” (1Joh 3.4) The slightest outward or inward departure from absolute mathematical parallelism with God’s revealed will and character constitutes a sin, and at once makes us guilty in God’s sight.

Of course, I need not tell anyone who reads his Bible with attention, that a man may break God’s law in heart and thought, when there is no overt and visible act of wickedness. Our Lord has settled that point beyond dispute in the Sermon on the Mount. (Mat 5.21-28) Even a poet of our own has truly said, “A man may smile and smile, and be a villain.”

Again, I need not tell a careful student of the New Testament, that there are sins of omission as well as commission, and that we sin, as our Prayer-book justly reminds us, by “leaving undone the things we ought to do,” as really as by “doing the things we ought not to do.” The solemn words of our Master in the Gospel of St. Matthew place this point also beyond dispute. It is there written, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire: — for I was hungry, and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink.” (Mat 25.41, 42) It was a deep and thoughtful saying of holy Archbishop Usher, just before he died — “Lord, forgive me all my sins, and specially my sins of omission.”

But I do think it necessary in these times to remind my readers that a man may commit sin and yet be ignorant of it, and fancy himself innocent when he is guilty. I fail to see any Scriptural warrant for the modern assertion that “Sin is not sin to us until we discern it and are conscious of it.” On the contrary, in the 4th and 5th chapters of that unduly neglected book, Leviticus, and in the 15th chapter of Numbers, I find Israel distinctly taught that there were sins of ignorance which rendered people unclean, and needed atonement. (Lev 4.1-35; 5.14-19; Num 15.25-29) And I find our Lord expressly teaching that “the servant who did not know his master’s will and did not do it,” was not excused on account of his ignorance, but was “beaten” or punished. (Luk 12. 48) We would do well to remember that when we make our own miserably imperfect knowledge and consciousness the measure of our sinfulness, we are on very dangerous ground. A deeper study of Leviticus might do us much good.

(2) Concerning the ORIGIN and SOURCE of this vast moral disease called “sin” I must say something. I fear the views of many professing Christians on this point are sadly defective and unsound. I dare not pass it by. Let us, then, have it fixed down in our minds that the sinfulness of man does not begin from without, but from within. It is not the result of bad training in early years. It is not picked up from bad companions and bad examples, as some weak Christians are too fond of saying. No! it is a family disease, which we all inherit from our first parents, Adam and Eve, and with which we are born. Created “in the image of God,” innocent and righteous at first, our parents fell from original righteousness and became sinful and corrupt. And from that day to this, all men and women are born in the image of fallen Adam and Eve, and inherit a heart and nature inclined to evil.

- “By one man, sin entered into the world.” (Rom 5.12)
- “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” (Joh 3 6)
- “We are by nature children of wrath.” (Eph 2.3)
- “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” (Rom 8.7)
- “Out of the heart (as out of a fountain) proceed evil thoughts, adulteries...” (Mar 7.21)

The fairest babe that has entered life this year, and become the sunbeam of a family, is not, as its mother perhaps fondly calls it, a little “angel,” or a little “innocent,” but a little “sinner.” Alas! as it lies smiling and crowing in its cradle, that little creature carries in its heart the seeds of every kind of wickedness! Only watch it carefully, as it grows in stature and its mind develops, and you will soon detect in it an incessant tendency to that which is bad, and a backwardness to that which is good. You will see in it the buds and germs of deceit, evil temper, selfishness, self-will, obstinacy, greediness, envy, jealousy, passion — which, if indulged and let alone, will shoot up with painful rapidity. Who taught the child these things? Where did he learn them? The Bible alone can answer these questions! — Of all the foolish things that parents say about their children, there is none worse than the

common saying, “My son *has a good heart at the bottom*. He is not what he ought to be; but he has fallen into bad hands. Public schools are bad places. The tutors neglect the boys. Yet he has a good heart at the bottom.” — The truth, unhappily, is diametrically the other way. The first cause of all sin lies in the natural corruption of the boy’s own heart, and not in the school.

(3) Concerning the EXTENT of this vast moral disease of man called sin, let us beware that we make no mistake. The only safe ground is that which is laid for us in Scripture. “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart” is by nature “evil, and that continually.” — “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,” (Gen 6.5; Jer 17.9) Sin is a disease which pervades and runs through every part of our moral constitution and every faculty of our minds. The understanding, the affections, the reasoning powers, the will, are all more or less infected. Even the conscience is so blinded that it cannot be depended upon as a sure guide, and is as likely to lead men wrong as right, unless it is enlightened by the Holy Ghost. In short, “from the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness” about us. (Isa 1.6) The disease may be veiled under a thin covering of courtesy, politeness, good manners, and outward decorum; but it lies deep down in the constitution.

I admit fully that man has many grand and noble faculties left about him, and that in arts and sciences and literature he shows immense capacity. But the fact still remains that in spiritual things he is utterly “dead,” and has no natural knowledge, or love, or fear of God. His best things are so interwoven and intermingled with corruption, that the contrast only brings out into sharper relief the truth and extent of the fall. That one and the same creature should be in some things so high and in others so low — so great and yet so little — so noble and yet so mean — so grand in his conception and execution of material things, and yet so grovelling and debased in his affections — that he should be able to plan and erect buildings like those to Carnac and Luxor in Egypt, and the Parthenon at Athens, and yet worship vile gods and goddesses, and birds, and beasts, and creeping things — that he should be able to produce tragedies like those of Æschylus and Sophocles, and histories like that of Thucydides, and yet be a slave to abominable vices like those described in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans — all this is a sore puzzle to those who sneer at “God’s written Word,” and scoff at us as Bibliolaters. But it is a knot that we can untie with the Bible in our hands. We can acknowledge that man has all the marks of a majestic temple about him — a temple in which God once dwelt, but a temple which is now in utter ruins — a temple in which a shattered window here, and a doorway there, and a column there, still give some faint idea of the magnificence of the original design, but a temple which from end to end has lost its glory and fallen from its high estate. And we say that nothing solves the complicated problem of man’s condition but the doctrine of original or birth-sin, and the crushing effects of the fall.

Let us remember, besides this, that every part of the world bears testimony to the fact that sin is the *universal disease of all mankind*. Search the globe from east to west and from pole to pole — search every nation of every clime in the four quarters of the earth — search every rank and class in our own country from the highest to the lowest — and under every circumstance and condition, the report will always be the same. The remotest islands in the Pacific Ocean, completely separate from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, beyond the reach of Oriental luxury and Western arts and literature alike — islands inhabited by people ignorant of books, money, steam, and gunpowder — uncontaminated by the vices

of modern civilization — these very islands have always been found, when first discovered, the abode of the vilest forms of lust, cruelty, deceit, and superstition. If the inhabitants have known nothing else, they have always known how to sin! Everywhere the human heart is naturally “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” (Jer 17.9) For my part, I know no stronger proof of the inspiration of Genesis and the Mosaic account of the origin of man, than the power, extent, and universality of sin. Grant that mankind has all sprung from one pair, and that this pair fell (as Genesis 3 tells us), and the state of human nature everywhere is easily accounted for. Deny it, as many do, and you are at once involved in inexplicable difficulties. In a word, the uniformity and universality of human corruption supply one of the most unanswerable instances of the enormous “difficulties of infidelity.”

After all, I am convinced that the greatest proof of the extent and power of sin is the pertinacity with which it clings to man even after he is converted and has become the subject of the Holy Ghost’s operations. To use the language of the Ninth Article, “this infection of nature remains — indeed even in those who are regenerate.” So deeply planted are the roots of human corruption, that even after we are born again, renewed, “washed, sanctified, justified,” and made living members of Christ, these roots remain alive in the bottom of our hearts, and, like the leprosy in the walls of the house, we never get rid of them until the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved. Sin, no doubt, in the believer’s heart, no longer has *dominion*. It is checked, controlled, mortified, and crucified by the expulsive power of the new principle of grace. The life of a believer is a life of victory, and not of failure. But the very struggles which go on within his bosom, the fight that he finds it needful to fight daily, the watchful jealousy which he is obliged to exercise over his inner man, the contest between the flesh and the spirit, the inward “groanings” which no one knows but he who has experienced them — all, all testify to the same great truth, all show the enormous power and vitality of sin. Mighty indeed must that foe be who even when crucified is still alive! Happy is that believer who understands it, and while he rejoices in Christ Jesus, has no confidence in the flesh; and while he says, “Thanks be to God who gives us the victory,” never forgets to watch and pray lest he fall into temptation!

(4) Concerning the GUILT, VILENESS, and OFFENSIVENESS of sin in the sight of God, my words will be few. I say “few” advisedly. I do not think, in the nature of things, that mortal man can at all realize the exceeding sinfulness of sin in the sight of that holy and perfect One with whom we have to deal. On the one hand, God is that eternal Being who “charges His angels with folly,” and in whose sight the very “heavens are not clean.” He is One who reads thoughts and motives as well as actions, and requires “truth in the inward parts.” (Job 15.18; 15.15; Psa 51.6) We, on the other hand — poor blind creatures, here today and gone tomorrow, born in sin, surrounded by sinners, living in a constant atmosphere of weakness, infirmity, and imperfection — can form none but the most inadequate conceptions of the hideousness of evil. We have no line to fathom it, and no measure by which to gauge it. The blind man can see no difference between a masterpiece of Titian or Raphael, and the Queen’s Head on a village signboard. The deaf man cannot distinguish between a penny whistle and a cathedral organ. The very animals whose smell is most offensive to us, have no idea that they are offensive, and are not offensive to one another. And man, fallen man, I believe, can have no just idea what a vile thing sin is in the sight of that God whose handiwork is absolutely perfect — perfect whether we look through telescope or microscope — perfect in the formation of a mighty planet like Jupiter, with

his satellites, keeping time to a second as he rolls round the sun — perfect in the formation of the smallest insect that crawls over a foot of ground. But let us nevertheless settle it firmly in our minds that sin is “the abominable thing that God hates” — that God “is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon that which is evil”

- that the least transgression of God’s law makes us “guilty of all.” (Jas 2.10)
- that “the soul that sins shall die.” (Eze 18.4)
- that “the wages of sin is death.” (Rom 6.23)
- that God shall “judge the secrets of men.” (Rom 2.16)
- that there is a “worm that never dies, and a fire that is not quenched.” (Mar 9.48)
- that “the wicked shall be turned into hell” (Psa 9.17)
- and “shall go away into everlasting punishment” (Mat 25.46)
- and “nothing that defiles shall in any way enter heaven.” (Rev 21.27)

These are indeed tremendous words, when we consider that they are written in the Book of a most merciful God!

No proof of the fulness of sin, after all, is so overwhelming and unanswerable as the cross and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the whole doctrine of His substitution and atonement. That guilt must be terribly black for which nothing but the blood of the Son of God could make satisfaction.

Heavy must that weight of human sin be which made Jesus groan and sweat drops of blood in agony at Gethsemane, and cry at Golgotha, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Mat 27.46) Nothing, I am convinced, will astonish us so much, when we awake in the resurrection day, as the view we will have of sin, and the retrospect we will take of our own countless shortcomings and defects. Never till the hour when Christ comes the second time, will we fully realize the “sinfulness of sin.” Well might George Whitefield say, “The anthem in heaven will be, *What has God wrought!*”

(5) One point only remains to be considered on the subject of sin, which I dare not pass over. That point is its DECEITFULNESS. It is a point of most serious importance, and I venture to think it does not receive the attention which it deserves. You may see this deceitfulness in the wonderful proneness of men to regard sin as less sinful and dangerous than it is in the sight of God; and in their readiness to extenuate it, make excuses for it, and minimize its guilt. — “It is but a little one! God is merciful! God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss! We mean well! One cannot be so particular! Where is the mighty harm? We only do as others!” Who is not familiar with this kind of language? — You may see it in the long string of smooth words and phrases which men have coined in order to designate things which God calls downright wicked and ruinous to the soul. What do such expressions as “fast,” “merry,” “wild,” “unsteady,” “thoughtless,” “loose” mean? They show that men try to cheat themselves into the belief that sin is not quite so sinful as God says it is, and that they are not so bad as they really are. — You may see it in the tendency even of believers to indulge their children in questionable practices, and to bind their own eyes to the inevitable result of the love of money, of tampering with temptation, and sanctioning a low standard of family religion. — I fear we do not sufficiently realize the extreme subtlety of our soul’s disease. We are too apt to forget that temptation to sin will rarely present itself to us in its true colours, saying, “I am your deadly enemy, and I want to ruin you forever in hell.” Oh, no! sin comes to us, like Judas, with a kiss; and like Joab, with an outstretched hand and flattering words. The forbidden fruit seemed good and

desirable to Eve; yet it cast her out of Eden. Walking idly on his palace roof seemed harmless enough to David; yet it ended in adultery and murder. Sin rarely seems sin at first beginnings. Let us then watch and pray, lest we fall into temptation. We may give wickedness smooth names, but we cannot alter its nature and character in the sight of God. Let us remember St. Paul's words: "Exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb 3.13) It is a wise prayer in our Litany, "From the *deceits* of the world, the flesh, and the devil, good Lord, deliver us."

And now, before I go further, let me briefly mention two thoughts which appear to me to rise with irresistible force out of the subject.

On the one hand, I ask my readers to observe what deep reasons we all have *for humiliation and self-abasement*. Let us sit down before the picture of sin displayed to us in the Bible, and consider what guilty, vile, corrupt creatures we all are in the sight of God. What need we all have of that entire change of heart called regeneration, new birth, or conversion! What a mass of infirmity and imperfection clings to the very best of us at our very best! What a solemn thought it is, that "without holiness no man will see the Lord!" (Heb 12.14) What cause we have to cry with the publican, every night in our lives, when we think of our sins of omission as well as commission, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" (Luk 18.13) How admirably suited are the general and Communion Confessions of the Prayer-book to the actual condition of all professing Christians! How well that language suits God's children which the Prayer-book puts in the mouth of every Churchman before he goes up to the Communion Table — "The remembrance of our misdoings is grievous to us; the burden is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; for your Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past." How true it is that the holiest saint is in himself a miserable sinner," and a debtor to mercy and grace to the last moment of his existence!

With my whole heart I subscribe to that passage in Hooker's sermon on Justification, which begins,

"Let the holiest and best things we do be considered. We are never better affected unto God than when we pray; yet when we pray, how our affections are many times distracted! How little reverence do we show to the grand majesty of God to whom we speak! How little remorse of our own miseries! How little taste of the sweet influence of His tender mercies do we feel! Are we not as unwilling many times to begin, and as glad to make an end, as if in saying, 'Call upon Me,' He had set us a very burdensome task? What I will speak may seem somewhat extreme; therefore, let everyone judge it, even as his own heart tells him, and not otherwise; I will but make a demand! If God were to yield to us, as to Abraham — If fifty, forty, thirty, twenty — indeed or if ten good persons could be found in a city, for their sakes this city should not be destroyed; but if He were to make us an offer this large, search all the generations of men since the fall of our father Adam, find one man that has done one action which has passed from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all; and for that one man's only action, neither man nor angel will feel the torments which are prepared for both. Do you think that this ransom to deliver men and angels could be found to be among the sons of men? The best things which we do have something in them to be pardoned." <sup>4</sup>

That witness is true. For my part, I am persuaded that the more light we have, the more we see our own sinfulness: the nearer we get to heaven, the more we are clothed with

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<sup>4</sup> Hooker's "Learned Discourse of Justification."

humility. In every age of the Church you will find it true, if you study biographies, that the most eminent saints — men like Bradford, Rutherford, and McCheyne — have always been the humblest men.

On the other hand, I ask my readers to observe *how deeply thankful we ought to be for the glorious Gospel of the grace of God*. There is a remedy revealed for man's need, as wide and broad and deep as man's disease. We need not be afraid to look at sin, and study its *nature, origin, power, extent, and vileness*, if we only look at the same time at the *Almighty medicine* provided for us in the salvation that is in Jesus Christ. Though sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. Yes:

- in the everlasting covenant of redemption, to which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are parties
  - in the Mediator of that covenant, Jesus Christ the righteous, perfect God and perfect Man in one Person
  - in the *work* that He did by dying for our sins and rising again for our justification
  - in the *offices* that He fills as our Priest, Substitute, Physician, Shepherd, and Advocate
  - in the *precious blood* He shed which can cleanse from all sin
  - in the *everlasting righteousness* that He brought in
  - in the *perpetual intercession* that He carries on as our Representative at God's right hand
  - in His *power* to save to the uttermost the chief of sinners, His willingness to receive and pardon the vilest, His readiness to bear with the weakest
  - in the *grace* of the Holy Spirit which He plants in the hearts of all His people, renewing, sanctifying and causing old things to pass away and all things to become new
- in all this (and oh, what a brief sketch it is!) — in all this, I say, there is a full, perfect, and complete medicine for the hideous disease of sin. Awful and tremendous as the right view of sin undoubtedly is, no one need faint and despair if he takes a right view of Jesus Christ at the same time. No wonder that old Flavel ends many a chapter of his admirable "Fountain of Life" with the touching words, "Blessed be God for Jesus Christ."

In bringing this mighty subject to a close, I feel that I have only touched the surface of it. It is one which cannot be thoroughly handled in a paper like this. He that would see it treated fully and exhaustively must turn to such masters of experiential theology as Owen, and Burgess, and Manton, and Charnock, and the other giants of the Puritan school. On subjects like this there are no writers to be compared to the Puritans. It only remains for me to point out some practical uses to which the whole doctrine of sin may be profitably turned in the present day.

(a) I say, then, in the first place, that a Scriptural view of sin is one of the *best antidotes to that vague, dim, misty, hazy kind of theology* which is so painfully current in the present age. It is vain to shut our eyes to the fact that there is a vast quantity of so-called Christianity now-a-days which you cannot declare positively unsound, but which, nevertheless, is not full measure, good weight, and sixteen ounces to the pound. It is a Christianity in which there is undeniably "something about Christ, and something about grace, and something about faith, and something about repentance, and something about holiness"; but it is not the real "thing as it is" in the Bible. Things are out of place, and out of proportion. As old Latimer would have said, it is a kind of "mingle-mangle,"

and does no good. It neither exercises influence on daily conduct, nor comforts in life, nor gives peace in death; and those who hold it often awake too late to find that they have got nothing solid under their feet. Now, I believe the likeliest way to cure and mend this defective kind of religion is to bring forward more prominently the old Scriptural truth about the sinfulness of sin. People will never set their faces decidedly towards heaven, and live like pilgrims, until they really feel that they are in danger of hell. Let us all try to revive the old teaching about sin, in nurseries, in schools, in training colleges, in Universities. Let us not forget that “the law is good if we use it lawfully,” and that “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (1Tim 1.8; Rom 3.20; 7.7) Let us bring the law to the front and press it on men’s attention. Let us expound and beat out the Ten Commandments, and show the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of their requirements. This is the way of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. We cannot do better than follow His plan. We may depend upon it, men will never come to Jesus, and stay with Jesus, and live for Jesus, unless they really know why they are to come, and what is their need. Those whom the Spirit draws to Jesus are those whom the Spirit has convinced of sin. Without thorough conviction of sin, men may seem to come to Jesus and follow Him for a season, but they will soon fall away and return to the world.

(b) In the next place, a Scriptural view of sin is one of the *best antidotes to the extravagantly broad and liberal theology* which is so much in vogue at the present time. The tendency of modern thought is to reject dogmas, creeds, and every kind of bounds in religion. It is thought grand and wise to condemn no opinion whatever, and to pronounce all earnest and clever teachers to be trustworthy, however heterogeneous and mutually destructive their opinions may be. — Everything truly is true, and nothing is false! Everybody is right, and nobody is wrong! Everybody is likely to be saved, and nobody is to be lost! — The Atonement and Substitution of Christ, the personality of the devil, the miraculous element in Scripture, the reality and eternity of future punishment, all these mighty foundation-stones are coolly tossed overboard, like lumber, in order to lighten the ship of Christianity, and enable it to keep pace with modern science. — Stand up for these great verities, and you are called narrow, illiberal, old-fashioned, and a theological fossil! Quote a text, and you are told that all truth is not confined to the pages of an ancient Jewish Book, and that free inquiry has found out many things since the Book was completed! — Now, I know nothing so likely to counteract this modern plague as constant clear statements about the nature, reality, vileness, power, and guilt of sin. We must charge home into the consciences of these men of broad views, and demand a plain answer to some plain questions. We must ask them to lay their hands on their hearts, and tell us whether their favourite opinions comfort them in the day of sickness, in the hour of death, by the bedside of dying parents, by the grave of beloved wife or child. We must ask them whether a vague earnestness, without definite doctrine, gives them peace at seasons like these. We must challenge them to tell us whether they do not sometimes feel a gnawing “something” within, which all the free inquiry and philosophy and science in the world cannot satisfy. And then we must tell them that this gnawing “something” is the sense of sin, guilt, and corruption, which they are leaving out in their calculations. And above all, we must tell them that nothing will ever make them feel rest, but submission to the old doctrines of man’s ruin and Christ’s redemption, and simple childlike faith in Jesus.

(c) In the next place, a right view of sin is the *best antidote to that sensuous, ceremonial, formal kind of Christianity*, which has swept over England like a flood in the last twenty-five years, and carried away so many before it. I can well believe that there is much that is attractive in this system of religion, to a certain order of minds, so long as the conscience is not fully enlightened. But when that wonderful part of our constitution called *conscience* is really awake and alive, I find it hard to believe that a sensuous ceremonial Christianity will thoroughly satisfy us. A little child is easily quieted and amused with gaudy toys, and dolls, and rattles, so long as it is not hungry; but let it once feel the cravings of nature within, and we know that nothing will satisfy it but food. It is just so with man in the matter of his soul. Music, and flowers, and candles, and incense, and banners, and processions, and beautiful vestments, and confessionals, and man-made ceremonies of a semi-Romish character, may do well enough for him under certain conditions.

But once you let him “awake and arise from the dead,” he will not rest content with these things. They will seem to him mere solemn triflings, and a waste of time. Once you let him see his *sin*, he must see his *Saviour*. He feels stricken with a deadly disease, and nothing will satisfy him but the great Physician. He hungers and thirsts, and he must have nothing less than the bread of life. I may seem bold in what I am about to say; but I fearlessly venture the assertion that four-fifths of the semi-Romanism of the last quarter of a century would never have existed if English people had been taught more fully and clearly the nature, vileness, and sinfulness of sin.

(d) In the next place, a right view of sin is one of the *best antidotes to the overstrained theories of Perfection*, of which we hear so much in these times. I will say but little about this, and in saying it I trust I will not give offence. If those who press on us perfection mean nothing more than an all-round consistency, and a careful attention to all the graces which make up the Christian character, reason would have us not only bear with them, but agree with them entirely. By all means let us aim high. — But if men really mean to tell us that here in this world a believer can attain to entire freedom from sin, live for years in unbroken and uninterrupted communion with God, and feel for months together not so much as one evil thought, I must honestly say that such an opinion appears to me very *unscriptural*. — I go even further. I say that the opinion is very dangerous to the one who holds it, and very likely to depress, discourage, and keep back inquirers after salvation. I cannot find the slightest warrant in God’s Word for expecting such perfection as this while we are in the body. I believe the words of our Fifteenth Article are strictly true — that “Christ alone is without sin; and that all we, the rest, though baptized and born again in Christ, offend in many things; and if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” — To use the language of our first Homily, “There are imperfections in our best works: we do not love God so much as we are bound to do, with all our hearts, mind, and power; we do not fear God so much as we ought to do; we do not pray to God but with many and great imperfections. We give, forgive, believe, live, and hope imperfectly; we speak, think, and do imperfectly; we fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh imperfectly. Let us, therefore, not be ashamed to confess plainly our state of imperfections.” — Once more I repeat what I have said: the best preservative against this temporary delusion about perfection which clouds some minds — for I hope I may call it such — is a clear, full, distinct understanding of the nature, sinfulness, and deceitfulness of sin.

(e) In the last place, a Scriptural view of sin will prove an admirable *antidote to those low views of personal holiness* which are so painfully prevalent in these last days of the Church. This is a very painful and delicate subject, I know; but I dare not turn away from it. It has long been my sorrowful conviction that the standard of daily life among professing Christians in this country has been gradually falling. I am afraid that Christ-like charity, kindness, good-temper, unselfishness, meekness, gentleness, good-nature, self-denial, zeal to do good, and separation from the world, are far less appreciated than they ought to be, and than they used to be in the days of our fathers.

Into the causes of this state of things I cannot pretend to enter fully, and can only suggest conjectures for consideration. It may be that a certain profession of religion has become so fashionable and comparatively easy in the present age, that the streams which were once narrow and deep have become wide and shallow, and what we have gained in outward show, we have lost in quality. It may be that the vast increase of wealth in the last twenty-five years has insensibly introduced into social life a plague of worldliness, and self-indulgence, and love of ease. What were once called luxuries are now comforts and necessities, and self-denial and “enduring hardness” are consequently little known. It may be that the enormous amount of controversy which marks this age has insensibly dried up our spiritual life. We have too often been content with zeal for orthodoxy, and have neglected the sober realities of daily practical godliness. Whatever the causes may be, I must declare my own belief that the result remains. There has been in recent years a lower standard of personal holiness among believers than there used to be in the days of our fathers. The whole result is that the SPIRIT IS GRIEVED! and the matter calls for much humiliation and searching of heart.

As to the best remedy for the state of things I have mentioned, I will venture to give an opinion. Other schools of thought in the Churches must judge for themselves. The cure for evangelical churchmen, I am convinced, is to be found in a clearer apprehension of the nature and sinfulness of sin. We need not go back to Egypt, and borrow semi-Romish practices in order to revive our spiritual life. We need not restore the confessional, or return to monasticism or asceticism. Nothing of the kind! We must simply repent and do our first works. We must return to first principles. We must go back to “the old paths.” We must sit down humbly in the presence of God, look the whole subject in the face, examine clearly what the Lord Jesus calls sin, and what the Lord Jesus calls “doing His will.” We must then try to realize that it is *terribly possible* to live a careless, easy-going, half-worldly life, and yet at the same time to maintain evangelical principles and call ourselves evangelical people! Once we see that sin is far viler, and far nearer to us, and sticks more closely to us than we supposed, we will be led, I trust and believe, to get nearer to Christ. Once we are drawn nearer to Christ, we will drink more deeply out of His fullness, and learn more thoroughly to “live the life of faith” in Him, as St. Paul did. Once we are taught to live the life of faith in Jesus, abiding in Him, we will bear more fruit, and find ourselves more strong for duty, more patient in trial, more watchful over our poor weak hearts, and more like our Master in all our little daily ways. As we realize how much Christ has done for us, we will proportionally labour to do much for Christ. Being much forgiven, we will love much. In short, as the Apostle says, “with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2Cor 3.18)

Whatever some may please to think or say, there can be no doubt that an increased feeling about holiness is one of the signs of the times. Conferences for the promotion of “spiritual life” are becoming common in the present day. The subject of “spiritual life” finds a place on Congress platforms almost every year. It has awakened an amount of interest and general attention throughout the land, for which we ought to be thankful. A movement, based on sound principles, which helps to deepen our spiritual life and increase our personal holiness, will be a real blessing to the Church of England. It will do much to draw us together and heal our unhappy divisions. It may bring down some fresh out-pouring of the grace of the Spirit, and be “life from the dead” in these later times. But I am sure, as I said in the beginning of this paper, that we must begin low, if we would build high. I am convinced that the first step towards attaining a higher standard of holiness is to realize more fully the amazing sinfulness of sin.

## 2. SANCTIFICATION

*“Sanctify them through your truth.” — Joh 17.17.*

*“This is the will of God, even our sanctification.” — 1Th 4.3.*

THE subject of sanctification is one which many, I fear, dislike exceedingly. Some even turn from it with scorn and disdain. The very last thing they would like is to be a “saint,” or a “sanctified” man. Yet the subject does not deserve to be treated this way. It is not an enemy, but a friend.

It is a subject of the utmost importance to our souls. If the Bible is true, then it is certain that unless we are “sanctified,” we will not be saved. There are three things which, according to the Bible, are absolutely necessary to the salvation of every man and woman in Christendom. These three are *justification*, *regeneration*, and *sanctification*. All three meet in every child of God: he is both born again, and justified, and sanctified. He that lacks any one of these three things is not a true Christian in the sight of God, and dying in that condition, he will not be found in heaven and glorified in the last day.

It is a subject which is peculiarly seasonable in the present day. Strange doctrines have risen up of late upon the whole subject of sanctification. Some appear to confound it with justification. Others fritter it away to nothing, under the pretence of zeal for free grace, and practically neglect it altogether. Others are so much afraid of “works” being made a part of justification, that they can hardly find any place at all for “works” in their religion. Others set up a wrong standard of sanctification before their eyes, and failing to attain it, they waste their lives in repeated secessions from church to church, chapel to chapel, and sect to sect, in the vain hope that they will find what they want. In a day like this, a calm examination of the subject, as a great leading doctrine of the Gospel, may be of great use to our souls.

I. Let us consider, firstly, *the true nature of sanctification*.

II. Let us consider, secondly, *the visible marks of sanctification*.

III. Let us consider, lastly, *wherein justification and sanctification agree and are like one another, and wherein they differ and are unlike*.

If, unhappily, the reader of these pages is one of those who care for nothing but this world, and make no profession of religion, then I cannot expect him to take much interest in what I am writing.

You will probably think it an affair of “words, and names,” and nice questions about which it matters nothing what you hold and believe. But if you are a thoughtful, reasonable, sensible Christian, then I venture to say that you will find it worthwhile to have some clear ideas about sanctification.

**I.** In the first place, we have to consider *the nature of sanctification*. What does the Bible mean when it speaks of a “sanctified” man?

Sanctification is that inward spiritual work which the Lord Jesus Christ works in a man by the Holy Ghost, when He calls him to be a true believer. He not only washes him from his sins in His own blood, but He also *separates* him from his natural love of sin and the world, puts a new principle in his heart, and makes him practically godly in life. The

instrument by which the Spirit effects this work is generally the Word of God — though He sometimes uses afflictions and providential visitations “without the Word.” (1Pet 3.1) The *subject* of this work of Christ by His Spirit, is called in Scripture a “sanctified” man.<sup>5</sup>

He who supposes that Jesus Christ only lived and died and rose again in order to provide justification and forgiveness of sins for His people, has yet much to learn. Whether he knows it or not, he is dishonouring our blessed Lord, and making Him only half a Saviour. The Lord Jesus has undertaken everything that His people’s souls require; not only to deliver them from the guilt of their sins by His atoning death, but from the dominion of their sins, by placing in their hearts the Holy Spirit — not only to *justify* them, but also to *sanctify* them. Thus, He is not only their “righteousness,” but their “sanctification.” (1Cor 1.30) Let us hear what the Bible says: “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified.” — “Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it.” — “Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” — “Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.” — “Christ has reconciled (you) in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in His sight.” (John 17.19; Eph 5.25; Tit 2.14; 1Pet 2.24; Col 1.22) Let the meaning of these five texts be carefully considered. If words mean anything, they teach that Christ undertakes the sanctification, no less than the justification, of His believing people. Both are alike provided for in that “everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure,” [2Sam 23.5](#) of which the Mediator is Christ. In fact, Christ in one place is called “He that sanctifies,” and His People, “they who are sanctified.” (Heb 2.11)

The subject before us is of such deep and vast importance, that it requires fencing, guarding, clearing up, and marking out on every side. A doctrine which is needful to salvation can never be too sharply developed, or brought too fully into light. To clear away the confusion between doctrines and doctrines, which is so unhappily common among Christians, and to map out the precise relation between truths and truths in religion, is one way to attain accuracy in our theology. I will therefore not hesitate to lay before my readers a series of connected propositions or statements, drawn from Scripture, which I think will be found useful in defining the exact nature of sanctification.

(1) Sanctification, then, is the invariable result of that *vital union with Christ* which true faith gives to a Christian. — “He that abides in Me, and I in him, produces much fruit.” (John 15.5) The branch which bears no fruit is no living branch of the vine. The union with Christ which produces no effect on the heart and life is a mere formal union, which is worthless before God. The faith which does not have a sanctifying influence on the character, is no better than the faith of devils. It is a “dead faith, because it is alone.” It is

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<sup>5</sup> There is mention in the Scripture of a twofold sanctification, and consequently in a twofold holiness. The first is common to persons and things, consisting of the peculiar dedication, consecration, or separation of them to the service of God, by His own appointment, whereby they become holy. Thus the priests and Levites of old, the ark, the altar, the tabernacle, and the temple, were sanctified and made holy; and indeed, in all holiness whatsoever, there is a peculiar dedication and separation unto God. But in the sense mentioned, this was solitary and alone. No more belonged to it than this sacred separation, nor was there any other effect of this sanctification. But secondly, there is another kind of sanctification and holiness, in which this separation to God is not the first thing done or intended, but a consequent and effect of it. This is real and internal, by the communicating of a principle of holiness to our natures, attended with its exercise in acts and duties of holy obedience to God. This is what we inquire after.” — *John Owen on the Holy Spirit*. Vol. iii, p. 370, Works, Goold’s edition.

not the gift of God. It is not the faith of God's elect. In short, where there is no sanctification of life, there is no real faith in Christ. True faith works by love. It constrains a man to live unto the Lord from a deep sense of gratitude for redemption. It makes him feel that he can never do too much for Him that died for him. Being much forgiven, he loves much. He whom the blood cleanses, walks in the light. He who has real lively hope in Christ, purifies himself even as He is pure. (Jas 2.17-20; Tit 1.1; Gal 5.6; 1Joh 1.7; 3.3)

(2) Sanctification, again, is the *outcome and inseparable consequence of regeneration*. He that is born again and made a new creature, receives a new nature and a new principle, and always lives a new life. A regeneration which a man can have, and yet live carelessly in sin or worldliness, is a regeneration invented by uninspired theologians, but never mentioned in Scripture. On the contrary, St. John expressly says, that "He that is born of God does not commit sin — does righteousness — loves the brethren — keeps himself — and overcomes the world." (1Joh 2.29; 3.9-14; 5.4-18) In a word, where there is no sanctification, there is no regeneration; and where there is no holy life, there is no new birth. This is, no doubt, a hard saying to many minds; but hard or not, it is simple Bible truth. It is written plainly, that he who is born of God is one whose "seed remains in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (1Joh 3.9)

(3) Sanctification, again, is the only certain *evidence of that indwelling of the Holy Spirit* which is essential to salvation. "If any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Rom 8.9) The Spirit never lies dormant and idle within the soul: He always makes His presence known by the fruit He causes to be borne in heart, character, and life. "The fruit of the Spirit," says St. Paul, "is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," and such like. (Gal 5.22) Where these things are to be found, there is the Spirit: where these things are lacking, men are dead before God. The Spirit is compared to the wind; and like the wind, He cannot be seen by our bodily eyes. But just as we know there is a wind by the effect it produces on waves, and trees, and smoke, so we may know the Spirit is in a man by the effects He produces in the man's conduct. It is nonsense to suppose that we have the Spirit, if we do not also "walk in the Spirit." (Gal 5.25) We may depend on it as a positive certainty, that where there is no holy living, there is no Holy Ghost. The seal that the Spirit stamps on Christ's people is sanctification. As many as are actually "led by the Spirit of God, these," and only these, "are the sons of God." (Rom 8.14)

(4) Sanctification, again, is the *only sure mark of God's election*. The names and number of the elect are a secret thing, no doubt, which God has wisely kept in His own power, and not revealed to man. It is not given to us in this world to study the pages of the book of life, and see if our names are there. But if there is one thing clearly and plainly laid down about election, it is this — that elect men and women may be known and distinguished by holy lives. It is expressly written that they are "elect through sanctification — chosen unto salvation through sanctification — predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son — and chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world that they should be holy." — Hence, when St. Paul saw the working "faith" and labouring "love" and patient "hope" of the Thessalonian believers, he says, "I know your election by God." (1Pet 1.2; 2Th 2.13; Rom 8.29; Eph 1.4; 1Th 1.3, 4) He that boasts of being one of God's elect, while he is wilfully and habitually living in sin, is only deceiving himself, and talking wicked blasphemy. Of course, it is hard to know what people *really* are; and many who make a fair show outwardly in religion, may turn out at last to be rotten-hearted hypocrites. But

where there is not, at least, some appearance of sanctification, we may be quite certain that there is no election. The Church Catechism correctly and wisely teaches that the Holy Ghost “*sanctifies* all the elect people of God.”

(5) Sanctification, again, is *a thing that will always be seen*. Like the Great Head of the Church from whom it springs, it “cannot be hid.” “Every tree is known by his own fruit.” (Luk 6.44) A truly sanctified person may be so clothed with humility, that he can see in himself nothing but infirmity and defects. Like Moses when he came down from the Mount, he may not be conscious that his face shines. Like the righteous in the mighty parable of the sheep and the goats, he may not see that he has done anything worthy of his Master’s notice and commendation: “When did we see You hungry, and feed You?” (Mat 25.37) But whether he sees it himself or not, others will always see in him a tone, and taste, and character, and habit of life unlike that of other men. The very idea of a man being “sanctified” while no holiness can be seen in his life, is flat nonsense and a misuse of words. Light may be very dim; but if there is only a spark in a dark room, it will be seen. Life may be very feeble; but if the pulse only beats a little, it will be felt. It is just the same with a sanctified man: his sanctification will be something felt and seen, though he himself may not understand it. A “saint” in whom nothing can be seen but worldliness or sin, is a kind of monster not recognised in the Bible!

(6) Sanctification, again, is *a thing for which every believer is responsible*. In saying this I would not be mistaken. I hold as strongly as anyone that every man on earth is accountable to God, and that all the lost will be speechless and without excuse at the last day. Every man has power to “lose his own soul.” (Mat 16.26) But while I hold this, I maintain that believers are eminently and peculiarly responsible, and under a special obligation to live holy lives. They are not as others — dead and blind and unrenewed. They are alive unto God, and have light and knowledge, and a new principle within them. Whose fault is it if they are not holy, but their own? On whom can they throw the blame if they are not sanctified, but themselves? God, who has given them grace and a new heart, and a new nature, has deprived them of all excuse if they do not live for His praise. This is a point which is far too much forgotten. A man who professes to be a true Christian, while he sits still, content with a very low degree of sanctification (if indeed he has any at all), and coolly tells you that he “can do nothing,” is a very pitiable sight, and a very ignorant man. Let us watch and be on our guard against this delusion. The Word of God always addresses its precepts to believers as accountable and responsible beings. If the Saviour of sinners gives us renewing grace, and calls us by His Spirit, then we may be sure that He expects us to use our grace, and not to go to sleep. Forgetfulness of this is what causes many believers to “grieve the Holy Spirit,” and makes them very useless and uncomfortable Christians.

(7) Sanctification, again, is *a thing which admits growth and degrees*. A man may climb from one step to another in holiness, and be far more sanctified at one period of his life than another. He cannot be more pardoned and more justified than he is when he first believes, though he may feel it more. He certainly may be more sanctified, because every grace in his new character may be strengthened, enlarged, and deepened. This is the evident meaning of our Lord’s last prayer for His disciples when He used the words, “Sanctify them”; and of St. Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians, “The very God of peace sanctify you.” (John 17.17; 1Th 4.3) In both cases, the expression plainly implies the possibility of increased sanctification; while such an expression as “justify them” is never

once in Scripture applied to a believer, because he cannot be more justified than he is. I can find no warrant in Scripture for the doctrine of “imputed sanctification.” It is a doctrine which seems to me to confuse things that differ, and to lead to very evil consequences. Not least, it is a doctrine which is flatly contradicted by the experience of all the most eminent Christians. If there is any point on which God’s holiest saints agree, it is this: that they see more, and know more, and feel more, and do more, and repent more, and believe more, as they get on in spiritual life, and in proportion to the closeness of their walk with God. In short, they “grow in grace,” as St. Peter exhorts believers to do; and they “abound more and more,” according to the words of St. Paul. (2Pet 3.18; 1Th 4.1)

(8) Sanctification, again, is *a thing which depends greatly on a diligent use of Scriptural means*. When I speak of “means,” I have in view Bible-reading, private prayer, regular attendance on public worship, regular hearing of God’s Word, and regular reception of the Lord’s Supper. I lay it down as a simple matter of fact, that no one who is careless about such things must ever expect to make much progress in sanctification. I can find no record of any eminent saint who ever neglected them. They are appointed channels through which the Holy Spirit conveys fresh supplies of grace to the soul, and strengthens the work which He has begun in the inward man. Let men call this “legal doctrine” if they please, but I will never shrink from declaring my belief that there are no “spiritual gains without pains.” I would as soon expect a farmer to prosper in business who contented himself with sowing his fields, and never looking at them till harvest, as expect a believer to attain much holiness who was not diligent about his Bible-reading, his prayers, and the use of his Sundays. Our God is a God who works by means, and He will never bless the soul of that man who pretends to be so high and spiritual that he can get on without them.

(9) Sanctification, again, is *a thing which does not prevent a man having a great deal of inward spiritual conflict*. By conflict I mean a struggle within the heart between the old nature and the new, the flesh and the spirit, which are to be found together in every believer. (Gal 5.17) A deep sense of that struggle, and a vast amount of mental discomfort from it, are no proof that a man is not sanctified. No indeed; I rather believe they are healthy symptoms of our condition, and prove that we are not dead, but alive. A true Christian is one who not only has peace of conscience, but war within. He may be known by his warfare as well as by his peace. In saying this, I do not forget that I am contradicting the views of some well-meaning Christians who hold the doctrine called “sinless perfection.” I cannot help that. I believe that what I say is confirmed by the language of St. Paul in the seventh chapter of Romans. That chapter I commend to the careful study of all my readers. I am quite satisfied that it does not describe the experience of an unconverted man, or of a young and unestablished Christian; but of an old experienced saint in close communion with God. None but such a man could say, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” (Rom 7.22) I believe, furthermore, that what I say is proved by the experience of all the most eminent servants of Christ that have ever lived. The full proof is to be seen in their journals, their autobiographies, and their lives. — Believing all this, I will never hesitate to tell people that inward conflict is no proof that a man is not holy, and they must not think they are not sanctified because they do not feel entirely free from inward struggle. We will doubtless have such freedom in heaven, but we will never enjoy it in this world. The heart of the best Christian, even at his best, is a field occupied by two rival camps, and the “company of two armies.” (Song 6.13) Let the words of the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Articles be well considered by all Churchmen: “The infection of

nature remains in those who are regenerated.” “Although baptized and born again in Christ, we offend in many things; and if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” <sup>6</sup>

(10) Sanctification, again, is *a thing which cannot justify a man, and yet it pleases God*. This may seem wonderful, and yet it is true. The holiest actions of the holiest saint that ever lived are all more or less full of defects and imperfections. They are either wrong in their motive or defective in their performance; and in themselves they are no better than “splendid sins,” deserving God’s wrath and condemnation. To suppose that such actions can stand the severity of God’s judgment, atone for sin, and merit heaven, is simply absurd. “By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified.” — “We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” (Rom 3.20-28) The only righteousness in which we can appear before God, is the righteousness of another — even the perfect righteousness of our Substitute and Representative, Jesus Christ the Lord. His work, and not our work, is our only title to heaven. This is a truth which we should be ready to die to maintain. — For all this, however, the Bible distinctly teaches that the holy actions of a sanctified man, although imperfect, are pleasing in the sight of God. “With such sacrifices God is well pleased.” (Heb 13.16) “Obey your parents, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.” (Col 3.20) “We do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” (1Joh 3.22) Let this never be forgotten, for it is a very comfortable doctrine. Just as a parent is pleased with the efforts of his little child to please him, though it is only by picking a daisy or walking across a room, so our Father in heaven is pleased with the poor performances of His believing children. He looks at the motive, principle, and intention of their actions, and not merely at their quantity and quality. He regards them as members of His own dear Son, and for His sake, wherever there is a single eye, He is well-pleased. Those Churchmen who dispute this would do well to study the Twelfth Article of the Church of England.

(11) Sanctification, again, is a thing which will be found absolutely necessary as *a witness to our character in the great day of judgment*. It will be utterly useless to plead that we believed in Christ, unless our faith has had some sanctifying effect, and been seen in our lives. Evidence, evidence, evidence, will be the one thing wanted when the great white throne is set, when the books are opened, when the graves give up their tenants, when the dead are arraigned before the bar of God. Without some evidence that our faith in Christ was real and genuine, we will only rise again to be condemned. I can find no evidence that will be admitted in that day, except sanctification. The question will not be how we talked and what we professed, but how we lived and what we did. Let no man deceive himself on this point. If anything is certain about the future, it is certain that there will be a judgment; and if anything is certain about judgment, it is certain that men’s “works” and “doings” will be considered and examined in it. (Joh 5.29; 2Cor 5.10; Rev 20.13) He that supposes works are of no importance because they cannot justify us, is a very ignorant Christian. Unless he opens his eyes, he will find to his cost that if he comes to the bar of God without some evidence of grace, it would have been better if he had never been born. [Mk 14.21](#)

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<sup>6</sup> “The devil’s war is better than the devil’s peace. Suspect dumb holiness. When the dog is kept out of doors, he howls to be let in again.” — “Contraries meeting, such as fire and water, conflict one with another. — When Satan finds a sanctified heart, he tempts with much importunity. Where there is much of God and of Christ, there are strong injections and firebrands thrown through the windows, so that some of much faith have been tempted to doubt.” — *Rutherford’s Trial of Faith*, p. 403.

(12) Sanctification, in the last place, is *absolutely necessary in order to train and prepare us for heaven*. Most men hope to go to heaven when they die; but few, it may be feared, take the trouble to consider whether they would enjoy heaven if they got there. Heaven is essentially a holy place; its inhabitants are all holy; its occupations are all holy. To be really happy in heaven, it is clear and plain that we must be somewhat trained and made ready for heaven while we are on earth. The notion of a purgatory after death, which will turn sinners into saints, is a lying invention of man, and is nowhere taught in the Bible. We must be saints *before* we die, if we are to be saints afterwards in glory. The favourite idea of many, that dying men need nothing except absolution and forgiveness of sins to fit them for their great change, is a profound delusion. We need the work of the Holy Spirit as well as the work of Christ; we need renewal of the heart as well as the atoning blood; we need to be sanctified as well as to be justified. It is common to hear people saying on their death-beds, “I only want the Lord to forgive me my sins, and take me to rest.” But those who say such things forget that the rest of heaven would be utterly useless if we had no heart to enjoy it! What could an unsanctified man do in heaven, if by any chance he got there? Let that question be fairly looked in the face, and fairly answered. No man can possibly be happy in a place where he is not in his element, and where nothing around him is congenial to his tastes, habits, and character. When an eagle is happy in an iron cage, when a sheep is happy in the water, when an owl is happy in the blaze of a noonday sun, when a fish is happy on dry land — then, and not till then, will I admit that the unsanctified man could be happy in heaven.<sup>7</sup>

I lay down these twelve propositions about sanctification with a firm persuasion that they are true, and I ask all who read these pages to ponder them well. Each of them would admit being expanded and handled more fully, and all of them deserve private thought and consideration. Some of them may be disputed and contradicted; but I doubt whether any of them can be overthrown or proved untrue. I only ask for them a fair and impartial hearing. I believe in my conscience that they are likely to assist men in attaining clear views of sanctification.

**II.** I now proceed to take up the second point which I proposed to consider. That point is *the visible evidence of sanctification*. In a word, what are the visible marks of a sanctified man? What may we expect to see in him?

This is a very wide and difficult department of our subject. It is wide, because it necessitates the mention of many details which cannot be handled fully in the limits of a paper like this. It is difficult, because it cannot possibly be treated without giving offence. But truth ought to be spoken at any risk; and there is some kind of truth which especially requires to be spoken in the present day.

(1) True sanctification then does not consist in *talk about religion*. This is a point which should never be forgotten. The vast increase of education and preaching in these latter days makes it absolutely necessary to raise a warning voice. People hear so much of Gospel truth, that they contract an unholy familiarity with its words and phrases; and sometimes

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<sup>7</sup> “There is no imagination with which man is so besotted and more foolish, none so pernicious, as this: that persons not purified, not sanctified, not made holy in their life, should afterwards be taken into that state of blessedness which consists in the enjoyment of God... Neither can such persons enjoy God, nor would God be a reward to them... Holiness indeed is perfected in heaven: but the beginning of it is invariably confined to this world.” — *Owen On the Holy Spirit*, pp. 574-575. Goold’s edition.

they talk so fluently about its doctrines, that you might think them true Christians. In fact, it is sickening and disgusting to hear the cool and flippant language which many pour out about “conversion — the Saviour — the Gospel — finding peace — free grace,” and the like, while they are notoriously serving sin or living for the world. Can we doubt that such talk is abominable in God’s sight, and is little better than cursing, swearing, and taking God’s name in vain? The tongue is not the only member that Christ bids us to give to His service. God does not want His people to be mere empty tubs, sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals. We must be sanctified not only “in word and in tongue, but in deed and truth.” (1Joh 3.18)

(2) True sanctification does not consist in temporary *religious feelings*. This again is a point about which a warning is greatly needed. Mission services and revival meetings are attracting great attention in every part of the land, and producing a great sensation. The Church of England seems to have taken a new lease of life, and exhibits a new activity; and we ought to thank God for it. But these things have their attendant dangers as well as their advantages. Wherever wheat is sown, the devil is sure to sow tares. Many, it may be feared, appear moved and touched and roused under the preaching of the Gospel, while in reality their hearts are not changed at all. A kind of animal excitement from the contagion of seeing others weeping, rejoicing, or being affected, is the true account of their case. Their wounds are only skin deep, and the peace they profess to feel is skin deep also. Like the stony-ground hearers, they “receive the Word with joy” (Mat 13.20); but after a little they fall away, go back to the world, and are harder and worse than before. Like Jonah’s gourd, they come up suddenly in a night, and perish in a night. Let these things not be forgotten. Let us beware in this day, of healing wounds slightly, and crying Peace, peace, when there is no peace. Let us urge on everyone who exhibits new interest in religion, to be content with nothing short of the deep, solid, sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost. Reaction, after false religious excitement, is a most deadly disease of soul. When the devil is only temporarily cast out of a man in the heat of a revival, and by and by returns to his house, the last state becomes worse than the first. It is a thousand times better to begin more slowly and then “continue in the word” steadfastly, than to begin in a hurry, without counting the cost, and by and by look back, with Lot’s wife, and return to the world. I declare, I know no state of soul more dangerous than to imagine we are born again and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, because we have picked up a few religious feelings.

(3) True sanctification does not consist in *outward formalism* and external devoutness. This is an enormous delusion, but unhappily a very common one. Thousands appear to imagine that true holiness is to be seen in an excessive quantity of bodily religion — in constant attendance at Church services, reception of the Lord’s Supper, and observance of fasts and saints’ days — in multiplied bowings and turnings and gestures and postures during public worship — in self-imposed austerities and petty self-denials — in wearing peculiar dresses, and the use of pictures and crosses. I freely admit that some people take up these things from conscientious motives, and actually believe that they help their souls. But I am afraid that in many cases, this external *religiousness* is made a substitute for inward holiness; and I am quite certain that it falls utterly short of sanctification of heart. Above all, when I see that many followers of this outward, sensuous, and formal style of Christianity are absorbed in worldliness, and plunge headlong into its pomps and vanities, without shame, I feel that there is need of very plain speaking on the subject.

There may be an immense amount of “bodily service,” while there is not a jot of real sanctification.

(4) Sanctification does not consist in *retirement from our place in life* and the renunciation of our social duties. In every age, it has been a snare with many to take up this line in the pursuit of holiness. Hundreds of hermits have buried themselves in some wilderness, and thousands of men and women have shut themselves up within the walls of monasteries and convents, under the vain idea that by so doing they would escape sin and become eminently holy. They have forgotten that no bolts and bars can keep out the devil, and that wherever we go, we carry that root of all evil: our own hearts. To become a monk, or a nun, or to join a House of Mercy, is not the high road to sanctification. True holiness does not make a Christian evade difficulties, but face and overcome them. Christ would have His people show that His grace is not a mere hot-house plant, which can only thrive under shelter, but a strong, hardy thing which can flourish in every relation of life. It is doing our duty in that state to which God has called us — like salt in the midst of corruption, and light in the midst of darkness — which is a primary element in sanctification. It is not the man who hides himself in a cave, but the man who glorifies God as master or servant, parent or child, in the family and in the street, in business and in trade, who is the Scriptural type of a sanctified man. Our Master Himself said in His last prayer, “I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil.” (John 17.15)

(5) Sanctification does not consist in the *occasional performance of right actions*. It is the habitual working of a new heavenly principle within, which runs through all a man’s daily conduct in both great things and small. Its seat is in the heart, and like the heart in the body, it has a regular influence on every part of the character. It is not like a pump, which only sends forth water when worked on from without, but like a perpetual fountain from which a stream is ever flowing spontaneously and naturally. Even Herod, when he heard John the Baptist, “did many things,” while his heart was utterly wrong in the sight of God. (Mar 6.20) Just so, there are scores of people in the present day who seem to have spasmodic fits of “goodness,” as it is called, and do many right things under the influence of sickness, affliction, death in the family, public calamities, or a sudden qualm of conscience. Yet all the time, any intelligent observer can see plainly that they are not converted, and that they know nothing of “sanctification.” A true saint, like Hezekiah, will be whole-hearted. He will “count God’s commandments concerning all things to be right, and hate every false way.” (2Chr 31.21; Psa 119.104)

(6) Genuine sanctification will show itself in *habitual respect to God’s law*, and habitual effort to live in obedience to it as the rule of life. There is no greater mistake than to suppose that a Christian has nothing to do with the law and the Ten Commandments, because he cannot be justified by keeping them. The same Holy Ghost who convinces the believer of sin by the law, and leads him to Christ for justification, will always lead him to a spiritual use of the law, as a friendly guide in the pursuit of sanctification. Our Lord Jesus Christ never made light of the Ten Commandments. On the contrary, in His first public discourse, the Sermon on the Mount, He expounded them and showed the searching nature of their requirements. St. Paul never made light of the law. On the contrary, he says, “The law is good, if a man uses it lawfully.” — “I delight in the law of God after the inward man”, (1Tim 1.8; Rom 7.22) He that pretends to be a saint, while he sneers at the Ten Commandments, and thinks nothing of lying, hypocrisy, swindling, ill-

temper, slander, drunkenness, and breach of the seventh commandment ([adultery](#)), is under a fearful delusion. He will find it hard to prove that he is a “saint” in the last day!

(7) Genuine sanctification will show itself in a *habitual endeavour* to do Christ’s will, and to live by His practical precepts. These precepts are to be found scattered everywhere throughout the four Gospels, and especially in the Sermon on the Mount. He that supposes they were spoken without the intention of promoting holiness, and that a Christian need not attend to them in his daily life, is really little better than a lunatic, and at any rate is a grossly ignorant person. To hear some men talk, and to read some men’s writings, one might imagine that our blessed Lord when He was on earth, never taught anything but *doctrine*, and left practical duties to be taught by others! The slightest knowledge of the four Gospels ought to tell us that this is a complete mistake. What His disciples ought to be and do is continually brought forward in our Lord’s teaching. A truly sanctified man will never forget this. He serves a Master who said, “You are my friends if you do whatever I command you.” (John 15.14)

(8) Genuine sanctification will show itself in a habitual desire to live up to *the standard which St. Paul sets before the Churches* in his writings. That standard is to be found in the closing chapters of nearly all his Epistles. The common idea of many persons that St. Paul’s writings are full of nothing but doctrinal statements and controversial subjects — justification, election, predestination, prophecy, and the like — is an entire delusion, and a melancholy proof of the ignorance of Scripture which prevails in these latter days. I defy anyone to read St. Paul’s writings carefully without finding in them a large quantity of plain, practical directions about the Christian’s duty in every relation of life, and about our daily habits, temper, and behaviour toward one another. These directions were written down by inspiration of God for the perpetual guidance of professing Christians. He who does not attend to them may possibly pass muster as a member of a church or a chapel, but he certainly is not what the Bible calls a “sanctified” man.

(9) Genuine sanctification will show itself in habitual *attention to the active graces* which our Lord so beautifully exemplified, and especially to the grace of charity. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love toward one another.” (Joh 13.34, 35) A sanctified man will try to do good in the world, and to lessen the sorrow and increase the happiness of all around him. He will aim to be like his Master, full of kindness and love toward everyone; and this not in word only, by calling people “dear,” but by deeds and actions and self-denying work, as he has opportunity. The selfish Christian professor, who wraps himself up in his own conceit of superior knowledge, and seems not to care whether others sink or swim, go to heaven or hell, so long as he walks to church or chapel in his Sunday best, and is called a “sound member” — such a man knows nothing of sanctification. He may think himself a saint on earth, but he will not be a saint in heaven. Christ will never be found the Saviour of those who know nothing of following His example. Saving faith and real converting grace will always produce some conformity to the image of Jesus. <sup>8</sup> (Col 3.10)

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<sup>8</sup> “Christ in the Gospel is proposed to us as our pattern and example of holiness. And as it is a cursed imagination that this was the whole end of his life and death — namely, to exemplify and confirm the doctrine of holiness which He taught — so it is evil and pernicious to neglect His being our example, to not consider Him by faith to that end, nor labour after conformity to Him. Therefore, let us be much in the contemplation of what He was, and what He did, and

(10) Genuine sanctification, in the last place, will show itself in *habitual attention to the passive graces* of Christianity. When I speak of passive graces, I mean those graces which are especially shown in submission to the will of God, and in bearing and forbearing towards one another. Few people, perhaps, unless they have examined the point, have an idea how much is said about these graces in the New Testament, and how important a place they seem to fill. This is the special point which St. Peter dwells upon in commending our Lord Jesus Christ's example to our notice: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously." (1Pet 2.21-23) — This is the one piece of profession which the Lord's prayer requires us to make: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us"; and the one point that is commented upon at the end of the prayer. — This is the point which occupies one-third of the list of the fruits of the Spirit, supplied by St. Paul. Nine are named, and three of these, "long-suffering, gentleness, and meekness," are unquestionably passive graces. (Gal 5.22, 23) I must plainly say that I do not think this subject is sufficiently considered by Christians. The passive graces are no doubt harder to attain than the active ones, but they are precisely the graces which have the greatest influence on the world. One thing I feel very sure of — it is nonsense to pretend to sanctification unless we follow after the meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, and forgiveness of which the Bible makes so much. People who are habitually giving way to peevish and cross tempers in daily life, and are constantly sharp with their tongues, and disagreeable to all around them — spiteful people, vindictive people, revengeful people, malicious people — of whom, alas, the world is only too full! — all such know little, as they should know, about sanctification.

Such are the visible marks of a sanctified man. I do not say that they are all to be seen equally in all God's people. I freely admit that they are not fully and perfectly exhibited even in the best. But I say confidently that the things of which I have been speaking are the Scriptural marks of sanctification, and that those who know nothing of them may well doubt whether they have any grace at all. Whatever others may please to say, I will never shrink from saying that genuine sanctification is a thing that can be seen, and that the marks I have endeavoured to sketch out are more or less the marks of a sanctified man.

**III.** I now propose to consider, in the last place, the *distinction between justification and sanctification*. Wherein do they agree, and wherein do they differ? This branch of our subject is one of great importance, though I fear it will not seem so to all my readers. I will handle it briefly, but I dare not pass it over altogether. Too many are apt to look at nothing but the surface of things in religion, and regard nice distinctions in theology as questions of "words and names," which are of little real value. But I warn all who are in earnest about their souls, that the discomfort which arises from not "distinguishing things that differ" in Christian doctrine is very great indeed; and I especially advise them, if they love peace, to seek clear views about the matter before us. We must always remember that justification and sanctification are two distinct things. Yet there are points in which they *agree* and points in which they *differ*. Let us try to find out what they are.

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how He carried Himself in all duties and trials, until an image or idea of His perfect holiness is implanted in our minds, and we are thereby made like Him." — *Owen on the Holy Ghost*, p. 513. Goold's edition.

In what, then, are justification and sanctification alike?

- (a) Both proceed originally from the free grace of God. It is by His gift alone that believers are justified or sanctified at all.
- (b) Both are part of that great work of salvation which Christ, in the eternal covenant, has undertaken on behalf of His people. Christ is the fountain of life from which pardon and holiness both flow. The root of each is Christ.
- (c) Both are to be found in the same persons. Those who are justified are always sanctified, and those who are sanctified are always justified. God has joined them together, and they cannot be put asunder.
- (d) Both begin at the same time. The moment a person begins to be a justified person, he also begins to be a sanctified person. He may not feel it, but it is a fact.
- (e) Both are alike necessary to salvation. No one ever reached heaven without a *renewed heart* as well as forgiveness, without the *Spirit's grace* as well as the blood of Christ, without a *fitness* for eternal glory as well as a title. The one is just as necessary as the other.

Such are the points on which justification and sanctification agree. Let us now reverse the picture, and see wherein they differ.

- (a) Justification is reckoning and counting a man to be righteous for the sake of another, even Jesus Christ the Lord. Sanctification is actually making a man inwardly righteous, though it may be in a very feeble degree.
- (b) The righteousness we have by our justification is not our own, but the everlasting perfect righteousness of our great Mediator Christ, imputed to us, and made our own by faith. The righteousness we have by sanctification is our own righteousness, imparted, inherent, and wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, but mingled with much infirmity and imperfection.
- (c) In justification, our own works have no place at all, and simple faith in Christ is the one thing needful. In sanctification our own works are of vast importance and God bids us fight, and watch, and pray, and strive, and take pains, and labour.
- (d) Justification is a finished and complete work, and a man is perfectly justified the moment he believes. Sanctification is an imperfect work, comparatively, and will never be perfected until we reach heaven.
- (e) Justification admits no growth or increase: a man is as much justified the hour he first comes to Christ by faith, as he will be to all eternity. Sanctification is eminently a progressive work, and it admits continual growth and enlargement so long as a man lives.
- (f) Justification has special reference to our *persons*, our standing in God's sight, and our deliverance from guilt. Sanctification has special reference to our *natures*, and the moral renewal of our hearts.
- (g) Justification gives us our title to heaven, and boldness to enter in. Sanctification gives us our fitness for heaven, and prepares us to enjoy it when we dwell there.

(h) Justification is the act of God *about* us, and is not easily discerned by others. Sanctification is the work of God *within* us, and cannot be hidden from the eyes of men in its outward manifestation.

I commend these distinctions to the attention of all my readers, and I ask them to ponder them well. I am persuaded that one great cause of the darkness and uncomfortable feelings of many well-meaning people in the matter of religion, is their habit of confounding, and not distinguishing, justification and sanctification. It can never be too strongly impressed on our minds, that they are two separate things. No doubt they cannot be divided, and everyone that is a partaker of *either* is a partaker of *both*. But never, never should they be confounded, and never should the distinction between them be forgotten.

It only remains for me now to bring this subject to a conclusion by a few plain words of application. The nature and visible marks of sanctification have been brought before us. What practical reflections should the whole matter raise in our minds?

(1) For one thing, let us all awake to a sense of the *perilous state of many professing Christians*. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;” without sanctification there is no salvation. (Heb 12.14) Then, what an enormous amount of so-called religion there is which is perfectly useless! What an immense proportion of church-goers and chapel-goers are in the *broad* road that leads to destruction! The thought is awful, crushing, and overwhelming. Oh, that preachers and teachers would open their eyes and realize the condition of souls around them! Oh, that men could be persuaded to “flee from the wrath to come”! If unsanctified souls can be saved and go to heaven, the Bible is not true. Yet the Bible is true and cannot lie! What must the end be!

(2) For another thing, let us *make sure work of our own condition*, and never rest till we feel and know that we are “sanctified” ourselves. What are our tastes, and choices, and likings, and inclinations? This is the great testing question. It matters little what we wish, and what we hope, and what we desire to be before we die. Where are we *now*? What are we doing? Are we sanctified or not? If not, the fault is all our own.

(3) For another thing, if we would be sanctified, our course is clear and plain — *we must begin with Christ*. We must go to Him as sinners, with no plea but that of utter need, and cast our souls on Him by faith, for peace and reconciliation with God. We must place ourselves in His hands, as in the hands of a good physician, and cry to Him for mercy and grace. We must wait for nothing to bring with us as a recommendation. The very first step towards sanctification, no less than justification, is to come with faith to Christ. We must first live, and *then* work.

(4) For another thing, if we would grow in holiness and become more sanctified, we must *continually go on as we began*, and be making ever fresh applications to Christ. He is the Head from which every member must be supplied. (Eph 4.16) To live the life of daily faith in the Son of God, and be daily drawing out of His fulness the promised grace and strength which He has laid up for His people — *this* is the grand secret of progressive sanctification. Believers who seem at a standstill are generally neglecting close communion with Jesus, and so they are grieving the Spirit. He that prayed, “Sanctify them,” the last night before His crucifixion, is infinitely willing to help everyone who by faith applies to Him for help, and desires to be made more holy.

(5) For another thing, *let us not expect too much* from our own hearts here below. At our best, we will find in ourselves daily cause for humiliation, and discover that we are needy debtors to mercy and grace every hour. The more light we have, the more we will see our own imperfection. Sinners we were when we began, sinners we will find ourselves as we go on — renewed, pardoned, justified; yet sinners to the very last. Our absolute perfection is yet to come, and the expectation of it is one reason why we should long for heaven.

(6) Finally, let us never be ashamed of *making much of sanctification*, and contending for a high standard of holiness. While some are satisfied with a miserably low degree of attainment, and others are not ashamed to live on without any holiness at all — content with a mere round of church-going and chapel-going, but never getting on, like a horse in a mill — let us stand fast in the old paths, follow after eminent holiness ourselves, and recommend it boldly to others. This is the only way to be really happy.

Let us feel convinced, whatever others may say, that holiness is happiness, and that the man who gets through life most comfortably is the *sanctified* man. No doubt there are some true Christians who from ill-health, or family trials, or other secret causes, enjoy little sensible comfort, and go mourning all their days on the way to heaven. But these are exceptional cases. As a general rule, in the long-run of life, it will be found true that “sanctified” people are the happiest people on earth. They have solid comforts which the world can neither give nor take away. “The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness.” — “Great peace have those who love your law.” — It was said by One who cannot lie, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” — But it is also written, “There is no peace for the wicked.” (Pro 3.17; Psa 119.165; Mat 11.30; Isa 48.22)

#### P. S.

THE subject of sanctification is of such deep importance, and the mistakes made about it so many and great, that I make no apology for strongly recommending “Owen on the Holy Spirit” to all who want to study more thoroughly the whole doctrine of sanctification. No single paper like this can embrace it all.

I am quite aware that Owen’s writings are not fashionable in the present day, and that many think fit to neglect and sneer at him as a Puritan! Yet the great divine who in Commonwealth times was Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, does not deserve to be treated in this way. He had more learning and sound knowledge of Scripture in his little finger than many who depreciate him have in their whole bodies. I assert unhesitatingly that the man who wants to study experiential theology will find no books equal to those of Owen and some of his contemporaries, for complete, Scriptural, and exhaustive treatment of the subjects they handle.

### 3. HOLINESS

*“Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” — Heb 12.14.*

THE text which heads this page opens up a subject of deep importance. That subject is practical holiness. It suggests a question which demands the attention of all professing Christians — Are we holy? Shall we see the Lord?

That question can never be out of season. The wise man tells us, “There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh — a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Ecc 3.4, 7); but there is no time, no, not a day, in which a man ought not to be holy. Are we?

That question concerns all ranks and conditions of men. Some are rich, and some are poor — some learned, and some unlearned — some masters, and some servants; but there is no rank or condition in life in which a man ought not to be holy. Are *we*?

I ask to be heard today about this question. How does the account stand between our souls and God? In this hurrying, bustling world, let us stand still for a few minutes and consider the matter of holiness. I believe I might have chosen a subject more popular and pleasant. I am sure I might have found one easier to handle. But I feel deeply that I could not have chosen one more seasonable and more profitable to our souls. It is a solemn thing to hear the Word of God saying, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” (Heb 12.14)

I will endeavour, by God’s help, to examine what true holiness is, and the reason why it is so needful. In conclusion, I will try to point out the only way in which holiness can be attained. I have already, in the second paper in this volume, approached this subject from a doctrinal side. Let me now try to present it to my readers in a more plain and practical point of view.

**I.** First, then, let me try to show *what true practical holiness is — what sort of persons are those whom God calls holy.*

A man may go great lengths, and yet never reach true holiness.

- It is not knowledge — Balaam had that;
- nor great profession — Judas Iscariot had that;
- nor doing many things — Herod had that;
- nor zeal for certain matters in religion — Jehu had that;
- nor morality and outward respectability of conduct — the young ruler had that;
- nor taking pleasure in hearing preachers — the Jews in Ezekiel’s time had that;
- nor keeping company with godly people — Joab, Gehazi, and Demas had that.

Yet none of these was holy! These things alone are not holiness. A man may have any one of them, and yet never see the Lord.

What then is true practical holiness? It is a hard question to answer. I do not mean that there is any lack of Scriptural matter on the subject. But I fear lest I give a defective view of holiness, and not say all that ought to be said; or lest I say things about it that ought not to be said, and so do harm. Let me, however, try to draw a picture of holiness, so that we may see it clearly before the eyes of our minds. Only let it never be forgotten, when I have said all, that my account is but a poor imperfect outline at best.

## HOLINESS

(a) Holiness is *the habit of being of one mind with God*, as His mind is described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God's judgment — hating what He hates — loving what He loves — and measuring everything in this world by the standard of His Word. He who most entirely agrees with God, is the most holy man.

(b) A holy man will *endeavour to shun every known sin, and to keep every known commandment*. He will have a decided bent of mind toward God, a hearty desire to do His will — a greater fear of displeasing Him than of displeasing the world, and a love for all His ways. He will feel what Paul felt when he said, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom 7.22), and what David felt when he said, "I esteem all your precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." (Psa 119.128)

(c) A holy man will *strive to be like our Lord Jesus Christ*. He will not only live the life of faith in Him, and draw from Him all his daily peace and strength, but he will also labour to have the mind that was in Him, and to be "conformed to His image." (Rom 8.29) It will be his aim,

- to bear with and forgive others, even as Christ forgave us
- to be unselfish, even as Christ did not please Himself
- to walk in love, even as Christ loved us
- to be lowly-minded and humble, even as Christ made Himself of no reputation and humbled Himself.

He will remember,

- that Christ was a faithful witness for the truth
- that He came not to do His own will
- that it was His food and drink to do His Father's will
- that He would continually deny Himself in order to minister to others
- that He was meek and patient under undeserved insults
- that He thought more of godly poor men than of kings
- that He was full of love and compassion toward sinners
- that He was bold and uncompromising in denouncing sin
- that He did not seek the praise of men, when He might have had it
- that He went about doing good
- that He was separate from worldly people
- that He continued instant in prayer
- that He would not let even His nearest relations stand in His way when God's work was to be done.

These things a holy man will try to remember. He will endeavour to shape his course in life by them. He will lay to heart the saying of John, "He that says he abides in Christ should himself also walk as He walked" (1Joh 2.6); and the saying of Peter, that "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow His steps." (1Pet 2.21) Happy is the one who has learned to make Christ his "all," both for salvation and example! Much time would be saved, and much sin prevented, if men were to more often ask themselves the question, "What would Christ have said and done, if He were in my place?"

(d) A holy man will follow after *meekness*, longsuffering, gentleness, patience, kind tempers, government of his tongue. He will bear much, forbear much, overlook much,

and be slow to talk of standing on his rights. We see a bright example of this in the behaviour of David when Shimei cursed him — and of Moses when Aaron and Miriam spoke against him. (2Sam 16.10; Num 12.3)

(e) A holy man will follow after *temperance and self-denial*. He will labour to mortify the desires of his body — to crucify his flesh with his affections and lusts — to curb his passions — to restrain his carnal inclinations, lest at any time they break loose. Oh, what a word is that of the Lord Jesus to the Apostles, “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life” (Luk 21.34); and that of the Apostle Paul, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” (1Cor 9.27)

(f) A holy man will follow after *charity and brotherly kindness*. He will endeavour to observe the golden rule of doing as he would have men do to him, and speaking as he would have men speak to him. He will be full of affection towards his brethren — towards their bodies, their property, their characters, their feelings, their souls. “He that loves another,” says Paul, “has fulfilled the law.” (Rom 13.8) He will abhor all lying, slandering, backbiting, cheating, dishonesty, and unfair dealing, even in the least things. The shekel and cubit of the sanctuary were larger than those in common use. He will strive to adorn his religion by all his outward demeanour, and to make it lovely and beautiful in the eyes of all around him. Alas, what condemning words are the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, and the Sermon on the Mount, when laid alongside the conduct of many professing Christians!

(g) A holy man will follow after a spirit of *mercy and benevolence towards others*. He will not stand idle all day. He will not be content with doing no harm — he will try to do good. He will strive to be useful in his day and generation, and to lessen the spiritual wants and misery around him, as far as he can. Such was Dorcas, “full of good works and alms-deeds, which she did,” — not merely purposed and talked about, but she did them. Such a one was Paul: “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you,” he says, “though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.” (Act 9.36; 2Cor 12.15)

(h) A holy man will follow after *purity of heart*. He will dread all filthiness and uncleanness of spirit, and seek to avoid all things that might draw him into it. He knows his own heart is like tinder, and will diligently keep clear of the sparks of temptation. Who would dare to talk of strength when David can fall? There is many a hint to be gleaned from the ceremonial law. Under it the man who only touched a bone, or a dead body, or a grave, or a diseased person, became at once unclean in the sight of God. And these things were emblems and figures. Few Christians are ever too watchful and too particular about this point.

(i) A holy man will follow after *the fear of God*. I do not mean the fear of a slave, who only works because he is afraid of punishment, and would be idle if he did not dread discovery. I rather mean the fear of a child, who wishes to live and move as if he was always before his father's face, because he loves him. What a noble example Nehemiah gives us of this! When he became Governor at Jerusalem he might have been chargeable to the Jews and required money from them for his support. The former Governors had done so. There was none to blame him if he did. But he says, “So I did not, because of the fear of God.” (Neh 5.15)

(j) A holy man will follow after *humility*. He will desire, in lowliness of mind, to esteem all others better than himself. He will see more evil in his own heart than in any other in the world. He will understand something of,

- *Abraham's* feeling, when he says, "I am dust and ashes;"
- and *Jacob's*, when he says, "I am less than the least of all your mercies;"
- and *Job's*, when he says, "I am vile;"
- and *Paul's*, when he says, "I am chief of sinners."

Holy Bradford, that faithful martyr of Christ, would sometimes finish his letters with these words, "A most miserable sinner, John Bradford." Good old Mr. Grimshaw's last words, when he lay on his death-bed, were these, "Here goes an unprofitable servant."

(k) A holy man will follow after *faithfulness in all the duties and relations in life*. He will try, not merely to fill his place as well as others who take no thought for their souls, but even better, because he has higher motives, and more help than they. Those words of Paul should never be forgotten, "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord," — "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." (Col 3.23; Rom 12.11) Holy persons should aim at doing everything well, and should be ashamed of allowing themselves to do anything poorly if they can help it. Like Daniel, they should seek to give no "occasion" against themselves, except "concerning the law of their God." (Dan 6.5) They should strive to be,

- good husbands and good wives,
- good parents and good children,
- good masters and good servants,
- good neighbours,
- good friends,
- good subjects,
- good in private and good in public,
- good in the place of business and good by their firesides.

Holiness is worth little indeed, if it does not bear this kind of fruit. The Lord Jesus puts a searching question to His people, when He says, "What do you do more than others?" (Mat 5.47)

(l) Last, but not least, a holy man will follow after *spiritual mindedness*. He will endeavour to set his affections entirely on things above, and to hold things on earth with a very loose hand. He will not neglect the business of the life that now is; but the first place in his mind and thoughts will be given to the life to come. He will aim to live like one whose treasure is in heaven, and to pass through this world like a stranger and pilgrim travelling to his home. To commune with God in prayer, in the Bible, and in the assembly of His people — these things will be the holy man's chiefest enjoyments. He will value every thing and place and company, in just proportion to how it draws him nearer to God. He will enter into something of David's feeling, when he says, "My soul follows hard after You." "You are my portion." (Psa 63.8; 119.57)

Such is the outline of holiness which I venture to sketch out. Such is the character which those who are called "holy" *follow after*. Such are the main features of a holy man.

But here let me say, I trust no man will misunderstand me. I am not without fear that my meaning will be mistaken, and the description I have given of holiness will discourage

some tender conscience. I would not willingly make one righteous heart sad, or throw a stumbling-block in any believer's way.

I do not say for a moment that holiness shuts out the presence of *indwelling sin*. No, far from it. It is the greatest misery of a holy man that he carries about with him a "body of death;" — that often when he would do good, "evil is present with him"; that the old man is clogging all his movements, and as it were, trying to draw him back at every step he takes. (Rom 7.21-24) But it is the excellence of a holy man, that he is not at peace with indwelling sin, as others are. He hates it, mourns over it, and longs to be free from its company. The work of sanctification within him is like the wall of Jerusalem — the building goes forward "even in troublesome times." (Dan 9.25)

Neither do I say that holiness comes to ripeness and perfection all at once, or that these graces I have touched on must be found in full bloom and vigour before you can call a man holy. No, far from it. Sanctification is always a *progressive work*. Some men's graces are in the blade, some in the ear, and some are like full corn in the ear. All must have a beginning. We must never despise "the day of small things." [Zec 4.10](#) And sanctification in the very best is an *imperfect work*. The history of the brightest saints that ever lived will contain many a "but," and "however," and "notwithstanding," before you reach the end. The gold will never be without some dross — the light will never shine without some clouds, until we reach the heavenly Jerusalem. The sun himself has spots upon his face. The holiest men have many a blemish and defect when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. Their life is a continual warfare with sin, the world, and the devil; and sometimes you will see them not overcoming, but overcome. The flesh is ever lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and "in many things they offend all." (Gal 5.17; Jas 3.2)

But still, for all this, I am sure that to have such a character as I have faintly drawn, is the heart's desire and prayer of all true Christians. They press towards it, if they do not reach it. They may not attain to it, but they always aim at it. It is what they strive and labour to be, if it is not what they are.

And this I boldly and confidently say, that true holiness is a great *reality*. It is something in a man that can be seen, and known, and marked, and felt by all around him. It is light: if it exists, it will show itself. It is salt: if it exists, its savour will be perceived. It is a precious ointment: if it exists, its presence cannot be hidden.

I am sure we should all be ready to make allowance for much backsliding, for much occasional deadness in professing Christians. I know a road may lead from one point to another, and yet have many a winding and turn; and a man may be truly holy, and yet be drawn aside by many an infirmity. Gold is no less gold because it is mingled with alloy, nor is light less light because it is faint and dim, nor is grace less grace because it is young and weak. But after every allowance, I cannot see how any man deserves to be called "holy," who wilfully allows himself in sins, and is not humbled and ashamed because of them. I dare not call anyone "holy" who makes a habit of wilfully neglecting known duties, and wilfully doing what he knows God has commanded him not to do. Owen says well, "I do not understand how a man can be a true believer to whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble."

Such are the leading characteristics of practical holiness. Let us examine ourselves and see whether we are acquainted with it. Let us prove our own selves.

**II.** In the next place, let me try *to show some reasons why practical holiness is so important*. Can holiness save us? Can holiness put away sin — cover iniquities — make satisfaction for transgressions — pay our debt to God? No, not a whit. God forbid that I should ever say so. Holiness can do none of these things. The brightest saints are all “unprofitable servants.” Our purest works are no better than filthy rags, when tried by the light of God’s holy law. The white robe which Jesus offers, and faith puts on, must be our only righteousness — the name of Christ our only confidence — the Lamb’s book of life our only title to heaven. With all our holiness we are no better than *sinner*s. Our best things are stained and tainted with imperfection. They are all more or less incomplete, wrong in the motive or defective in the performance. By the deeds of the law no child of Adam shall ever be justified. “By grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man boast.” (Eph 2.8, 9)

Why then is holiness so important? Why does the Apostle say, “Without it no man shall see the Lord”? Let me set out in order a few reasons.

(a) For one thing, we must be holy, because *the voice of God in Scripture plainly commands it*. The Lord Jesus says to His people, “Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Mat 5.20) “Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Mat 5.48) Paul tells the Thessalonians, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” (1Th 4.3) And Peter says, “As He who has called you is holy, so you be holy in all manner of conduct;” because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1Pet 1.15, 16) “In this,” says Leighton, “Law and Gospel agree.”

(b) We must be holy, because this is one grand *end and purpose for which Christ came into the world*. Paul writes to the Corinthians, “He died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again.” (2Cor 5.15) And to the Ephesians, “Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it.” (Eph 5.25, 26) And to Titus, “He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Tit 2.14) In short, to talk of men being saved from the guilt of sin, without being at the same time saved from its dominion in their hearts, is to contradict the witness of all Scripture.

- Are believers said to be *elect*? — it is “through sanctification of the Spirit.”
- Are they *predestined*? — it is “to be conformed to the image of God’s Son.”
- Are they *chosen*? — it is “that they may be holy.”
- Are they *called*? — is it “with a holy calling.”
- Are they *afflicted*? — it is that they may be “partakers of holiness.”

Jesus is a complete Saviour. He does not merely take away the guilt of a believer’s sin. He does more — He breaks its power. (1Pet 1.2; Rom 8.29; Eph 1.4; Heb 12.10)

(c) We must be holy, because this is the *only sound evidence that we have a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*. The Twelfth Article of our Church says truly that, “Although good works cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s judgment, yet they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out necessarily from a true

and lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by its fruits.” James warns us that there is such a thing as dead faith — a faith which goes no further than the profession of the lips, and has no influence on a man’s character. (Jas 2.17) True saving faith is a very different kind of thing. True faith will always show itself by its fruits — it will sanctify, it will work by love, it will overcome the world, it will purify the heart. I know that people are fond of talking about death-bed evidences. They will rest on words spoken in the hours of fear, and pain, and weakness, as if they might take comfort in them about the friends they lose. But I am afraid in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, such evidences are not to be depended on. I suspect that, with rare exceptions, men die just as they have lived. The only safe evidence that we are one with Christ, and Christ in us, is a holy life. Those who live unto the Lord are generally the only people who die in the Lord. If we would die the death of the righteous, let us not rest in slothful desires only; let us seek to live His life. It is a true saying of Traill’s,<sup>9</sup> “That man’s state is nothing, and his faith unsound, who does not find his hopes of glory purifying to his heart and life.”

(d) We must be holy, because this is the *only proof that we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*. This is a point on which He has spoken most plainly, in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of John. “If you love Me, keep my commandments.” — “He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me.” — “If a man loves Me, he will keep my words.” — “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” (Joh 14.15, 21, 23; 15.14) — It would be difficult to find plainer words than these, and woe to those who neglect them! Surely that man must be in an unhealthy state of soul who can think of all that Jesus suffered, and yet cling to those sins for which that suffering was undergone.

- It was sin that wove the crown of thorns
- It was sin that pierced our Lord’s hands, and feet, and side
- It was sin that brought Him to Gethsemane and Calvary, to the cross and to the grave!

Cold must our hearts be if we do not hate sin and labour to get rid of it, though we may have to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye in doing it. [Mat 5.29-30](#)

(e) We must be holy, because this is the *only sound evidence that we are true children of God*. Children in this world are generally like their parents. Doubtless, some are more so, and some less so — but it is seldom indeed that you cannot trace a kind of family likeness. And it is much the same with the children of God. The Lord Jesus says, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.” — “If God were your Father you would love Me.” (Joh 8.39, 42) If men have no likeness to the Father in heaven, it is vain to talk of their being His “sons.” If we know nothing of holiness we may flatter ourselves as we please, but we have not got the Holy Spirit dwelling in us: we are dead, and must be brought to life again — we are lost, and must be found. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they,” and only they, “are the sons of God.” (Rom 8.14) We must show by our lives, the family we belong to. — We must let men see by our good living that we are indeed the children of the Holy One, or our sonship is but an empty

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Traill (1642-1716). Puritan author of *Vindication of Justification*.

name. “Do not say,” says Gurnall, “that you have royal blood in your veins, and are born of God, unless you can prove your pedigree by daring to be holy.”<sup>10</sup>

(f) We must be holy, because this is the *most likely way to do good to others*. We cannot live to ourselves only in this world. Our lives will always be doing either good or harm to those who see them. They are a silent sermon which all can read. It is sad indeed when they are a sermon for the devil’s cause, and not for God’s. I believe that far more is done for Christ’s kingdom by the holy living of believers than we are at all aware of. There is a reality about such living which makes men feel, and obliges them to think. It carries a weight and influence with it which nothing else can give. It makes religion beautiful, and draws men to consider it, like a lighthouse seen afar off. The day of judgment will prove that many besides husbands have been won “*without the word*” by a holy life, (1Pet 3.1) You may talk to persons about the doctrines of the Gospels, and few will listen, and still fewer understand. But your life is an argument that none can escape. There is a meaning about holiness which not even the most unlearned can help taking in. They may not understand justification, but they can understand charity. I believe there is far more harm done by unholy and inconsistent Christians than we are aware of. Such men are among Satan’s best allies. They pull down by their lives what ministers build with their lips. They cause the chariot wheels of the Gospel to drive heavily. They supply the children of this world with a never-ending excuse for remaining as they are. — “I cannot see the use of so much religion,” said an irreligious tradesman not long ago; “I observe that some of my customers are always talking about the Gospel, and faith, and election, and the blessed promises, and so forth; and yet these very people think nothing of cheating me of pence and half-pence when they have an opportunity. Now, if religious persons can do such things, I do not see what good there is in religion.” — I grieve to be obliged to write such things, but I fear that Christ’s name is too often blasphemed because of the lives of Christians. Let us take heed lest the blood of souls be required at our hands. Good Lord, deliver us from the murder of souls by inconsistency and loose walking! Oh, for the sake of others, if for no other reason, let us strive to be holy!

(g) We must be holy, *because our present comfort depends much upon it*. We cannot be reminded of this too often. We are sadly apt to forget that there is a close connection between sin and sorrow, holiness and happiness, sanctification and consolation. God has so wisely ordered it, that our well-being and our well-doing are linked together. He has mercifully provided that even in this world it will be man’s *interest* to be holy. Our justification is not by works — our calling and election are not according to our works — but it is vain for anyone to suppose that he will have a lively *sense* of his justification, or an *assurance* of his calling, so long as he neglects good works, or does not strive to live a holy life. “Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” — “Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts.” (1Joh 2.3; 3.19) A believer may as soon expect to feel the sun’s rays upon a dark and cloudy day, as to feel strong consolation in Christ while he does not follow Him fully. When the disciples forsook the Lord and fled, they escaped danger, but they were miserable and sad. Shortly after, when they confessed Him boldly before men, they were thrown into prison and beaten; but we are told, “they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” (Act 5.41) Oh, for our own sakes, if there were no other reason, let us

<sup>10</sup> William Gurnall, *The Whole Armour of God*, vol. 1, First Part.

strive to be holy! He that follows Jesus most fully, will always follow Him most comfortably.

(h) Lastly, we must be holy, *because without holiness on earth we will never be prepared to enjoy heaven.*

- Heaven is a holy *place*.
- The Lord of heaven is a holy *Being*.
- The angels are holy *creatures*.

Holiness is written on everything in heaven. The book of Revelation says expressly, “There shall in no way enter into it anything that defiles, nor whatever works abomination, or makes a lie.” (Rev 21.27)

I appeal solemnly to everyone who reads these pages, How will we ever be at home and happy in heaven, if we die unholy? Death works no change. The grave makes no alteration. Each will rise again with the same character in which he breathed his last. Where will our place be if we are strangers to holiness now?

Suppose for a moment that you were allowed to enter heaven without holiness. What would you do? What possible enjoyment could you feel there? To which of all the saints would you join yourself, and by whose side would you sit down? Their pleasures are not your pleasures, their tastes not your tastes, their character not your character. How could you possibly be happy if you had not been holy on earth?

Now perhaps you love the company of,

- the light and the careless,
- the worldly-minded and the covetous,
- the reveller and the pleasure-seeker,
- the ungodly and the profane.

There will be none such in heaven.

Now perhaps you think the saints of God are too strict, and particular, and serious. You rather avoid them. You have no delight in their society. There will be no other company in heaven.

Now perhaps you think praying, and Scripture-reading, and hymn singing, are dull and melancholy, and stupid work — a thing to be tolerated now and then, but not enjoyed. You reckon the Sabbath is a burden and a weariness; you could not possibly spend more than a small part of it in worshipping God. But remember, heaven is a never-ending Sabbath. The inhabitants of it do not rest day or night, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty” and singing the praise of the Lamb. How could an unholy man find pleasure in occupation such as this?

Do you think that such a one would delight to meet David, and Paul, and John, after a life spent in doing the very things they spoke against? Would he take sweet counsel with them, and find that he and they had much in common? — Do you think, above all, that he would rejoice to meet Jesus, the Crucified One, face to face, after clinging to the sins for which He died, after loving His enemies and despising His friends? Would he stand before Him with confidence, and join in the cry, “This is our God; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation”? (Isa 25.9) Do you not rather think that the tongue of

an unholy man would cling to the roof of his mouth with shame, and his only desire would be to have himself thrown out! He would feel like a stranger in a land he did not know, a black sheep amidst Christ's holy flock. The voice of Cherubim and Seraphim, the song of Angels and Archangels and all the company of heaven, would be a language he could not understand. The very air would seem air that he could not breathe. I know not what others may think, but to me it seems clear that heaven would be a miserable place to an unholy man. It cannot be otherwise. People may say, in a vague way, "they hope to go to heaven;" but they do not consider what they say. There must be a certain "fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light." [Col 1.12](#) Our hearts must be somewhat in tune. To reach the holiday of glory, we must pass through the training school of grace. We must be heavenly-minded, and have heavenly tastes, in the life that now is, or else we will never find ourselves in heaven in the life to come.

And now, before I go any further, let me say a few words by way of application.

(1) For one thing, let me ask everyone who may read these pages, *Are you holy?* Listen, I beg you, to the question I put to you this day. Do you know anything of the holiness of which I have been speaking?

I do not ask whether you attend your church regularly — whether you have been baptized, and received the Lord's Supper — whether you have the name of *Christian* — I ask something more than all this: *Are you holy, or are you not?*

I do not ask whether you approve of holiness in others — whether you like to read the lives of holy people, and to talk of holy things, and to have holy books on your table — whether you mean to be holy, and hope you will be holy some day — I ask something further: *Are you yourself holy this very day, or are you not?*

And why do I ask so straitly, and press the question so strongly? I do it because the Scripture says, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It is *written*, it is not my fancy — it is the *Bible*, not my private opinion — it is the word of *God*, not of man — "*Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*" (Heb 12.14)

Alas, what searching, sifting words are these! What thoughts come across my mind, as I write them down! I look at the world, and see the greater part of it lying in wickedness. I look at professing Christians, and see the vast majority having nothing of Christianity but the name. I turn to the Bible, and I hear the Spirit saying, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Surely it is a text that ought to make us consider our ways, and search our hearts. Surely it should raise within us solemn thoughts, and send us to prayer.

You may try to put me off by saying "you feel much, and think much about these things: far more than many suppose." I answer, "This is not the point. The poor lost souls in hell do as much as this. The great question is not what you think, and what you feel, but what you DO.

You may say, "It was never meant that all Christians should be holy, and that holiness, such as I have described, is only for great saints, and people of uncommon gifts." I answer, "I cannot see that in Scripture. I read that every man who has hope in Christ purifies himself." (1Joh 3.3) — "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

You may say, "It is impossible to be so holy and to do our duty in this life at the same time: the thing cannot be done." I answer, "You are mistaken. It *can* be done. With Christ on your side nothing is impossible. It *has* been done by many. David, and Obadiah, and Daniel, and the servants of Nero's household, are all examples that go to prove it."

You may say, "If I were so holy I would be unlike other people." I answer, "I know it well. It is just what you ought to be. Christ's true servants were always unlike the world around them — a separate nation, a peculiar people; — and you must be so too, if you would be saved!"

You may say, "At this rate very few will be saved." I answer, "I know it. It is precisely what we are told in the Sermon on the Mount." The Lord Jesus said so 1900 years ago. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads to life, and few there are that find it." (Mat 7.14) Few will be saved, because few will take the trouble to seek salvation. Men will not deny themselves the pleasures of sin and their own way for a little season. They turn their backs on an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and does not fade away." "You will not come to Me," says Jesus, "that you might have life." (1Pet 1.4; Joh 5.40)

You may say, "These are hard sayings: the way is very narrow." I answer, "I know it. So says the Sermon on the Mount." The Lord Jesus said so 1,900 years ago. He always said that men must take up the cross daily, and that they must be ready to cut off hand or foot if they would be His disciples. It is in religion as it is in other things, "there are no gains without pains." *That which costs nothing is worth nothing.*

Whatever we may think fit to say, we must be holy if we would see the Lord. Where is our Christianity if we are not holy? We must not merely have a Christian name, and Christian knowledge; we must have a Christian *character* also. We must be saints on earth, if ever we mean to be saints in heaven. God has said it, and He will not go back: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "The Pope's calendar," says Jenkyn, "only makes saints of the *dead*, but Scripture requires sanctity in the *living*." "Let not men deceive themselves," says Owen; "sanctification is a qualification indispensably necessary to those who will be under the conduct of the Lord Christ unto salvation. He leads none to heaven but whom He sanctifies on the earth. This living Head will not admit dead members."

Surely we need not wonder that Scripture says, "You must be born again." (Joh 3.7) Surely it is clear as noon-day that many professing Christians need a complete change — new hearts, new natures — if ever they are to be saved. Old things must pass away — they must become new creatures. "Without holiness no man," whoever he may be, "shall see the Lord."

(2) Let me, for another thing, speak a little to believers. I ask you this question, "*Do you think you feel the importance of holiness as much as you should?*"

I own that I fear the temper of the times about this subject. I exceedingly doubt whether it holds that place which it deserves in the thoughts and attention of some of the Lord's people. I would humbly suggest that we are apt to overlook the doctrine of growth in grace, and that we do not sufficiently consider how very far a person may go in a profession of religion, and yet have no grace, and be dead in God's sight after all. I believe that Judas Iscariot seemed very like the other Apostles. When the Lord warned them that one would betray Him, no one said, "Is it Judas?" We had better think more about the Churches of Sardis (*dead*) and Laodicea (*lukewarm*) than we do.

I have no desire to make an idol of holiness. I do not wish to dethrone Christ, and put holiness in His place. But I must candidly say, I wish sanctification was more thought of in this day than it seems to be; and I therefore take occasion to press the subject on all believers into whose hands these pages may fall. I fear it is sometimes forgotten that God has married together justification and sanctification. They are distinct and different things, beyond question, but one is never found without the other. All justified people are sanctified, and all sanctified are justified. What God has joined together let no man dare to put asunder. Do not tell me of your justification, unless you also have some marks of sanctification. Do not boast of Christ's work *for you*, unless you can show us the Spirit's work *in you*. Do not think that Christ and the Spirit can ever be divided. I do not doubt that many believers know these things, but I think it good for us to be put in remembrance of them. Let us prove that we know them by our lives. Let us try to keep in view this text more continually: "Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

I must frankly say that I wish there was not such an excessive *sensitiveness* on the subject of holiness as I sometimes perceive in the minds of believers. A man might really think it was a dangerous subject to handle, so cautiously is it touched! Yet surely, when we have exalted Christ as "the way, the truth, and the life," we cannot err in speaking strongly about what should be the character of His people. Rutherford says well, "The way that decries duties and sanctification, is not the way of grace. Believing and doing are blood-friends."

I would say it with all reverence, but say it I must — I sometimes fear if Christ were on earth now, there are not a few who would think His preaching was *legal*; and if Paul were writing his Epistles, there are those who would think he had better not write the latter, or most of them, as he did. But let us remember that the Lord Jesus *did* speak the Sermon on the Mount, and that the Epistle to the Ephesians contains six chapters and not four. I grieve to feel obliged to speak in this way, but I am sure there is a cause.

That great divine, John Owen, the Dean of Christ Church, used to say more than two hundred years ago, that there were people whose whole religion seemed to consist in going about complaining of their own corruptions, and telling everyone that they could do nothing of themselves. I am afraid that after two centuries the same thing might be said with truth about some of Christ's professing people in this day. I know there are texts in Scripture which warrant such complaints. I do not object to them when they come from men who walk in the steps of the Apostle Paul, and fight a good fight, as he did, against sin, the devil, and the world. But I never like such complaints when I see ground for suspecting (as I often do) that they are only a cloak to cover spiritual laziness, and an excuse for spiritual sloth. If we say with Paul, "O wretched man that I am," let us also be able to say with him, "I press toward the mark." Let us not quote his example in one thing, while we do not follow him in another. (Rom 7.24; Phi 3.14)

I do not set myself up to be better than other people; and if anyone asks, "What are you, that you write in this way?" I answer, "I am a very poor creature indeed." But I say that I cannot read the Bible without desiring to see many believers,

- more spiritual,
- more holy,
- more single-eyed,
- more heavenly-minded,

— more whole-hearted than they are in the nineteenth century.

I want to see among believers,

- more of a pilgrim spirit,
- a more decided separation from the world,
- a life more evidently in heaven,
- a closer walk with God,

and therefore I have written as I have.

Is it not true that we need a higher standard of personal holiness in this day? Where is our patience? Where is our zeal? Where is our love? Where are our works? Where is the power of religion to be seen, as it was in times gone by? Where is that unmistakable tone which used to distinguish the saints of old, and shake the world? Truly our silver has become dross, our wine mixed with water, and our salt has very little savour. We are all more than half asleep. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Let us awake, and sleep no more. Let us open our eyes more widely than we have done up to now. “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets us.” — “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.” — (Heb 12.1; 2Cor 7.1) “Did Christ die,” says Owen, “and shall sin live? Was He crucified in the world, and shall our affections to the world be quick and lively? Oh, where is the spirit of him who by the cross of Christ was crucified to the world, and the world to him!”

**III.** Let me, in the last place, offer a *word of advice to all who desire to be holy*.

Would you be holy? Would you become a new creature? Then you must begin with Christ. You will do nothing at all, and make no progress, till you feel your sin and weakness, and flee to Him. He is the root and beginning of all holiness, and the way to be holy is to come to Him by faith and be joined to Him. Christ is not only wisdom and righteousness to His people, but sanctification also. Men sometimes try to make themselves holy first of all, and a sad work they make of it. They toil and labour, and turn over new leaves, and make many changes; and yet, like the woman with the issue of blood, before she came to Christ, they feel “nothing bettered, but rather worse.” (Mar 5.26) They run in vain, and labour in vain; and it is little wonder, for they are beginning at the wrong end. They are building up a wall of sand; their work runs down as fast as they throw it up. They are baling water out of a leaky vessel: the leak gains on them, not they on the leak. No man can lay any other foundation of “holiness” than that which Paul laid, even Christ Jesus. “Without Christ we can do nothing.” (Joh 15.5) It is a strong but true saying of Traill’s, “*Wisdom* out of Christ is damning folly; *righteousness* out of Christ is guilt and condemnation; *sanctification* out of Christ is filth and sin; *redemption* out of Christ is bondage and slavery.”

Do you want to attain holiness? Do you feel this day a real hearty desire to be holy? Would you be a partaker of the Divine nature? Then *go to Christ*. Wait for nothing. Wait for nobody. Do not linger. Do not think to make yourself ready. Go and say to Him, in the words of that beautiful hymn —

Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to your cross I cling;  
Naked, flee to You for dress;  
Helpless, look to You for grace.”

## HOLINESS

There is not a brick nor a stone laid in the work of our sanctification till we go to Christ. Holiness is His special gift to His believing people. Holiness is the work He carries on in their hearts by the Spirit whom He puts within them. He is appointed a “Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance” as well as remission of sins. — “To as many as receive Him, He gives power to become sons of God.” (Act 5.31; Joh 1.12, 13) Holiness does not come of blood — parents cannot give it to their children; nor yet of the will of the flesh — man cannot produce it in himself; nor yet of the will of man — ministers cannot give it you by baptism. Holiness comes from Christ. It is the result of vital union with Him. It is the fruit of being a living branch of the True Vine. Go then to Christ and say, “Lord, not only save me from the guilt of sin, but send the Spirit, whom You promised, and save me from its power. Make me holy. Teach me to do your will.”

Would you continue holy? Then *abide in Christ*. He says Himself, “Abide in Me and I in you, — he that abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit. (Joh 15.4, 5) It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell — a full supply for all a believer’s wants. He is the Physician to whom you must daily go if you would keep well. He is the Manna which you must daily eat, and the Rock from which you must daily drink. His arm is the arm on which you must daily lean as you come up out of the wilderness of this world. You must not only be rooted, you must also be *built up* in Him. Paul was a man of God indeed — a holy man — a growing, thriving Christian — and what was the secret of it all? He was one to whom Christ was “all in all.” He was ever “looking unto Jesus.” “I can do all things,” he says, “through Christ who strengthened me.” “I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” Let us go and do likewise. (Heb 12.2; Phi 4.13; Gal 2.20)

May all who read these pages know these things by experience, and not by hearsay only. May we all feel the importance of holiness, far more than we have ever done yet! May our years be holy years with our souls, and then they will be happy ones! Whether we live, may we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, may we die unto the Lord; of if He comes for us, may we be found in peace, without spot, and blameless!

## 4. THE FIGHT

*“Fight the good fight of faith.” — 1Tim 6.12.*

It is a curious fact that there is no subject about which most people feel such deep interest as “fighting.” Young men and maidens, old men and little children, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all feel a deep interest in wars, battles, and fighting.

This is a simple fact, whatever way we may try to explain it. We should call that Englishman a dull fellow who cared nothing about the story of Waterloo, or Inkermann, or Balaclava, or Lucknow.

We should think that heart was cold and stupid which was not moved and thrilled by the struggles at Sedan and Strasburg, and Metz, and Paris, during the war between France and Germany.

But there is another warfare of far greater importance than any war that was ever waged by man. It is a warfare which concerns not two or three nations only, but every Christian man and woman born into the world. The warfare I speak of is the *spiritual* warfare. It is the fight which everyone who would be saved must fight about his soul.

This warfare, I am aware, is a thing of which many know nothing. Talk to them about it, and they are ready to set you down as a madman, an enthusiast, or a fool. And yet it is as real and true as any war the world has ever seen. It has its hand-to-hand conflicts and its wounds. It has its watchings and fatigues. It has its sieges and assaults. It has its victories and its defeats. Above all, it has *consequences* which are awful, tremendous, and most peculiar. In earthly warfare the consequences to nations are often temporary and remediable. In the spiritual warfare it is very different. The consequences of that warfare, when the fight is over, are unchangeable and eternal.

It is of this warfare that St. Paul spoke to Timothy, when he wrote those burning words, “Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life.” It is of this warfare that I propose to speak in this paper. I hold the subject to be closely connected with that of sanctification and holiness. He that would understand the nature of true holiness must know that the Christian is “a man of war.” If we would be holy, we must fight.

**I.** The first thing I have to say is this: *True Christianity is a fight.*

True Christianity! Let us mind that word “true.” There is a vast quantity of religion current in the world which is not true, genuine Christianity. It passes muster; it satisfies sleepy consciences; but it is not good money. It is not the real thing which was called Christianity eighteen hundred years ago. There are thousands of men and women who go to churches and chapels every Sunday and call themselves Christians. Their names are in the baptismal register. They are reckoned Christians while they live. They are married with a Christian marriage service. They mean to be buried as Christians when they die. But you never see any “fight” about their religion! They know literally nothing at all of spiritual strife, and exertion, and conflict, and self-denial, and watching, and warring. Such Christianity may satisfy man; and those who say anything against it may be thought very hard and uncharitable; but it certainly is not the Christianity of the Bible. It is not the religion which the Lord Jesus founded, and His Apostles preached. It is not the religion which produces real holiness. True Christianity is “a fight.”

## THE FIGHT

The true Christian is called to be a soldier, and must behave as such from the day of his conversion to the day of his death. He is not meant to live a life of religious ease, indolence, and security. He must never imagine for a moment that he can sleep and doze along the way to heaven, like one travelling in an easy carriage. If he takes his standard of Christianity from the children of this world, he may be content with such notions; but he will find no countenance for them in the Word of God. If the Bible is the rule of his faith and practice, he will find his course laid down very plainly in this matter. He must “fight.”

With whom is the Christian soldier meant to fight? Not with other Christians. Wretched indeed is that man’s idea of religion who fancies that it consists in perpetual controversy! Someone who is never satisfied unless he is engaged in some strife between church and church, chapel and chapel, sect and sect, faction and faction, party and party, knows nothing yet as he ought to know. No doubt it may be absolutely needful sometimes to appeal to law courts in order to ascertain the right interpretation of a Church’s Articles, and rubrics, and formularies. But as a general rule, the cause of sin is never helped so much as when Christians waste their strength in quarrelling with one another, and spend their time in petty squabbles.

No, indeed! The principal fight of the Christian is with the world, the flesh, and the devil. These are his never-dying foes. These are the three chief enemies against whom he must wage war. Unless he gets the victory over these three, all other victories are useless and vain. If he had a nature like an angel, and were not a fallen creature, the warfare would not be so essential. But with a corrupt heart, a busy devil, and an ensnaring world, he must either “fight” or be lost.

He must fight *the flesh*. Even after conversion he carries within him a nature prone to evil, and a heart weak and unstable as water. That heart will never be free from imperfection in this world, and it is a miserable delusion to expect it. To keep that heart from going astray, the Lord Jesus bids us “watch and pray.” The spirit may be ready, but the flesh is weak. There is need of a daily struggle and a daily wrestling in prayer. “I keep under my body,” cries St. Paul, “and bring it into subjection.” — “I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity.” — “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” — “Those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” — “Mortify your members which are upon the earth.” (Mar 14.38; 1Cor 9.27; Rom 7.23, 24; Gal 5.24; Col 3.5)

He must fight *the world*. The subtle influence of that mighty enemy must be resisted daily; and without a daily battle, it can never be overcome.

- The love of the world’s good things
- The fear of the world’s laughter or blame
- The secret desire to keep in with the world
- The secret wish to do as others in the world do, and not to run into extremes
- all these are spiritual foes which beset the Christian continually on his way to heaven, and they must be *conquered*. “The friendship of the world is enmity with God: whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” — “If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” — “The world is crucified to Me, and I to the world.” — “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world.” — “Do not be conformed to this world.” (Jas 4.4; 1Joh 2.15; Gal 6.14; 1Joh 5.4; Rom 12.2)

He must fight *the devil*. That old enemy of mankind is not dead. Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve he has been “going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it,” and striving to compass one great end — the ruin of man’s soul. Never slumbering and never sleeping, he is always “going about as a lion seeking whom he may devour.” An unseen enemy, he is always near us, about our path and about our bed, and spying out all our ways. A “murderer and a liar” from the beginning, he labours night and day to cast us down to hell. Sometimes by leading into superstition, sometimes by suggesting infidelity, sometimes by one kind of tactics and sometimes by another, he is always carrying on a campaign against our souls. “Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.”

This *mighty adversary* must be *resisted daily* if we wish to be saved. But “this kind does not go out” except by watching and praying, and fighting, and putting on the whole armour of God. The strong man armed will never be kept out of our hearts without a daily battle. (Job 1.7; 1Pet 5.8; Joh 8.44; Luk 22.31; Eph 6.11)

Some men may think these statements are too strong. You fancy that I am going too far, and laying on the colours too thickly. You are secretly saying to yourself, that men and women in England may surely get to heaven without all this trouble and warfare and fighting. Listen to me for a few minutes and I will show you that I have something to say on God’s behalf. Remember the maxim of the wisest General that ever lived in England — “In time of war it is the worst mistake to underrate your enemy, and try to make a little war.”<sup>11</sup> This Christian warfare is no light matter.

Give me your attention and consider what I say. What does the Scripture say?

- “Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life. (1Tim 6.12)
- “Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (2Tim 2.3)
- “Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the ruler of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Therefore, put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.” (Eph 6.11-13)
- “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” (Luk 13.24)
- “Labour for the food that endures unto everlasting life.” (Joh 6.27)
- “Do not think that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.” (Mat 10.34)
- “He that has no sword let him sell his garment and buy one.” (Luk 22.36)
- “Watch, stand fast in the faith: quit yourselves like men, be strong.” (1Cor 16.13)
- “War a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience.” (1Tim 1.18, 19)

Words such as these appear to me clear, plain, and unmistakable. They all teach one and the same great lesson if we are willing to receive it. That lesson is, that true Christianity is a struggle, a fight, and a warfare. He that pretends to condemn “fighting” and teaches that we ought to sit still and “yield ourselves to God,” appears to me to misunderstand his Bible, and to make a great mistake.

What does the Baptismal Service of the Church of England say? No doubt that Service is uninspired, and like every uninspired composition, it has its defects; but to the millions

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<sup>11</sup> [The Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley \(1769-1852\). Shared in the victory over Napoleon at Waterloo \(1815\).](#)

of people all over the globe who profess and call themselves English Churchmen, its voice ought to speak with some weight. And what does it say? It tells us that over every new member who is admitted into the Church of England, the following words are used — “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” — “I sign this child with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he will not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully *to fight* under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end.” — Of course, we all know that in myriads of cases baptism is a mere form, and that parents bring their children to the font without faith or prayer or thought, and consequently they receive no blessing. The man who supposes that baptism in such cases acts *mechanically*, like a medicine — and that godly and ungodly parents, praying and prayerless parents, all alike get the same benefit for their children — must be in a strange state of mind. But one thing, at any rate, is very certain. Every baptized Churchman is by his profession a “soldier of Jesus Christ,” and is pledged “to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil.” He that doubts it had better take up his Prayer-book, and read, mark, and learn its contents. The worst thing about many very zealous Churchmen is their total ignorance of what their own Prayer-book contains.

Whether we are Churchmen or not, one thing is certain — this Christian warfare is a great reality, and a subject of vast importance. It is not a matter like Church government and ceremony, about which men may differ and yet reach heaven at last. Necessity is laid upon us. We must fight. There are no promises in the Lord Jesus Christ’s Epistles to the Seven Churches, except to those who “overcome.” Where there is *grace*, there will be *conflict*. The believer is a *soldier*. There is no holiness without a warfare. Saved souls will always be found to have fought a fight.

It is a fight of *absolute necessity*. Let us not think that we can remain neutral and sit still in this war. Such a line of action may be possible in the strife of nations, but it is utterly impossible in that conflict which concerns the soul. The boasted policy of noninterference — the “masterly inactivity” which pleases so many statesmen — the plan of keeping quiet and letting things alone — all this will never do in the Christian warfare. Here, at any rate, no one can escape serving under the plea that he is “a man of peace.” To be at peace with the world, the flesh, and the devil, is to be at enmity with God, and to be in the broad way that leads to destruction. We have no choice or option. We must either fight or be lost.

It is a fight of *universal necessity*. No rank, or class, or age, can plead exemption, or escape the battle. Ministers and people, preachers and hearers, old and young, high and low, rich and poor, gentle and simple, kings and subjects, landlords and tenants, learned and unlearned — all alike must carry arms and go to war. All have by nature a *heart* full of pride, unbelief, sloth, worldliness, and sin. All are living in a *world* beset with snares, traps, and pitfalls for the soul. All have near them a busy, restless, malicious *devil*. All — from the queen in her palace down to the pauper in the workhouse — all must fight if they would be saved.

It is a fight of *perpetual necessity*. It allows no breathing time, no armistice, no truce. On week-days as well as on Sundays — in private as well as in public — at home by the family fireside as well as abroad — in little things like management of tongue and temper, as well as in great ones, like the government of kingdoms — the Christian’s warfare must go on unceasingly. The foe we have to deal with keeps no holidays, never slumbers, and never

sleeps. So long as we have breath in our bodies, we must keep our armour on, and remember that we are on an enemy's ground. "Even on the brink of Jordan," said a dying saint, "I find Satan nibbling at my heels." We must fight till we die.

Let us consider well these propositions. Let us take care that our own personal religion is real, genuine, and true. The saddest symptom about many so-called Christians is the utter absence of anything like conflict and fight in their Christianity. They eat, they drink, they dress, they work, they amuse themselves, they get money, they spend money, they go through a scanty round of formal religious services once or twice every week. But the great spiritual warfare — its watchings and strugglings, its agonies and anxieties, its battles and contests — of all this, they appear to know nothing at all. Let us take care that this case is not our own. The worst state of a soul is "when the strong man armed keeps the house, and his goods are at peace" — when he leads men and women "captive at his will," and they make no resistance. The worst chains are those which are neither felt nor seen by the prisoner. (Luk 11.21; 2Tim 2.26)

We may take comfort about our souls if we know anything of an inward fight and conflict. It is the invariable companion of genuine Christian holiness. It is not everything, I am well aware, but it is something. Do we find in our heart of hearts a spiritual struggle? Do we feel anything of the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that we cannot do the things we would? (Gal 5.17) Are we conscious of two principles within us, contending for the mastery? Do we feel anything of war in our inward man? Well, let us thank God for it! It is a good sign. It is strongly probable evidence of the great work of sanctification. All true saints are soldiers. Anything is better than apathy, stagnation, deadness, and indifference. We are in a better state than many. Most so-called Christians have no feeling at all. We are evidently no friends of Satan. Like the kings of this world, he does not war against his own subjects. The very fact that he assaults us should fill our minds with hope. I say again, let us take comfort. The child of God has two great marks about him, and of these two we have one. HE MAY BE KNOWN BY HIS INWARD WARFARE, AS WELL AS BY HIS INWARD PEACE.

**II.** I pass on to the second thing which I have to say in handling my subject: *True Christianity is the fight of faith.*

In this respect, Christian warfare is utterly unlike the conflicts of this world. It does not depend on the strong arm, the quick eye, or the swift foot. It is not waged with carnal weapons, but with spiritual. Faith is the hinge on which victory turns. Success depends entirely on believing.

*A general faith in the truth of God's written Word* is the primary foundation of the Christian soldier's character.

- He is what he is,
- does what he does,
- thinks as he thinks,
- acts as he acts,
- hopes as he hopes,
- behaves as he behaves,

— for one simple reason: he believes certain propositions revealed and laid down in Holy Scripture. “He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Heb 11.5)

A religion without doctrine or dogma is a thing which many are fond of talking about in the present day. It sounds very fine at first. It looks very pretty at a distance. But the moment we sit down to examine and consider it, we find it a simple impossibility. We might as well talk about a body without bones and sinews. No man will ever be anything or do anything in religion, unless he believes something. Even those who profess to hold the miserable and uncomfortable views of the Deists are obliged to confess that they believe something. With all their bitter sneers against dogmatic theology and Christian credulity, as they call it, they themselves have a kind of faith.

As for true Christians, faith is the very backbone of their spiritual existence. No one ever fights earnestly against the world, the flesh, and the devil, unless he has engraven on his heart certain great principles which he believes. What they are he may hardly know, and may certainly not be able to define or write down. But there they are, and consciously or unconsciously, they form the roots of his religion. Wherever you see a man, whether rich or poor, learned or unlearned, wrestling manfully with sin, and trying to overcome it, you may be sure there are certain great principles which that man believes. The poet who wrote the famous lines: “For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight, He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right,” was a clever man,<sup>12</sup> but a poor divine. There is no such thing as right living without faith and believing.

*A special faith in our Lord Jesus Christ’s person, work, and office*, is the life, heart, and mainspring of the Christian soldier’s character. He sees by faith an unseen Saviour,

- who loved him,
- gave Himself for him,
- paid his debts for him,
- bore his sins,
- carried his transgressions,
- rose again for him,
- and appears in heaven for him as his Advocate at the right hand of God.

He sees Jesus, and clings to Him. Seeing this Saviour and trusting in Him, he feels peace and hope, and willingly does battle against the foes of his soul. He sees,

- his many sins
- his weak heart,
- a tempting world,
- a busy devil.

And if he looked only at them, he might well despair. But he also sees,

- a *mighty* Saviour,
- an *interceding* Saviour,
- a *sympathizing* Saviour,
- His *blood*,
- His *righteousness*,

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<sup>12</sup> [Alexander Pope \(1688-1744\) – English poet.](#)

— His everlasting *priesthood*.

And he believes that all this is his own. He sees Jesus, and casts his whole weight on Him. Seeing Him, he cheerfully fights on with a full confidence that he will prove “more than conqueror through Him that loved him.” (Rom 8.37)

*Habitual lively faith in Christ’s presence and readiness to help*, is the secret of the Christian soldier fighting successfully.

It must never be forgotten that faith admits degrees. All men do not believe alike, and even the same person has his ebbs and flows of faith, and believes more heartily at one time than another. According to the degree of his faith, the Christian fights well or poorly, wins victories, or suffers occasional repulses, comes off triumphant, or loses a battle.

He who has the most faith will always be the happiest and most comfortable soldier. Nothing makes the anxieties of warfare sit so lightly on a man as the assurance of Christ’s love and continual protection. Nothing enables him to bear the fatigue of watching, struggling, and wrestling against sin, like the indwelling confidence that Christ is on his side and success is sure. It is the “shield of faith” which quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one. — It is the man who can say, “I know whom I have believed,” who can say in time of suffering, “I am not ashamed.” — He who wrote those glowing words, “We do not faint;” “Our light affliction which endures but for a moment works in us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” — was the man who wrote with the same pen, “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” — It is the man who said, “I live by the faith of the Son of God,” who said in the same Epistle, “the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.” — It is the man who said, “To me to live is Christ,” who said, in the same Epistle, “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content with it.” “I can do all things through Christ.” — The more faith, the more victory! The more faith, the more inward peace! (Eph 6.16; 2Tim 1.12; 2Cor 4.17, 18; Gal 2.20; 6.14; Phi 1. 21; 4.11, 13)

I think it impossible to overrate the value and importance of faith. Well may the Apostle Peter call it “precious.” (2Pet 1.1) Time would fail me if I tried to recount a hundredth part of the victories which Christian soldiers have obtained by faith.

Let us take down our Bibles and read with attention the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Let us mark the long list of worthies whose names are thus recorded, from Abel down to Moses, even before Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, and brought life and immortality into full light by the Gospel. Let us note well what battles they won against the world, the flesh, and the devil. And then let us remember that *believing* did it all. These men looked forward to the promised Messiah. They saw Him that is invisible. “By *faith* the elders obtained a good report.” (Heb 11.2-27)

Let us turn to the pages of early Church history. Let us see how the primitive Christians held fast their religion even unto death, and were not shaken by the fiercest persecutions of heathen Emperors. For centuries, men like Polycarp and Ignatius were never wanting, who were ready to die rather than deny Christ. Fines, and prisons, and torture, and fire, and sword, were unable to crush the spirit of the noble army of martyrs. The whole power of imperial Rome, the mistress of the world, proved unable to stamp out the religion which

began with a few fishermen and publicans in Palestine! And then let us remember that believing in an unseen Jesus was the Church's strength. They won their victory by *faith*.

Let us examine the story of the PROTESTANT REFORMATION. Let us study the lives of its leading champions — Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, Ridley, Latimer, and Hooper. Let us mark how these gallant soldiers of Christ stood firm against a host of adversaries, and were ready to die for their principles. What battles they fought! What controversies they maintained! What contradiction they endured! What tenacity of purpose they exhibited against a world in arms! And then let us remember that believing in an unseen Jesus was the secret of their strength. They overcame by *faith*.

Let us consider the men who have made the greatest marks in Church history in the last hundred years. Let us observe how men like Wesley, Whitefield, Venn, and Romaine, stood alone in their day and generation, and revived English religion in the face of opposition from men high in office, and in the face of slander, ridicule, and persecution from nine-tenths of professing Christians in our land. Let us observe how men like William Wilberforce, Havelock, and Hedley Vicars, have witnessed for Christ in the most difficult positions, and displayed a banner for Christ even at the regimental mess-table, or on the floor of the House of Commons. Let us mark how these noble witnesses never flinched to the end, and won the respect even of their worst adversaries. And then let us remember that believing in an unseen Christ is the key to all their characters. By *faith* they lived, and walked, and stood, and overcame.

Would anyone live the life of a Christian soldier? Let him pray for faith. It is the gift of God; and a gift which those who ask will never ask for in vain. You must *believe*, before you *do*. If men do nothing in religion, it is because they do not believe. Faith is the first step toward heaven.

Would anyone fight the fight of a Christian soldier successfully and prosperously? Let him pray for a continual increase of faith. Let him abide in Christ, get closer to Christ, tighten his hold on Christ every day that he lives. Let his daily prayer be that of the disciples — “Lord, increase my faith.” (Luk 17.5) Watch jealously over your faith, if you have any. It is the citadel of the Christian character, on which the safety of the whole fortress depends. It is the point which Satan loves to assail. All lies at his mercy if faith is overthrown. Here, if we love life, we must especially stand on our guard.

**III.** The last thing I have to say is this: *True Christianity is a **good** fight.*

“Good” is a curious word to apply to any warfare. All worldly war is more or less evil. No doubt it is an absolute necessity in many cases — to procure the liberty of nations, to prevent the weak from being trampled down by the strong — but still, it is an evil. It entails an awful amount of bloodshed and suffering. It hurries myriads into eternity, who are completely unprepared for their change. It calls forth the worst passions of man. It causes enormous waste and destruction of property. It fills peaceful homes with mourning widows and orphans. It spreads poverty, taxation, and national distress far and wide. It disarranges all the order of society. It interrupts the work of the Gospel and the growth of Christian missions. In short, war is an immense and incalculable evil, and every praying man should cry night and day, “Give peace in our time.” And yet there is one warfare which is emphatically “good,” and one fight in which there is no evil. That warfare is the Christian warfare. That fight is the fight of the soul.

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Now, what are the reasons why the Christian fight is a “good fight”? What are the points in which his warfare is superior to the warfare of this world? Let me examine this matter, and open it out in order. I dare not pass the subject and leave it unnoticed. I want no one to begin the life of a Christian soldier without counting the cost. I would not keep back from anyone, that if he would be holy and see the Lord, then he must fight; and that the Christian fight, though spiritual, is real and severe. It needs courage, boldness, and perseverance. But I want my readers to know that there is abundant encouragement if they will only *begin* the battle. The Scripture does not call the Christian fight “a good fight” without reason and cause. Let me try to show what I mean.

(a) The Christian’s fight is good *because it is fought under the best of generals*. The Leader and Commander of all believers is our Divine Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ — a Saviour of perfect wisdom, infinite love, and almighty power. The Captain of our salvation never fails to lead His soldiers to victory. He never makes any useless movements, never errs in judgment, never commits any mistake. His eye is on all His followers, from the greatest of them even to the least. The humblest servant in His army is not forgotten. The weakest and most sickly is cared for, remembered, and kept unto salvation. The souls whom He has purchased and redeemed with His own blood are far too precious to be wasted and thrown away. Surely this is good!

(b) The Christian’s fight is good, *because it is fought with the best of helps*. Weak as each believer is in himself, the Holy Spirit dwells in him, and his body is a temple of the Holy Ghost. Chosen by God the Father, washed in the blood of the Son, renewed by the Spirit, he does not go into warfare at his own expense, [1Cor 9.7](#) and he is never alone.

- God the *Holy Ghost* daily teaches, leads, guides, and directs him.
- God the *Father* guards him by His almighty power.
- God the *Son* intercedes for him every moment, like Moses on the mount, while he is fighting in the valley below.

A threefold cord like this can never be broken! His daily provisions and supplies never fail. His commissariat <sup>13</sup> is never defective. His bread and his water are sure. Weak as he seems in himself, like a worm, he is strong in the Lord to do great exploits. Surely this is good!

(c) The Christian fight is a good fight, *because it is fought with the best of promises*. To every believer belong exceeding great and precious promises — all Yes and Amen in Christ [2Cor 1.20](#) — promises sure to be fulfilled, because they are made by One who cannot lie, and who has the power as well as the will to keep His word.

- “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” (Rom 6.14)
- “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” (Rom 16.20)
- “He that has begun a good work will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Phi 1.6)
- “When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the floods, they shall not overflow you.” (Isa 43.2)
- “My sheep shall never perish, nor shall anyone pluck them out of my hand.” (Joh 10.28)

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<sup>13</sup> *Commissariat*: his stock or supply of food.

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- “Whoever comes to Me, I will by no means cast out.” (Joh 6.37)
- “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” (Heb 13.5)
- “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.” (Rom 8.38)

Words like these are worth their weight in gold! Who does not know that promises of coming aid have cheered the defenders of besieged cities, like Lucknow, and raised them above their natural strength? Have we never heard that the promise of “help before night” had much to say to the mighty victory of Waterloo? Yet all such promises are as nothing compared to the rich treasure of believers, the eternal promises of God. Surely this is good!

(d) The Christian’s fight is a good fight, *because it is fought with the best of issues and results*. No doubt it is a way in which there are tremendous struggles, agonizing conflicts, wounds, bruises, watchings, fastings, and fatigue. But still, every believer, without exception is “more than a conqueror through Him that loved him.” (Rom 8.37) No soldiers of Christ are ever lost, missing, or left dead on the battlefield. No mourning will ever need to be put on, and no tears to be shed for either private or officer in the army of Christ. The muster roll, when the last evening comes, will be found precisely the same that it was in the morning. The English Guards marched out of London to the Crimean campaign a magnificent body of men; but many of the gallant fellows laid their bones in a foreign grave, and never saw London again. Far different will be the arrival of the Christian army in “the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” (Heb 11.10) Not one will be found missing. The words of our great Captain will be found true: “Of them which You have given Me, I have lost *none*.” (Joh 18.9) Surely this is good!

(e) The Christian’s fight is good, *because it does good to the soul of him that fights it*. All other wars have a bad, lowering, and demoralising tendency. They call forth the worst passions of the human mind. They harden the conscience, and sap the foundations of religion and morality. The Christian warfare alone tends to call forth the best things that are left in man.

- It promotes *humility* and *charity*.
- It lessens *selfishness* and *worldliness*.
- It induces men to set their affections on *things above*.

The old, the sick, the dying, are never known to repent of fighting Christ’s battles against sin, the world, and the devil. Their only regret is that they did not begin to serve Christ long before. The experience of that eminent saint, Philip Henry,<sup>14</sup> does not stand alone. In his last days he said to his family, “I take you all to record that a life spent in the service of Christ is the happiest life that a man can spend on earth.” Surely this is good!

(f) The Christian’s fight is a good fight, *because it does good to the world*. All other wars have a devastating, ravaging, and injurious effect. The march of an army through a land is an awful scourge to the inhabitants. Wherever it goes it impoverishes, wastes, and does harm. Injury to persons, property, feelings, and morals invariably accompanies it.

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Henry (1631-1696) – Puritan pastor.

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Far different are the effects produced by Christian soldiers. Wherever they live they are a blessing. They raise the standard of religion and morality. They invariably check the progress of drunkenness. Sabbath-breaking, profligacy, and dishonesty. Even their enemies are obliged to respect them. Go where you please, you will rarely find that barracks and garrisons do good to the neighbourhood. But go where you please, you will find that the presence of a few true Christians is a blessing. Surely this is good!

(g) Finally, the Christian's fight is good, *because it ends in a glorious reward for all who fight it*. Who can tell the wages that Christ will pay to all His faithful people? Who can estimate the good things that our Divine Captain has laid up for those who confess Him before men? A grateful country can give to her successful warriors medals, Victoria Crosses, pensions, peerages, honours, and titles. But it can give nothing that will last and endure forever, nothing that can be carried beyond the grave. Palaces like Blenheim and Strathfield can only be enjoyed for a few years. The bravest generals and soldiers must go down one day before the King of Terrors. Better, far better, is the position of him who fights under Christ's banner against sin, the world, and the devil. He may get little praise of man while he lives, and go down to the grave with little honour; but he will have that which is far better, because it is far more enduring. He will have "a crown of glory that does not fade away." (1Pet 5.4) Surely this is good!

Let us settle it in our minds that the Christian fight is a good fight — really good, truly good, emphatically good. We see only part of it as yet;

- we see the struggle, but not the end;
- we see the campaign, but not the reward;
- we see the cross, but not the crown.

We see a few humble, broken-spirited, penitent, praying people, who are enduring hardships and despised by the world; but we do not see,

- the hand of God over them,
- the face of God smiling on them,
- the kingdom of glory prepared for them.

These things are yet to be revealed. Let us not judge by appearances. There are more good things about the Christian warfare than we see.

And now let me conclude my whole subject with a few words of practical application. Our lot is cast in times when the world seems thinking of little else but battles and fighting. The iron is entering into the soul of more than one nation, and the mirth of many a fair district is clean gone. Surely in times like these, a minister may fairly call on men to remember their spiritual warfare. Let me say a few parting words about the great fight of the soul.

(1) It may be that *you are struggling hard for the rewards of this world*. Perhaps you are straining every nerve to obtain money, or place, or power, or pleasure. If that is your case, take care. Your sowing will lead to a crop of bitter disappointment. Unless you mind what you are about, your latter end will be to lie down in sorrow.

Thousands have trodden the path you are pursuing, awoke too late, and found it ended in misery and eternal ruin. They fought hard for wealth, honour, office, and promotion, and turned their backs on God, Christ, heaven, and the world to come. And what has their end

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been? Often, far too often, they have found out that their whole life has been a grand mistake. They have tasted by bitter experience the feelings of the dying statesman who cried aloud in his last hours, “The battle is fought; the battle is fought; but the victory is not won.”

For your own happiness’ sake, resolve this day to join the Lord’s side. Shake off your past carelessness and unbelief. Come out from the ways of a thoughtless, unreasoning world. Take up the cross, and become a good soldier of Christ. “Fight the good fight of faith,” that you may be happy as well as safe.

Think what the children of this world will often do for liberty, without any religious principle. Remember how Greeks, Romans, Swiss, and Tyrolese, have endured the loss of all things, and even life itself, rather than bend their necks to a foreign yoke. Let their example provoke you to emulation. If men can do so much for a corruptible crown, how much more should you do for one which is incorruptible! Awake to a sense of the misery of being a slave. For life, and happiness, and liberty, arise and fight.

Do not fear to begin and enlist under Christ’s banner. The great Captain of your salvation rejects none that come to Him. Like David in the cave of Adullam, He is ready to receive all who apply to Him, however unworthy they may feel themselves. None who repent and believe are too bad to be enrolled in the ranks of Christ’s army. All who come to Him by faith are admitted, clothed, armed, trained, and finally led on to complete victory. Fear not to begin this very day. There is yet room for you.

Do not fear to go on fighting, once you enlist. The more thorough and whole-hearted you are as a soldier, the more comfortable will you find your warfare. No doubt you will often meet with trouble, fatigue, and hard fighting, before your warfare is accomplished. But let none of these things move you. Greater is He that is for you, than all those who are against you. Everlasting liberty or everlasting captivity are the alternatives before you. Choose liberty, and fight to the last!

(2) *It may be that you know something of Christian warfare*, and are a tried and proved soldier already. If that is your case, accept a parting word of advice and encouragement from a fellow-soldier. Let me speak to myself as well as to you. Let us stir up our minds by way of remembrance. There are some things which we cannot remember too well.

Let us remember that if we would fight successfully, we must put on the *whole* armour of God, and never lay it aside till we die. Not a single piece of the armour can be dispensed with. The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the helmet of hope — each and all are needful. Not a single day can we dispense with any part of this armour. An old veteran in Christ’s army who died 200 years ago, says well, “In heaven we shall appear, not in armour, but in robes of glory. But here our arms are to be worn night and day. We must *walk, work, sleep* in them, or else we are not true soldiers of Christ.” (Gurnall’s *Christian Armour*)

Let us remember the solemn words of an inspired warrior, who went to his rest 1800 years ago: “No man that wars, entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.” (2Tim 2.4) May we never forget that saying!

Let us remember that some have seemed good soldiers for a little season, and talked loudly of what they would do, and yet turned back disgracefully in the day of battle.

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Let us never forget Balaam, Judas, Demas, and Lot's wife. Whatever we are, and however weak, let us be real, genuine, true, and sincere.

Let us remember that the eye of our loving Saviour is upon us, morning, noon, and night. He will never suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for He suffered Himself being tempted. He knows what battles and conflicts are, for He Himself was assaulted by the Prince of this world. Having such a High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. (Heb 4.14)

Let us remember that thousands of soldiers before us have fought the same battle that we are fighting, and come away more than conquerors through Him that loved them. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb; and so also may we. Christ's arm is quite as strong as ever, and Christ's heart is just as loving as ever. He that saved men and women before us, is one who never changes. He is "able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him." Then let us cast our doubts and fears away. Let us "follow those who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and are waiting for us to join them. (Heb 7.25; 6.12)

Finally, let us remember that the time is short, and the coming of the Lord draws near. A few more battles and the last trumpet shall sound; and the Prince of Peace shall come to reign on a renewed earth. A few more struggles and conflicts, and then we shall bid an eternal good-bye to warfare, and to sin, sorrow, and death. Then let us fight on to the last, and never surrender. Thus says the Captain of our salvation: "He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (Rev 21.7)

Let me conclude all with the words of John Bunyan, in one of the most beautiful parts of *Pilgrim's Progress*. He is describing the end of one of his best and holiest pilgrims: —

"After this it was noised abroad that Mr. *Valiant-for-truth* was sent for by a summons, by the same party as the others. And he had this word for a token that the summons was true, 'The pitcher was broken at the fountain.' (Ecc 12.6) When he understood it, he called for his friends, and told them of it. Then he said, 'I am going to my Father's house; and though I have got here with great difficulty, yet now I do not repent of all the troubles I have been through to arrive where I am. I give my sword to him that will succeed me in my pilgrimage, and I give my courage and skill to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles, who will now be my rewarder.' When the day that he must go home had come, many accompanied him to the river-side, into which, as he went down, he said, 'O death where is your sting?' And as he went down deeper, he cried, 'O grave, where is your victory?' So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

May our end be like this! May we never forget that without fighting there can be no holiness while we live, and no crown of glory when we die!

## 5. THE COST

*“Which of you, intending to build a house, does not first sit down and count the cost?”*

— Luk 14.28

THE text which heads this page is one of great importance. Few are the people who are not often obliged to ask themselves — “What does it cost?”

In buying property, in building houses, in furnishing rooms, in forming plans, in changing dwellings, in educating children, it is wise and prudent to look forward and consider. Many would save themselves much sorrow and trouble if they would only remember the question — “What does it cost?”

But there is one subject on which it is specially important to “count the cost.” That subject is the salvation of our souls. What does it cost to be a true Christian? What does it cost to be a really holy man? This, after all, is the grand question. For want of thought about this, thousands, after seeming to begin well, turn away from the road to heaven, and are lost forever in hell. Let me try to say a few words which may throw light on the subject.

I. I will show, firstly, *what it costs to be a true Christian.*

II. I will explain, secondly, *why it is of such great importance to count the cost.*

III. I will give, in the last place, *some hints which may help men to count the cost rightly.*

We are living in strange times. Events are hurrying on with singular rapidity. We never know “what a day may bring;” we know much less what may happen in a *year!* — We live in a day of great religious profession. Scores of professing Christians in every part of the land are expressing a desire for more holiness and a higher degree of spiritual life. Yet nothing is more common than to see people receiving the Word with joy, and then after two or three years, falling away and going back to their sins. They had not considered “what it costs” to be a really consistent believer and holy Christian. Surely these are times when we should often sit down and “count the cost,” and consider the state of our souls. We must mind what we are about. If we desire to be truly holy, it is a good sign. We may thank God for putting the desire into our hearts. But still, the cost ought to be counted. No doubt Christ’s way to eternal life is a way of pleasantness. But it is folly to shut our eyes to the fact that His way is narrow, and the cross comes before the crown.

I. I have, first, to show *what it costs to be a true Christian.*

Let there be no mistake about my meaning. I am not examining what it costs to save a Christian’s soul. I know well that it costs nothing less than the blood of the Son of God to provide an atonement, and to redeem man from hell. The price paid for our redemption was nothing less than the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary. We “are bought with a price.” “Christ gave Himself a ransom for all.” (1Cor 6.20; 1Tim 2.6) But all this is wide of the question. The point I want to consider is another one altogether. It is what a man must be *ready to give up* if he wishes to be saved. It is the amount of sacrifice a man must submit to if he intends to serve Christ. It is in this sense that I raise the question, “What does it cost?” And I firmly believe that it is a most important one.

I grant freely that it costs little to be a mere outward Christian. A man has only got to attend a place of worship twice on Sunday, and to be tolerably moral during the week, and he has gone as far as thousands around him ever go in religion. All this is cheap and easy

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work: it entails no self-denial or self-sacrifice. If this is saving Christianity, and it will take us to heaven when we die, then we must alter the description of the way of life, and write, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to heaven!"

But according to the standard of the Bible, it *does* cost something to be a real Christian. There are,

- enemies to be overcome,
- battles to be fought,
- sacrifices to be made,

There is,

- an Egypt to be forsaken,
- a wilderness to be passed through,
- a cross to be carried,
- a race to be run.

Conversion is not putting a man in an arm-chair and taking him easily to heaven. It is the beginning of a mighty conflict, in which it costs much to win the victory. Hence arises the unspeakable importance of "counting the cost."

Let me try to show precisely and particularly what it costs to be a true Christian. Let us suppose that a man is disposed to take service with Christ, and feels drawn and inclined to follow Him. Let us suppose that some affliction, or some sudden death, or an awakening sermon, has stirred his conscience, and made him feel the value of his soul and desire to be a true Christian. No doubt there is everything to encourage him. His sins may be freely forgiven, however many and great they are. His heart may be completely changed, however cold and hard it is. Christ and the Holy Spirit, mercy and grace, are all ready for him. But still, he should count the cost. Let us see particularly, one by one, the things that his religion will cost him.

(1) For one thing, it will cost him *his self-righteousness*. He must cast away all pride and high thoughts, and conceit of his own goodness. He must be content to go to heaven as a poor sinner saved only by free grace, and owing all to the merit and righteousness of another. He must really feel as well as say the Prayer-book words — that he has "erred and gone astray like a lost sheep," that he has "left undone the things he should have done, and done the things he should not have done, and that there is no health in him." He must be willing to give up all trust in his own morality, respectability, praying, Bible-reading, church-going, and sacrament-receiving, and to trust in nothing but Jesus Christ.

Now, this sounds hard to some. I do not wonder. "Sir," said a godly ploughman to the well-known James Hervey, of Weston Favell, "it is harder to deny proud self than sinful self. But it is absolutely necessary." Let us set down this item first and foremost in our account. To be a true Christian it will cost a man his self-righteousness.

(2) For another thing, it will cost a man *his sins*. He must be willing to give up every habit and practice which is wrong in God's sight. He must set his face against it, quarrel with it, break off from it, fight with it, crucify it, and labour to keep it under, whatever the world around him may say or think. He must do this honestly and fairly. There must be no separate truce with any special sin which he loves. He must count *all* sins as his deadly enemies, and hate every false way. Whether little or great, whether open or secret, all his

sins must be thoroughly renounced. They may struggle hard with him every day, and sometimes almost get the mastery over him. But he must never give way to them. He must keep up a perpetual war with his sins. It is written — “Cast away from you all your transgressions.” — “Break off your sins and iniquities.” — “Cease to do evil.” — (Eze 18.31; Dan 4.27; Isa 1.16)

This also sounds hard. I do not wonder. Our sins are often as dear to us as our children: we love them, hug them, cling to them, and delight in them. To part with them is as hard as cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye. But it must be done. The parting must come. “Though wickedness is sweet in the sinner’s mouth, though he hides it under his tongue; though he spares it, and does not forsake it,” yet it must be given up if he wishes to be saved. (Job 20.12, 13) He and sin must quarrel if he and God are to be friends. Christ is willing to receive any sinners. But He will not receive them if they will stick to their sins. Let us set down that item second in our account. To be a Christian it will cost a man his sins.

(3) For another thing, it will cost a man *his love of ease*. He must take pains and trouble, if he means to run a successful race towards heaven. He must daily watch and stand on his guard, like a soldier on enemy’s ground. He must take heed to his behaviour every hour of the day, in every company, and in every place, in public as well as in private, among strangers as well as at home. He must be careful over his time, his tongue, his temper, his thoughts, his imagination, his motives, his conduct in every relation of life. He must be diligent about his prayers, his Bible-reading, and his use of Sundays, with all their means of grace. In attending to these things, he may come far short of perfection; but there is none of them that he can safely neglect. “The soul of the sluggard desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.” (Pro 13.4)

This also sounds hard. There is nothing we naturally dislike so much as “trouble” about our religion. We hate trouble. We secretly wish we could have a “vicarious” Christianity, and could be good by proxy, and have everything done for us. Anything that requires exertion and labour is entirely against the grain of our hearts. But the soul can have “no gains without pains.” Let us set down that third item in our account. To be a Christian, it will cost a man his love of ease.

(4) In the last place, it will cost a man *the favour of the world*. He must be content to be thought ill of by man if he pleases God. He must count it no strange thing to be mocked, ridiculed, slandered, persecuted, and even hated. He must not be surprised to find his opinions and practices in religion despised and held up to scorn. He must submit to be thought by many a fool, an enthusiast,<sup>15</sup> and a fanatic — to have his words perverted and his actions misrepresented. In fact, he must not marvel if some call him mad. The Master says — “Remember the word that I said to you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also.” (Joh 15.20)

I dare say this also sounds hard. We naturally dislike unjust dealing and false charges, and think it very hard to be accused without cause. We would not be flesh and blood if we did not wish to have the good opinion of our neighbours. It is always unpleasant to be spoken against, and forsaken, and lied about, and to stand alone. But there is no help for

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<sup>15</sup> *Enthusiast*: someone who uses emotionalism to make a point, rather than biblical truth and logic.

it. The cup which our Master drank must be drunk by His disciples. They must be “despised and rejected by men.” (Isa 53.3) Let us set down that last item in our account. To be a Christian, it will cost a man the favour of the world.

Such is the account of what it costs to be a true Christian. I grant the list is a heavy one. But where is the item that could be removed? Bold indeed must that man be who would dare to say that we may keep our self-righteousness, our sins, our laziness, and our love of the world, and yet be saved!

I grant that it costs much to be a true Christian. But who in his sound senses can doubt that it is worth any cost to have the soul saved? When the ship is in danger of sinking, the crew think nothing of casting overboard the precious cargo. When a limb is mortified, a man will submit to any severe operation, even to amputation, to save his life. Surely a Christian should be willing to give up anything which stands between him and heaven. *A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing!* A cheap Christianity, without a cross, will prove in the end to be a useless Christianity, without a crown.

**II.** Now, in the second place I have to explain *why “counting the cost” is of such great importance to man’s soul.*

I might easily settle this question by laying down the principle, that no duty enjoined by Christ can ever be neglected without damage. I might show how many shut their eyes throughout life to the nature of saving religion, and refuse to consider what it really costs to be a Christian. I might describe how at last, when life is ebbing away, they wake up, and make a few spasmodic efforts to turn to God. I might tell you how they find to their amazement that repentance and conversion are no such easy matters as they had supposed, and that it costs “a great sum” to be a true Christian. They discover that habits of pride and sinful indulgence, and love of ease, and worldliness, are not so easily laid aside as they had dreamed. And so, after a faint struggle, they give up in despair, and leave the world hopeless, graceless, and unfit to meet God! They had flattered themselves all their days that religion would be easy work once they took it up seriously. But they open their eyes too late, and discover for the first time that they are ruined because they never “counted the cost.”

But there is one class of persons to whom especially I wish to address myself in handling this part of my subject. It is a large class — an increasing class — and a class which in these days is in peculiar danger. Let me try to describe this class in a few plain words. It deserves our best attention.

The persons I speak of are not thoughtless about religion: they think a good deal about it. They are not ignorant of religion: they know the outlines of it pretty well. But their great defect is that they are not “rooted and grounded” in their faith. Too often they have picked up their knowledge second-hand, from being in religious families, or from being trained in religious ways; but they have never worked it out by their own inward experience. Too often they have hastily taken up a profession of religion under the pressure of circumstances, from sentimental feelings, from animal excitement, or from a vague desire to do like others around them, but without any solid work of grace in their hearts. Persons like these are in a position of immense danger. They are precisely those, if Bible examples are worth anything, who need to be exhorted “to count the cost.”

For want of “counting the cost” myriads of the children of Israel perished miserably in the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan. They left Egypt full of zeal and fervour, as if nothing could stop them. But when they found dangers and difficulties in the way, their courage soon cooled down. They had never reckoned on trouble. They had thought the promised land would be entirely before them in a few days. And so, when enemies, privations, hunger, and thirst began to test them, they murmured against Moses and God, and would gladly have gone back to Egypt. In a word, they had “not counted the cost,” and so they lost everything, and died in their sins.

For want of “counting the cost,” many of our Lord Jesus Christ’s hearers went back after a time, and “walked no more with Him.” (Joh 6.66) When they first saw His miracles, and heard His preaching, they thought “the kingdom of God would immediately appear.” They cast their lot with His Apostles, and followed Him without thinking of the consequences. But when they found that there were hard doctrines to be believed, and hard work to be done, and hard treatment to be borne, their faith gave way entirely, and proved to be nothing at all. In a word, they had not “counted the cost,” and so they made shipwreck of their profession. [1Tim 1.19](#)

For want of “counting the cost,” King Herod returned to his old sins, and destroyed his soul. He liked to hear John the Baptist preach. He “observed” and honoured him as a just and holy man. He even “did many things” which were right and good. But when he found that he must give up his darling Herodias, his religion entirely broke down. He had not reckoned on this. He had not “counted the cost.” (Mar 6.20)

For want of “counting the cost,” Demas forsook the company of St. Paul, forsook the Gospel, forsook Christ, forsook heaven. For a long time he journeyed with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and was actually a “fellow-labourer.” But when he found he could not have the friendship of this world as well as the friendship of God, he gave up his Christianity and clung to the world. “Demas has forsaken me,” says St. Paul, “having loved this present world.” (2Tim 4.10) He had not “counted the cost.”

For want of “counting the cost,” the hearers of powerful evangelical preachers often come to miserable ends. They are stirred and excited into professing what they have not really experienced. They receive the Word with a “joy” so extravagant that it almost startles old Christians. They run for a time with such zeal and fervour that they seem likely to outstrip all others. They talk and work for spiritual objects with such enthusiasm that they make older believers feel ashamed. But when the novelty and freshness of their feelings is gone, a change comes over them. They prove to have been nothing more than stony-ground hearers. The description the great Master gives in the Parable of the Sower is exemplified exactly. “Temptation or persecution arises because of the Word, and they are offended.” (Mat 13.21) Little by little their zeal melts away, and their love becomes cold. By and by their seats are empty in the assembly of God’s people, and they are heard of no more among Christians. And why? They had “never counted the cost.”

For want of “counting the cost,” hundreds of professed converts, under religious revivals, go back to the world after a time, and bring disgrace on religion. They begin with a sadly mistaken notion of what is true Christianity. They fancy that it consists in nothing more than a so-called “coming to Christ,” and having strong inward feelings of joy and peace. And so, when they find, after a time, that there is a cross to be carried, that our hearts are deceitful, and that there is a busy devil always near us, they cool down in disgust, and

return to their old sins. And why? Because they had really never known what Bible Christianity is. They had never learned that we must “count the cost.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> I should be very sorry indeed if the language I have used above about revivals was misunderstood. To prevent this I will offer a few remarks by way of explanation.

For true revivals of religion, no one can be more deeply thankful than I am. Wherever they may take place, and by whatever agents they may be effected, I desire to bless God for them, with all my heart. “If Christ is preached,” I rejoice, whoever may be the preacher. If souls are saved, I rejoice, by whatever section of the Church the word of life has been ministered.

But it is a melancholy fact that, in a world like this, you cannot have good without evil. I have no hesitation in saying, that one consequence of the revival movement has been the rise of a theological system which I feel obliged to call defective and mischievous in the extreme.

The leading feature of the theological system I refer to, is this: an extravagant and disproportionate magnifying of three points in religion, — viz., instantaneous conversion — the invitation of unconverted sinners to come to Christ, — and the possession of inward joy and peace as a test of conversion. I repeat that these three grand truths (for truths they are) are so incessantly and exclusively brought forward, in some quarters, that great harm is done.

Instantaneous conversion, no doubt, ought to be pressed on people. But surely they ought not to be led to suppose that there is no other sort of conversion, and that unless they are suddenly and powerfully converted to God, they are not converted at all.

The duty of coming to Christ at once, “just as we are,” should be pressed on all hearers. It is the very cornerstone of Gospel preaching. But surely men ought to be told to repent as well as to believe. They should be told why they are to come to Christ, and what they are to come for, and where their need arises from.

The nearness of peace and comfort in Christ should be proclaimed to men. But surely they should be taught that the possession of strong inward joys and high frames of mind is not essential to justification, and that there may be true faith and true peace without such very triumphant feelings. Joy alone is no certain evidence of grace.

The defects of the theological system I have in view appear to me to be these: (1) The work of the Holy Ghost in converting sinners is narrowed and confined far too much to one single way. Not all true converts are converted instantaneously, like Saul and the Philippian jailor. (2) Sinners are not sufficiently instructed about the holiness of God’s law, the depth of their sinfulness, and the real guilt of sin. To be incessantly telling a sinner to “come to Christ” is of little use, unless you tell him *why* he needs to come, and show him fully his sins. (3) Faith is not properly explained. In some cases people are taught that mere feeling is faith. In others they are taught that if they believe that Christ died for sinners they have faith! At this rate, the very devils are believers! (4) The possession of inward joy and assurance is made essential to believing. Yet assurance is certainly not of the essence of saving faith. There may be faith when there is no assurance. To insist on all believers at once “rejoicing,” as soon as they believe, is most unsafe. Some, I am quite sure, will rejoice without believing, while others will believe who cannot at once rejoice. (5) Last, but not least, the sovereignty of God in saving sinners, and the absolute necessity of preventing grace, are overlooked far too much. Many talk as if conversions could be manufactured at man’s pleasure, and as if there were no such text as this, “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy.” (Rom 9.16)

The mischief done by the theological system I refer to is, I am persuaded, very great. On the one hand, many humble-minded Christians are totally discouraged and daunted. They fancy they have no grace because they cannot reach up to the high frames and feelings which are pressed on their attention. On the other side, many graceless people are deluded into thinking they *are* “converted” because, under the pressure or animal excitement and temporary feelings, they are led to profess themselves Christians. And all this time the thoughtless and ungodly look on with contempt, and find fresh reasons for neglecting religion altogether.

The antidotes to the state of things that I deplore are plain and few. (1) Let “all the counsel of God be taught” in Scriptural proportion; and do not let two or three precious doctrines of the Gospel be allowed to overshadow all other truths. (2) Let repentance be taught fully as well as faith, and not thrust completely into the background. Our Lord Jesus Christ and St. Paul always taught both. (3) Let the variety of the Holy Ghost’s works be honestly stated and admitted; and while instantaneous conversion is pressed on men, let it not be taught as a necessity. (4) Let those who profess to have found immediate sensible peace be plainly warned to test themselves well, and to remember that *feeling* is not *faith*, and that “patient continuance in well-doing” is the great proof that faith is true. (Joh 8.31) (5) Let the great duty of “counting the cost” be constantly urged on all who are disposed to make a religious profession, and let them be honestly and fairly told that there is warfare as well as peace, a cross as well as a crown, in Christ’s service.

I am sure that unhealthy excitement is above all things to be dreaded in religion, because it often ends in fatal, soul-ruining reaction and utter deadness. And when multitudes are suddenly brought under the power of religious impressions, unhealthy excitement is almost sure to follow.

I do not have much faith in the soundness of conversions when they are said to take places in masses and wholesale. It does not seem to me in harmony with God’s general dealings in this dispensation. To my eyes it appears that God’s

## THE COST

For want of “counting the cost,” the children of religious parents often turn out poorly, and bring disgrace on Christianity. Familiar from their earliest years with the form and theory of the Gospel — taught even from infancy to repeat great leading texts — accustomed every week to be instructed in the Gospel, or to instruct others in Sunday schools — they often grow up professing a religion without knowing why, or without ever having thought seriously about it. And then when the realities of grown-up life begin to press upon them, they often astound everyone by dropping all their religion, and plunging right into the world. And why? They had never thoroughly understood the sacrifices which Christianity entails. They had never been taught to “count the cost.”

These are solemn and painful truths. But they are truths. They all help to show the immense importance of the subject I am now considering. They all point out the absolute necessity of pressing the subject of this paper on all who profess a desire for holiness, and of crying aloud in all the churches — “Count the Cost.”

I am bold to say that it would be well if the duty of “counting the cost” were more frequently taught than it is. Impatient hurry is the order of the day with many religionists. Instantaneous conversions, and immediate sensible peace, are the only results they seem to care for from the Gospel. Compared with these, all other things are thrown into the shade. Apparently, to produce them is the grand end and object of all their labours. I say without hesitation that such a naked, one-sided mode of teaching Christianity is mischievous in the extreme.

Let no one mistake my meaning. I thoroughly approve of offering men a full, free, present, and immediate salvation in Christ Jesus. I thoroughly approve of urging on man the possibility and the duty of immediate instantaneous conversion. In these matters I give way to no one. But I do say that these truths should not be set before men nakedly, singly, and alone. They should be told honestly what it is they are taking up if they profess a desire to come out from the world and serve Christ. They should not be pressed into the ranks of Christ’s army without being told what the warfare entails. In a word, they should be told honestly to “count the cost.”

Does anyone ask what our Lord Jesus Christ’s practice was in this matter? Let him read what St. Luke records. He tells us that on a certain occasion, “Great multitudes went with Him: and He turned and said to them, If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, indeed and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.” (Luk 14.25-27) I must plainly say, that I cannot reconcile this passage with the proceedings of many modern religious teachers. And yet, to my mind,

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ordinary plan is to call in individuals one by one. Therefore, when I hear of large numbers being suddenly converted all at one time, I hear of it with less hope than some. The healthiest and most enduring success in mission fields is certainly not where natives have come over to Christianity in a mass. The most satisfactory and firmest work at home does not always appear to me to be the work done in revivals.

There are two passages of Scripture which I would like to have frequently and fully expounded in the present day by all who preach the Gospel, and specially by those who have anything to do with revivals. One passage is the parable of the sower. That parable is not recorded three times over without good reason and a deep meaning. — The other passage is our Lord’s teaching about “counting the cost,” and the words which He spoke to the “great multitudes” whom He saw following Him. It is very noteworthy that He did not say anything on that occasion to flatter these volunteers or encourage them to follow Him. No, He saw what their case needed. He told them to stand still and “count the cost.” (Luk 14.25, etc.) I am not sure that some modern preachers would have adopted this course of treatment.

its doctrine is as clear as the sun at noon-day. It shows us that we should not hurry men into professing discipleship, without warning them plainly to “count the cost.”

Does anyone ask what the practice of the eminent and best preachers of the Gospel has been in days gone by? I am bold to say that they have all, with one mouth, borne testimony to the wisdom of our Lord’s dealing with the multitudes to which I just referred. Luther, and Latimer, and Baxter, and Wesley, and Whitefield, and Berridge, and Rowland Hill, were all keenly alive to the deceitfulness of man’s heart. They knew full well,

- that all that *glitters* is not *gold*,
- that *conviction* is not *conversion*,
- that *feeling* is not *faith*,
- that *sentiment* is not *grace*,
- that all *blossoms* do not become *fruit*.

“Do not be deceived,” was their constant cry. “Consider well what you do. Do not run before you are called. Count the cost.”

If we desire to do good, let us never be ashamed of walking in the steps of our Lord Jesus Christ. Work hard if you will, and have the opportunity, for the souls of others. Press them to consider their ways. Compel them with holy force to come in, to lay down their arms, and to yield themselves to God. Offer them salvation, ready, free, full, and immediate salvation. Press Christ and all His benefits on their acceptance. But in all your work, tell the truth, and the whole truth. Be ashamed to use the vulgar arts of a recruiting sergeant. Do not speak only of the uniform, the pay, and the glory; speak also of the enemies, the battle, the armour, the watching, the marching, and the drill. Do not present only one side of Christianity. Do not keep back “the cross” of self-denial that must be carried, when you speak of the cross on which Christ died for our redemption. Explain fully what Christianity entails. Entreat men to repent and come to Christ; but bid them at the same time to “count the cost.”

**III.** The third and last thing which I propose to do, is to *give some hints which may help men to “count the cost” rightly*.

I would be sorry indeed if I did not say something on this branch of my subject. I have no wish to discourage anyone, or to keep anyone back from Christ’s service. It is my heart’s desire to encourage everyone to go forward and take up the cross. Let us “count the cost” by all means, and count it carefully. But let us remember that if we count rightly, and look on all sides, there is nothing that need make us afraid.

Let us mention some things which should always enter into our calculations in counting the cost of true Christianity. Set down honestly and fairly what you will have to give up, and go through, if you become Christ’s disciple. Leave nothing out. Put it all down. But then set down side by side the following sums which I am going to give you. Do this fairly and correctly, and I am not afraid for the result.

- (a) Count up and compare, for one thing, *the profit and the loss*, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. You may possibly lose something in this world, but you will gain the salvation of your immortal soul. It is written — “What will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Mar 8.36)

(b) Count up and compare, for another thing, *the praise and the blame*, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. You may possibly be blamed by man, but you will have the praise of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Your blame will come from the lips of a few erring, blind, fallible men and women. Your praise will come from the King of kings and Judge of all the earth. It is only those whom He blesses who are really blessed. It is written, “Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.” (Mat 5.11, 12)

(c) Count up and compare, for another thing, *the friends and the enemies*, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. On the one side of you is the enmity of the devil and the wicked. On the other, you have the favour and friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Your enemies, at most, can only bruise your heel. They may rage loudly, and compass sea and land to work your ruin; but they cannot destroy you. Your Friend is able to save to the uttermost all those who come to God by Him. None shall ever pluck His sheep out of His hand. It is written — “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, who after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; indeed I say to you, fear Him.” (Luk 12.5)

(d) Count up and compare, for another thing, *the life that now is and the life to come*, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. The time present, no doubt, is not a time of ease. It is a time of watching and praying, fighting and struggling, believing and working. But it is only for a few years. The future time is the season of rest and refreshing. Sin will be cast out. Satan will be bound. And, best of all, it will be a rest forever. It is written, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2Cor 4.17, 18)

(e) Count up and compare, for another thing, *the pleasures of sin and the happiness of God’s service*, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. The pleasures that the worldly man gets by his ways are hollow, unreal, and unsatisfying. They are like the fire of thorns, flashing and crackling for a few minutes, and then quenched forever. The happiness that Christ gives to His people is something solid, lasting, and substantial. It is not dependent on health or circumstances. It never leaves a man, even in death. It ends in a crown of glory that does not fade away. It is written — “The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment.” — “As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool.” (Job 20.5; Ecc 7.6) But it is also written — “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you: not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (Joh 14.27)

(f) Count up and compare, for another thing, *the trouble that true Christianity entails, and the troubles that are in store for the wicked beyond the grave*. Grant for a moment that Bible-reading, and praying, and repenting, and believing, and holy living, require pains and self-denial. It is all nothing compared to that “wrath to come” which is stored up for the impenitent and unbelieving. A single day in hell will be worse than a whole life spent in carrying the cross. The “worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched,” are things which it surpasses man’s power to conceive fully or describe. It is

written, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.” (Luk 16.25)

(g) Count up and compare, in the last place, *the number of those who turn from sin and the world and serve Christ, and the number of those who forsake Christ and return to the world*. On the one side you will find thousands — on the other you will find none. Multitudes are every year turning out of the broad way and entering the narrow. None who really enter the narrow way grow tired of it and return to the broad. The footsteps in the downward road are often to be seen turning out of it. The footsteps in the road to heaven are all one way. It is written — “The way of the wicked is darkness” — “The way of transgressors is hard.” (Pro 4.19; 13.15) But it is also written — “The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day.” (Pro 4.8)

Such sums as these, no doubt, are often not done correctly. Not a few, I am well aware, are ever “halting between two opinions.” <sup>1</sup>Kng 18.21 They cannot make up their minds that it is worthwhile to serve Christ.

- The losses and gains
- The advantages and disadvantages
- The sorrows and the joys
- The helps and the hindrances

*With that faith*, we will set such things down at their *true* value. *Filled with that faith*, we will neither add to the cross nor subtract from the crown. Our conclusions will all be correct. Our sum total will be without error.

(1) In conclusion, let every reader of this paper think seriously *whether his religion costs him anything at present*. Very likely it costs you nothing. Very probably it neither costs you trouble, nor time, nor thought, nor care, nor pains, nor reading, nor praying, nor self-denial, nor conflict, nor working, nor labour of any kind. Now, mark what I say. Such a religion as this will never save your soul. It will never give you peace while you live, nor hope while you die. It will not support you in the day of affliction, nor cheer you in the hour of death. *A religion which costs nothing is worth nothing*. Awake before it is too late. Awake and repent. Awake and be converted. Awake and believe. Awake and pray. Do not rest till you can give a satisfactory answer to my question, “What does it cost?”

(2) Think, if you want stirring motives for serving God, *what it cost to provide a salvation for your soul*. Think how the Son of God left heaven and became Man, suffered on the cross, and lay in the grave, to pay your debt to God, and to work out for you a complete redemption. Think of all this and learn that it is no light matter to possess an immortal soul. It is worthwhile to take some trouble about one’s soul.

Ah, lazy man or woman, has it really come to this, that you will miss heaven for lack of trouble? Are you really determined to make shipwreck forever, from mere dislike to exertion? Away with the cowardly, unworthy thought. Arise and play the man. Say to yourself, “Whatever it may cost, I will, at any rate, strive to enter in at the strait gate.” Look at the cross of Christ, and take fresh courage. Look forward to death, judgment, and eternity, and be in earnest. It may cost much to be a Christian, but you may be sure it pays.

## THE COST

(3) If any reader of this paper really feels that he has counted the cost, and taken up the cross, I bid him to *persevere and press on*. I dare say that you often feel your heart faint, and are sorely tempted to give up in despair. Your enemies seem so many, your besetting sins so strong, your friends so few, the way so steep and narrow, that you hardly know what to do. But still I say, persevere and press on.

The time is very short. A few more years of watching and praying, a few more tossings on the sea of this world, a few more deaths and changes, a few more winters and summers, and all will be over. We will have fought our last battle, and will need to fight no more.

The presence and company of Christ will make amends for all we suffer here below. When we *see* as we have been *seen*, and look back on the journey of life, we will wonder at our own faintness of heart. We will marvel that we made so much of our cross, and thought so little of our crown.

We will marvel that in “counting the cost” we could ever doubt on which side the balance of profit lay. Let us take courage. We are not far from home. IT MAY COST MUCH TO BE A TRUE CHRISTIAN AND A CONSISTENT BELIEVER; BUT IT PAYS.

## 6. GROWTH

*“Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” — 2Pet 3.18.*

THE subject of the text which heads this page is one which I dare not omit in this volume about Holiness. It is one that ought to be deeply interesting to every true Christian. It naturally raises the questions, Do we grow in grace? Do we get on in our religion? Do we make progress?

To a mere formal Christian, I cannot expect the inquiry to seem worth attention. The man who has nothing more than a kind of Sunday religion — whose Christianity is like his Sunday clothes, put on once a week, and then laid aside — such a man cannot, of course, be expected to care about “growth in grace.” He knows nothing about such matters. “They are foolishness to him.” (1Cor 2.14) But to everyone who is downright earnest about his soul, and hungers and thirsts after spiritual life, the question ought to come home with searching power. Do we make progress in our religion? Do we grow?

The question is one that is always useful, but especially so at certain seasons. A Saturday night, a Communion Sunday, the return of a birthday, the end of a year — all these are seasons that ought to set us thinking, and make us look within. Time is fast flying. Life is fast ebbing away. The hour is daily drawing nearer when the reality of our Christianity will be tested, and it will be seen whether we have built on “the rock” or on “the sand.” Surely it becomes us from time to time to examine ourselves, and take account of our souls? Do we get on in spiritual things? Do we grow?

The question is one that is of special importance in the present day. Crude and strange opinions are floating in men’s minds on some points of doctrine, and among others on the point of “growth in grace,” as an essential part of true holiness. By some it is totally denied. By others it is explained away, and pared down to nothing. By thousands it is misunderstood, and consequently neglected. In a day like this, it is useful to look the whole subject of Christian growth squarely in the face,.

In considering this subject there are three things which I wish to bring forward and establish: —

- I. *The reality of religious growth.* There is such a thing as “growth in grace.”
- II. *The marks of religious growth.* There are marks by which “growth in grace” may be known.
- III. *The means of religious growth.* There are means that must be used by those who desire “growth in grace.”

I know not who you are, into whose hands this paper may have fallen. But I am not ashamed to ask your best attention to its contents. Believe me, the subject is no mere matter of speculation and controversy. It is an eminently practical subject, if there any is in religion. It is intimately and inseparably connected with the whole question of “sanctification.” A leading mark of true saints is that they grow. The spiritual health and prosperity of every true-hearted and holy Christian, their spiritual happiness and comfort, are intimately connected with the subject of spiritual growth.

I. The first point I propose to establish is this: *There is such a thing as growth in grace.*

That any Christian should deny this proposition is at first sight a strange and melancholy thing. But it is fair to remember that man's understanding has fallen no less than his will. Disagreements about *doctrines* are often nothing more than disagreements about the meaning of words. I try to hope that it is so in the present case. I try to believe that when I speak of "growth in grace," and maintain it, I mean one thing by it while my brethren who deny it mean quite another. Let me therefore clear the way by explaining what I mean.

When I speak of "growth in grace," I do not for a moment mean that a believer's interest in Christ can grow. I do not mean that he can grow in safety, acceptance with God, or security. I do not mean that he can be ever more justified, more pardoned, more forgiven, more at peace with God, than he is the first moment that he believes. I hold firmly that the justification of a believer is a finished, perfect, and complete work; and that the weakest saint, though he may not know and feel it, is as completely justified as the strongest. I hold firmly that our election, calling, and standing in Christ admit no degrees, increase, or diminution. If anyone dreams that by "growth in grace" I mean growth in justification, he is utterly wide of the mark, and mistaken about the whole point that I am considering. I would go to the stake, God helping me, for the glorious truth that in the matter of justification before God, every believer is "complete in Christ." (Col 2.10) Nothing can be added to his justification from the moment he believes, and nothing can be taken away.

When I speak of "growth in grace" I only mean increase in the degree, size, strength, vigour, and power of the graces which the Holy Spirit plants in a believer's heart. I hold that every one of those graces admits growth, progress, and increase. I hold that repentance, faith, hope, love, humility, zeal, courage, and the like,

- may be little or great,
- strong or weak,
- vigorous or feeble,

and may vary greatly in the same man at different periods of his life. When I speak of a man "growing in grace," I mean simply that,

- his sense of sin is becoming deeper,
- his faith stronger,
- his hope brighter,
- his love more extensive,
- his spiritual-mindedness more marked.

He feels more of the power of godliness in his own heart. He manifests more of it in his life. He is going on from strength to strength, from faith to faith, and from grace to grace. I leave it to others to describe such a man's condition by any words they please. For myself, I think the truest and best account of him is this: he is "growing in grace."

One principal ground on which I build this doctrine of "growth in grace," is the plain language of Scripture. If words in the Bible mean anything, there is such a thing as "growth," and believers ought to be exhorted to "grow."

What does St. Paul say?

## GROWTH

- “Your faith *grows* exceedingly.” (2Th 1.3)
- “We beseech you that you *increase* more and more.” (1Th 4.10)
- “*Increasing* in the knowledge of God.” (Col 1.10)
- “Having hope, when your faith is *increased*.” (2Cor 10.15)
- “The Lord make you to *increase* in love.” (1Th 3.12)
- “That you may *grow up* into Him in all things.” (Eph 4.15)
- “I pray that your love may *abound more and more*.” (Phi 1.9)
- “We beseech you, as you have received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, so you would *abound more and more*.” (1Th 4.1)

What does St. Peter say?

- “Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may *grow* thereby.” (1Pet 2.2)
- “*Grow* in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (2Pet 3.18)

I do not know what others think of such texts. To me they seem to establish the doctrine for which I contend, and to be incapable of any other explanation. Growth in grace is taught in the Bible. I might stop here and say no more.

The other ground on which I build the doctrine of “growth in grace,” however, is the ground of fact and experience. I ask any honest reader of the New Testament whether he cannot see degrees of grace in the New Testament saints whose histories are recorded, as plainly as the sun at noon-day? — I ask him whether he cannot see in the very same persons, as great a difference between their faith and knowledge at one time as at another, as between the same man’s strength when he is an infant, and when he is a grownup man? — I ask him whether the Scripture does not distinctly recognise this in the language it uses, when it speaks of “weak” faith and “strong” faith, and of Christians as “newborn babes,” “little children,” “young men,” and “fathers”? (1Pet 2.2; Joh 2.12-14) I ask him, above all, whether his own observation of believers now-a-days does not bring him to the same conclusion? — What true Christian would not confess that there is as much difference between the degree of his own faith and knowledge when he was first converted, and his present attainments, as there is between a sapling and a full-grown tree? His graces are the same in *principle*; but they have grown. I do not know how these facts strike others. To my eyes they seem to prove, most unanswerably, that “growth in grace” is a real thing.

I feel almost ashamed to dwell so long on this part of my subject. In fact, if any man means to say that the faith, and hope, and knowledge, and holiness of a newly-converted person, are as strong as those of an old-established believer, and need no increase, it is waste of time to argue further. No doubt they are as real, but not so strong — as true, but not so vigorous — as much seeds of the Spirit’s planting, but not yet so fruitful. And if anyone asks how they are to become stronger, I say it must be by the same process by which all things having life-increase — they must *grow*. And this is what I mean by “growth in grace.” <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “True grace is progressive, from a spreading, growing nature. It is with grace as it is with light: first there is daybreak; then it shines brighter to the full noon-day. The saints are not only compared to stars for their light, but to trees for their growth, (Isa 61.3; Hos 14.5) A good Christian is not like Hezekiah’s sun that went backwards, nor Joshua’s sun

Let us turn away from the things I have been discussing, to a more practical view of the great subject before us. I want men to look at “growth in grace” as a thing of infinite importance to the soul. I believe, whatever others may think, that our best interests are concerned in a right view of the question — Do we grow?

(a) Let us know, then, that “growth in grace” is the best evidence of spiritual *health* and prosperity. In a child, or a flower, or a tree, we are all aware that when there is no growth, there is something wrong. Healthy life in an animal or vegetable will always show itself by progress and increase. It is just the same with our souls. If they are progressing and doing well they will grow.<sup>18</sup>

(b) Let us know, furthermore, that “growth in grace” is one way to be *happy* in our religion. God has wisely linked together our comfort and our increase in holiness. He has graciously made it our interest to press on and aim high in our Christianity. There is a vast difference between the amount of sensible enjoyment which one believer has in his religion compared to another. But you may be sure that, ordinarily, the man who feels the most “joy and peace in believing,” and has the clearest witness of the Spirit in his heart, is the man who grows.

(c) Let us know, furthermore, that “growth in grace” is one secret of *usefulness* to others. Our influence on others for good depends greatly on what they see in us. The children of the world measure Christianity quite as much by their eyes as by their ears. The Christian who is always at a standstill — to all appearances the same man, with the same little faults, weaknesses, besetting sins, and petty infirmities — is seldom the Christian who does much good. The man who shakes and stirs minds, and sets the world thinking, is the believer who is continually improving and going forward. Men think there is life and reality when they see growth.<sup>19</sup>

(d) Let us know, furthermore, that “growth in grace” *pleases God*. It may seem a surprising thing, no doubt, that anything done by such creatures as we are can give pleasure to the Most High God. But so it is. The Scripture speaks of walking so as to “please God.” The Scripture says there are sacrifices with which “God is well-pleased.” (1Th 4.1; Heb 13.16) The husbandman loves to see the plants on which he has bestowed his labour, flourishing and bearing fruit. It cannot but disappoint and grieve him to see them stunted and standing still. [Luk 13.17](#) Now, what does our Lord Himself say? “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.” — “In this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you shall be my disciples.” (John 15.1, 8) The Lord takes pleasure in all His people — but specially in those who grow.

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that stood still, but he is always advancing in holiness, and increasing with the increase of God.” — *Thomas Watson, Minister of St. Stephen's Walbrook, 1660. (Body of Divinity)*

<sup>18</sup> “The growth of grace is the best evidence of the truth of grace. Things that do not have life will not grow. A picture will not grow. A stake in a hedge will not grow. But a plant that has vegetative life will grow. The growing of grace shows it to be alive in the soul.” — *T. Watson, 1660.*

<sup>19</sup> “Christian, just as you would ever stir others up to exalt the God of grace, look to the exercise and improvement of your own graces. When poor servants live in a family, and see the faith, and love, and wisdom, and patience, and humility of a master, shining like the stars in heaven, it draws their hearts to bless the Lord that they ever came into such a family. — When men's graces shine as Moses' face did, when their life, as one speaks of Joseph's life, is a very heaven, sparkling with virtues as so many bright stars, how much others are stirred up to glorify God and cry, ‘These are Christians indeed! These are an honour to their God, a crown to their Christ, and a credit to their Gospel! Oh, if they were all such, we would be Christians too!’ — *T. Brooks, 1661. (Unsearchable Riches)*

(e) Let us know, above all, that “growth in grace” is not only possible, but a thing for which believers are *accountable*. To tell an unconverted man, dead in sins, to “grow in grace” would doubtless be absurd. To tell a believer to grow, who is quickened and alive to God, is only summoning him to a plain Scriptural duty. He has a new principle within him, and it is a solemn duty not to quench it. Neglect of growth robs him of privileges, grieves the Spirit, and makes the chariot wheels of his soul move heavily. Whose fault is it, I should like to know, if a believer does not grow in grace? The fault, I am sure, cannot be laid on God. He delights to “give more grace;” He “has pleasure in the prosperity of His servants.” (Jas 4.6; Psa 35.27) The fault, no doubt, is our own. We ourselves are to blame, and no one else, if we do not grow.

**II.** The second point I propose to establish is this: *There are marks by which growth in grace may be known.*

Let me take it for granted that we do not question the reality of growth in grace and its vast importance. — So far so good. But you now want to know how anyone may find out whether he is growing in grace or not? I answer that question, in the first place, by observing that we are very poor judges of our own condition, and that bystanders often know us better than we know ourselves. But I answer further, that there are undoubtedly certain great marks and signs of growth in grace, and that wherever you see these marks, you see a “growing” soul. I will now proceed to place some of these marks before you, in order.

(a) One mark of “growth in grace” is increased *humility*. The man whose soul is “growing,” feels his own sinfulness and unworthiness more every year.

- He is ready to say with Job, “I am vile,” (Job 40.4)
- and with Abraham, I am “dust and ashes,” (Gen 18.27)
- and with Jacob, “I am not worthy of the least of all your mercies, Gen 18.32.10
- and with David, “I am a worm,” (Psa 22.6)
- and with Isaiah, “I am a man of unclean lips,” (Isa 6.5)
- and with Peter, “I am a sinful man, O Lord.” (Luk 5.8)

The nearer he draws to God, and the more he sees of God’s holiness and perfection, the more thoroughly he is sensible of his own countless imperfections. The further he journeys in the way to heaven, the more he understands what St. Paul means when he says,

- “I am not already perfect,” Phi 3.12
- “I am not fit to be called an Apostle,” (1Cor 15.9)
- “I am less than the least of all saints,” (Eph 3.8)
- “I am chief of sinners.” (1Tim 1.15)

The riper he is for glory, the more he hangs his head down, like ripe corn. The brighter and clearer is his light, the more he sees of the shortcomings and infirmities of his own heart. When first converted, he would tell you he saw but little of them compared to

what he sees now. Would anyone care to know whether he is growing in grace? Be sure that you look within for increased humility. <sup>20</sup>

(b) Another mark of “growth in grace” is increased *faith and love towards our Lord Jesus Christ*. The man whose soul is “growing,” finds more in Christ to rest upon every year, and rejoices more that he has such a Saviour. No doubt he saw much in Him when first he believed. His faith laid hold on the atonement of Christ and gave him hope. — But as he grows in grace, he sees a thousand things in Christ which he never dreamed of at first.

- His love and power
- His heart and His intentions
- His offices as Substitute, Intercessor, Priest, Advocate, Physician, Shepherd, and Friend

These unfold themselves to a growing soul, in an unspeakable manner. In short, he discovers a suitableness in Christ to the wants of his soul, the half of which was once not known to him. Would anyone care to know if he is growing in grace? Then let him look within for increased knowledge of Christ.

(c) Another mark of “growth in grace” is increased *holiness of life and conduct*. The man whose soul is “growing” gets more dominion over sin, the world, and the devil every year. He becomes more careful about his temper, his words, and his actions. He is more watchful over his conduct in every relation of life. He strives more to be conformed to the image of Christ in all things, and to follow Him as his example, as well as to trust in Him as his Saviour. He is not content with old attainments and former grace. He forgets the things that are behind and reaches out to those things which are ahead, making “Higher!” “Upward!” “Forward!” “Onward!” his continual motto. (Phi 3.13) On earth, he thirsts and longs to have a will more entirely in unison with God’s will. In heaven, the chief thing that he looks for, next to the presence of Christ, is complete separation from all sin. Would anyone care to know if he is growing in grace? Then let him look within for increased holiness. <sup>21</sup>

(d) Another mark of “growth in grace” is increased *spirituality of taste and mind*. The man whose soul is “growing” takes more interest in spiritual things every year. He does not neglect his duty in the world. He discharges faithfully, diligently, and conscientiously every relation of life, whether at home or abroad. But the things he loves best are spiritual things. The ways, and fashions, and amusements, and recreations of the world have a continually decreasing place in his heart. He does not condemn them as downright sinful, nor say that those who have anything to do with them are going to hell. He only feels that they have a constantly diminishing hold on his own affections, and gradually seem smaller and more trifling in his eyes. Spiritual companions, spiritual

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<sup>20</sup> “The right manner of growth is to grow less in one’s own eyes. ‘I am a worm and no man.’ (Psa 22.6) The sight of corruption and ignorance makes a Christian grow into a dislike of himself. He vanishes in his own eyes. Job abhorred himself in the dust. (Job 42.6) This is good: to grow out of conceit with oneself.” — *T. Watson*. 1660.

<sup>21</sup> “It is a sign of not growing in grace, when we are less troubled about sin. Time was when the least sin grieved us (as the least hair makes the eye weep), but now we can digest sin without remorse. Time was when a Christian was troubled if he neglected closet prayer; now he can omit family prayer. Time was when vain *thoughts* did not trouble him; now he is not troubled by loose *practices*. There is a sad declension in religion; and grace is so far from growing, that we can hardly perceive its pulse beating.” — *T. Watson*. 1660.

occupations, spiritual conversation, appear to have ever-increasing value to him. Would anyone care to know if he is growing in grace? Then let him look within for increasing spirituality of taste. <sup>22</sup>

(e) Another mark of “growth in grace” is increase of *charity*. The man whose soul is “growing” is more full of love every year — of love toward all men, but especially of love towards the brethren. His love will show itself actively in a growing disposition to do kindnesses, to take trouble for others, to be good-natured to everybody, to be generous, sympathizing, thoughtful, tender-hearted, and considerate. It will show itself passively in a growing disposition to be meek and patient toward all men, to put up with provocation and not stand upon rights, to bear and forbear much, rather than quarrel. A growing soul will try to put the best construction on other people’s conduct, and to believe all things, and hope all things, even to the end. There is no surer mark of backsliding and falling off in grace than an increasing disposition to find fault, pick holes, and see weak points in others. Would anyone care to know if he is growing in grace? Then let him look within for increasing charity.

(f) One more mark of “growth in grace” is increased *zeal and diligence in trying to do good to souls*. The man who is really “growing” will take greater interest in the salvation of sinners every year. Missions at home and abroad, efforts to increase religious light and diminish religious darkness — all these things will every year have a greater place in his attention. He will not become “weary in well-doing” just because he does not see every effort succeed. He will not care less for the progress of Christ’s cause on earth as he grows older, though he will learn to expect less. He will just work on, whatever the result may be — giving, praying, preaching, speaking, visiting, according to his position — and count his work its own reward. One of the surest marks of spiritual decline is a decreased interest about the souls of others and the growth of Christ’s kingdom. Would anyone care to know whether he is growing in grace? Then let him look within for increased concern about the salvation of souls.

Such are the most trustworthy marks of growth in grace. Let us examine them carefully, and consider what we know about them. I can well believe that they will not please some professing Christians in the present day. Those high-flying religionists whose only notion of Christianity is that of a state of perpetual joy and ecstasy — who tell you that they have gotten far beyond the region of conflict and soul-humiliation — such persons no doubt will regard the marks I have laid down as “legal,” “carnal,” and “gendering to bondage.” I cannot help that. I call no man master in these things. I only wish my statements to be tried in the balance of Scripture. And I firmly believe that what I have said is not only Scriptural, but agreeable to the experience of the most eminent saints in every age. Show

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<sup>22</sup> “If now you would be rich in graces, look to your walking. It is not the knowing soul, nor the talking soul, but the close-walking soul, the obedient soul, that is rich. Others may be rich in notions, but none are so rich in spiritual experience, and in all holy and heavenly graces, as close-walking Christians.” — *T. Brooks*. 1661.

“It is a sign of not growing in grace, when we grow more worldly. Perhaps once we were mounted into higher orbits — we set our hearts on things above, and spoke the language of Canaan. But now our minds are taken off heaven; we dig our comforts out of these lower mines, and with Satan we compass the earth. It is a sign that we are going downhill apace, and our grace is in a consumption [i.e., *wasting away*]. It is observable that when nature decays, and people are near dying, they stoop more. And truly, when men’s hearts stoop more to the earth, and they can hardly lift themselves up to a heavenly thought, if grace is not dead, yet it is ready to die.” — *T. Watson*. 1660.

me a man in whom the six marks I have mentioned can be found. *He* is the man who can give a satisfactory answer to the question, DO WE GROW?

**III.** The third and last thing I propose to consider is this: — *The means that must be used by those who desire to grow in grace.* The words of St. James must never be forgotten: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.” (Jas 1.17) This is no doubt as true of growth in grace as it is of everything else. It is the “gift of God.” But still, it must always be kept in mind that God is pleased to work by means. God has ordained means as well as ends. He that would grow in grace must use the *means* of growth.<sup>23</sup>

This is a point, I fear, which is too much overlooked by believers. Many admire growth in grace in others, and wish that they themselves were like them. But they seem to suppose that those who grow, are what they are by some special gift or grant from God; and that, as this gift is not bestowed on themselves, they must be content to sit still. This is a grievous delusion, and one against which I desire to testify with all my might. I wish it to be distinctly understood that growth in grace is bound up with the use of means within the reach of all believers; and that, as a general rule, growing souls are what they are because they use these means.

Let me ask the special attention of my readers while I try to set forth in order the means of growth. Throw away forever the vain thought that if a believer does not grow in grace, it is not his fault. Settle it in your mind that a believer, a man quickened by the Spirit, is not a mere dead creature, but a being of mighty capacities and responsibilities. Let the words of Solomon sink down into your heart: “The soul of the diligent shall be made fat.” (Pro 13.4)

(a) One thing essential to growth in grace is *diligence in the use of PRIVATE means of grace.* By these I intend such means as a man must use by himself alone, and no one can use for him. I include under this heading,

- private prayer,
- private reading of the Scriptures, and
- private meditation and self-examination.

The man who does not take pains about these three things, must never expect to grow. Here are the roots of true Christianity. If a man is wrong here, he is wrong all the way through! Here is the whole reason why many professing Christians never seem to get on. They are careless and slovenly about their private prayers. They read their Bibles only a little, and with very little heartiness of spirit. They give themselves no time for self-inquiry and quiet thought about the state of their souls.

It is useless to conceal from ourselves that the age we live in is full of peculiar dangers. It is an age of great activity, and of much hurry, bustle, and excitement in religion. No doubt many are “running to and fro,” and “knowledge is increased.” (Dan 12.4)

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<sup>23</sup> “Experience will tell every Christian that the more strictly, and closely, and constantly he walks with God, the stronger he grows in duty. Infused habits are advantaged by exercise. As the fire that kindled the wood for sacrifices upon the altar first came down from heaven, but then it was to be kept alive by the care and labour of the priests, so the habits of spiritual grace are indeed infused from God, and must be maintained by daily influences from God. Yet also — with a concurrence of our own labours in waiting upon God, and exercising ourselves with godliness — the more a Christian so exercises himself, the stronger he will grow.” — *Collinges on Providence*. 1678.

Thousands are ready enough for public meetings, sermon-hearing, or anything else in which there is “sensation.” Few appear to remember the absolute necessity of making time to “commune with our hearts, and be still.” (Psa 4.4) But without this, there is seldom any deep spiritual prosperity. I suspect that English Christians two hundred years ago read their Bibles more, and were more frequently alone with God, than they are in the present day. Let us remember this point! Private religion must receive our first attention, if we wish our souls to grow.

(b) Another thing which is essential to growth in grace is *carefulness in the use of PUBLIC means of grace*. By these I understand such means as a man has within his reach as a member of Christ’s visible Church. Under this head, I include the ordinances of regular Sunday worship, uniting with God’s people in common prayer and praise, the preaching of the Word, and the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. I firmly believe that the *manner* in which these public means of grace are used has much to say to the prosperity of a believer’s soul. It is easy to use them in a cold and heartless way. The very familiarity of them is apt to make us careless. The regular return of the same voice, and the same kind of words, and the same ceremonies, is likely to make us sleepy, callous, and unfeeling. Here is a snare into which too many professing Christians fall. If we would grow, we must be on our guard here. Here is a matter in which the Spirit is often grieved, and saints take great damage. Let us strive to use the old prayers, and sing the old hymns, and kneel at the old communion-rail, and hear the old truths preached, with as much freshness and appetite as in the year we first believed. It is a sign of bad health when a person loses relish for his food; and it is a sign of spiritual decline when we lose our appetite for means of grace. Whatever we do about public means, let us always do it “with our might.” (Ecc 9.10) This is the way to grow!

(c) Another thing essential to growth in grace is *watchfulness over our conduct in the little matters of everyday life*. Our tempers, our tongues, the discharge of our several relations of life, our employment of time — each and all must be vigilantly attended to if we wish our souls to prosper. Life is made up of days, and days of hours, and the little things of every hour are never so little as to be beneath the care of a Christian. When a tree begins to decay at root or heart, the mischief is first seen at the extreme end of the little branches. “He that despises little things,” says an uninspired writer, “will fall little by little.”<sup>24</sup> That witness is true. Let others despise us, if they like, and call us precise and over-careful. Let us patiently hold on our way, remembering that “we serve a precise God,” that our Lord’s example is to be copied in the least things as well as the greatest, and that we must “take up our cross daily” and hourly, rather than sin. We must aim to have a Christianity which, like the sap of a tree, runs through every twig and leaf of our character, and sanctifies all. This is one way to grow!

(d) Another thing which is essential to growth in grace is *caution about the company we keep and the friendships we form*. Nothing perhaps affects a man’s character more than the company he keeps. We catch the ways and tone of those we live and talk with, and unhappily get harm far more easily than good. Disease is infectious, but health is not. Now, if a professing Christian deliberately chooses to be intimate with those who are not friends of God and who cling to the world, then his soul is sure to take harm. It is hard enough to serve Christ under any circumstances in such a world as this. But it is

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<sup>24</sup> [Ralph Waldo Emerson \(1803-1882\)](#).

doubly hard to do it if we are friends of the thoughtless and ungodly. Mistakes in friendship or marriage-engagements are the whole reason why some have entirely ceased to grow. “Evil company corrupts good manners.” “The friendship of the world is enmity with God.” (1Cor 15.33; Jas 4.4) Let us seek friends that will stir us up about our prayers, our Bible-reading, and our employment of time — about our souls, our salvation, and a world to come. Who can tell the good that a friend’s word in season may do, or the harm that it may stop? This is one way to grow. <sup>25</sup>

(e) There is one more thing which is absolutely essential to growth in grace — and that is *regular and habitual communion with the Lord Jesus*. In saying this, let no one suppose for a minute that I am referring to the Lord’s Supper. I mean nothing of the kind. I mean that daily habit of intercourse between the believer and his Saviour, which can only be carried on by faith, prayer, and meditation. It is a habit, I fear, of which many believers know little. A man may be a believer and have his feet on the rock, and yet live far below his privileges. It is possible to have “union” with Christ, and yet to have little if any “communion” with Him. But for all that, there *is* such a thing.

The names and offices of Christ, as laid down in Scripture, appear to me to show unmistakably that this “communion” between the saint and his Saviour is not a mere fancy, but a real true thing.

- Between the “Bridegroom” and his bride,
- between the “Head” and His members,
- between the “Physician” and His patients,
- between the “Advocate” and His clients,
- between the “Shepherd” and His sheep,
- between the “Master” and His scholars,

there is evidently implied a habit

- of familiar intercourse,
- of daily application for things needed,
- of daily pouring out and unburdening of our hearts and minds.

Such a habit of dealing with Christ is clearly something more than a vague general trust in the work that Christ did for sinners. It is getting *close* to Him, and laying hold on Him with confidence, as a loving, personal Friend. This is what I mean by communion.

Now, I believe that no man will ever grow in grace who does not know something experientially of the habit of “communion.” We must not be content with a general orthodox knowledge that justification is by faith and not by works, and that we put our trust in Christ. We must go *further* than this. We must seek to have personal intimacy with the Lord Jesus, and to deal with Him as a man deals with a loving friend. We must realize what it means,

- to turn to Him first in every need,
- to talk to Him about every difficulty,

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<sup>25</sup> “Let them be your choicest companions, who have made Christ their chiefest companion. Do not so much eye the outsides of men, as their inside: look most to their internal worth. Many persons have their eyes upon the external garb of a professor. But give me a Christian who minds the internal worth of persons — who makes those who are most filled with the fulness of God his choicest and chiefest companions.” — *T. Brooks*. 1661.

- to consult Him about every step,
- to spread before Him all our sorrows,
- to get Him to share in all our joys,
- to do all as in His sight, and
- to go through every day leaning on and looking to Him.

This is the way that St. Paul lived: “The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” “To me to live is Christ.” (Gal 2.20; Phi 1.21) It is ignorance of this way of living, that makes so many see no beauty in the book of Canticles.<sup>26</sup> But it is the man who lives in this way, who keeps up constant communion with Christ — *this* is the man, I say emphatically, whose soul will grow.

I leave the subject of growth in grace here. Far more might be said about it if time permitted. But I have said enough, I hope, to convince my readers that the subject is one of vast importance. — Let me wind up all with some practical applications.

(1) This book may fall into the hands of some who *know nothing whatever about growth in grace*. They have little or no concern about religion. A little proper Sunday church-going or chapel-going makes up the sum and substance of their Christianity. They are without spiritual life, and of course they cannot at present grow. Are you one of these people? If you are, you are in a pitiable condition.

Years are slipping away, and time is flying. Graveyards are filling up and families are thinning. Death and judgment are getting nearer to us all. And yet you live like one asleep about your soul! What madness! What folly! What suicide can be worse than this?

Awake before it be too late; awake, and arise from the dead, and live to God. Turn to Him who is sitting at the right hand of God, to be your Saviour and Friend. Turn to Christ, and cry mightily to Him about your soul. There is yet hope! He that called Lazarus from the grave is not changed. He that commanded the widow’s son at Nain to arise from his bier can do miracles yet for your soul. Seek Him at once: seek Christ, if you would not be lost forever. Do not stand still talking, and meaning, and intending, and wishing, and hoping. Seek Christ that you may live, and that living you may grow.

(2) This book may fall into the hands of some who *ought to know something of growth in grace*, but at present know nothing at all. They have made little or no progress since they were first converted. They seem to have “settled on their lees.” (Zep 1.12) They go on from year to year content with old grace, old experience, old knowledge, old faith, old measure of attainment, old religious expressions, old set phrases. Like the Gibeonites, their bread is always mouldy, and their shoes are patched and clouted. They never appear to get on. Are you one of these people? If you are, you are living far below your privileges and responsibilities. It is high time to examine yourself.

If you have reason to hope that you are a true believer and yet do not grow in grace, there must be a fault, and a serious fault somewhere. It cannot be the will of God that your soul should stand still. “He gives more grace.” He “takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants.” (Jas 4.6; Psa 35.27) It cannot be for your own happiness or usefulness that your soul should stand still. Without growth you will never rejoice in the Lord. (Phi 4.4) Without growth you will never do good to others. Surely this want of growth is a serious

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<sup>26</sup> Song of Solomon.

matter! It should raise in you great searchings of heart. There must be some “secret thing.” (Job 15.11) There must be some cause.

Take the advice I give you. Resolve this very day that you will find out the reason for your standstill condition. Probe with a faithful and firm hand every corner of your soul. Search from one end of the camp to the other till you discover the Achan who is weakening your hands. Begin with an application to the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Physician of souls, and ask Him to heal the secret ailment within you, whatever it may be. Begin as if you had never applied to Him before, and ask for grace to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye. But never, never be content if your soul does not grow. For your peace’ sake, for your usefulness’ sake, for the honour of your Maker’s cause, resolve to find out the reason.

(3) This book may fall into the hands of some who are really growing in grace, but are not aware of it, and will not allow it. Their very growth is the reason why they do not see their growth! Their continual increase in humility prevents them feeling that they get on.<sup>27</sup> Like Moses when he came down from the mount after communing with God, their faces shine. And yet, like Moses, they are not aware of it. (Exo 34.29) Such Christians, I freely grant, are not common. But here and there, such are to be found. Like angels’ visits, they are few and far between. Happy is the neighbourhood where such growing Christians live! To meet them and see them and be in their company, is like meeting and seeing a bit of “heaven on earth.”

Now, what will I say to such people? What can I say? What should I say? Will I bid them awake to a consciousness of their growth and be pleased with it? I will do nothing of the kind. — Will I tell them to plume themselves on their own attainments, and look at their own superiority to others? God forbid! I will do nothing of the kind. — To tell them such things would do them no good. To tell them such things, above all, would be a useless waste of time. If there is any one feature about a growing soul which specially marks him, it is his deep sense of his own unworthiness. He never sees anything to be praised in himself. He only feels that he is an unprofitable servant and the chief of sinners. It is the righteous, in the picture of the judgment-day, who say, “Lord, when did we see You

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<sup>27</sup> “Christians may be growing when they think they do not grow.” “There is one who makes himself poor, yet he is rich.” (Pro 13.7) The sight that Christians have of their defects in grace, and their thirst after greater measures of grace, makes them think they do not grow. He who covets a great estate, because he does not have so much as he desires, thinks himself poor.” — *T. Watson*. 1660.

“Souls may be rich in grace, and yet not know it, not perceive it. The child is heir to a crown or a great estate, but does not know it. Moses’ face shined and others saw it, but *he* did not perceive it. So many a precious soul is rich in grace, and others see it, and know it, and bless God for it, and yet the poor soul does not perceive it. — Sometimes this arises from the soul’s strong desires for spiritual riches. The strength of the soul’s desires after spiritual riches often takes away the very sense of growing spiritually rich. Many covetous men’s desires are so strongly carried forth after earthly riches, that although they grow rich, they cannot perceive it, they cannot believe it. It is just so with many a precious Christian: his desires after spiritual riches are so strong that they take away the very sense of his growing rich in spirituals. Many Christians have much worth within them, but they do not see it. It was a good man who said, ‘The Lord was in this place and I did not know it.’ *Gen 28.16* — Again, this arises sometimes from men neglecting to tally up their accounts. Many men thrive and grow rich, and yet by neglecting to tally up their accounts, they cannot tell whether they go forward or backward. It is so with many precious souls. Again, this arises sometimes from the soul’s too frequent tallying up of its accounts. If a man were to tally up his accounts once a week, or once a month, he may not be able to *discern* that he grows rich, and yet he may grow rich. But let him compare one year with another, and he will clearly see that he does grow rich. — Again, this sometimes arises from the soul’s mistakes in tallying up its accounts. The soul many times mistakes: it is in a hurry, and then it puts down ten for a hundred, and a hundred for a thousand. Look, just as hypocrites put down their counterfeits for gold, their pence for pounds, and always prize themselves above the market, so sincere souls often put down their pounds for pence, their thousands for hundreds, and still prize themselves below the market.” — *Thomas Brooks*. 1661. (*Unsearchable Riches*)

hungry, and feed You?” (Mat 25.37) Extremes do indeed meet strangely sometimes. The conscience-hardened sinner and the eminent saint are in one respect singularly alike. Neither of them fully realizes his own condition. The one does not see his own sin, nor the other his own grace!

But will I say nothing to growing Christians? Is there no word of counsel I can address to them? The sum and substance of all that I can say is to be found in two sentences: “Go forward!” “Go on!”

We can never have,

- too much *humility*,
- too much *faith* in Christ,
- too much *holiness*,
- too much *spirituality* of mind,
- too much *charity*,
- too much *zeal* in doing good to others.

Then let us be continually forgetting the things behind, and reaching out to the things ahead. (Phi 3.13) The best of Christians in these matters is infinitely below the perfect pattern of his Lord. Whatever the world may please to say, we may be sure there is no danger of any of us becoming “too good.”

Let us cast to the winds as idle talk, the common notion that it is possible to be “extreme” and go “too far” in religion. This is a favourite lie of the devil, and one which he circulates with vast industry. No doubt there are enthusiasts and fanatics to be found who bring evil report upon Christianity by their extravagances and follies. But if anyone means to say that a mortal man can be too humble, too charitable, too holy, or too diligent in doing good, he must either be an infidel or a fool. In serving pleasure and money, it is easy to go too far. But in following the things which make up true religion, and in serving Christ, there can be no extreme.

Let us never measure our religion by that of others, and think we are doing enough if we have gone beyond our neighbours. This is another snare of the devil. Let us mind our own business. “What is that to you?” said our Master on a certain occasion: “Follow you Me.” (Joh 21.22) Let us follow on, aiming at nothing short of perfection. Let us follow on, making Christ’s life and character our only pattern and example. Let us follow on, remembering daily that at our best we are miserable sinners. Let us follow on, and never forget that it signifies nothing whether we are better than others or not. At our very best we are far worse than we ought to be. There will always be room for improvement in us. We will be debtors to Christ’s mercy and grace to the very last. Then let us stop looking at others and comparing ourselves with them. We will find enough to do if we look at our own hearts.

Last, but not least, if we know anything of growth in grace, and desire to know more, let us not be surprised if we have to go through much trial and affliction in this world. I firmly believe it is the experience of nearly all the most eminent saints. Like their blessed Master, they have been “men of sorrows, acquainted with grief,” and “perfected through sufferings.” (Isa 43.3; Heb 2.10) It is a striking saying of our Lord, “Every branch in Me that bears fruit, my Father purges it, that it may produce more fruit.” (John 15.2) It is a melancholy fact that constant temporal prosperity, as a general rule, is injurious to a

## GROWTH

believer's soul. We cannot stand it. Sickness, and losses, and crosses, and anxieties, and disappointments seem absolutely needful to keep us humble, watchful, and spiritual-minded. They are as needful as the pruning knife to the vine, and the refiner's furnace to the gold. They are not pleasant to flesh and blood. We do not like them, and often we do not see their meaning. "No chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness." (Heb 12.11) We will find that all worked for our good when we reach heaven. Let these thoughts abide in our minds if we love growth in grace. When days of darkness come upon us, let us not count it a strange thing. Rather let us remember that lessons are learned on such days which would never have been learned in sunshine. Let us say to ourselves, "This too is for my profit, that I may be a partaker of God's holiness. It is sent in love. I am in God's best school. Correction is instruction. This is meant to make me grow."

I leave the subject of growth in grace here. I trust that I have said enough to set some readers thinking about it. All things are growing older: the world is growing old; we ourselves are growing older. A few more summers, a few more winters, a few more sicknesses, a few more sorrows, a few more weddings, a few more funerals, a few more meetings, and a few more partings, and then — what? Why the grass will be growing over our graves!

Now, would it not be good to look within, and put a simple question to our souls? In religion, in the things that concern our peace, in the great matter of personal holiness, *are* we getting on? DO WE GROW?

## 7. ASSURANCE

*“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.”*

*“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*

*“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all those also who love His appearing.” — 2Tim 4.6-8.*

IN the words of Scripture which head this page, we see the Apostle Paul looking three ways: downward, backward, forward;

- *downward* to the grave
- *backward* to his own ministry
- *forward* to that great day, the Day of Judgment!

It will do us good to stand by the Apostle’s side a few minutes, and mark the words he uses. Happy is that soul who can look where Paul looked, and then speak as Paul spoke!

(a) He looks *downward* to the grave, and he does it without fear. Hear what he says: —

“I am ready to be offered.” — I am like an animal brought to the place of sacrifice, and bound with cords to the very horns of the altar. The drink-offering, which generally accompanies the oblation, is already being poured out. The last ceremonies have been gone through. Every preparation has been made. It only remains to receive the death-blow, and then all is over.

“The time of my departure is at hand.” — I am like a ship about to unmoor and put to sea. All on board is ready. I only wait to have the moorings cast off that fasten me to the shore, and I will then set sail, and begin my voyage.

These are remarkable words to come from the lips of a child of Adam like ourselves! Death is a solemn thing, and never so much so as when we see it close at hand. The grave is a chilling, heart-sickening place, and it is vain to pretend it has no terrors. Yet here is a mortal man who can look calmly into the narrow “house appointed for all living,” and say, while he stands on the brink, “I see it all, and am not afraid.”

(b) Let us listen to him again. He looks *backward* to his ministerial life, and he does it without shame. Hear what he says: —

“I have fought a good fight.” — There he speaks as a soldier. I have fought that good fight with the world, the flesh, and the devil, from which so many shrink and draw back.

“I have finished my course.” — There he speaks as one who has run for a prize. I have run the race marked out for me. I have gone over the ground appointed for me, however rough and steep. I have not turned aside because of difficulties, nor been discouraged by the length of the way. I am at last in sight of the goal.

“I have kept the faith.” — There he speaks as a steward. I have held fast that glorious Gospel which was committed to my trust. I have not mingled it with man’s traditions, nor spoiled its simplicity by adding my own inventions, nor allowed others to adulterate it without withstanding them to the face. “As a soldier — a runner — a steward,” he seems to say, “I am not ashamed.”

That Christian is happy who, as he quits the world, can leave such testimony behind him. A good conscience will save no man, wash away no sin, nor lift us one hair's breadth toward heaven. Yet a good conscience will be found a pleasant visitor at our bedside in a dying hour. There is a fine passage in *Pilgrim's Progress* which describes Old Honest's passage across the river of death. "The river," says Bunyan, "at that time overflowed its banks in some places; but Mr. Honest in his lifetime had spoken to one Good Conscience to meet him there — which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over." We may be sure there is a mine of truth in that passage.

(c) Let us hear the Apostle once more. He looks *forward* to the great day of reckoning, and he does it without doubt. Mark his words: — "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all those also who love His appearing." — "A glorious reward," he seems to say, "is ready and laid up in store for me — even that crown which is only given to the righteous. In the great day of judgment, the Lord shall give this crown to me, and to all beside me who have loved Him as an unseen Saviour, and longed to see Him face to face. My work on earth is over. This one thing now remains for me to look forward to, and nothing more."

Let us observe that the Apostle speaks without any hesitation or distrust. He regards the crown as a sure thing, as his own already. He declares with unfaltering confidence his firm persuasion that the righteous Judge will give it to him. Paul was no stranger to all the circumstances and accompaniments of that solemn day to which he referred. The great white throne — the assembled world — the open books — the revealing of all secrets — the listening angels — the awful sentence — the eternal separation of the lost and saved — all these were things with which he was well acquainted. But none of these things moved him. His strong faith overleaped them all, and he saw only Jesus, his all-prevailing Advocate, and the blood of sprinkling, and sin washed away. "A crown," he says, "is laid up for me." "The Lord Himself *shall* give it to me." He speaks as if he saw it all with his own eyes.

Such are the main things which these verses contain. I will not speak of most of them, because I want to confine myself to the special subject of this paper. I will only try to consider one point in the passage. That point is the strong "assurance of hope," with which the Apostle looks forwards to his own prospects in the day of judgment.

I will do this more readily, because of the great importance which attaches to the subject of assurance, and the great neglect with which, I humbly conceive, it is often treated in this day.

But I will do it at the same time with fear and trembling. I feel that I am treading on very difficult ground, and that it is easy to speak rashly and unscripturally in this matter. The road between truth and error here is an especially a narrow pass; and if I am enabled to do good to some without doing harm to others, I will be very thankful.

There are four things I wish to bring forward in speaking of the subject of assurance, and it may clear our way if I name them at once.

I. First, then, I will try to show *that an assured hope, such as Paul here expresses, is a true and Scriptural thing.*

II. Secondly, I will make this broad concession — *that a man may never arrive at this assured hope, and yet be saved.*

III. Thirdly, I will give some reasons why *an assured hope is to be exceedingly desired.*

IV. Lastly, I will try to point out some causes *why an assured hope is so seldom attained.*

I ask special attention from all who take an interest in the great subject of this volume. If I am not greatly mistaken, there is a very close connection between true holiness and assurance. Before I close this paper, I hope to show my readers the nature of that connection. At present, I content myself with saying that where there is the most holiness, there is generally the most assurance.

I. First, then, I will try to show that *an assured hope is a true and Scriptural thing.*

Assurance, such as Paul expresses in the verses which head this paper, is not a mere fancy or feeling. It is not the result of high animal spirits, or a sanguine temperament of body. It is a positive gift of the Holy Ghost, bestowed without reference to men's bodily frames or constitutions, and a gift which *every believer* in Christ ought to aim at and seek after.

In matters like these, the first question is this: What does the Scripture say? I answer that question without the least hesitation. The Word of God appears to me to teach distinctly that a believer may arrive at an assured confidence with regard to his own salvation.

I lay it down fully and broadly, as God's truth, that a true Christian, a converted man, may reach such a comfortable degree of faith in Christ, that in general he will feel entirely confident as to the pardon and safety of his soul — he will seldom be troubled with doubts — seldom be distracted with fears — seldom be distressed by anxious questionings — and in short, though vexed by many an inward conflict with sin, will look forward to death without trembling, and to judgment without dismay. <sup>28</sup> This, I say, is the doctrine of the Bible.

Such is my account of assurance. I will ask my readers to mark it well. I say neither less nor more than I have laid down here.

Now, such a statement as this is often disputed and denied. Many cannot see the truth of it at all.

The Church of Rome denounces assurance in the most unmeasured terms. The Council of Trent roundly declares that a "believer's assurance of the pardon of his sins is a vain and ungodly confidence;" and Cardinal Bellarmine, the well-known champion of Romanism, calls it "a prime error of heretics."

The vast majority of the worldly and thoughtless Christians among ourselves oppose the doctrine of assurance. It offends and annoys them to hear of it. They do not like others to feel comfortable and sure, because they never feel so themselves. Ask them whether their sins are forgiven, and they will probably tell you they do not know! That *they* cannot receive the doctrine of assurance is certainly no marvel.

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<sup>28</sup> "Full assurance that Christ has delivered Paul from condemnation — indeed, so full and real as produces thanksgiving and triumphing in Christ — may and does consist with complaints and outcries of a wretched condition for the indwelling of the body of sin." — *Rutherford's Triumph of Faith*. 1645.

But there are also some true believers who reject assurance, or shrink from it as a doctrine fraught with danger. They consider that it borders on presumption. They seem to think it is a proper humility never to feel sure, never to be confident, and to live in a certain degree of doubt and suspense about their souls. This is to be regretted, and it does much harm.

I frankly allow that there are some *presumptuous* persons who profess to feel a confidence for which they have no Scriptural warrant. There are always some people who think well of themselves when God thinks ill of them, just as there are some who think ill of themselves when God thinks well of them. There will always be such. There never yet was a Scriptural truth without abuses and counterfeits. God's election — man's impotence — salvation by grace — all alike are abused. There will be fanatics and enthusiasts as long as the world stands. But for all this, assurance is a reality and a true thing; and God's children must not let themselves be driven from the use of a truth, merely because it is abused.<sup>29</sup>

My answer to all who deny the existence of real, well-grounded assurance, is simply this: What does the Scripture say? If assurance is not there, I do not have another word to say.

- But does Job not say, “I *know* that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God”? (Job 19.25, 26)
- Does David not say, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, *I will fear no evil*: for You are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me”? (Psa 23.4)
- Does Isaiah not say, “You will keep him in *perfect peace* whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You”? (Isa 26.3)
- And again, “The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness, and *assurance* forever.” (Isa 32.17)
- Does Paul not say to the Romans, “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”? (Rom 8.38, 39)
- Does he not say to the Corinthians, “We *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens “? (2Cor 5.1)
- And again, “We are always *confident*, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” (2Cor 5.6)
- Does he not say to Timothy, “I know whom I have believed, and am *persuaded* that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him”? (2Tim 1.12)

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<sup>29</sup> We do not vindicate every vain pretender to ‘the witness of the spirit’; we are aware that there are those in whose professions of religion we can see nothing but their forwardness and confidence to recommend them. But let us not reject any doctrine of revelation through an over-anxious fear of consequences.” — *Robinson's Christian System*.

“True assurance is built upon a Scripture basis: presumption has no Scripture to show for its warrant; it is like a will without seal and witnesses, which is null and void in law. Presumption lacks both the witness of the Word and the seal of the Spirit. Assurance always keeps the heart in a lowly posture; but presumption is bred of pride. Feathers fly up, but gold descends; he who has this golden assurance, his heart descends in humility.” — *Watson's Body of Divinity*. 1650.

“Presumption is joined with looseness of life; persuasion with a tender conscience. Presumption dares sin because it is sure; persuasion dares *not* sin for fear of losing assurance. Persuasion will *not* sin, because it cost her Saviour so dear; presumption *will* sin, because grace abounds. Humility is the way to heaven. Those who are proudly secure of going to heaven do not so often come there, as those who are afraid of going to hell.” — *Adams on Second Epistle of Peter*. 1633.

- And does he not speak to the Colossians of “the full assurance of understanding” (Col 2.2), and to the Hebrews of the “full assurance of faith,” and the “full assurance of hope”? (Heb 6.11; 10.22)
- Does Peter not expressly say, “Give diligence to make your calling and election *sure*”? (2Pet 1.10)
- Does John not say, “We *know* that we have passed from death unto life”? (1Joh 3.14)
- And again, “These things I have written to you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may *know* that you have eternal life.” (1Joh 5.13)
- And again, “We *know* that we are of God.” (1Joh 5.19)

What will we say to these things? I desire to speak with all humility on any controverted point. I feel that I am only a poor fallible child of Adam myself. But I must say that in the passages I have just quoted, I see something far higher than the mere “hopes” and “trusts,” with which so many believers appear content in this day. I see the language of persuasion, confidence, knowledge — indeed, I may almost say, of certainty. And I feel, for my own part, if I may take these Scriptures in their plain and obvious meaning, *the doctrine of assurance is true*.

But my answer, furthermore, to all who dislike the doctrine of assurance, as bordering on presumption, is this: It can hardly be presumption to tread in the steps of Peter, and Paul, of Job, and of John. They were all eminently humble and lowly-minded men, if ever any were such; and yet they all speak of their own state with an assured hope. Surely this should teach us that deep humility and strong assurance are perfectly compatible, and that there is no necessary connection between spiritual confidence and pride.<sup>30</sup>

My answer, furthermore, is that many have attained to such an assured hope as our text expresses, even in modern times. I will not concede for a moment that it was a peculiar privilege confined to the Apostolic day. There have been in our own land many believers who have appeared to walk in almost uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son — who have seemed to enjoy an almost unceasing sense of the light of God’s reconciled countenance shining down upon them, and have left their experience on record. I could mention well-known names, if space permitted. The thing has been, and it is — and that is enough.

My answer, lastly, is that it cannot be wrong to feel confidently in a matter where God speaks unconditionally — to believe decidedly when God promises decidedly — to have a sure persuasion of pardon and peace when we rest on the word and oath of Him who never changes. It is an utter mistake to suppose that the believer who feels assurance is resting on anything he sees in himself. He simply leans on the Mediator of the New Covenant, and the Scripture of truth. He believes the Lord Jesus means what He says, and he *takes Him at His word*. Assurance, after all, is no more than a *full-grown faith*; a masculine faith that grasps Christ’s promise with both hands — a faith that argues like the good centurion, If the Lord “only speaks the word,” I am healed. Why then should I doubt? (Mat8.8)<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> “They are quite mistaken, who think that faith and humility are inconsistent; they not only agree well together, but they cannot be parted.” — *Traill*.

<sup>31</sup> “To be assured of our salvation,” Augustine says, “is no arrogant stoutness; it is our faith. It is no pride; it is devotion. It is no presumption; it is God’s promise.” — *Bishop Jewell’s Defence of the Apology*. 1570

We may be sure that Paul was the last man in the world to build his assurance on anything of his own. He who could write himself down as “chief of sinners” (1Tim 1.15), had a deep sense of his guilt and corruption. But then, he had a still deeper sense of the length and breadth of Christ’s righteousness imputed to him. — He who could cry, “O wretched man that I am” (Rom 7.24), had a clear view of the fountain of evil within his heart. But then, he had a still clearer view of that other Fountain which can remove “all sin and uncleanness.” He who thought himself “less than the least of all saints” (Eph 3.8), had a lively and abiding feeling of his own weakness. But he had a still livelier feeling that Christ’s promise, “My sheep shall never perish” (Joh 10.28), could not be broken. — Paul knew, if ever any man did, that he was a poor, frail bark, floating on a stormy ocean. He saw, if anyone did, the rolling waves and roaring tempest by which he was surrounded. But then, he looked away from self to Jesus, and was not afraid. He remembered that anchor within the veil, which is both “sure and steadfast.” (Heb 6.19) He remembered the word, and work, and constant intercession of Him that loved him and gave Himself for him. And it was *this*, and nothing else, that enabled him to say so boldly, “A crown is laid up for me, and the Lord shall give it to me;” and to conclude so surely, “The Lord will preserve me; I shall never be confounded.” <sup>32</sup>

I may not dwell longer on this part of the subject. I think it will be allowed that I have shown some good ground for the assertion I made, that assurance is a true thing.

**II.** I pass on to the second thing that I spoke of. I said, *a believer may never arrive at this assured hope, which Paul expresses, and yet be saved.*

I grant this most freely. I do not dispute it for a moment. I would not desire to make one contrite heart sad that God has not made sad, or to discourage one fainting child of God, or to leave the impression that men have no part or lot in Christ unless they feel assurance.

A person may have saving faith in Christ, and yet never enjoy an assured hope such as the Apostle Paul enjoyed. To believe and have a glimmering hope of acceptance is one thing; to have “joy and peace” in our believing, and to abound in hope, is quite another. All God’s children have faith; not all have assurance. I think this should never be forgotten.

I know some great and good men have held a different opinion. I believe that many excellent ministers of the Gospel, at whose feet I would gladly sit, do not allow the distinction I have stated. But I desire to call no man master. I dread as much as anyone the idea of healing the wounds of conscience too easily; but I should think any other view

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“If the ground of our assurance rested in and on ourselves, it might justly be called presumption; but being grounded on the Lord and the power of His might, those who account assured confidence thereon to be presumption, either do not know what the might of His power is, or else they too lightly esteem it.” — Gouge’s *Whole Armour of God*. 1647.

<sup>32</sup> “Upon what ground is this certainty built? Surely not upon anything that is in us. Our assurance of perseverance is grounded wholly upon God. If we look upon ourselves, we see cause for fear and doubting; but if we look up to God, we will find cause enough for assurance.” — *Hildersam on John iv*. 1632.

“Our hope is not hung upon such an untwisted thread as, ‘I imagine so,’ or ‘It is likely;’ but the cable, the strong rope of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of Him who is eternal verity. Our salvation is fastened with God’s own hand, and Christ’s own strength, to the strong stake of God’s unchangeable nature.” — *Rutherford’s Letters*. 1637.

“Never did a believer in Jesus Christ die or drown in his voyage to heaven. They will all be found safe and sound with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Christ loses none of them; indeed nothing of them. (Joh 6.39) Not a bone of a believer is to be seen in the field of battle. They are all more than conquerors through Him that loved them.” (Rom 8.37) — *Traill*.

than what I have given, is a most uncomfortable Gospel to preach, and one very likely to keep souls back a long time from the gate of life. <sup>33</sup>

I do not shrink from saying that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ; sufficient faith to really lay hold on Him — to really trust in Him — to really be a child of God — to really be saved; and yet to his last day, never be free from much anxiety, doubt, and fear.

“A letter,” says an old writer, “may be written, which is not sealed; so grace may be written in the heart, and yet the Spirit may not set the seal of assurance to it.”

A child may be born heir to a great fortune, and yet never be aware of his riches; may live childish, die childish, and never know the greatness of his possessions. And so also, a man may be a babe in Christ’s family, think as a babe, speak as a babe, and though saved, never enjoy a lively hope, or know the real privileges of his inheritance.

Let no man mistake my meaning when I dwell strongly on the reality, privilege, and importance of assurance. Do not do me the injustice of saying that I teach that none are saved except those who can say with Paul, “I know and am persuaded — there is a crown laid up for me.” I do not say so. I teach nothing of the kind.

A man *must* have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, beyond all question, if he is to be saved. I know no other way of access to the Father. I see no intimation of mercy, except through Christ. A man *must* feel his sins and lost estate — he *must* come to Jesus for pardon and salvation — he *must* rest his hope on Him, and on Him alone. But if he only has faith to do this, however weak and feeble that faith may be, I will engage from Scripture warrants, that he will not miss heaven.

Never, never let us curtail the freeness of the glorious Gospel, or clip its fair proportions. Never let us make the gate straiter and the way narrower than pride and the love of sin have made it already. The Lord Jesus is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. He does not regard the *quantity* of faith, but the *quality*: He does not measure its *degree*, but its *truth*. He will not break any bruised reed, nor quench any smoking flax. He will never let it be said that any perished at the foot of the cross. “Whoever comes to Me,” He says, “I will by no means cast out.” (Joh 6.37) <sup>34</sup>

Yes! Though a man’s faith is no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, if it only brings him to Christ, and enables him to touch the hem of His garment, he shall be saved — saved as surely as the oldest saint in paradise — saved as completely and eternally as Peter, or John, or Paul. There are degrees in our sanctification. In our justification there are none. What is written, is written, and it shall never fail: “Whoever believes in Him,” — not whoever has a strong and mighty faith — “Whoever *believes in Him*, shall not be ashamed.” (Rom 10.11)

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<sup>33</sup> The reader who would like to hear more about this point is referred to a NOTE at the end of this paper, in which he will find extracts from several well-known English Divines, supporting the view here maintained. The extracts are too long for insertion in this page.

<sup>34</sup> “He who believes in Jesus shall never be confounded — never was any, nor shall you be, if you believe. It was a great word of faith spoken by a dying man who had been converted in a singular way, between his condemnation and execution: his last words were these, spoken with a mighty shout: ‘Never a man perished with his face towards Christ Jesus.’” — *Traill*.

But all this time, let it be remembered, the poor believing soul may have no full assurance of his pardon and acceptance with God. He may be troubled with fear upon fear, and doubt upon doubt. He may have many an inward question, and many an anxiety — many a struggle, and many a misgiving — clouds and darkness — storm and tempest to the very end.

I will engage, I repeat, that bare simple faith in Christ will save a man though he may never attain to assurance; but I will not engage that it will bring him to heaven with strong and abounding consolations. I will engage that it will land him safe in harbour; but I will not engage that he will enter that harbour in full sail, confident and rejoicing. I will not be surprised if he reaches his desired haven weather-beaten and tempest-tossed, scarcely realizing his own safety, till he opens his eyes in glory.

I believe it is of great importance to keep in view this distinction between *faith* and *assurance*. It explains things which an inquirer in religion sometimes finds it hard to understand.

Faith, let us remember, is the root, and assurance is the flower. Doubtless you can never have the flower without the root; but it is no less certain that you may have the root and not the flower.

Faith is that poor trembling woman who came behind Jesus in the press [of the crowd], and touched the hem of His garment. (Mar 5.25) Assurance is Stephen standing calmly in the midst of his murderers, and saying, “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.” (Act 7. 56)

Faith is the penitent thief crying, “Lord, remember me.” (Luk 23.42) Assurance is Job, sitting in the dust, covered with sores, saying, “I know that my Redeemer lives” (Job 19.25); “Though He slay me, yet I will trust Him.” (Job 13.15)

Faith is Peter’s drowning cry as he began to sink: “Lord save, me!” (Mat 14.30) Assurance is that same Peter declaring before the Council afterward, “This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Act 4.11, 12)

Faith is the anxious, trembling voice, “Lord, I believe: help my unbelief.” (Mar 9.24) Assurance is the confident challenge, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Who is he that condemns?” (Rom 8.33, 34) Faith is Saul praying in the house of Judas at Damascus — sorrowful, blind, and alone. (Act 9.11) Assurance is Paul, the aged prisoner, looking calmly into the grave, and saying, “I know whom I have believed. There is a crown laid up for me.” (2Tim 1.12; 4.8)

Faith is *life*. How great the blessing! Who can describe or realize the gulf between life and death? “A living dog is better than a dead lion.” (Ecc 9.4) And yet life may be weak, sickly, unhealthy, painful, trying, anxious, weary, burdensome, joyless, smileless to the very end. Assurance is *more than life*. It is health, strength, power, vigour, activity, energy, manliness, beauty.

It is not a question of “saved or not saved,” that lies before us, but of “privilege or no privilege.” — It is not a question of peace or no peace, but of great peace or little peace. —

It is not a question between the wanderers of this world and the school of Christ: it is someone who belongs to the school only: it is between the first form and the last.<sup>35</sup>

He that has faith does *well*. I would be happy if I thought all readers of this paper had it. Blessed, thrice blessed are those who believe! They are safe. They are washed. They are justified. They are beyond the power of hell. Satan, with all his malice, shall never pluck them out of Christ's hand. But he that has assurance does *far better* — he sees more, feels more, knows more, enjoys more, has more days like those spoken of in Deuteronomy, even "the days of heaven upon the earth." (Deu 11.21) <sup>36</sup>

**III.** I pass on to the third thing of which I spoke. I will give some reasons *why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired*.

I ask special attention to this point. I heartily wish that assurance was more sought after than it is. Too many among those who believe, begin doubting and go on doubting, live doubting and die doubting, and go to heaven in a kind of mist.

It would not become me to speak in a slighting way about "hopes" and "trusts." But I fear that many of us sit down content with them, and go no further. I would like to see fewer "perhaps" in the Lord's family, and more who could say, "I *know* and am persuaded." Oh, that all believers would covet the best gifts, and not be content with less! Many miss the full tide of blessedness that the Gospel was meant to convey. Many keep themselves in a low and starved condition of soul, while their Lord is saying, "Eat and drink abundantly, O beloved." "Ask and receive, that your joy may be full." (Song 5.1; Joh 16.24)

(1) Let us remember then, for one thing, that assurance is to be desired, because of the *present comfort and peace it affords*.

Doubts and fears have power to spoil much of the happiness of a true believer in Christ. Uncertainty and suspense are bad enough in any condition — in the matter of our health, our property, our families, our affections, our earthly callings — but never so bad as in the affairs of our souls. And so long as a believer cannot get beyond "I hope," and "I trust," he manifestly feels a degree of uncertainty about his spiritual state. The very words imply as much. He says, "I hope," because he dares not say, "I know."

Now, assurance goes far to set a child of God free from this painful kind of bondage, and thus it ministers mightily to his comfort. It enables him to feel that the great business of life is a settled business, the great debt a paid debt, the great disease a healed disease, and the great work a finished work; and all other business, diseases, debts, and works, are then small by comparison. In this way, assurance makes him,

- patient in tribulation,
- calm under bereavements,
- unmoved in sorrow,
- not afraid of evil tidings, and

<sup>35</sup> That is, a lower classman in school versus an upper classman (British "forms" are levels of schooling).

<sup>36</sup> "The greatest thing that we can desire, next to the glory of God, is our own salvation; and the sweetest thing we can desire is the assurance of our salvation. In this life we cannot get higher than to be assured of that which is to be enjoyed in the next life. All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave this earth; some saints enjoy a heaven while they are here on earth." — *Joseph Caryl*. 1653.

— content in every condition,  
for it gives him a FIXEDNESS of heart.

- It sweetens his bitter cups;
- it lessens the burden of his crosses;
- it smooths the rough places over which he travels;
- it lightens the valley of the shadow of death.

It makes him always feel that he has something solid beneath his feet and something firm under his hands — a *sure friend* by the way, and a *sure home* at the end.<sup>37</sup>

Assurance will help a man to bear poverty and loss. It will teach him to say, “I know that I have a better and more enduring substance in heaven. I have no silver and gold, but grace and glory are mine, and these can never make themselves wings and fly away. Though the fig tree will not blossom, yet I will rejoice in the Lord.” (Hab 3.17, 18)

Assurance will support a child of God under the heaviest bereavements, and assist him to feel “It is well.” An assured soul will say, “Though beloved ones are taken from me, yet Jesus is the same, and is alive forevermore. Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more. Though my house is not as flesh and blood could wish, yet I have an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” (2Kng 4.26; Heb 13.8; Rom 6.9; 2Sam 23.5)

Assurance will enable a man to praise God, and be thankful, even in prison, like Paul and Silas at Philippi. It can give a believer songs even in the darkest night, and joy when all things seem to be going against him.<sup>38</sup> (Job 35.10; Psa 42.8)

Assurance will enable a man to sleep with the full prospect of death on the morrow, like Peter in Herod’s dungeon. It will teach him to say, “I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for You only, Lord, make me dwell in safety.” (Psa 4.8)

Assurance can make a man rejoice to suffer shame for Christ’s sake, as the Apostles did when put in prison at Jerusalem. (Act 5.41) It will remind him that he may “rejoice and be exceeding glad” (Mat 5.12), and that in heaven there is an exceeding weight of glory that will make amends for all. (2Cor 4.17)

Assurance will enable a believer to meet a violent and painful death without fear, as Stephen did in the beginning of Christ’s Church, and as Cranmer, Ridley, Hooper,

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<sup>37</sup> “It was a saying of Bishop Latimer to Ridley, ‘When I live in a settled and steadfast assurance about the state of my soul, I think then that I am as bold as a lion. I can laugh at all trouble: no affliction daunts me. But when I am eclipsed in my comforts, I am of so fearful a spirit that I could run into a very mouse-hole.’ — *Quoted by Christopher Love*. 1653.

“Assurance will assist us in all duties: it will arm us against all temptations; it will answer all objections; it will sustain us in all conditions into which the saddest of times can bring us. ‘If God is for us, who can be against us?’” — *Bishop Reynolds on Hosea 14*. 1642.

“We cannot come amiss to him that has assurance. God is his. Has he lost a friend? — his father lives. Has he lost an only child? — God has given him His only Son. Has he scarcity of bread? — God has given him the finest of the wheat, the bread of life. Are his comforts gone? — he has a Comforter. Does he meet with storms? — he knows where to put in for harbour. God is his Portion, and heaven is his haven.” — *Thomas Watson*. 1662.

<sup>38</sup> These were John Bradford’s words in prison, shortly before his execution: “I have no request to make. If Queen Mary gives me my life, I will thank her; if she banishes me, I will thank her; if she burns me, I will thank her; if she condemns me to perpetual imprisonment, I will thank her.”

This was Rutherford’s experience when banished to Aberdeen: “How blind are my adversaries, who sent me to a banqueting house, and not to a prison or a place of exile.” “My prison is a palace to me, and Christ’s banqueting house.” — *Letters*.

Latimer, Rogers, and Taylor did in our own land. It will bring to his heart the texts, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” (Luk 12.4) “Lord Jesus receive my spirit.” (Act 7.59) <sup>39</sup>

Assurance will support a man in pain and sickness, make all his bed, and smooth down his dying pillow. It will enable him to say, “If my earthly house fails, I have a building of God.” (2Cor 5.1) “I desire to depart and be with Christ.” (Phi 1.23) “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. <sup>40</sup> (Psa 73.26)

The strong consolation which assurance can give in the hour of death is a point of great importance. We may depend on it, we will never think assurance so precious as when our turn comes to die. In that awful hour there are few believers who do not find the value and privilege of an “assured hope,” whatever they may have thought about it during their lives. General “hopes” and “trusts” are all very well to live on while the sun shines and the body is strong; but when we come to die, we want to be able to say, “I *know*” and “I *feel*.” The river of death is a cold stream, and we have to cross it alone. No earthly friend can help us. The last enemy, the king of terrors, is a strong foe. When our souls are departing, there is no cordial like the strong wine of assurance.

There is a beautiful expression in the Prayer-book service for the Visitation of the Sick: “The Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all those who put their trust in Him, be now and evermore your defence, and make you *know* and *feel* that there is no other name under heaven, through whom you may receive health and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The compilers of that service showed great wisdom there. They saw that when the eyes grow dim, and the heart grows faint, and the spirit is on the eve of departing, there must then be *knowing* and *feeling* what Christ has done for us, or else there cannot be perfect peace. <sup>41</sup>

(2) Let us remember, for another thing, that assurance is to be desired, because *it tends to make a Christian an active working Christian*.

None, generally speaking, do so much for Christ on earth as those who enjoy the fullest confidence of a free entrance into heaven, and do not trust in their own works, but in the finished work of Christ. That sounds wonderful, I dare say, but it is true.

A believer who lacks an assured hope, will spend much of his time in inward searchings of heart about his own state. Like a nervous hypochondriac, he will be full of his own ailments, his own doubts and questions, his own conflicts and corruptions. In short, you

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<sup>39</sup> These were the last words of Hugh Mackail on the scaffold, at Edinburgh, 1666: “Now I begin my intercourse with God, which shall never be broken off. Farewell, father and mother, friends and relations; farewell, the world and all its delights; farewell, food and drinks; farewell, sun, moon and stars. Welcome, God and Father; welcome, sweet Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; welcome, blessed Spirit of grace, and God of all consolation; welcome, glory; welcome, eternal life; welcome, death. O Lord, into your hands I commit my spirit; for You have redeemed my soul, O Lord God of truth!”

<sup>40</sup> These were Rutherford’s words on his death-bed: “O that all my brethren knew what a Master I have served, and what peace I have this day! I shall sleep in Christ, and when I awake I shall be satisfied with His likeness.” 1661.

These were Baxter’s words on his death-bed: “I bless God I have a well-grounded assurance of my eternal happiness, and great peace and comfort within.” Towards the close he was asked how he did. The answer was, “Almost well.” 1691.

<sup>41</sup> “The least degree of faith takes away the sting of death, because it takes away guilt; but the full assurance of faith breaks the very teeth and jaws of death, by taking away the fear and dread of it.” — *Fairclough’s Sermon in the Morning Exercises*.

will often find that he is so taken up with his internal warfare, that he has little leisure for other things, and little time to work for God.

But a believer who has, like Paul, an assured hope, is free from these harassing distractions. He does not vex his soul with doubts about his own pardon and acceptance. He looks at the everlasting covenant sealed with blood — at the finished work and never-the-broken word of his Lord and Saviour — and therefore he counts his salvation a *settled thing*. And thus he is able to give undivided attention to the work of the Lord, and so, to do more in the long run. <sup>42</sup>

Take for an illustration of this, two English emigrants. Suppose they are set down side by side in New Zealand or Australia. Give each of them a piece of land to clear and cultivate. Let the portions allotted to them be the same, both in quantity and quality. Secure that land to them by every needful legal instrument; let it be conveyed as freehold to them and theirs forever; let the conveyance be publicly registered, and the property made sure to them by every deed and security that man's ingenuity can devise.

Then suppose that one of them sets to work to clear his land and cultivate it, and labours at it day after day without intermission or cessation.

Suppose that meanwhile the other continually leaves his work, and repeatedly goes to the public registry to ask whether the land is really his own — whether there is some mistake — whether there is, after all, some flaw in the legal instruments which conveyed it to him.

The one will never doubt his title, but just work diligently on. The other will hardly ever feel sure of his title, and spend half his time going to Sydney or Melbourne or Auckland, with needless inquiries about it.

Now, which of these two men will have made the most progress in a year's time? Who will have done the most for his land, gotten the greatest breadth of soil under tillage, have the best crops to show, and be altogether the most prosperous?

Anyone of common sense can answer that question. I do not need to supply an answer. There can only be one reply. Undivided attention will always attain the greatest success.

It is much the same in the matter of our title to "mansions in the skies." None will do so much for the Lord who bought him, as the believer who sees his title clear, and is not distracted by unbelieving doubts, questionings, and hesitations. The joy of the Lord will be that man's strength. "Restore unto me," says David, "the joy of your salvation; *then* I will teach transgressors Your ways." (Psa 51.12)

Never were there such working Christians as the Apostles. They seemed to live to labour. Christ's work was truly their food and drink. They did not count their lives dear to themselves. They spent and were spent. They laid down ease, health, and worldly comfort, at the foot of the cross. And one grand cause of this, I believe, was their assured hope.

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<sup>42</sup> "Assurance would make us active and lively in God's service: it would excite prayer, quicken obedience. Faith would make us walk, but assurance would make us run — we should think we could never do enough for God. Assurance would be as wings to the bird, as weights to the clock, to set all the wheels of obedience a-running." — *Thomas Watson*.

"Assurance will make a man fervent, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord. When the assured Christian has done one work, he is calling out for another. — What is next, Lord, says the assured soul, what is next? An assured Christian will put his hand to any work, he will put his neck in any yoke for Christ — he never thinks he has done enough, he always thinks he had done too little; and when he has done all he can, he sits down, saying, I am an unprofitable servant". — *Thomas Brooks*.

They were men who could say, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness.” (1Joh 5.19)

(3) Let us remember, for another thing, that assurance is to be desired, because *it tends to make a Christian a decided Christian*.

Indecision and doubt about our own state in God’s sight is a grievous evil, and it is the mother of many evils. It often produces a wavering and unstable walk in following the Lord. Assurance helps to cut many a knot, and to make the path of Christian duty clear and plain.

Many whom we hope are God’s children, and have true grace (however weak), are themselves continually perplexed with doubts in points of practice. “Should we do such and such a thing? Will we give up this family custom? Should we go into that company? How will we draw the line about visiting? What is to be the measure of our dress and entertainments? Are we never, under any circumstances, to dance, never to touch a card, never to attend parties of pleasure?” These are the kinds of questions which seem to give them constant trouble. And often, very often, the simple root of their perplexity is that they do not feel assured that they are children of God. They have not yet settled which side of the gate they are on. They do not know whether they are inside the ark or not.

They quite feel that a child of God ought to act in a certain decided way; but the grand question is, “Are they children of God themselves?” If they only *felt* they were so, they would go straightforward and take a decided line. But not feeling sure about it, their conscience is forever hesitating and coming to a deadlock. The devil whispers, “Perhaps, after all, you are only a hypocrite: what right do you have to take a decided course? Wait till you are really a Christian.” And this whisper too often turns the scale, and leads on to some miserable compromise, or wretched conformity to the world!

I believe we have here one chief reason why so many in this day are inconsistent, trimming, unsatisfactory, and half-hearted in their conduct about the world. Their faith fails. They feel no assurance that they are Christ’s, and so they feel a hesitancy about breaking with the world. They shrink from laying aside all the ways of the old man because they are not quite confident they have put on the new. In short, I have little doubt that one secret cause of “halting between two opinions” is lack of assurance. When people can say decidedly, “The Lord, He is the God,” their course becomes very clear. (1Kng 18.39)

(4) Let us remember, finally, that assurance is to be desired, because *it tends to make the holiest Christians*.

This, too, sounds wonderful and strange, and yet it is true. It is one of the paradoxes of the Gospel — contrary to reason and common sense at first sight; and yet it is a fact. Cardinal Bellarmine was seldom wider of the truth than when he said, “Assurance tends toward carelessness and sloth.” He that is freely forgiven by Christ will always do much for Christ’s glory; and he that enjoys the fullest assurance of this forgiveness will ordinarily keep up the closest walk with God. It is a faithful saying and worthy to be remembered by all believers, “He that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.” (1Joh 3.3) A hope that does not purify, is a mockery, a delusion, and a snare. <sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> “The true assurance of salvation which the Spirit of God has wrought in any heart has that force to restrain a man from looseness of life, and to knit his heart in love and obedience to God, as nothing else has in all the world. It is

None are so likely to maintain a watchful guard over their own hearts and lives as those who know the comfort of living in close communion with God. They feel their privilege, and will fear losing it. They will dread falling from their high estate, and marring their own comforts, by bringing clouds between themselves and Christ. Someone who goes on a journey with little money, takes little thought of danger, and cares little how late he travels. Someone who carries gold and jewels, on the contrary, will be a cautious traveller. He will look well to his roads, his lodgings, and his company, and run no risks. It is an old saying, however unscientific it may be, that the fixed stars are those which tremble the most. The man who most fully enjoys the light of God's reconciled countenance, will be a man tremblingly afraid of losing its blessed consolations, and jealously fearful of doing anything to grieve the Holy Ghost.

I commend these four points to the serious consideration of all professing Christians. Would you like to feel the Everlasting Arms around you, [Deu 33:27](#) and to hear the voice of Jesus daily drawing near to your soul, and saying, "I am your salvation"? [Psa 35:3](#)— Would you like to be a useful labourer in the vineyard in your day and generation? — Would you be known by all men as a bold, firm, decided, single-eyed, uncompromising follower of Christ? — Would you be eminently spiritually-minded and holy? — I do not doubt that some readers will say, "These are the very things our hearts desire. We long for them. We pant after them: but they seem far from us."

Now, has it never struck you that your neglect of assurance may possibly be the main secret of all your failures — that the low measure of *faith* which satisfies you may be the cause of your low degree of *peace*? Can you think it a strange thing that your graces are faint and languishing, when faith — the root and mother of them all — is allowed to remain feeble and weak?

Take my advice this day. Seek an increase of faith. Seek an assured hope of salvation like the Apostle Paul's. Seek to obtain a simple, childlike confidence in God's promises. Seek to be able to say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed: I am persuaded that He is mine, and I am His." [2Tim 1:12](#)

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certainly either the lack of faith and assurance of God's love, or a false and carnal assurance of it, that is the true cause of all the licentiousness that reigns in the world." — *Hildersam 51st Psalm*.

"None walk so evenly with God, as those who are assured of the love of God. Faith is the mother of obedience, and sureness of trust makes way for strictness of life. When men are loose from Christ, they are loose in point of duty, and their floating belief is soon discovered in their inconstancy and unevenness of walking. We do not, with alacrity, engage in something, the success of which we are doubtful; and therefore, when we do not know whether God will accept us or not, when we are off and on in point of trust, we are just so in the course of our lives, and serve God by fits and starts. It is the slander of the world to think assurance is an idle doctrine." — *Manton's Exposition of James*. 1660.

"Who is more obliged, or who feels the obligation to observance more cogently — the son who knows his near relation, and knows his father loves him? or the servant that has great reason to doubt it? Fear is a weak and impotent principle in comparison to love. Terrors may awaken: love enlivens. Terrors may 'almost persuade': love over-persuades. I am sure that a believer's knowledge that his Beloved is his, and that he is his Beloved's (Song 6.3), is found by experience to lay the strongest and most cogent obligations upon him to loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus. For as it is to him who believes Christ is precious (1Pet 2.7), so it is to him who knows he believes Christ is so much the more precious, even the 'chiefest of ten thousand.'" (Song 5.10) — *Fairclough's Sermon in Morning Exercises*. 1660.

"Is it necessary that men be kept in continual dread of damnation, in order to render them circumspect and ensure their attention to duty? Will not the well-grounded expectation of heaven prove far more efficacious? Love is the noblest and strangest principle of obedience; nor can it be but that a sense of God's love to us will increase our desire to please Him." — *Robinson's Christian System*.

You have very likely tried other ways and methods and completely failed. Change your plan. Take another tack. Lay aside your doubts. Lean more entirely on the Lord's arm. Begin with implicit trusting. Cast aside your faithless backwardness to take the Lord at His word. Come and roll yourself, your soul, and your sins, upon your gracious Saviour. Begin with simple believing, and all other things will soon be added to you. <sup>44</sup>

**IV.** I come now to the last thing of which I spoke. I promised to point out *some probable causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained*. I will do it very briefly.

This is a very serious question, and it ought to raise in all of us great searchings of heart. Certainly, few of Christ's people seem to reach up to this blessed spirit of assurance. Many believe, but comparatively few are persuaded. Many have saving faith, but comparatively few have that glorious confidence which shines forth in the language of St. Paul. I think we must all admit that such is the case.

Now, why is this so? — Why is a thing which two Apostles have strongly enjoined us to seek after, a thing which few believers have any experiential knowledge of in these latter days? *Why is an assured hope so rare?*

I desire to offer a few suggestions on this point, with all humility. I know that many have never attained assurance, at whose feet I would gladly sit both in earth and heaven. *Perhaps* the Lord sees something in the natural temperament of some of His children, which makes assurance not good for them. *Perhaps*, in order to be kept in spiritual health, they need to be kept very low. God only knows. Still, after every allowance, I fear there are many believers without an assured hope, whose case may too often be explained by causes such as the following.

(1) One most common cause, I suspect, is a *defective view of the doctrine of justification*.

I am inclined to think that justification and sanctification are *insensibly confused together* in the minds of many believers. They receive the Gospel truth that there must be something done *in us*, as well as something done *for us*, if we are true members of Christ — and so far they are right. But then, without being aware of it, perhaps, they seem to imbibe the idea that their justification is in some degree affected by something within themselves. They do not clearly see that Christ's work, not their own work — either in whole or in part, either directly or indirectly — is alone the ground of our acceptance with God; that justification is a thing entirely without us, for which nothing whatever is needful on our part but simple faith — and that the weakest believer is as fully and completely justified as the strongest. <sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> "That which breeds so much perplexity is that we would invert God's order. 'If I knew,' say some, 'that the promise belonged to me, and Christ was a Saviour to me, I could believe' — that is to say, I would first see and then believe. But the true method is just the contrary: 'I would have fainted,' says David, 'unless I had believed I would see the goodness of the Lord.' He believed it first, and saw it afterwards." — *Archbishop Leighton*.

"It is a weak and ignorant, but common thought of Christians, that they should not look for heaven, nor trust Christ for eternal glory, till they are well advanced in holiness and fitness for it. But just as the first sanctification of our natures flows from our *faith and trust* in Christ for acceptance, so our further sanctification and fitness for glory flows from the renewed and repeated exercise of *faith in Him*." — *Traill*.

<sup>45</sup> The Westminster Confession of Faith gives an admirable account of justification: "Those whom God effectually calls, He also freely justifies! — not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness; but by

Many appear to forget that we are saved and justified as sinners, and only sinners; and that we can never attain to anything higher if we live to the age of Methuselah. *Redeemed* sinners, *justified* sinners, and *renewed* sinners, doubtless we must be — but sinners, sinners, sinners, we shall always be to the very last.

They do not seem to comprehend that there is a wide difference between our justification and our sanctification. Our justification is a perfect finished work, and it admits no degrees. Our sanctification is imperfect and incomplete, and will be so to the last hour of our life. They appear to expect that a believer may at some period of his life be in a measure free from corruption, and attain to a kind of inward perfection. And not finding this angelic state of things in their own hearts, they at once conclude there must be something very wrong in their state. And so they go mourning all their days — oppressed with fears that they have no part or lot in Christ, and refusing to be comforted.

Let us weigh this point well. If any believing soul desires assurance, and has not gotten it, let him ask himself, first of all, if he is quite sure that he is sound in the faith, if he knows how to distinguish things that differ, and if his eyes are thoroughly clear in the matter of justification. He must know what it means to simply *believe* and be justified by faith, before he can expect to feel assured.

In this matter, as well as in many others, the old Galatian heresy is the most fertile source of error, both in doctrine and in practice. People ought to seek clearer views of Christ, and what Christ has done for them. Happy is the man who really understands “justification by faith without the deeds of the law.” [Rom 3.28](#)

(2) Another common cause of the absence of assurance is, *slothfulness about growth in grace*.

I suspect that many true believers hold dangerous and unscriptural views on this point; I do not of course mean intentionally, but they do hold them. Many appear to think that, once converted, they have little more to attend to, and that a state of salvation is a kind of easy chair in which they may just sit still, lie back, and be happy. They seem to fancy that grace is given to them so that they may enjoy it; and they forget that it is given, like a talent, to be used, employed, and improved. Such persons lose sight of the many direct injunctions “to increase — to grow — to abound more and more — to add to our faith,” and the like. And in this little-doing condition, this sitting-still state of mind, I never marvel that they miss assurance.

I believe it ought to be our continual aim and desire to *go forward*. And our watchword on every returning birthday, and at the beginning of every year, should be, “More and more” (1Th 4.1): more knowledge — more faith — more obedience — more love. If we have produced thirtyfold, we should seek to produce sixty; and if we have produced sixty, we should strive to produce a hundred. The will of the Lord is our sanctification, and it ought to be our will too. (Mat 13.23; 1Th 4.3)

One thing we may depend upon, at all events, is that there is an inseparable connection between diligence and assurance. “Give *diligence*” says Peter, “to make your calling and election sure.” (2Pet 1.10) “We desire,” says Paul, “that every one of you show the same

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imputing the obedience and righteousness of Christ to them — they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness, by faith.”

diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.” (Heb 6.11) “The soul of the *diligent*,” says Solomon, “shall be made fat.” (Pro 13.4) There is much truth in the old maxim of the Puritans: “Faith of adherence comes by hearing, but faith of assurance does not come without *doing*.”

Is any reader of this paper one of those who desires assurance, but has not gotten it? Mark my words. You will never get it without diligence, however much you may desire it. There are no gains without pains in spiritual things, any more than in temporal. “The soul of the sluggard desires and has nothing.” (Pro 13.4) <sup>46</sup>

(3) Another common cause of a lack of assurance is *an inconsistent walk in life*.

With grief and sorrow, I feel constrained to say that I fear nothing more frequently prevents men attaining an assured hope than this. The stream of professing Christianity in this day is far wider than it formerly was, and I am afraid that we must admit, at the same time, that it is much less deep.

Inconsistency of life is utterly destructive of peace of conscience. The two things are incompatible. They cannot and will not go together. If you would have your besetting sins, and cannot make up your minds to give them up — if you would shrink from cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye when occasion requires it — then I will engage that you will have no assurance.

- A vacillating walk
- A backwardness to take a bold and decided line
- A readiness to conform to the world
- A hesitating witness for Christ
- A lingering tone of religion
- A flinching from a high standard of holiness and spiritual life

All these make a sure receipt for bringing a blight upon the garden of your soul.

It is vain to suppose that you will feel assured and persuaded of your own pardon and acceptance with God, unless you count *all* God’s commandments concerning *all* things to be right, and hate every sin, whether great or small. (Psa 119.128) One Achan allowed in the camp of your heart will weaken your hands and lay your consolations low in the dust. You must be sowing to the Spirit daily, if you are to reap the witness of the Spirit. You will

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<sup>46</sup> “Whose fault is it that your interest in Christ is not put out of question? If Christians were more in self-examination, closer in walking with God, and if they had nearer communion with God, and acting more of faith, this shameful darkness and doubting would quickly vanish.” — *Traill*.

“A lazy Christian will always lack four things: comfort, contentment, confidence, and assurance. God has made a separation between joy and idleness, between assurance and laziness; and therefore, it is impossible for you to bring these together which God has put so far apart.” — *Thomas Brooks*.

“Are you in depths and doubts, staggering and uncertain, not knowing what is your condition, nor whether you have any interest in the forgiveness that is of God? Are you tossed up and down between hopes and fears, and want peace, consolation, and establishment? Why do you lie upon your faces? Get up: watch, pray, fast, meditate, offer violence to your lusts and corruptions; do not fear not, do not startle at their crying to be spared; press to the throne of grace by prayer, supplications, importunities, restless requests — this is the way to take the kingdom of God. [Mat 11.12](#) These things are not peace; they are not assurance; but they *are* part of the means God has appointed for attaining them.” — *Owen on the 130th Psalm*.

not find and feel that all the Lord's ways are ways of pleasantness, unless you labour in all your ways to please the Lord. <sup>47</sup>

I bless God that our salvation in no way depends on our own works. We are saved by grace, through faith, without the deeds of the law — not by works of righteousness. But I would never have any believer forget for a moment that our SENSE of salvation depends much on the manner of our living. Inconsistency will dim our eyes, and bring clouds between us and the sun. The sun is the same behind the clouds, but you will not be able to see its brightness or enjoy its warmth, and your soul will be gloomy and cold. It is in the path of well doing that the dayspring of assurance will visit you, and shine down upon your heart.

- “The secret of the Lord,” says David, “is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.” (Psa 25.14)
- “To him that orders his conduct aright, I will show the salvation of God.” (Psa 50.23)
- “Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing shall offend them.” (Psa 119.165)
- “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.” (1Joh 1.7)
- “Let us not love in word, or in tongue; but in deed and in truth; and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and will *assure* our hearts before Him.” (1Joh 3.18, 19)
- “Hereby we do *know* that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” (1Joh 2.3)

Paul was a man who exercised himself to always have a conscience void of offence toward God and man. (Act 24.16) He could say with boldness, “I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith.” Therefore, I do not wonder that the Lord enabled him to add with confidence, “Henceforth there is a crown laid up for me, and the Lord shall give it me at that day.” <sup>2Tim 4.7-8</sup>

If any believer in the Lord Jesus desires assurance, and has not gotten it, let him think over this point also. Let him look at his own heart, look at his own conscience, look at his own life, look at his own ways, look at his own home. And perhaps when he has done that, he will be able to say, “There is a reason why I have no assured hope.”

I leave the three matters I have just mentioned to the private consideration of every reader of this paper. I am sure they are worth examining. May we examine them honestly. And may the Lord give us understanding in all things.

(1) And now, in closing this important inquiry, let me speak first to those readers who have not yet given themselves to the Lord, who have not yet come out from the world, chosen the good part, and followed Christ.

I ask you, then, to learn from this subject, the *privileges and comforts of a true Christian*.

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<sup>47</sup> “Would you have your hope strong? Then keep your conscience pure: you cannot defile one without weakening the other. The godly person who is loose and careless in his holy walking will soon find his hope languishing. All sin disposes the soul that tampers with it, to trembling fears and shakings of heart.” — *Gurnall*.

“One great and too common cause of distress is secretly maintaining some known sin: it puts out the eye of the soul, or dims it and stupefies it, so that it can neither see nor feel its own condition; but especially, it provokes God to withdraw Himself, His comforts, and the assistance of His Spirit.” — *Baxter's Saints' Rest*.

“The stars which have the least circuit are nearest the pole; and men whose hearts are least entangled with the world are always nearest to God and to the assurance of His favour. Worldly Christians, remember this: you and the world must part, or else assurance and your souls will never meet.” — *Thomas Brooks*.

I would not have you judge the Lord Jesus Christ by His people. The best of servants can give you but a faint idea of that glorious Master. Nor would I have you judge the privileges of His kingdom by the measure of comfort to which many of His people attain. Alas, most of us are poor creatures! We come short, very short, of the blessedness we might enjoy. But depend upon it, there are glorious things in the city of our God, which those who have an assured hope taste, even in their lifetime. There are lengths and breadths of peace and consolation there, which it has not entered into your heart to conceive. There is bread enough and to spare in our Father's house, though many of us certainly eat but little of it, and continue weak. But the fault must not be laid to our Master's charge: it is all our own.

And after all, the weakest child of God has a mine of comforts within him, of which you know nothing. You see the conflicts and tossings of the surface of his heart, but you do not see the pearls of great price which are hidden in the depths below. The feeblest member of Christ would not change conditions with you. The believer who possesses the least assurance is far better off than you are. He has a *hope*, however faint — but you have none at all. He has,

- a *portion* that will never be taken from him,
- a *Saviour* who will never forsake him,
- a *treasure* that does not fade away,

however little he may realize all this at present. But as for you, if you die as you are, your expectations will all perish. Oh, that you were wise! Oh, that you understood these things! Oh, that you would consider your final end!

I feel deeply for you in these latter days of the world, if I ever did. I feel deeply for those whose treasure is all on earth, and whose hopes are all on this side of the grave. Yes! When I see old kingdoms and dynasties shaking to the very foundation — when I see, as we all saw a few years ago, kings and princes and rich men and great men fleeing for their lives, scarcely knowing where to hide their heads — when I see property dependent on public confidence melting like snow in the spring, and public stocks and funds losing their value — when I see these things, I feel deeply for those who have no better portion than this world can give them, and no place in that kingdom which cannot be removed. <sup>48</sup>

Take advice from a minister of Christ this very day. Seek *durable riches* — a *treasure* that cannot be taken from you — a *city* which has lasting foundations. Do as the Apostle Paul did. Give yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek that incorruptible crown which He is ready to bestow. Take His yoke upon you, and learn from Him. Come away from a world which will never really satisfy you, and from sin which will at last bite like a serpent if you cling to it. Come to the Lord Jesus as lowly sinners, and He will receive you, pardon you, give you His renewing Spirit, fill you with peace. This will give you more real comfort than the world has ever done. There is a *gulf in your heart* which nothing but the peace of Christ can fill. Enter in and share our privileges. Come with us, and sit down by our side.

(2) Lastly, let me turn to all believers who read these pages, and speak a few words of brotherly counsel to them.

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<sup>48</sup> "They are doubly miserable who have neither heaven nor earth, temporals nor eternal, made sure to them in changing times." — *Thomas Brooks*.

The main thing that I urge upon you is this: *if you have not gotten an assured hope of your own acceptance in Christ, resolve this day to seek it.* Labour for it. Strive after it. Pray for it. Give the Lord no rest till you “know whom you have believed.”

I feel, indeed, that the small amount of assurance in this day, among those who are reckoned to be God’s children, is a shame and a reproach. “It is a thing to be heavily bewailed,” says old Traill, “that many Christians have lived twenty or forty years since Christ called them by His grace, yet *doubting* in their life.” Let us call to mind the earnest “desire” Paul expresses, that “every one” of the Hebrews should seek full assurance; and let us endeavour, by God’s blessing, to roll this reproach away. (Heb 6.11)

Believing reader, do you really mean to say that you have no desire to exchange hope for *confidence*, trust for *persuasion*, uncertainty for *knowledge*? Because *weak faith* will save you, will you therefore rest content with it? Because assurance is not essential to your entrance into heaven, will you therefore be satisfied without it on earth? Alas, this is not a healthy state of soul to be in; this is not the mind of the Apostolic day! Arise at once and go forward. Do not stay at the foundations of religion: go on to perfection. Do not be content with a day of small things. Never despise it in others, but never be content with it in yourself.

Believe me, believe me, assurance is worth seeking. You forsake your own mercies when you rest content without it. The things I speak are for your peace. If it is good to be sure in earthly things, then how much better is it to be sure in heavenly things! Your salvation is a fixed and certain thing. God knows it. Why should not you seek to know it too? There is nothing unscriptural in this. Paul never saw the Book of Life, and yet Paul says, “I *know* and am *persuaded*.”

Make it then your daily prayer that you may have an increase of faith. Your peace will be according to your faith. Cultivate that blessed root more, and sooner or later, by God’s blessing, you may hope to have the flower. You may not perhaps attain to full assurance all at once. It is good sometimes to be kept waiting: we do not value things which we get without trouble. But though it tarry, wait for it. Seek on, and expect to find.

There is one thing, however, of which I would not have you ignorant: — *You must not be surprised if you have occasional doubts*, even after you have assurance. You must not forget that you are on earth, and not in heaven. You are still in the body, and have indwelling sin: the flesh will lust against the spirit to the very end. The leprosy will never be out of the walls of the old house till death takes it down. And there is a devil, too, and a strong devil: a devil who tempted the Lord Jesus, and gave Peter a fall; and he will take care that you know it. There will always be some doubts. He that never doubts has nothing to lose. He that never fears possesses nothing truly valuable. He that is never jealous knows little of deep love. Do not be discouraged: you will be more than a conqueror through Him who loved you. <sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> “None have assurance at all times. As in a walk that is shaded with trees and chequered with light and shadow, some tracks and paths in it are dark and others are sunshine. Such is usually the life of the most assured Christian.” — *Bishop Hopkins*.

“It is very suspicious that a person who is always in the same frame, is a hypocrite, let him pretend it to be ever so good.” — *Traill*.

Finally, do not forget that assurance is a thing which *may be lost for a season*, even by the brightest Christians, unless they take care.

Assurance is a most delicate plant. It needs daily, hourly watching, watering, tending, cherishing. So watch and pray more, once you have it. As Rutherford says, “Make much of assurance.” Always be on your guard. In *Pilgrim’s Progress*, when Christian slept in the harbour, he lost his certificate. Keep that in mind.

David lost assurance for many months by falling into transgression. Peter lost it when he denied his Lord. Each found it again, undoubtedly, but not till after bitter tears. Spiritual darkness comes on horseback, and it goes away on foot. It is upon us before we know that it is coming. It leaves us slowly, gradually, and not till after many days. It is easy to run downhill. It is hard work to climb uphill. So, remember my caution: when you have the joy of the Lord, watch and pray.

Above all, do not grieve the Spirit. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not vex the Spirit. Do not drive Him to a distance, by toying with small bad habits and little sins. Little jarrings between husbands and wives make unhappy homes; and petty inconsistencies, known and allowed, will bring a strangeness between you and the Spirit.

Hear the conclusion of the whole matter. The man who most closely walks with God in Christ, will generally be kept in the greatest peace.

The believer who follows the Lord most fully and aims at the highest degree of holiness, will ordinarily enjoy the most assured hope, and have the clearest persuasion of his own salvation.

#### **NOTE – Extracts from English Divines**

*(Referred to in footnote 24)*

Extracts from English Divines, showing that there is a difference between faith and assurance — that a believer may be justified and accepted with God, and yet not enjoy a comfortable knowledge and persuasion of his own safety — and that the weakest faith in Christ, if it is true, will save a man as surely as the strongest.

(1) “The mercy of God is greater than all the sins in the world. But we sometimes are in such a state, that we think we have no faith at all; or if we have any, it is very feeble and weak. And therefore, these are two separate things: to have faith, and to have the feeling of faith. For some men would gladly have the feeling of faith, but they cannot attain it. And yet they must not despair, but instead go forward in calling upon God, and it will come at length: God will open their hearts and let them feel His goodness.” — *Bishop Larimer’s Sermons*. 1552.

(2) “A man’s weak faith may fail in applying, or in apprehending and appropriating Christ’s benefits for himself. This is to be seen in ordinary experience. For there is many a man of humble and contrite heart, who serves God in spirit and truth, and yet is not able to say without great doubtings and waverings, I know and am fully assured that my sins are pardoned. Now, shall we say that all such men are without faith? God forbid!

“This *weak* faith will as truly apprehend God’s merciful promises for the pardon of sin as *strong* faith, though not as soundly — even as a man with a palsied hand can just as well stretch it out to receive a gift from the hand of a king as one who is sounder, though it may not be as firmly and steadfastly.” — *Exposition of the Creed, by William Perkins, Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge*. 1612.

(3) “This certainty of our salvation, spoken of by Paul, repeated by Peter, and mentioned by David (Psa 4.7), is that special fruit of faith, which breeds spiritual joy and inward peace, and which surpasses all understanding. It is true: all God’s children do not have it. One thing is the tree, and another is the fruit of the tree: one thing is faith, and another is the fruit of faith. And that remnant of God’s elect who feel the shortcomings of this faith, have faith notwithstanding.” — *Sermons by Richard Greenham, Minister and Preacher of the Word of God*. 1612.

(4) “Some think they have no faith at all, because they have no full assurance. Yet the fairest fire that can be, will have some smoke.” — *The Bruised Reed, by Richard Sibbes, Master of Catherine Hall, Cambridge, and Preacher of Gray’s Inn, London*. 1630.

(5) “The act of faith is to apply Christ to the soul; and the weakest faith can do this as well as the strongest, if it is true. A child can hold a staff as well as a man, though not so strongly. The prisoner sees the sun through a hole, though not so perfectly as those in the open air. Those who saw the brazen serpent, though a great way off, were yet healed.

“The least faith is as precious to the believer’s soul as Peter’s or Paul’s faith was to them; for it lays hold upon Christ and brings eternal salvation.” — *An Exposition of the Second Epistle General of Peter, by the Rev Thomas Adams, Rector of St. Gregory’s, London*. 1633.

(6) “Weak faith is true faith — as precious, though not so great as strong faith: the same Holy Ghost is the author; the same Gospel is the instrument.

“If it never proves great, yet weak faith shall save; for it interests us in Christ,<sup>50</sup> and makes Him and all His benefits ours. For it is not the strength of our faith that saves, but the truth of our faith — not the weakness of our faith that condemns, but the lack of faith; for the least faith lays hold on Christ, and so it will save us. Neither are we saved by the worth or quantity of our faith, but by Christ, who is laid hold on by a weak faith, as well as a strong faith. Just as a weak hand that can put food into the mouth, will feed and nourish the body as well as if it were a strong hand, seeing that the body is not nourished by the strength of the hand, but by the goodness of the food.” — *The Doctrine of Faith, by John Rogers, Preacher of God’s Word, at Dedham, in Essex*. 1634.

(7) “It is one thing to have a thing surely, and another to *know* I have it surely. We seek many things that we have in our hands, and we have many things that we think we have lost. So too with a believer who has a sure belief yet does not always know that he so believes. Faith is necessary to salvation: but full assurance that I *do* believe is not of like necessity.” — *Ball on Faith*. 1637.

(8) “There is a weak faith which yet is a true faith; and although it is weak, yet because it is true, it shall not be rejected by Christ.

“Faith is not created perfect at first, as Adam was; but it is like a man in the ordinary course of nature, who is first an instrument, then a child, then a youth, then a man.

“Some utterly reject all weak faith, and assess all weakness in faith as hypocrisy. Certainly these are either proud or cruel men.

“Some comfort and establish those who are weak, saying, ‘Be quiet. You have faith and grace enough, and are good enough: you need no more, nor should you be too righteous.’ (Ecc 7.16) These are soft cushions, but not safe: these are fawning flatterers, not faithful friends.

“Some comfort and exhort, saying, ‘Be of good cheer: He who has begun a good work will also finish it in you; therefore pray that His grace may abound in you; indeed do not sit still, but go forward, and march on in the way of the Lord.’ (Heb 6.1) Now, *this* is the safest and best course.”

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<sup>50</sup> Faith unites us to Christ, gaining us an interest or portion in Christ (an inheritance as co-heirs with him).

— *Questions, Observations, etc., upon the Gospel according to St. Matthew, by Richard Ward, sometime Student at Cambridge, and Preacher of the Gospel in London.* 1640.

(9) “A man may be in the favour of God, in the state of grace, a justified man before God, and yet lack the sensible assurance of His salvation and of the favour of God in Christ.

“A man may have saving grace in him, and not perceive it himself; a man may have true justifying faith in him, and not have the use and operation of it so far as to work in him a comfortable assurance of his reconciliation with God. Indeed, I will say more: a man may be in the state of grace, and have true justifying faith in him, and yet be so far from a sensible assurance of it in himself, as in his own sense and feeling he may seem to be assured of the contrary. Job was certainly in this case when he cried unto God, ‘Why do You hide your face and regard me as Your enemy?’ (Job 13.24)

“The weakest faith will justify. If you can receive Christ and rest upon Him, even with the weakest faith, it will serve your turn. Take heed that you do not think it is the strength of your faith that justifies you. No, no: what does it is Christ and His perfect righteousness, which your faith receives and rests upon. He that has the feeblest and weakest hand may receive alms and apply a sovereign plaster to his wound, as well as he that has the strongest, and he receives as much good by it too.”

— *Lectures on the 51st Psalm, preached at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, by Arthur Hildersam, Minister of Jesus Christ.* 1642.

(10) “Though your grace is ever so weak, if you have truth of grace, you have as great a share in the righteousness of Christ for your justification as the strong Christian does. You have as much of Christ imputed to you as any other.” — *Sermons by William Bridge, formerly Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Pastor of the Church of Christ, in Great Yarmouth.* 1648.

(1) “There are some who are true believers, and yet weak in faith. They do indeed receive Christ and free grace, but it is with a shaking hand; they have, as divines say, the faith of adherence; they will stick to Christ as theirs. But they lack the faith of evidence; they cannot see themselves as His. They are believers, but of little faith; they hope that Christ will not cast them out, but are not sure that He will take them up.” — *Sips of Sweetness, or Consolation for Weak Relievers, by John Durant, Preacher in Canterbury Cathedral.* 1649.

(12) You say, “I know that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that ‘whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.’ (John 3.15) Nor can I help but know that, in a sense of my own sinful condition, I cast myself in some measure upon my Saviour, and lay some hold upon His all-sufficient redemption: But alas, my apprehensions of Him are so feeble, that they can afford no sound comfort to my soul!

“Courage, my son. If you had looked to be justified and saved by the power of the very act of your faith, you would have had reason to be disheartened with the conviction of its weakness. But now that the virtue and efficacy of this happy work is in the *object* that you apprehended, which is the infinite merits and mercy of your God and Saviour, which cannot be abated by your infirmities, you have cause to take heart, and to cheerfully expect His salvation.

“Understand your case aright. Here is a double hand, that helps us up toward Heaven. Our hand of faith lays hold upon our Saviour; our Saviour’s hand of mercy and plenteous redemption lays hold on us. Our hold of Him is feeble and easily loosed; His hold of us is strong and irresistible.

“If your works were stood upon, then a strength of hand would be necessary; but now that only taking and receiving a precious gift is required, why may not a weak hand do that as well as a strong one? As *well*, though not as *forcibly*.” — *Bishop Hall’s “Balm of Gilead.”* 1650.

(13) “I do not find that salvation is put upon the *strength* of faith, but the *truth* of faith — not upon the *brightest* degree, but upon *any* degree of faith. It is not said, If you have such a degree of faith, you shall be justified and saved; but simply believing is required. The lowest degree of true faith

will do it, as in Romans 10.9: ‘If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.’ The thief upon the cross had not attained to such high degrees of faith: by one act, and that of a weak faith, he was justified and saved. (Luk 23.42)” — *Exposition of the Prophet Ezekiel*, by William Greenhill, Rector of Stepney, London, and Chaplain to the Dukes of York and Gloucester. 1650.

(14) “A man may have true grace that does not have the assurance of the love and favour of God, or of the remission of his sins and the salvation of his soul. A man may be God’s, and yet not know it; his estate may be good, and yet he does not see it; he may be in a *safe* condition, when he is not in a *comfortable* position. All may be well with him in the court of glory, when he would give a thousand worlds that all were only well in the court of conscience.

“Assurance is requisite to the *well-being* of a Christian, but not to his *being*; it is requisite to the consolation of a Christian, but not to his salvation; it is requisite to the *well-being* of grace, but not to the mere being of grace. Though a man cannot be saved without *faith*, yet he may be saved without *assurance*. In many places of the Scripture, God has declared that without *faith* there is no salvation; but God has not in any place of Scripture declared that without *assurance* there is no salvation.” — *Heaven on Earth*, by Thomas Brooks, Preacher of the Gospel, at St. Margaret’s, Fish Street Hill, London. 1654.

(15) “You that can make this clear to your own hearts, that you have faith even though it is weak, do not be discouraged; do not be troubled. Consider that the smallest degree of true faith, is as saving as the greatest faith. A spark of fire is as true a fire as any in the element of fire. A drop of water is as true water as any in the ocean. So the least grain of faith is as true and as saving as the greatest faith in the world.

“The least bud draws sap from the root as well as the greatest bough. So the weakest measure of faith as truly ingrafts you into Christ, and draws life from Christ by it, as the strongest. The weakest faith has communion with the merits and blood of Christ as well as the strongest.

“The least faith marries the soul to Christ. The weakest faith has as equal a share in God’s love as the strongest. We are beloved in Christ, and the least measure of faith makes us members of Christ. The least faith has equal right to the promises as the strongest. And therefore, do not let our souls be discouraged by weakness.” — *Nature and Royalties of Faith*, by Samuel Bolton, D.D., of Christ’s College, Cambridge. 1657.

(16) “Some are afraid they have no faith at all, because they do not have the highest degree of faith, which is full assurance; or because they lack the comfort which others attain to — even joy unspeakable and full of glory. <sup>1Pet 1.8</sup> But for rolling this stone out of the way, we must remember there are several degrees of faith. It is possible you may have faith, though not the highest degree of faith, and so have joy in the Spirit. That is a point of faith rather than faith itself. It is indeed living by sense rather than living by faith, when we are cheered with continual cordials. A stronger faith is required to live upon God without comfort, than when God shines on our spirit with an abundance of joy.” — *Matthew Lawrence, Preacher at Ipswich, on Faith*. 1657.

(17) “If any person abroad has thought that a special and full persuasion of the pardon of their sin was of the essence of faith, let them answer for it. Our divines at home generally are of another judgment. Bishop Davenant and Bishop Prideaux, and others, have shown the great difference between resting <sup>51</sup> and assurance; and they all account and call assurance a daughter, a fruit and consequent, of *faith*. And the late learned Arrowsmith tells us that God seldom bestows assurance on believers till they have grown in grace: for, he says, there is the same difference between faith of resting and faith of assurance, as there is between reason and learning. Reason is the foundation of learning. Just as there can be no learning if reason is lacking (as in beasts), in like manner,

<sup>51</sup> Originally “recumbrance” i.e., *recumbence* – leaning, resting, or reclining against something.

there can be no assurance where there is no faith of adherence. Again, just as reason well-exercised in the study of arts and sciences rises to learning, so faith being well-exercised on its proper object, and by its proper fruits, rises to assurance. Further, learning may be lost by negligence, non-attendance, or some violent disease, while reason abides; so too, assurance may be lost by temptation, or by spiritual sloth, while saving faith abides. Lastly, just as all men have reason, but all men are not learned, so all regenerate persons have faith to comply savingly with the gospel method of salvation, but all true believers may not have assurance.” — *Sermon by R. Fair dough, Fellow of Immanuel College, Cambridge, in the Morning Exercises, preached at Southwark.* 1660.

(18) We must distinguish between weakness of faith and nullity. A weak faith is still true. The bruised reed is but weak, yet it is one that Christ will not break. Though your faith is but weak, yet do not be discouraged. A weak faith may receive a strong Christ; a weak hand can tie the knot in marriage as well as a strong; a weak eye might have seen the brazen serpent. The promise is not made to strong faith, but to true faith. The promise does not say, Whoever has a giant faith that can remove mountains, that can stop the mouth of lions, shall be saved — but whoever believes, however small his faith.

“You may have the water of the Spirit poured on you in sanctification, though not the oil of gladness in assurance; there may be faith of adherence, and not of evidence; there may be life in the root where there is no fruit in the branches, and faith in the heart where there is no fruit of assurance.” — *A Body of Divinity, by Thomas Watson, formerly Minister of St. Stephen’s, Walbrook, London.* 1660.

(19) “Many of God’s dear children may remain very doubtful for a long time as to their present and eternal condition, and not know what to conclude — whether they will be damned or be saved. There are believers of several growths in the Church of God — fathers, young men, children, and babes; and just as in most families there are more babes and children than grown men, so in the Church of God there are more weak, doubting Christians than strong ones, grown up to a full assurance. A babe may be born, and yet not know it; so a man may be born again, and yet not be sure of it.

“We make a difference between saving faith, as such, and a full persuasion of the heart. Some of those who will be saved may not be *certain* that they will be saved; for the promise is made to the *grace* of faith, and not to the *evidence* of it — to faith as true, and not to faith as strong. They may be sure of heaven, and yet in their own sense, *not* be assured of heaven.” — *Sermon by Rev Thomas Doolittle, of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and sometime Rector of St. Alphege, London, in the Morning Exercises, at Cripplegate.* 1661.

(20) “Is it not necessary to justification to be assured that my sins are pardoned, and that I am justified? No, that is not an act of faith as it justifies, but an effect and fruit that follows *after* justification.

“It is one thing for a man to have his salvation certain, another thing to be certain that it is certain.

“A man fallen into a river and likely to be drowned, as he is carried down with the flood, espies the bough of a tree hanging over the river. He catches at it, and clings to it with all his might to save himself. Seeing no other way of succour than that, he ventures his life upon it. This man, as soon as he fastened on this bough, was in a safe condition — though all troubles, fears, and terrors are not quickly out of his mind until he comes to himself, and *sees* himself quite out of danger. Then he is sure that he is safe — but he was safe *before* he was sure. It is the same with a believer. Faith is but espying Christ as the only means to save, and reaching out the heart to lay hold on Him. ‘God has spoken the word, and made the promise to His Son: I believe Him to be the only Saviour, and I remit my soul to Him to be saved by His mediation.’ As soon as the soul can do this, God imputes the righteousness of His Son to it, and it is actually justified in the court of heaven,

though it is not quickly quieted and pacified in the court of conscience. That is done afterwards: in some it is sooner, in some later, by the fruits and effects of justification.” — *Archbishop Usher’s “Body of Divinity.”* 1670.

(21) “There are those who doubt because they doubt, and who multiply distrust upon itself, concluding that they have no faith because they find so much and such frequent doubting within themselves. But this is a great mistake. There may be some doubting where there is yet much faith; and there may be a little faith where there is much doubting.

“Our Saviour requires and delights in a strong, firm believing on Him, though He does not reject the least and weakest believing.” — *Archbishop Leighton’s Lectures on the first nine chapters of St. Matthew’s Gospel.* 1670.

(22) “Many formerly, and those of the highest remark and eminence, have placed true faith in no lower degree than assurance — or the secure persuasion of the pardon of their sins, the acceptance of their persons, and their future salvation.

“But this is very sad and uncomfortable for thousands of doubting and deserted souls, concluding that all those who fall short of certainty, fall short of grace; and so it has given the Papists too great an advantage.

“Faith is *not* assurance. But assurance sometimes crowns and rewards a strong, vigorous, and heroic faith. The Spirit of God breaks in upon the soul with an evidencing light, scattering all that darkness, and those fears and doubts which before clouded it.” — *Bishop Hopkins on the Covenants.* 1680.

(23) “A lack of assurance is *not* unbelief. Believers may be drooping spirits. There is a manifest distinction made between faith in Christ, and the comfort of that faith — between believing unto eternal life, and knowing that we *have* eternal life. There is a difference between a child’s having a right to an estate, and his full knowledge of the title.

“The character of faith may be written in the heart, as letters engraven upon a seal, yet filled with so much dust as not to be distinguished. The dust hinders the reading of the letters, yet it does not raze them out.” — *Discourses by Stephen Charnock, of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.* 1680.

(24) “Some rob themselves of their own comfort by placing saving faith in full assurance. Faith, and *sense* of faith, are two distinct and separable mercies; you may have truly received Christ, and not receive the knowledge or assurance of it. There are some who say, ‘You are our God,’ of whom God never said, ‘You are my people;’ these have no authority to be called the sons of God. There are others of whom God says, ‘These are my people,’ and yet they dare not call God ‘their God’; these have authority to be called the sons of God, yet do not know it. They have received Christ; that is their safety. But they have not yet received the knowledge and assurance of it; *that* is their trouble.... The father owns his child in the cradle, who does not yet know him to be his father.” — *Method of Grace, by John Flavel, Minister of the Gospel at Dartmouth, Devon.* 1680.

(25) “It is confessed that weak faith has as much peace with God through Christ, as another has by strong faith — but not so much bosom-peace.

“Weak faith will land the Christian in heaven as surely as strong faith, for it is impossible that the least dram of true grace should perish, being all incorruptible seed; but the weak, doubting Christian is not likely to have so pleasant a voyage there as another with strong faith. Though everyone in the ship comes safe to shore, yet he that is sea-sick all the way does not have so comfortable a voyage as he that is strong and healthy.” — *The Christian in Complete Armour, by William Gurnall, sometime Ejector of Lavenham, Suffolk.* 1680.

(26) “Do not be discouraged if it does not yet appear to you that you were given by the Father to the Son. It may *be*, though you do not see it. Many of the given do not know it for a long time;

indeed I see no great danger in saying that not a few of those given to the Son may be in darkness, and doubts, and fears about it, till the last and brightest day declares it, and till the last sentence proclaims it.

“Therefore, if any of you are in the dark about your own election, do not be discouraged: it may be, though you do not know it.” — *Sermons on the Lord’s Prayer, by Robert Traill, Minister of the Gospel, in London, and sometime at Cranbrook, Kent.* 1690.

(27) “Assurance is not essential to the being of faith. It is a strong faith; but we read likewise of a weak faith, little faith, faith like a grain of mustard seed. True saving faith in Jesus Christ is only distinguishable by its different degrees; but in every degree and in every subject, it is universally of the same kind.” — *Sermons, by the Key. John Newton, sometime Vicar of Olney, and Rector of St. Mary, Woolnoth, London.* 1767.

(28) “There is no reason why weak believers should conclude against themselves. Weak faith unites with Christ as really as strong faith — as the least bud in the vine is drawing sap and life from the root, no less than the strongest branch. Weak believers, therefore, have abundant cause to be thankful; and while they reach after growth in grace, they should not overlook what they have already received.” — *Letter of Rev Henry Venn.* 1784.

(29) “The faith necessary and sufficient for our salvation is not assurance. Its tendency doubtless is to produce that lively expectation of the Divine favour which will issue in a full confidence. But the confidence is not itself the faith of which we speak, nor is it necessarily included in it: indeed, it is a totally distinct thing.

“Assurance will generally accompany a high degree of faith. But there are sincere persons who are endued with only small measures of grace, or in whom the exercise of that grace may be greatly obstructed. When such defects or hindrances prevail, many fears and distresses may be expected to arise.” — *The Christian System, by the Rev Thomas Robinson, Vicar of St. Mary’s, Leicester.* 1795.

(30) “Salvation, and the joy of salvation, are not always contemporaneous; the latter does not always accompany the former in present experience.

“A sick man may be under a process of recovery, and yet be in doubt concerning the restoration of his health. Pain and weakness may cause him to hesitate. A child may be heir to an estate or kingdom, and yet derive no joy from the prospect of his future inheritance. He may be unable to trace his genealogy, or to read his title-deeds and the testament of his father; or with a capacity of reading them, he may be unable to understand their import, and his guardian may deem it right to allow him to remain in ignorance for a time. But his ignorance does not affect the validity of his title.

“Personal assurance of salvation is not necessarily connected with faith. They are not essentially the same. Every believer might indeed infer from the effect produced in his own heart, his own safety and privileges; but many who truly believe are unskilful in the word of righteousness, and they fail to draw the conclusion from Scriptural premises which they would be justified in drawing.” — *Lectures on the 51st Psalm, by the Rev Thomas Biddulph, Minister of St. James’s, Bristol.* 1830.

## 8. MOSES AN EXAMPLE

*“By faith Moses, when he had come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter: “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;*

*“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” — Heb 11.24-26.*

THE characters of God’s most eminent saints, as drawn and described in the Bible, form a most useful part of Holy Scripture. Abstract doctrines, and principles, and precepts, are all most valuable in their way; but after all that, nothing is more helpful than a pattern or example. Do we want to know what *practical* holiness is? Let us sit down and study the picture of an eminently holy man. In this paper, I propose to set before my readers the history of a man who lived by faith, and left us a pattern of what faith can do in promoting holiness of character. To all who want to know what “living by faith” means, I offer Moses as an example.

The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, from which my text is taken, is a great chapter: it deserves to be printed in golden letters. I can well believe it must have been most cheering and encouraging to a converted Jew. I suppose no members of the early Church found so much difficulty in a profession of Christianity, as the Hebrews did. The way was narrow to all, but preeminently narrow to them. The *cross was heavy to all*, but surely they had to carry double weight. And this chapter would refresh them like a cordial — it would be as “wine to those who are of heavy hearts.” Its words would “be pleasant as the honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.” (Pro 31.6; 16.24)

The three verses I am going to explain are far from being the least interesting in the chapter. Indeed, I think few if any have so strong a claim on our attention. And I will explain why I say so.

It seems to me that the work of faith described in the story of Moses comes home more especially to our own case. The men of God named in the former part of the chapter are all examples to us beyond question. But we cannot literally do what most of them did, however much we may drink into their spirit. We are not called upon to offer a literal sacrifice like *Abel* — or to build a literal ark like *Noah* — or to literally leave our country, and dwell in tents, and offer up our Isaac like *Abraham*. But the faith of *Moses* comes nearer to us. It seems to operate in a way that is more familiar to our own experience. It made him take up a line of conduct such as we must sometimes take up ourselves in the present day, each in our own walk of life, if we would be consistent Christians. And for this reason, I think these three verses deserve more than ordinary consideration.

Now, I have nothing but the simplest things to say about them. I will only try to show the greatness of the things Moses did, and the principle on which he did them. And then perhaps we will be better prepared for the practical instruction which the verses appear to hold out to everyone who will receive it.

**I.** First, then, I will speak of *what Moses gave up and refused*.

Moses gave up three things for the sake of his soul. He felt that his soul would not be saved if he kept them — so he gave them up. And in so doing, I say that he made three of the greatest sacrifices that man's heart can possibly make. Let us see.

(1) *He gave up rank and greatness.*

“He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.” We all know his history. The daughter of Pharaoh had preserved his life when he was an infant. She had gone further than that: she had adopted him and educated him as her own son.

If some writers of history may be trusted, she was Pharaoh's only child. Some go so far as to say that in the common order of things, Moses would one day have been King of Egypt! That may or may not be; we cannot tell.<sup>52</sup> It is enough for us to know that, from his connection with Pharaoh's daughter, Moses might have been a very great man, if he had pleased. If he had been content with the position in which he found himself at the Egyptian court, he might easily have been among the first (if not the very first) in all the land of Egypt.

Let us think, for a moment, how great this temptation was.

Here was a man of like passions with ourselves. He might have had as much greatness as earth can well give. Rank, power, place, honour, titles, dignities — all were before him, and within his grasp. These are the things for which many men are continually struggling. These are the prizes which there is an incessant race in the world around us to obtain. To be somebody, to be looked up to, to raise themselves in the scale of society, to get a handle to their names — these are the very things for which many sacrifice time, and thought, and health, and life itself. But Moses would not have them as a gift. He turned his back on them. He refused them. He gave them up!

(2) *And more than this — he refused pleasure.*

No doubt, pleasure of every kind was at his feet if he had liked to take it up — sensual pleasure, intellectual pleasure, social pleasure — whatever could strike his fancy. Egypt was a land of artists, a residence of learned men, a resort of everyone who had skill, or science of any description. There was nothing which could feed the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life,” which someone in Moses' place might not easily have commanded and possessed as his own. (1Joh 2.16)

Let us think again, how great *this* temptation was also.

Pleasure, let it be remembered, is the one thing for which millions live. They differ, perhaps, in their views of what makes up real pleasure, but all agree in seeking to obtain it first and foremost. Pleasure and enjoyment in the holidays is the grand object to which a schoolboy looks forward. Pleasure and satisfaction in making himself independent is the mark on which the young man in business fixes his eye. Pleasure and ease in retiring from business with a fortune is the aim which the merchant sets before him. Pleasure and bodily comfort at his own home is the sum of the poor man's wishes. Pleasure and fresh excitement in politics, travelling, amusements, company, books — this is the goal towards which the rich man is straining. Pleasure is the shadow which all alike are hunting — high

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<sup>52</sup> In Eastern countries, the liberty to adopt children who are not blood-relatives, and to give them the privileges of sons, is notoriously carried out most extensively.

and low, rich and poor, old and young, one with another — each, perhaps, pretending to despise his neighbour for seeking it — each in his own way seeking it for himself — each secretly wondering that he does not find it — each firmly persuaded that somewhere or other it is to be found. This was the cup that Moses had before his lips. He might have drunk as deeply as he liked of earthly pleasure; but he would not have it. He turned his back on it. He refused it. He gave it up!

(3) And more than this — *he refused riches*.

“The treasures in Egypt” is an expression that seems to tell of boundless wealth which Moses might have enjoyed, had he been content to remain with Pharaoh’s daughter. We may well suppose these “treasures” would have been a mighty fortune. Enough is still remaining in Egypt to give us some faint idea of the money at its King’s disposal. The pyramids, and obelisks, and temples, and statues are still standing there as witnesses. The ruins at Carnac, Luxor, Denderah, and many other places, are still the mightiest buildings in the world. They testify to this day that the man who gave up Egyptian wealth, gave up something which even our English minds would find it hard to reckon up and estimate.

Let us think once more, how great this temptation was.

Let us consider, for a moment, the power of money — the immense influence that “the love of money” obtains over men’s minds. Let us look around us and observe how men covet it, and what amazing pains and trouble they will go through to obtain it. Tell them of an island many thousands of miles away, where something may be found which may be profitable if imported, and at once a fleet of ships will be sent to get it. Show them a way to make one percent more of their money, and they will reckon you among the wisest of men — they will almost fall down and worship you. To possess money seems to hide defects — to cover over faults — to clothe a man with virtues. People can get over much, if you are rich! But here is a man who might have been rich, and would not have it. He would not have Egyptian treasures. He turned his back on them. He refused them. He gave them up!

Such were the things that Moses refused — rank, pleasure, riches — all three at once.

Add to all this that he did it *deliberately*. He did not refuse these things in a hasty fit of youthful excitement. — He was forty years old. He was in the prime of life. He knew what he was about. He was a highly educated man, “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.” (Act 7.22) He could weigh both sides of the question.

Add to it that he did not refuse them *because he was obliged*. He was not like the dying man, who tells us “he craves nothing more in this world;” and why? — Because he is leaving the world, and cannot keep it. He was not like the pauper, who makes a merit of necessity, and says “he does not want riches”; and why? — Because he cannot get them. He was not like the old man who boasts that “he has laid aside worldly pleasures;” and why? — Because he is worn out, and cannot enjoy them. No! Moses refused what he might have enjoyed. Rank, pleasure, and riches did not leave *him*, but he left *them*.

And then judge whether I am not right in saying that his was one of the greatest sacrifices mortal man ever made. Others have refused much, but none, I think, so much as Moses. Others have done well in the way of self-sacrifice and self-denial, but he excels them all.

**II.** And now let me go on to the second thing I wish to consider. I will speak of *what Moses chose*.

I think his choices as wonderful as his refusals. He chose three things for his soul's sake. The road to salvation led through them, and he followed it; and in so doing, he chose three of the last things that man is ever disposed to take up.

(1) For one thing *he chose suffering and affliction*.

He left the ease and comfort of Pharaoh's court, and openly took part with the children of Israel. They were an enslaved and persecuted people — an object of distrust, suspicion, and hatred; and anyone who befriended them was sure to taste something of the bitter cup they were daily drinking.

To the eye of sense there seemed no chance of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, without a long and doubtful struggle. A settled home and country for them must have appeared to be a thing that was never likely to be obtained, however much desired. In fact, if ever man seemed to be choosing pain, trials, poverty, want, distress, anxiety, perhaps even death, with his eyes open, Moses was that man.

Let us think how wonderful this choice was.

Flesh and blood naturally shrink from pain. It is in us all to do so. We draw back by a kind of instinct, from suffering, and avoid it if we can. If two courses of action are set before us, which both seem right, we generally take that which is the least disagreeable to flesh and blood. We spend our days in fear and anxiety when we think affliction is coming near us, and we use every means to escape it. And when it does come, we often fret and murmur under the burden of it; and if we can only bear it patiently, we count it a great matter.

But look here! Here is a man of like passions with ourselves, and he actually *chooses* affliction! Moses saw the cup of suffering that was before him if he left Pharaoh's court, and he chose it, preferred it, and took it up.

(2) But he did more than this, *he chose the company of a despised people*.

He left the society of the great and wise, among whom he had been brought up, and joined himself to the Children of Israel. He who had lived from infancy in the midst of rank, and riches, and luxury, came down from his high estate, and cast in his lot with poor men — slaves, serfs, helots,<sup>53</sup> pariahs, bondservants, oppressed, destitute, afflicted, tormented — labourers in the brick-kiln.

How wonderful, once more, this choice was!

Generally speaking, we think it enough to carry our own troubles. We may be sorry for others whose lot is to be mean and despised. We may even try to help them — we may give money to raise them — we may speak for them to those on whom they depend; but here we generally stop.

Here is a man who does far more. He not merely feels for despised Israel, but he actually goes down to them, adds himself to their society, and lives with them altogether. You would wonder if some great man in Grosvenor or Belgrave Square were to give up house, and fortune, and position in society, and go to live on a small allowance in some narrow

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<sup>53</sup> *Helot*: a person bound to the land and its owner.

lane in Bethnal Green, for the sake of doing good. Yet this would convey a very faint and feeble notion of the kind of thing that Moses did. He saw a despised people, and he chose their company in preference to that of the noblest in the land. He became one with them — their fellow, their companion in tribulation, their ally, their associate, and their friend.

(3) But he did even more. *He chose reproach and scorn.*

Who can conceive the torrent of mockery and ridicule that Moses would have to stem, in turning away from Pharaoh's court to join Israel! Men would tell him he was mad, foolish, weak, silly, out of his mind. He would lose his influence; he would forfeit the favour and good opinion of all among whom he had lived. But none of these things moved him. He left the court and joined the slaves!

Let us think again, what a choice this was!

There are few things more powerful than ridicule and scorn. It can do far more than open enmity and persecution. Many a man who would march up to a cannon's mouth, or lead a forlorn hope, or storm a breach, has found it impossible to face the mockery of a few companions, and has flinched from the path of duty to avoid it. To be laughed at! To be made a joke of! To be jested and sneered at! To be reckoned weak and silly! To be thought a fool! — There is nothing grand in all this, and many, alas, cannot make up their minds to undergo it!

Yet here is a man who made up his mind to it, and did not shrink from the trial. Moses saw reproach and scorn before him, and he chose them, and accepted them for his portion.

Such then were the things that Moses chose: affliction — the company of a despised people — and scorn.

Set down beside all this, that Moses was no weak, ignorant, illiterate person, who did not know what he was about. You are specially told he was "mighty in words and in deeds;" and yet he chose as he did! (Act 7.22)

Set down, too, the circumstances of his choice. He was not obliged to choose as he did. None compelled him to take such a course. The things he took up did not force themselves upon him against his will. He went after *them*; they did not come after *him*. All that he did, he did of his own free choice — voluntarily, and of his own accord.

And then judge whether it is not true that his choices were as wonderful as his refusals. Since the world began, I suppose, none ever made such a choice as Moses did in our text.

**III.** And now let me go on to a third thing: — *let me speak of the principle which moved Moses, and made him do as he did.*

How can this conduct of his be accounted for? What possible reason can be given for it? To refuse that which is generally called good, to choose that which is commonly thought evil — this is not the way of flesh and blood. This is not the manner of man; this requires some explanation. What will that explanation be?

We have the answer in the text. I do not know whether its greatness or its simplicity is more to be admired. It all lies in one little word, and that word is "FAITH."

Moses had faith. Faith was the mainspring of his wonderful conduct. Faith made him do as he did, choose what he chose, and refuse what he refused. He did it all because he *believed*.

God set before the eyes of his mind His own will and purpose. God revealed to him that a Saviour was to be born of the stock of Israel, that mighty promises were bound up in these children of Abraham, and yet to be fulfilled, that the time for fulfilling a portion of these promises was at hand; and Moses put credit in this, and believed it. And every step in his wonderful career, every action in his journey through life after leaving Pharaoh's court — his choice of seeming evil, his refusal of seeming good — all, all must be traced up to this fountain; all will be found to rest on this foundation. God had spoken to him, and he had faith in God's word.

He believed that God would *keep His promises* — that what He had said He would surely do, and what He had covenanted to do, He would surely perform.

He believed that with God *nothing was impossible*. Reason and sense might say that the deliverance of Israel was out of the question: the obstacles were too many, the difficulties too great. But faith told Moses that God was all-sufficient. God had undertaken the work, and it would be done.

He believed that God was *all wise*. Reason and sense might tell him that his line of action was absurd; that he was throwing away useful influence, and destroying all chance of benefiting his people, by breaking with Pharaoh's daughter. But faith told Moses that if God said, "Go this way," it must be the best.

He believed that God was *all merciful*. Reason and sense might hint that a more pleasant manner of deliverance might be found, that some compromise might be effected, and many hardships be avoided. But faith told Moses that God was love, and would not give His people one drop of bitterness beyond what was absolutely needed.

Faith was a *telescope* to Moses. It made him see the goodly land afar off — rest, peace, and victory, when dim-sighted reason could only see trial and barrenness, storm and tempest, weariness and pain,

Faith was an *interpreter* to Moses. It made him pick out a comfortable meaning in the dark commands of God's handwriting, while ignorant sense could see nothing in it but mystery and foolishness.

Faith told Moses that all this rank and greatness was of the earth, *earthy* — a poor, vain, empty thing, frail, fleeting, and passing away; and that there was no true greatness like that of serving God. He was the king, and Moses the true nobleman who belonged to the family of God. It was better to be last in heaven than first in hell.

Faith told Moses that worldly pleasures were "pleasures of sin." They were mingled with sin, they led on to sin, they were ruinous to the soul, and displeasing to God. It would be small comfort to have pleasure while God was against him. Better to suffer and obey God, than be at ease and sin.

Faith told Moses that after all, these pleasures were only for a "season." They could not last; they were all short-lived; they would weary him soon; he must leave them all in a few years.

Faith told him that there was a reward in heaven for the believer that was far richer than the treasures in Egypt — durable riches, where rust could not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. The crown there would be incorruptible; the weight of glory would be exceeding and eternal; — and faith bade him look away to an unseen heaven if his eyes were dazzled with Egyptian gold.

Faith told Moses that affliction and suffering were not real evils. — They were the school of God, in which He trains the children of grace for glory — the medicines which are needful to purify our corrupt wills — the furnace which must burn away our dross — the knife which must cut the ties that bind us to the world.

Faith told Moses that the despised Israelites were the chosen people of God. He believed that to them belonged the adoption, and the covenant, and the promises, and the glory; that of them the seed of the woman was one day to be born, who would bruise the serpent's head; that the special blessing of God was upon them; that they were lovely and beautiful in His eyes — and that it was better to be a doorkeeper among the people of God than to reign in the palaces of wickedness.

Faith told Moses that all the reproach and scorn poured out on him was “the reproach of Christ;” — that it was honourable to be mocked and despised for Christ's sake — that whoever persecuted Christ's people was persecuting Christ Himself — and that the day must come when His enemies would bow before Him and lick the dust. All this, and much more, of which I cannot speak particularly, Moses saw by faith. These were the things he believed, and believing, he did what he did.

- He was persuaded of them,
- and embraced them;
- he reckoned them as certainties;
- he regarded them as substantial verities;
- he counted them as sure as if he had seen them with his own eyes;
- he acted on them as realities.

And this made him the man that he was: he had faith; he believed.

Do not marvel that he refused greatness, riches, and pleasure. — *He looked far forward.* He saw with the eye of faith kingdoms crumbling into dust — riches taking on wings and flying away — pleasures leading on to death and judgment — and only Christ and His little flock enduring forever.

Do not wonder that he chose affliction, a despised people, and reproach. — He beheld things below the surface. With the eye of faith, he saw affliction lasting for but a moment — reproach rolled away, and ending in everlasting honour — and the despised people of God reigning as kings with Christ in glory.

And was he not right? Does he not speak to us, though dead, this very day? The name of Pharaoh's daughter has perished, or at any rate it is extremely doubtful. — The city where Pharaoh reigned is not known. — The treasures in Egypt are gone. — But the name of Moses is known wherever the Bible is read, and is still a standing witness that “whoever lives by faith is happy.” [Pro 16.20](#)

**IV.** And now let me wind all this up by trying to set forth in order some *practical lessons, which appear to me to follow, as legitimate consequences, from this history of Moses.*

What has all this to do with us? Some men will say, We do not live in Egypt — we have seen no miracles — we are not Israelites — we are weary of the subject.

Stay a little, if this is the thought of your heart, and by God's help I will show you that all may learn here, and all may be instructed. He that would live a Christian life, and be a really holy man, let him mark the history of Moses and get wisdom.

(1) For one thing, *if you would ever be saved, you must make the choice that Moses made — you must choose God before the world.*

Mark well what I say. Do not overlook this, though all the rest is forgotten. I do not say that the statesman must give up his office, and the rich man forsake his property. Let no one fancy that I mean this. But I say, if a man would be saved, whatever may be his rank in life, he must be prepared for tribulation. He must make up his mind to choose much which seems evil, and to give up and refuse much which seems good.

I dare say that this sounds strange language to some who read these pages. I know well that you may have a certain form of religion, and find no trouble in your way. There is a common, worldly kind of Christianity in this day, which many have, and think they have enough — a cheap Christianity which offends nobody, and is worth nothing. I am not speaking of religion of this kind.

But if you really are in earnest about your soul — if your religion is something more than a mere fashionable Sunday cloak — if you are determined to live by the Bible — if you are resolved to be a New Testament Christian, then I repeat, you will soon find that you must carry a cross. — You must endure hard things — you must suffer on behalf of your soul, as Moses did, or you cannot be saved.

The world in the nineteenth century is what it always was:

- The hearts of men are still the same.
- The offence of the cross has not ceased.
- God's true people are still a despised little flock.
- True evangelical religion still brings with it reproach and scorn.
- A real servant of God will still be thought by many to be a weak enthusiast and a fool.

But the matter comes to this: Do you wish your soul to be saved? Then remember, you must choose whom you will serve. You cannot serve God and mammon. You cannot be on two sides at once. You cannot be a friend of Christ and a friend of the world at the same time. You must come out from the children of this world, and be separate; you must put up with much ridicule, trouble, and opposition, or you will be lost forever. You must be willing to think and do things which the world considers foolish, and to hold opinions which are only held by a few. It will cost you something. The stream is strong, and you have to stem it. The way is narrow and steep, and it is no use saying it is not. But depend on it, there can be no saving religion without sacrifices and self-denial.

Now, are you making any sacrifices? Does your religion cost you anything? I put it to your conscience in all affection and tenderness. — Are you, like Moses, preferring God to the world, or not? I beseech you not to take shelter under that dangerous word “we”: “we ought,” and “we hope,” and “we mean,” and the like. I ask you plainly, What are *you* doing, yourself? Are you willing to give up anything which keeps you back from God? Or are you clinging to the Egypt of the world, and saying to yourself, “I must have it, I must have it:

I cannot tear myself away”? Is there any cross in your Christianity? Are there any sharp corners in your religion, anything that ever jars and collides with the earthly-mindedness around you? Or is it all smooth and rounded-off, and comfortably fitted into custom and fashion? Do you know anything of the afflictions of the Gospel? Is your faith and practice ever a subject of scorn and reproach? Are you thought a fool by anyone because of your soul? Have you left Pharaoh’s daughter, and heartily joined the people of God? Are you risking it all on Christ? Search and see.

These are hard inquiries and rough questions. I cannot help it. I believe they are founded on Scripture truths. I remember it is written, “Great multitudes went with Jesus, and He turned, and said to them, If any man comes to Me and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yes and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be my disciple.” (Luk 14.25-27) Many, I fear, would like *glory*, who have no wish for *grace*. They would gladly have,

- the wages, but not the work;
- the harvest, but not the labour;
- the reaping, but not the sowing;
- the reward, but not the battle.

But it may *not* be so. As Bunyan says, “the bitter must go before the sweet.” If there is no cross, there will be no crown.

(2) The second thing I say is this — *nothing will ever enable you to choose God before the world, except faith.*

Nothing else will do it. Knowledge will not, feeling will not, a regular use of outward forms will not, good companions will not. All these may do something, but the fruit they produce has no power of continuance: it will not last. A religion springing from such sources will only endure so long as there is no “tribulation or persecution because of the Word;” [Mat 13.21](#) but as soon as there is any, it will dry up. It is a clock without mainspring or weights; its face may be beautiful, you may turn its fingers round, but it will not go. A religion that is to stand, must have a living foundation, and there is none other but faith.

There must be a real heartfelt belief that God’s promises are sure and to be depended on; a real belief that what God says in the Bible is all true, and that every doctrine contrary to this is false, whatever anyone may say. There must be a real belief that all God’s words are to be received, however hard and disagreeable to flesh and blood, and that His way is right and all others are wrong. This there must be, or you will never come out from the world, take up the cross, follow Christ, and be saved.

You must learn to believe that promises are better than possessions; things unseen are better than things seen; things in heaven and out of sight, are better than things on earth before your eyes; the praise of the invisible God is better than the praise of visible man. Then, and only then, will you make a choice like Moses, and prefer God to the world.

Now, I ask every reader of this paper, have you got this faith? If you have, you will find it possible to refuse *seeming* good, and choose *seeming* evil. — You will think nothing of today’s losses, in the hope of tomorrow’s gains. — You will follow Christ in the dark, and stand by Him to the very last. If you do not have it, I warn you, you will never war a good warfare, and “run so as to obtain.” — You will soon be offended and turn back to the world.

Above all this, there must be a real abiding faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The life that you live in the flesh you must live by faith in the Son of God. [Gal 2.20](#) There must be a settled habit of continually leaning on Jesus, looking to Jesus, drawing out of Jesus, and using Him as the manna of your soul. You must strive to be able to say, “To me, to live is Christ.” “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Phi 1.21; 4.13)

This was the faith by which the old saints obtained a good report. This was the weapon by which they overcame the world. This made them what they were.

This was the faith that made,

- *Noah* go on building his ark, while the world looked on and mocked;
- *Abraham* give the choice of the land to Lot, and dwell on quietly in tents;
- *Ruth* cling to Naomi, and turn away from her country and her gods;
- *Daniel* continue in prayer, though he knew the lions’ den was prepared;
- The *three children* refuse to worship idols, though the fiery furnace was before their eyes;
- *Moses* forsake Egypt, not fearing the wrath of Pharaoh.

All these acted as they did because they believed. They saw the difficulties and troubles of this course. But by faith they saw Jesus above them all, and they pressed on. Well may the Apostle Peter speak of faith as “precious faith.” (2Pet 1.1)

(3) The third thing I say is this — *the true reason why so many are worldly and ungodly persons is that they have no faith.*

We must be aware that multitudes of professing Christians would never think for a moment of doing as Moses did. It is useless to say smooth things, and shut your eyes to the fact. That man must be blind who does not see thousands around him who are daily preferring the world to God — placing the things of time before the things of eternity — and the things of the body before the things of the soul. We may not like to admit this, and we try hard to blink at the fact. But so it is.

And why do they do so? No doubt they will all give us reasons and excuses.

- Some will talk of the snares of the world;
- some of the lack of time;
- some of the peculiar difficulties of their position;
- some of the cares and anxieties of life;
- some of the strength of temptation;
- some of the power of passions;
- some of the effects of bad companions.

But what does it come to after all? There is a far shorter way to account for the state of their souls — *they do not believe.* One simple sentence, like Aaron’s rod, will swallow up all their excuses — *they have no faith.*

They do not really think what God says is true. They secretly flatter themselves with the notion, “It will surely not be fulfilled — there must surely be some other way to heaven beside that which ministers speak of — surely there cannot be so much danger of being lost.” In short, they do not put implicit confidence in the words that God has written and spoken, and so they do not act upon them. They do not thoroughly believe hell, and so they do not flee from it — nor heaven, and so they do not seek it — nor the guilt of sin, and

so they do not turn from it — nor the holiness of God, and so they do not fear Him — nor their need of Christ, and so they do not trust in Him, nor love Him. They do not feel confidence in God, and so they risk nothing for Him. Like the boy Passion, in *Pilgrim's Progress*, they must have their good things now. They do not trust God, and so they cannot wait.

Now, how is it with ourselves? Do we believe the whole Bible? Let us ask ourselves that question. Depend on it, it is a much greater thing to believe the whole Bible than many suppose. Happy is the man who can lay his hand on his heart and say, "I am *a believer*."

We sometimes talk of infidels as if they were the rarest people in the world. And I grant that open avowed infidelity is happily not very common now. But there is a vast amount of practical infidelity around us, for all that, which is as dangerous in the end as the principles of Voltaire and Paine. There are many who Sunday after Sunday repeat the creed, and make a point of declaring their belief in all that the Apostolic and Nicene forms contain. And yet these very persons will live all week as if Christ had never died, and as if there were no judgment, and no resurrection of the dead, and no life everlasting at all. There are many who will say, "Oh, we know it all," when spoken to about eternal things and the value of their souls. And yet their lives plainly show that they do not know anything as they should; and the saddest part of their state is that they think they do!

It is an awful truth, and worthy of all consideration, that in God's sight, knowledge not acted upon is not merely useless and unprofitable. It is much worse than that. It will add to our condemnation and increase our guilt in the judgment day. A faith that does not influence a man's practice is not worthy of the name. There are only two classes in the Church of Christ — those who believe, and those who do not. The difference between the true Christian and the mere outward professor, lies in just one word — the true Christian is like Moses: "He has faith;" the mere outward professor has none. The true Christian believes, and therefore he lives as he does; the mere professor does not believe, and therefore he is what he is. Oh, where is our faith? Let us not be faithless, but believing.

(4) The last thing I say is this — *the true secret of doing great things for God is to have great faith.*

I believe that we are all apt to err on this point. We think too much, and talk too much, about graces, and gifts, and attainments, and do not sufficiently remember that faith is the root and mother of them all. In walking with God, a man will go just as far as he believes, and no further. His life will always be proportioned to his faith. His peace, his patience, his courage, his seal, his works — all will be according to his faith.

You read the lives of eminent Christians, of such men as Wesley, or Whitefield, or Venn, or Martyn, of Bickersteth, or Simeon, or McChesney. And you are disposed to say, "What wonderful gifts and graces these men had!" I answer, you should rather give honour to the mother-grace which God puts forward in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews — you should give honour to *their* faith. Depend on it, faith was the mainspring in the character of each and all.

I can fancy someone saying, "They were so prayerful — *that* made them what they were." I answer, why did they pray much? — Simply because they had much faith. What is prayer, but faith speaking to God?

Another will perhaps say, “They were so diligent and laborious — *that* accounts for their success.” I answer, why were they so diligent? — Simply because they had faith. What is Christian diligence, but faith at work?

Another will tell me, “They were so bold — *that* rendered them so useful.” I answer, why were they so bold? — Simply because they had much faith. What is Christian boldness, but faith honestly doing its duty?

And another will cry, “It was their holiness and spirituality — *that* gave them their weight.” For the last time I answer, what made them holy? — Nothing but a living, realizing spirit of faith. What is holiness, but faith *visible* and faith *incarnate*?

Now, does any reader of this paper desire to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? Would you produce much fruit? Would you be eminently holy and useful? Would you be bright, and shine as a light in your day? Would you, like Moses, make it clear as noonday that you have chosen God before the world? I dare be sure that every believer will reply, “Yes! yes! yes! these are the things we long for and desire.”

Then take the advice I give you this day — go and cry to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the disciples did, “Lord, increase our faith.” Faith is the root of a real Christian’s character. Let your root be right, and your fruit will soon abound. Your spiritual prosperity will always be according to your faith. He who believes will not only be saved but,

- he shall never thirst
- he shall overcome
- he shall be established
- he shall walk firmly on the waters of this world
- he shall do great works.

Reader, if you believe the things contained in this paper, and desire to be thoroughly holy, begin to act on your belief. Take Moses for your example. Walk in his steps. Go and do likewise.

## 9. LOT A BEACON

*“He lingered.” — Gen 19.16.*

THE Holy Scriptures, which were written for our learning, contain beacons as well as patterns. They show us examples of what we should avoid, as well as examples of what we should follow. The man whose name heads this page is set for a beacon to the whole Church of Christ. His character is put before us in one little word — “He lingered.” Let us sit down and look at this beacon for a few minutes. Let us consider Lot.

*Who* is this man that lingered? — It is the nephew of faithful Abraham. And *when* did he linger? — The very morning Sodom was to be destroyed. And *where* did he linger? — Within the walls of Sodom itself. And *before whom* did he linger? — Under the eyes of the two angels, who were sent to bring him out of the city. Even then, “he lingered!”

The words are solemn, and full of food for thought. They ought to sound like a trumpet in the ears of all who make any profession of religion. I trust they will make every reader of this paper think. Who knows if they are the very words your soul requires? The voice of the Lord Jesus commands you to “remember Lot’s wife.” (Luk 17.32) The voice of one of His ministers invites you this day to remember Lot.

Let me try to show —

- I. *What Lot was himself;*
- II. *What the text already quoted tells you about him;*
- III. *What reasons may account for his lingering;*
- IV. *What kind of fruit his lingering produced.*

I ask the special attention of all who have reason to hope they are real Christians, and desire to live holy lives. Let it be a settled principle in our minds, if we follow holiness, that we must not “linger.”

Once more, I say, “Lot is a beacon.”

### I. *What was Lot?*

This is a most important point. If I leave it unnoticed, I will perhaps miss that class of professing Christians I want especially to benefit. If I did not make it quite clear, many would perhaps say, after reading this paper, “Ah! Lot was a bad man — a poor, wicked, dark creature — an unconverted man — a child of this world! — no wonder he lingered.”

But mark now what I say. Lot was nothing of the kind. Lot was a true believer — a converted person — a real child of God — a justified soul — a righteous man.

- Does any one of my readers have grace in his heart? — Lot did also.
- Does any one of my readers have a hope of salvation? — Lot did also.
- Is any one of my readers a traveller in the narrow way which leads to life? — Lot was also.

Let no one think that this is only my private opinion — a mere arbitrary fancy of my own — a notion unsupported by Scripture. Let no one suppose that I want him to believe it merely because I say it. The Holy Ghost has placed the matter beyond controversy, by

calling him “just” and “righteous” (2Pet 2.7, 8), and He has given us good evidence of the grace that was in Lot.

One evidence is that he lived in a wicked place, “seeing and hearing” evil all around him (2Pet 2.8), and yet he was not wicked himself. Now, to be a Daniel in Babylon — an Obadiah in Ahab’s house — an Abijah in Jeroboam’s family — a saint in Nero’s court, and a “righteous man” in Sodom, a man must have the grace of God. Without grace, it would be impossible.

Another evidence is that he “vexed his soul with the unlawful deeds” that he beheld around him. (2Pet 2.8) He was wounded, grieved, pained, and hurt at the sight of sin. This was feeling like holy David, who says, “I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because they did not keep your word.” “Rivers of water run down my eyes, because they do not keep your law.” (Psa 119.136, 158) This was feeling like St. Paul, who says, “I have great sorrow and continual heaviness in my heart — for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” (Rom 9.2, 3) Nothing will account for this but the grace of God.

Another evidence is that he “vexed his soul from day to day” with the unlawful deeds he saw. (2Pet 2.8) He did not at length become cool and lukewarm about sin, as many do. Familiarity and habit did not take off the fine edge of his feelings, as too often is the case. Many a man is shocked and startled at the first sight of wickedness; and yet at last he becomes so accustomed to seeing it, that he views it with comparative unconcern. This is especially the case with those who live in towns and cities, or with English people who travel on the Continent. Such persons often become utterly indifferent about Sabbath-breaking, and many forms of open sin. But it was not so with Lot. And this, again, is a great mark of the reality of his grace.

Such a one was Lot — a just and righteous man, a man sealed and stamped as an heir of heaven by the Holy Ghost Himself.

Before we pass on, let us remember that a true Christian may have many a blemish, many a defect, many an infirmity, and yet be a true Christian nevertheless. We do not despise gold because it is mixed with much dross. We must not undervalue grace because it is accompanied by much corruption. Read on, and you will find that Lot paid dearly for his “lingering.” But as you read, do not forget that Lot was a child of God.

**II.** Let us pass on to the second thing I spoke of. *What does the text, already quoted, tell us about Lot’s behaviour?*

The words are wonderful and astounding: “He lingered.” — The more we consider the time and circumstances, the more wonderful we will think them.

Lot knew the awful condition of the city in which he stood. “The cry” of its abominations “had grown great before the Lord.” (Gen 19.13) And yet “he lingered.”

Lot knew the fearful judgment coming down on all within its walls. The angels had said plainly, “The Lord has sent us to destroy it.” (Gen 19.13) And yet “he lingered.”

Lot knew that God was a God who always kept His word, and if He said a thing, He would surely do it. He could hardly be Abraham’s nephew, and live long with him, and not be aware of this. Yet “he lingered.”

Lot believed there was danger — for he went to his sons-in-law, and warned them to flee. “Up!” he said, “Get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city.” (Gen 19.14) And yet “he lingered.”

Lot saw the angels of God standing by, waiting for him and his family to go out. He heard the voice of those ministers of wrath ringing in his ears to hasten him — “Arise! take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the iniquity of the city.” (Gen 19.15) And yet “he lingered.”

He was,

- *slow* when he should have been quick
- *backward* when he should have been forward
- *trifling* when he should have been hastening
- *loitering* when he should have been hurrying
- *cold* when he should have been hot.

It is passing strange! It seems almost incredible! It appears too wonderful to be true! But the Spirit writes it down for our learning. And so it was.

And yet, surprising as it may appear at first sight, I fear there are many of the Lord Jesus Christ’s people who are very like Lot.

I ask every reader of this paper to mark well what I say. I repeat it so that there may be no mistake about my meaning. I have shown you that Lot “lingered.” — I say that there are many Christian men and Christian women in this day who are very like Lot.

There are many real children of God who appear to know far more than they live up to, and see far more than they practise, and yet they continue in this state for many years. It is surprising that they go as far as they do, and yet go no further!

They acknowledge the Head, even Christ, and love the truth. They like sound preaching, and assent to every article of Gospel doctrine when they hear it. But still there is an indescribable *something* which is not satisfactory about them. They are constantly doing things which disappoint the expectations of their ministers, and of more advanced Christian friends. It is marvellous that they should think as they do, and yet stand still!

- They believe in heaven; yet seem to long for it faintly.
- They believe in hell; yet seem to fear it little.
- They love the Lord Jesus; but the work they do for Him is small.
- They hate the devil; but they often appear to tempt him to come to them.
- They know the time is short; but they live as if it were long.
- They know they have a battle to fight; yet a man might think they were at peace.
- They know they have a race to run; yet they often look like people sitting still.
- They know the Judge is at the door, and there is wrath to come; and yet they appear half-asleep.

It is astonishing that they should be what they are, and nothing more!

And what will we say of these people? They often puzzle godly friends and relations. They often cause great anxiety. They often give rise to great doubts and searchings of heart. But they may be classed under one sweeping description: they are all brothers and sisters of Lot. *They linger.*

Such people get the notion into their minds that it is impossible for all believers to be so very holy and very spiritual! They admit that eminent holiness is a beautiful thing. They like to read about it in books, and even to see it occasionally in others. But they do not think that all are meant to aim at so high a standard. At any rate, they seem to make up their minds that it is beyond their reach.

Such people get into their heads false ideas of “charity,” as they call it. They are morbidly afraid of being illiberal and narrow-minded, and are always flying into the opposite extreme. They would gladly please everybody, and suit everybody, and be agreeable to everybody. But they forget that they should first be sure that they please *God*.

Such people dread sacrifices, and shrink from self-denial. They never appear able to apply our Lord’s command, to “take up the cross,” and “cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye.” (Mat 5.29, 30) They cannot deny that our Lord used these expressions, but they never find a place for them in their religion. They spend their lives in trying to make the gate wider, and the cross lighter. But they never succeed.

Such people are always trying to keep in with the world. They are ingenious in discovering reasons for not decidedly separating from it, and framing plausible excuses for attending questionable amusements, and maintaining questionable friendships. One day you are told of their attending a Bible-reading: the next day perhaps you hear of their going to a ball. One day they fast, or go to the Lord’s table and receive the sacrament: another day they go to the race-course in the morning and the opera at night. One day they are almost in hysterics under the sermon of some sensational preacher: another day they are weeping over some novel. They are constantly labouring to persuade themselves that it does good to mix a *little* with worldly people on their own ground. Yet in their case, it is very clear that they do no good, and get only harm.

Such people cannot find it in their hearts to quarrel with their besetting sin, whether it is sloth, indolence, ill-temper, pride, selfishness, impatience, or whatever it may be. They allow it to remain as a tolerably quiet and undisturbed tenant of their hearts. They say it is their health, their constitutions, their temperaments, their trials, or their way. Their father, mother, or grandmother was this way before them, and they are sure they cannot help it. And when you meet after the absence of a year or so, you hear the same thing!

But all, all, *all* may be summed up in one single sentence. They are the brothers and sisters of Lot. *They linger*.

Ah, if you are a lingering soul, you are not happy! You know you are not. It would be strange indeed if you were so. Lingerer is the sure destruction of a happy Christianity. A lingerer’s conscience forbids him to enjoy inward peace.

Perhaps at one time you did run well. But you have left your first love — you have never felt the same comfort since and you never will, not till you return to your “first works.” (Rev 2.5) Like Peter, when the Lord Jesus was taken prisoner, you are following the Lord from afar; and like him, you will find the way is not pleasant, but hard.

Come and look at Lot. Come and mark Lot’s history. Come and consider Lot’s “lingering,” and be wise.

**III.** Let us next consider *the reasons that may account for Lot’s lingering*.

This is a question of great importance, and I ask for the most serious attention to it. To know the root of a disease is one step towards a remedy. Being forewarned is forearmed.

Who is there among the readers of this paper that feels secure, and has no fear of lingering? Come and listen while I tell you a few passages of Lot's history. Do as he did, and it will be a miracle indeed if you do not get into the same state of soul at last.

One thing then I observe in Lot is this: *he made a wrong choice in early life.*

There was a time when Abraham and Lot lived together. They both became rich, and could live together no longer. Abraham, the elder of the two, in the true spirit of humility and courtesy, gave Lot the choice of the country when they resolved to part company: "If you," he said, "will take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." (Gen 13.9)

And what did Lot do? — We are told that he saw the plains of Jordan, near Sodom, were rich, fertile, and well watered. It was a good land for cattle, and full of pastures. He had large flocks and herds, and it just suited his requirements. And this was the land he chose for a residence, simply because it was a rich, "well watered land." (Gen 13.10)

It was near the town of Sodom! He did not care about that. — The men of Sodom who would be his neighbours, were wicked! It did not matter. — They were sinners before God, exceedingly! It made no difference to him. — The pasture was rich. The land was good. He wanted such a country for his flocks and herds. And before that argument, all scruples and doubts (if indeed he had any) went down at once.

He chose by sight, and not by faith. He asked no counsel of God, to preserve him from mistakes. He looked to the things of time, and not of eternity. He thought of his worldly profit, and not of his soul. He considered only what would help him in this life. He forgot the solemn business of the life to come. This was a bad beginning.

But I also observe that *Lot mixed with sinners when there was no occasion for doing so.*

We are first told that he "pitched his tent toward Sodom." (Gen 13.12) This, as I have already shown, was a great mistake.

But the next time he is mentioned, we find him actually living in Sodom itself. The Spirit says expressly, "He dwelt in Sodom." (Gen 14.12) He left his tents. The country was forsaken. He occupied a house in the very streets of that wicked town.

We are not told the reason for this change. We are not aware that any occasion could have arisen for it. We are sure this could not have been a command of God. Perhaps his wife liked the town better than the country, for the sake of society. It is plain she had no grace herself. Perhaps she persuaded Lot that it was needful for the advantage of his daughters, that they might marry and get settled in life. Perhaps the daughters urged living in the town for the sake of amusing company: they were evidently light-minded young women. Perhaps Lot liked it himself, in order to make more of his flocks and herds. Men never lack reasons to confirm their wills. But one thing is very clear — Lot dwelt in the midst of Sodom without good cause.

When a child of God does these two things which I have named, we never need to be surprised if we hear, by and by, unfavourable accounts about his soul. We never need to

wonder if he becomes deaf to the warning voice of affliction, as Lot was (Gen 14.12), and turns out a lingerer in the day of trial and danger, as Lot did.

Make a wrong choice in life, an unscriptural choice, and settle yourself down unnecessarily in the midst of worldly people, and I know no surer way to damage your own spirituality, and to go backward about your eternal concerns.

- This is the way to make the pulse of your soul beat feebly and languidly.
- This is the way to make the edge of your feeling about sin become blunt and dull.
- This is the way to dim the eyes of your spiritual discernment, till you can scarcely distinguish good from evil, and stumble as you walk.
- This is the way to bring a moral palsy on your feet and limbs, and make you go tottering and trembling along the road to Zion, as if the grasshopper was a burden.
- This is the way to sell the pass to your worst enemy:
  - to give the devil vantage-ground in the battle
  - to tie your arms in fighting
  - to fetter your legs in running
  - to dry up the sources of your strength
  - to cripple your energies
  - to cut off your own hair, like Samson, and give yourself into the hands of the Philistines
  - to put out your own eyes, grind at the mill, and become a slave.

I call on every reader of this paper to mark well what I am saying. Settle these things in your mind. Do not forget them. Recollect them in the morning. Recall them to memory at night. Let them sink down deeply into your heart. If ever you would be safe from “lingering,” beware of needless mingling with worldly people. Beware of Lot’s choice! If you would not settle down into a dry, dull, sleepy, lazy, barren, heavy, carnal, stupid, apathetic state of soul, *beware of Lot’s choice!*

(a) Remember this in choosing a dwelling-place, or residence. It is not enough that,

- the house is comfortable
- the situation good
- the air fine
- the neighbourhood pleasant
- the rent or price small
- the living cheap.

There are other things yet to be considered. You must think of your immortal soul.

- Will the house you think of help you towards heaven or hell?
- Is the Gospel preached within an easy distance?
- Is Christ crucified within reach of your door?
- Is there a real man of God nearby, who will watch over your soul?

I charge you, if you love life, not to overlook this. Beware of Lot’s choice.

(b) Remember this in choosing a calling, a place, or a profession in life. It is not enough that,

- the salary is high
- the wages are good

- the work is light
- the advantages numerous
- the prospects of getting on most favourable.

Think of your soul, your immortal soul.

- Will it be prospered or drawn back?
- Will you have your Sundays free, and be able to have one day in the week for your spiritual business?

I beseech you, by the mercies of God, to take heed what you do. Make no rash decision. Look at the place in every light — the light of God as well as the light of the world. Gold may be bought too dear. *Beware of Lot's choice.*

(c) Remember this in choosing a husband or wife, if you are unmarried. It is not enough that,

- your eye is pleased
- that your tastes are met
- that your mind finds congeniality
- that there is amiability and affection
- that there is a comfortable home for life.

There needs to be something more than this. There is a life yet to come. Think of your soul, your immortal soul.

- Will it be helped upwards or dragged downwards by the union you are planning?
- Will it be made more heavenly, or more earthly?
- Will it be drawn nearer to Christ, or to the world?
- Will its religion grow in vigour, or will it decay?

I pray you, by all your hopes of glory, allow this to enter into your calculations. “*Think*,” as old Baxter said, and “think, and think again,” before you commit yourself. “Do not be unequally yoked.” (2Cor 6.14) Matrimony is nowhere named among the means of conversion. *Remember Lot's choice.*

(d) Remember this, if you are ever offered a situation on a railway. It is not enough,

- to have good pay and regular employment
- the confidence of the directors,
- the best chance of rising to a higher post.

These things are very well in their way, but they are not everything. How will your soul fare if you serve a railway company that runs Sunday trains?

- What day in the week will you have for God and eternity?
- What opportunities will you have for hearing the Gospel preached?

I solemnly warn you to consider this. It will profit you nothing to fill your purse, if you bring leanness and poverty on your soul. Beware of selling your Sabbath for the sake of a good place! Remember Esau's mess of pottage. *Beware of Lot's choice!*

Some reader may perhaps think, “A believer need not fear; he is a sheep of Christ, he will never perish, he cannot come to much harm. It cannot be that such small matters can be of great importance.”

Well, you may think so. But I warn you, if you neglect these matters, your soul will never prosper. A true believer will certainly not be cast away, even if he lingers. But if he does linger, it is vain to suppose that his religion will thrive. Grace is a tender plant. Unless you cherish it and nurse it well, it will soon become sickly in this evil world. Though it cannot die, it may droop. The brightest gold will soon become dim when exposed to a damp atmosphere. The hottest iron will soon become cold. It requires pains and toil to bring it to a red heat: it requires nothing but letting alone, or a little cold water to become black and hard.

You may be an earnest, zealous Christian now. You may feel like David in his prosperity: "I shall never be moved." (Psalm 30.6) But do not be deceived. You have only got to walk in Lot's steps and make Lot's choice, and you will soon come to Lot's state of soul. Allow yourself to do as he did, presume to act as he acted, and be very sure that you will soon discover you have become a wretched "lingerer" like him. You will find, like Samson, the presence of the Lord is no longer with you. You will prove to your own shame, to be an undecided, hesitating man, in the day of trial. There will come a canker on your religion, and eat out its vitality without your knowing it. There will come a slow consumption on your spiritual strength, and waste it away insensibly. And at length you will wake up to find your hands hardly able to do the Lord's work, and your feet hardly able to carry you along the Lord's way, and your faith no bigger than a grain of mustard seed; and this will perhaps come at some turning point in your life, at a time when the enemy is coming in like a flood, and your need is the sorest.

Ah, if you would not become a lingerer in religion, consider these things! Beware of doing what Lot did!

#### **IV.** Let us inquire now *what kind of fruit Lot's lingering spirit bore at last.*

I would not pass over this point for many reasons, and especially in the present day. There are not a few who will feel disposed to say, "After all, Lot was saved: he was justified — he got to heaven. I want no more than that. If I only get to heaven, I will be content." If this is the thought of your heart, just stay a moment, and listen to me a little longer. I will show you one or two things in Lot's history which deserve attention, and may perhaps induce you to alter your mind.

I think it of first importance to dwell upon this subject. I will always contend that eminent holiness and eminent usefulness are most closely connected; that happiness and "following the Lord fully" go side by side; that if believers linger, they must not expect to be useful in their day and generation, or to be very saintly and Christlike, or to enjoy great comfort and peace in believing.

(a) Let us mark, then, for one thing, that *Lot did no good among the inhabitants of Sodom.*

Lot probably lived in Sodom many years. No doubt he had many precious opportunities for speaking of the things of God, and trying to turn souls away from sin. But Lot seems to have effected nothing at all. He appears to have had no weight or influence with the people who lived around him. He possessed none of that respect and reverence which even the men of the world will frequently concede to a bright servant of God.

Not one righteous person could be found in all Sodom, outside the walls of Lot's home. Not one of his neighbours believed his testimony. Not one of his acquaintances honoured the Lord whom he worshipped. Not one of his servants served his master's God. Not one of "all the people from every quarter" cared a jot for his opinion when he tried to restrain their wickedness. "This one fellow came in to sojourn," they said, "and he would be a judge." (Gen 19.9) His life carried no weight; his words were not listened to; his religion drew none to follow him.

And truly, I do not wonder! As a general rule, lingering souls do no good to the world and they bring no credit to God's cause. Their salt has too little savour to season the corruption around them. They are not "Epistles of Christ" who can be "known and read by all." (2Cor 3.2) There is nothing magnetic, attractive, and Christ-reflecting about their ways. Let us remember this.

(b) Let us mark, for another thing, that *Lot helped none of his family, relatives, or connections towards heaven.*

We are not told how large his family was. But this we know: he had a wife and two daughters at least, in the day he was called out of Sodom, if he did not have more children besides.

But whether Lot's family was large or small, one thing I think is perfectly clear: there was not one among them all that feared God!

When he "went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who married his daughters," and warned them to flee from the judgments coming on Sodom, we are told, "he seemed to them as one who mocked." (Gen 19.14) What fearful words those are! It was as good as saying, "Who cares for anything you say?" So long as the world stands, those things will be a painful proof of the contempt with which a "lingerer" in religion is regarded.

And what was Lot's wife? She left the city in his company, but she did not go far. She did not have faith to see the need for such a speedy flight. She left her heart in Sodom when she began to flee.

She looked back from behind her husband, in spite of the plainest" command not to do so (Gen 19.17), and was at once turned into a pillar of salt.

And what were Lot's two daughters? They escaped, indeed, but only to do the devil's work. They became their father's tempters to wickedness, and led him to commit the foulest of sins.

In short, Lot seems to have stood alone in his family! He was not made the means of keeping one soul back from the gates of hell!

And I do not wonder. Lingering souls are seen through by their own families; and when seen through, they are despised. Their nearest relatives understand inconsistency, if they understand nothing else in religion. They draw the sad but not unnatural conclusion, "Surely, if he believed all that he professes to believe, he would not go on as he does." Lingering parents seldom have godly children. The eye of the child drinks in far more than the ear. A child will always observe what you do, much more than what you say. Let us remember this.

(c) Let us mark, for a third thing, that *Lot left no evidences behind him when he died.*

We know but little about Lot after his flight from Sodom, and all that we do know is unsatisfactory.

His pleading for Zoar, because it was “a little one,” — his departure from Zoar afterwards — and his conduct in the cave — all, all tell the same story. All show the weakness of the grace that was in him, and how low the state of soul into which he had fallen.

We do not know how long he lived after his escape. We do not know where he died, or when he died — whether he saw Abraham again — what was the manner of his death — what he said or what he thought. All these things are hidden. We are told of the last days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David — but not one word about Lot. Oh, what a gloomy deathbed the deathbed of Lot must have been!

The Scripture appears to draw a veil around him on purpose. There is a painful silence about his latter end. He seems to go out like an expiring lamp, and to leave a bad savour behind him. And had we not been specially told in the New Testament that Lot was “just” and “righteous,” I truly believe we would have doubted whether Lot was a saved soul at all.

But I do not wonder at his sad end. Lingering believers will generally reap according to how they have sown. Their lingering often meets them when their spirit is departing. They have little peace at the end. They reach heaven, to be sure; but they reach it in poor plight, weary and footsore, in weakness and tears, in darkness and storm. They are saved, but “saved so, as through fire.” (1Cor 3.15)

I ask every reader of this paper to consider the three things which I have just mentioned. Do not misunderstand my meaning. It is amazing to observe how readily people catch at the least excuse for misunderstanding the things that concern their souls!

I do not tell you that believers who do not “linger” will, as a matter of course, be great instruments of usefulness to the world. Noah preached one hundred and twenty years, and none believed him. The Lord Jesus was not esteemed by His own people, the Jews.

Nor do I tell you that believers who do not linger will, as a matter of course, be the means of converting their families and relatives. Many of David’s children were ungodly. The Lord Jesus was not believed on even by His own brothers.

But I do say that it is almost impossible not to see some connection between Lot’s evil choice and Lot’s lingering — and between Lot’s lingering and his unprofitableness to his family and the world. I believe the Spirit meant us to see it. I believe the Spirit meant to make him a beacon to all professing Christians. And I am sure the lessons I have tried to draw from the whole history deserve serious reflection.

And now let me say a few parting words to all who read this paper, and especially to all who call themselves believers in Christ.

I have no wish to make your hearts sad. I do not want to give you a gloomy view of the Christian course. My only object is to give you friendly warnings. I desire your peace and comfort. I would gladly see you happy as well as safe — and joyful, as well as justified. I speak as I have done, for your good.

You live in days when a lingering, Lot-like religion abounds. The stream of profession is far broader than it once was, but far less deep in many places. A certain kind of Christianity is almost fashionable now:

To belong to some party in the Church of England, and show a zeal for its interests

- to talk about the leading controversies of the day
- to buy popular religious books as fast as they come out, and lay them on your table
- to attend meetings
- to subscribe to Societies
- to discuss the merits of preachers
- to be enthusiastic and excited about every new form of sensational religion which crops up

All these are now comparatively easy and common attainments. They no longer make a person singular. They require little or no sacrifice. They entail no cross.

But,

- to walk closely with God
  - to be really spiritually-minded
  - to behave like strangers and pilgrims
  - to be distinct from the world in employment of time, conduct, amusements, dress
  - to bear a faithful witness for Christ in all places
  - to leave a savour of our Master in every society
  - to be prayerful, humble, unselfish, good-tempered, quiet, easily pleased, charitable, patient, meek
  - to be jealously afraid of all manner of sin, and tremblingly alive to our danger from the world
- *these*, these are still rare things! They are not common among those who are called true Christians, and worst of all, their absence is not felt and bewailed as it should be.

In a day like this, I venture to offer counsel to every believing reader of this paper. Do not turn away from it. Do not be angry with me for plain speaking. I bid you “give diligence to make your calling and election sure,” (2Pet 1.10) I bid you,

- not to be slothful
- not to be careless,
- not to be content with a small measure of grace
- not to be satisfied with being a little better than the world.

*I solemnly warn you* not to attempt doing what can never be done — I mean, to serve Christ, yet keep in with the world. I call upon and beseech you,

- to be a whole-hearted Christian,
- to follow after eminent holiness,
- to aim at a high degree of sanctification,
- to live a consecrated life,
- to present your body a “living sacrifice” to God,
- to “walk in the spirit.” (Rom 12.1; Gal 5.25)

*I charge you, and exhort you* by all your hopes of heaven and desires of glory, if you would be happy, if you would be useful — *do not be a lingering soul.*

Would you know what the times demand? The shaking of nations; the uprooting of ancient things; the overturning of kingdoms; the stir and restlessness of men's minds — what do they say? They all cry aloud — *Christian! Do not linger!*

Would you be found ready for Christ at His second appearing — your loins girded — your lamp burning — yourself bold, and prepared to meet Him? *Then do not linger!*

Would you enjoy much sensible comfort in your religion — feel the witness of the Spirit within you — know whom you have believed — and not be a gloomy, complaining, sour, downcast, and melancholy Christian? *Then do not linger!*

Would you enjoy strong assurance of your own salvation, in the day of sickness, and on the deathbed? — Would you see with the eye of faith, heaven opening and Jesus rising to receive you? *Then do not linger!*

Would you leave great broad evidences behind you when you are gone? — Would you like us to lay you in the grave with comfortable hope, and talk of your state after death without a doubt? *Then do not linger!*

Would you be useful to the world in your day and generation? — Would you draw men from sin to Christ, adorn your doctrine, and make your Master's cause beautiful and attractive in their eyes? *Then do not linger!*

Would you help your children and relatives towards heaven, and make them say, "We will go with you"? — and not make them infidels and despisers of all religion? *Then do not linger!*

Would you have a great crown in the day of Christ's appearing, and not be the least and smallest star in glory, and not find yourself the last and lowest in the kingdom of God? *Then do not linger!*

Oh, let not one of us linger!

- *Time* does not
- *Death* does not
- *Judgment* does not
- The *devil* does not
- The *world* does not

Neither let the children of God linger.

Does any reader of this paper feel that he is a lingerer? Has your heart felt heavy, and your conscience sore, while you have been reading these pages? Does something within you whisper, "I am the man"? [2Sam 12.7](#) Then listen to what I am saying. — It is not well with your soul. Awake, and try to do better.

If you are a lingerer, you must go to Christ at once and be cured. — You must use the old remedy; you must bathe in the old fountain. You must turn again to Christ and be healed. The way to do a thing is to do it. *Do this at once!*

Do not think for a moment that your case is past recovery. Do not think that because you have been living a long time in a dry, sleepy, and heavy state of soul, that there is no hope

of revival. Is not the Lord Jesus Christ an appointed Physician for all spiritual ailments? Did He not cure every form of disease when He was on earth? Did He not cast out every kind of devil? Did He not raise poor backsliding Peter, and put a new song in his mouth? Oh, do not doubt, but earnestly believe that He will yet revive His work within you! Only return from lingering, and confess your folly, and come — come at once to Christ. Blessed are the words of the prophet: “Only acknowledge your iniquity.” — “Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding.” (Jer 3.13, 22)

And let us all remember the souls of others, as well as our own. If at any time we see any brother or sister lingering, let us try to awaken them — try to arouse them — try to stir them up. Let us all “exhort one another” as we have opportunity. “Let us provoke to love and good works.” (Heb 3.13; 10.24) Let us not be afraid to say to each other, “Brother, or sister, have you forgotten Lot? Awake! and remember Lot! — Awake! and linger no more.”

## 10. A WOMAN TO BE REMEMBERED

“Remember Lot’s Wife.” — Luk 17.32.

THERE are few warnings in Scripture more solemn than that which heads this page. The Lord Jesus Christ says to us, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

Lot’s wife was a professor of *religion*: her husband was a “righteous man.” (2Pet 2.8) She left Sodom with him on the day when Sodom was destroyed; she looked back towards the city from behind her husband, against God’s express command; she was struck dead at once, and turned into a pillar of salt. And the Lord Jesus Christ holds her up as a beacon to His Church: He says, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

It is a solemn warning, when we think of the person Jesus names. He does not bid us remember Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, or Sarah, or Hannah, or Ruth. No, He singles out one whose soul was lost forever. He cries to us, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

It is a solemn warning, when we consider *the subject Jesus is upon*. He is speaking of His own second coming to judge the world. He is describing the awful state of unreadiness in which many will be found. The last days are on His mind when He says, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

It is a solemn warning, when we think of *the person who gives it*. The Lord Jesus is full of love, mercy, and compassion: He is one who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. [Mat 12.20](#) He could weep over unbelieving Jerusalem, and pray for the men that crucified Him; yet even He thinks it good to remind us of lost souls. Even He says, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

It is a solemn warning, when we think of *the persons to whom it was first given*. The Lord Jesus was speaking to His disciples: He was not addressing the scribes and Pharisees, who hated Him, but Peter, James, and John, and many others who loved Him; yet He thinks it good to address a caution even to them. Even to them He says, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

It is a solemn warning, when we consider *the manner in which it was given*. He does not merely say, “Beware of following — take heed of imitating — do not be like Lot’s wife.” He uses a different word: He says, “Remember.” He speaks as if we were all in danger of forgetting the subject; He stirs up our lazy memories; He bids us keep the case before our minds. He cries, “Remember Lot’s wife.”

I propose to examine the *lessons* which Lot’s wife is meant to teach us. I am sure that her history is full of useful instruction to the Church. The last days are upon us; the second coming of the Lord Jesus draws near; the danger of worldliness is yearly increasing in the Church. Let us be provided with *safeguards* and *antidotes* against the disease that is around us; and not least, let us become familiar with the story of Lot’s wife.

There are three things which I will do, in order to bring the subject before our minds in order.

- I. I will speak of *the religious privileges which Lot’s wife enjoyed*.
- II. I will speak of *the sin which Lot’s wife committed*.
- III. I will speak of *the judgment which God inflicted upon her*.

I. I will first speak of *the religious privileges which Lot’s wife enjoyed*.

In the days of Abraham and Lot, true saving religion was scarce on earth: there were no Bibles, no ministers, no churches, no tracts, no missionaries. The knowledge of God was confined to a few favoured families; the greater part of the inhabitants of the world were living in darkness, ignorance, superstition, and sin. Not one in a hundred, perhaps, had such good example, such spiritual society, such clear knowledge, such plain warnings as Lot's wife. Compared with millions of her fellow-creatures in her time, Lot's wife was a favoured woman.

She had a godly man for her husband: she had Abraham, the father of the faithful, for her uncle by marriage. The faith, the knowledge, and the prayers of these two righteous men could have been no secret to her. It is impossible that she could have dwelt in tents with them for any length of time without knowing whose they were and whom they served. Religion with them was no mere formal business; it was the ruling principle of their lives and the mainspring of all their actions. All this Lot's wife must have seen and known. This was no small privilege.

When Abraham first received the promises, it is probable that Lot's wife was there. When he built his altar by his tent between Ai and Bethel, it is probable she was there. When her husband was taken captive by Chedorlaomer, and delivered by God's interference, she was there. When Melchizedek, king of Salem, came out to meet Abraham with bread and wine, she was there. When the angels came to Sodom and warned her husband to flee, she saw them; when they took them by the hand and led them out of the city, she was one of those whom they helped to escape. Once more, I say, these were no small privileges.

Yet what good effect did all these privileges have on the heart of Lot's wife? None at all. Notwithstanding all her opportunities and means of grace — notwithstanding all her special warnings and messages from heaven, she lived and died graceless, godless, impenitent, and unbelieving.

- The eyes of her *understanding* were never opened;
- her *conscience* was never really aroused and quickened;
- her *will* was never really brought into a state of obedience to God;
- her *affections* were never really set upon things above.

The form of religion which she had was kept up for fashion's sake and not from feeling: it was a cloak worn for the sake of pleasing her company, but not from any sense of its value. She did as others did around her in Lot's house: she conformed to her husband's ways; she made no opposition to his religion; she allowed herself to be passively towed along in his wake; but all this time, her heart was wrong in the sight of God. *The world was in her heart, and her heart was in the world.* In this state she lived, and in this state she died.

In all this, there is much to be learned. I see a lesson here which is of the deepest importance in the present day. You live in times when there are many persons just like Lot's wife. Come and hear the lesson which her case is meant to teach.

Learn, then, that *the mere possession of religious privileges will save no one's soul.* You may have spiritual advantages of every description; you may live in the full sunshine of the richest opportunities and means of grace; you may enjoy the best of preaching and the choicest instruction; you may dwell in the midst of light, knowledge, holiness, and good company. All this may be, and yet you yourself may remain unconverted, and at last be lost forever.

I dare say this doctrine sounds hard to some readers. I know that many fancy they want nothing but religious privileges in order to become decided Christians. They admit that they are not what they ought to be at present; but they plead that their position is so hard, and their difficulties are so many. Give them a godly husband, or a godly wife — give them godly companions, or a godly master — give them the preaching of the Gospel — give them privileges, and *then* they would walk with God.

This is all a mistake. It is an entire delusion. It requires something more than privileges to save souls. Joab was David's captain; Gehazi was Elisha's servant; Demas was Paul's companion; Judas Iscariot was Christ's disciple; and Lot had a worldly, unbelieving wife. These all died in their sins. They went down to the pit in spite of knowledge, warnings, and opportunities; and they all teach us that it is not privileges alone that men need. *They need the grace of the Holy Ghost.*

Let us value religious privileges, but let us not rest entirely upon them. Let us desire to have the benefit of them in all our movements in life, but let us not put them in the place of Christ. Let us use them thankfully if God grants them to us, but let us take care that they produce some fruit in our heart and life. If they do not do good, they often do positive harm: they sear the conscience, increase responsibility, and aggravate condemnation.

The same fire which melts the wax hardens the clay; the same sun which makes the living tree grow, dries up the dead tree and prepares it for burning. *Nothing so hardens the heart of man as a barren familiarity with sacred things!* Once more I say, it is not privileges alone which make people Christians, but *the grace of the Holy Ghost*. Without that, no man will ever be saved.

I ask the *members* of evangelical congregations in the present day, to mark well what I am saying. You go to Mr. A's or Mr. B's church: you think he is an excellent preacher; you delight in his sermons; you cannot hear anyone else with the same comfort; you have learned many things since you attended his ministry; you consider it a great privilege to be one of his hearers! All this is very good. It is a privilege. I would be thankful if ministers like yours were multiplied a thousandfold. But after all, what have you got in your heart? Have you yet received the Holy Ghost? If not, *you are no better than Lot's wife.*

I ask the *servants* of religious families to mark well what I am saying. It is a great privilege to live in a house where the fear of God reigns. It is a privilege to hear family prayers morning and evening, to hear the Word of God regularly expounded, to have a quiet Sunday, and to always be able to go to church. These are the things that you ought to seek when you try to get a situation; these are the things which make a really good place. High wages and light work will never make up for a constant round of worldliness, Sabbath-breaking, and sin. But take heed that you do not rest content with these things: do not suppose that because you have all these spiritual advantages, you will of course go to heaven. You must have grace in your *own* heart, as well as attend family prayers. If not, *you are at present no better than Lot's wife.*

I ask the *children* of religious parents to mark well what I am saying. It is the highest privilege to be the child of a godly father and mother, and to be brought up in the midst of many prayers. It is a blessed thing indeed to be taught the Gospel from our earliest infancy, and to hear of sin, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and holiness, and heaven, from the first moment we can remember anything. But, oh, take heed that you do not remain

barren and unfruitful in the sunshine of all these privileges: beware lest your heart remains hard, impenitent and worldly notwithstanding the many advantages you enjoy. You cannot enter the kingdom of God on the credit of your parents' religion. You must eat the bread of life for yourself, and have the witness of the Spirit in your own heart. You must have *repentance* of your own, *faith* of your own, and *sanctification* of your own. If not, *you are no better than Lot's wife*.

I pray God that all professing Christians in these days, may lay these things to heart. May we never forget that privileges alone cannot save us. Light and knowledge, and faithful preaching, and abundant means of grace, and the company of holy people are all great blessings and advantages. Happy are those who have them! But after all, there is one thing without which privileges are useless: that one thing is the grace of the Holy Ghost. Lot's wife had many privileges: but Lot's wife had no grace.

## II. I will next speak of *the sin which Lot's wife committed*.

The history of her sin is given by the Holy Ghost in few and simple words — “She looked back from behind her husband, and she became a pillar of salt.” We are told no more than this. There is a naked solemnity about the history. The sum and substance of her transgression lies in these three words, “She looked back.”

Does that sin seem small in the eyes of any reader of this paper? Does the fault of Lot's wife appear a trifling one to be visited with such a punishment? This is the feeling, I dare say, that rises in some hearts. Give your attention while I reason with you on the subject. There was far more in that look than strikes you at first sight: it implied far more than it expressed. Listen, and you will hear.

(a) That look was a little thing, but *it revealed the true character of Lot's wife*. Little things will often show the state of a man's mind even better than great ones, and little symptoms are often the signs of deadly and incurable diseases. The apple that Eve ate was a little thing, but it proved that she had fallen from innocence and become a sinner. A crack in an arch seems a little thing; but it proves that the foundation is giving way, and the whole fabric is unsafe. A little cough in a morning seems an unimportant ailment; but it is often evidence of a failing in the constitution, and it leads on to decline, consumption, and death. A straw may show which way the wind blows; and one look may show the rotten condition of a sinner's heart. (Mat 5.28)

(b) That look was a little thing, but *it told of disobedience in Lot's wife*. The command of the angel was strait and unmistakable: “Do not look behind you.” (Gen 19.17) Lot's wife refused to obey this command. But the Holy Ghost says that, “to obey is better than sacrifice,” and that “rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft.” (1Sam 15.22, 23) When God speaks plainly by His Word, or by His messengers, man's duty is clear.

(c) That look was a little thing, but *it told of proud unbelief in Lot's wife*. She seemed to doubt whether God was really going to destroy Sodom: she appeared not to believe there was any danger, or any need for such hasty flight. But without faith, it is impossible to please God. (Heb 11.6) The moment a man begins to think he knows better than God, and that God does not mean anything when He threatens, that man's soul is in great danger. When we cannot see the reason for God's dealings, our duty is to hold our peace and believe.

(d) That look was a little thing, but *it told of secret love of the world in Lot's wife*. Her heart was in Sodom, though her body was outside. She had left her affections behind when she fled from her home. Her eye turned to the place where her treasure was, as the compass-needle turns to the pole. And this was the crowning point of her sin. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." (Jas 4.4) "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1Joh 2.15)

I ask the special attention of my readers to this part of our subject. I believe it to be the part to which the Lord Jesus particularly intends to direct our minds. I believe He would have us observe that *Lot's wife was lost by looking back to the world*. Her profession was at one time fair and specious, but she never really gave up the world. She seemed at one time in the road to safety, but even then the lowest and deepest thoughts of her heart were for the world. *The immense danger of worldliness* is the grand lesson which the Lord Jesus means us to learn. Oh, that we may all have an eye to see and a heart to understand!

I believe there was never a time when *warnings against worldliness* were so much needed by the Church of Christ as they are at the present day. Every age is said to have its own peculiar epidemic disease: the epidemic disease to which the souls of Christians are liable just now is the love of the world. It is a *pestilence* that walks in darkness, and a *sickness* that destroys at noonday. It "has cast down many wounded; indeed many strong men have been wounded by it." [Pro 7.26](#) I would gladly raise a warning voice, and try to arouse the slumbering consciences of all who make a profession of religion. I would gladly cry aloud, "Remember the sin of Lot's wife." She was no murderess, no adulteress, no thief — but she was a professor of religion, and she *looked back*.

There are thousands of baptized persons in our churches who are proof against immorality and infidelity, and yet they fall victims to the love of the world. There are thousands who run well for a season, and seem to bid well to reach heaven; but by and by they give up the race, and turn their backs on Christ altogether. And what has stopped them? Have they found the Bible untrue? Have they found the Lord Jesus fail to keep His word? No, not at all. But they have caught the epidemic disease: they are infected with the love of this world. I appeal to every true-hearted evangelical minister who reads this paper: I ask him to look round his congregation. I appeal to every old-established Christian: I ask him to look round the circle of his acquaintance. I am sure that I am speaking the truth. I am sure that it is high time to remember the sin of Lot's wife.

(a) How many *children of religious families* begin well and end poorly! In the days of their childhood they seem full of religion. They can repeat texts and hymns in abundance; they have spiritual feelings and convictions of sin; they profess to love the Lord Jesus and they desire heaven; they take pleasure in going to church and hearing sermons; they say things which are treasured up by their fond parents as indications of grace; they do things which make relations say, "What manner of child will this be?" But alas, how often their goodness vanishes like the morning cloud, and like the dew that passes away! The boy becomes a young man, and cares for nothing but amusements, field-sports, revelling, and excess. The girl becomes a young woman, and cares for nothing but dress, amusing company, reading novels, and excitement. Where is the spirituality which once appeared to promise so fair? It is all gone: it is buried; it is overflowed by the love of the world. They walk in the steps of Lot's wife. *They look back*.

(b) How many *married people* do well in religion to all appearance, until their children begin to grow up — and then they fall away! In the early years of their married life they seem to follow Christ diligently, and to witness a good confession. They regularly attend the preaching of the Gospel: they are fruitful in good works; they are never seen in vain and dissipated company.<sup>54</sup> Their faith and practice are both sound, and walk hand in hand. But alas, how often a spiritual blight comes over the household when a young family begins to grow up, and sons and daughters have to be advanced in life. A *leaven of worldliness* begins to appear in their habits, dress, entertainments, and employment of time. They are no longer strict about the *company* they keep and the *places* they visit. Where is the decided line of separation which they once observed? Where is the unswerving abstinence from worldly amusements which once marked their course? It is all forgotten. It is all laid aside like an old almanac. A change has come over them: the spirit of the world has taken possession of their hearts. They walk in the steps of Lot's wife. *They look back.*

(c) How many *young women* seem to love decided religion until they are twenty or twenty-one, and then lose all! Up to this time of their life, their conduct in religious matters is all that could be desired.

- They keep up habits of private prayer;
- they read their Bibles diligently;
- they visit the poor when they have opportunity;
- they teach in Sunday schools when there is an opening;
- they minister to the temporal and spiritual wants of the poor;
- they like religious friends;
- they love to talk on religious subjects:
- they write letters full of religious expressions and religious experience.

But alas, how often they prove unstable as water, and are ruined by the love of the world! Little by little they fall away and lose their first love. Little by little the “things seen” push out of their minds the “things unseen,” and like the plague of locusts, they eat up every green thing in their souls. Step by step they go back from the decided position they once took up. They cease to be jealous about sound doctrine; they pretend to find out that it is “uncharitable” to think one person has more religion than another; they discover it is “exclusive” to attempt any separation from the customs of society. By and by, they give their affections to some man who makes no pretence to decided religion. At last they end by giving up the last remnant of their own Christianity, and becoming thorough children of the world. They walk in the steps of Lot's wife. *They look back.*

(d) How many *communicants* <sup>55</sup> in our churches were at one time zealous and earnest professors, and have now become apathetic, formal, and cold! Time was when,

- none seemed so alive in religion as they were;
- none were so diligent in their attendance on the means of grace;
- none were so anxious to promote the cause of the Gospel;
- none were so ready for every good work;
- none were so thankful for spiritual instruction;

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<sup>54</sup> *Dissipated*: unrestrained by convention or morality; preoccupied with pleasure and risk.

<sup>55</sup> *Communicants*: those who partake of the Lord's Supper (communion) – members of the church.

— none were apparently so desirous to grow in grace.

But now, alas, everything seems altered! The “love of other things” has taken possession of their hearts, and choked the good seed of the Word. The money of the world, the rewards of the world, the literature of the world, the honours of the world, now have first place in their affections. Talk to them and you will find no response about spiritual things. Mark their daily conduct, and you will see no zeal about the kingdom of God. They indeed have a religion, but it is living religion no more. The spring of their former Christianity is dried up and gone; the fire of the spiritual machine is quenched and cold: earth has put out the flame which once burned so brightly. They have walked in the steps of Lot’s wife. *They have looked back.*

(e) How many clergymen work hard in their profession for a few years, and then become lazy and indolent from the love of this present world! At the outset of their ministry they seem willing to spend and be spent for Christ: they are instant in season and out of season; their preaching is lively and their churches are filled. Their congregations are well looked after: cottage lectures, prayer-meetings, house-to-house visitation, are their weekly delight. But alas, how often after “beginning in the Spirit” they end “in the flesh,” and like Samson, they are shorn of their strength in the lap of that Delilah, the world! They prefer some rich living; they marry a worldly wife; they are puffed up with pride, and neglect study and prayer. A nipping frost cuts off the spiritual blossoms which once bade so fair. Their preaching loses its unction and power; their week-day work becomes less and less; the society they mix with becomes less select; the tone of their conversation becomes more earthly. They cease to disregard the opinion of man: they imbibe a morbid fear of “extreme views,” and are filled with a cautious dread of giving offence. And at last, the man who at one time seemed likely to be a real successor of the apostles and a good soldier of Christ, settles down on his lees <sup>56</sup> as a clerical gardener, farmer, or diner-out, by whom nobody is offended and nobody is saved. His church becomes half empty; his influence dwindles away; the world has bound him hand and foot. He has walked in the steps of Lot’s wife. He has *looked back*. <sup>57</sup>

It is sad to write of these things, but it is far more sad to see them. It is sad to observe how professing Christians can blind their consciences by specious arguments on this subject, and can defend positive worldliness by talking about the “duties of their station,” the “courtesies of life,” and the necessity of having a “cheerful religion.”

It is sad to see how many a gallant ship launches forth on the voyage of life with every prospect of success and, springing this leak of worldliness, goes down with all her freight in full view of the harbour of safety. It is saddest of all to observe how many flatter themselves that it is all right with their souls when it is all wrong, because of this love of the world. Grey hairs are here and there upon them, and they do not know it. They began with Jacob, and David, and Peter, and they are likely to end with Esau, and Saul, and Judas Iscariot. They began with Ruth, and Hannah, and Mary, and Persis, and they are likely to end with Lot’s wife.

<sup>56</sup> *Lees*: here it means out of the storm; sheltered from the wind – i.e., he has departed from the battlefield.

<sup>57</sup> “Remember Dr. Dodd! I myself heard him tell his own flock, whom he was lecturing in his house, that he was obliged to give up that method of helping their souls, because it exposed him to so much reproach. He gave it up, and fell from one compliance to another with his corrupt nature; and under what reproach he died!” (He was hanged for forgery) *Venn’s Life and Letters*, p. 238. Edit. 1853.

Beware of a half-hearted religion. Beware of following Christ from any secondary motive — to please relations and friends — to keep in with the custom of the place or family in which you reside — to appear respectable and have the reputation of being religious. Follow Christ for His own sake, if you follow Him at all. Be thorough, be real, be honest, be sound, be whole-hearted. If you have any religion at all, let your religion be real. See that you do not sin *the sin of Lot's wife*.

Beware of ever supposing that you may go too far in religion, and of secretly trying to keep in with the world. I want no reader of this paper to become a hermit, a monk, or a nun. I wish every one to do his real duty in that state of life to which he is called. But I do urge on every professing Christian who wishes to be happy, the immense importance of making no compromise between God and the world. Do not try to drive a hard bargain, as if you wanted to give Christ as little of your heart as possible, and to keep as much as possible of the things of this life. Beware lest you overreach yourself, and end by losing all. Love Christ with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. Seek first the kingdom of God, and believe that all other things shall then be added to you. Take heed that you do not prove to be a copy of the character John Bunyan draws — Mr. Facing-both-ways. For your happiness' sake, for your usefulness' sake, for your safety's sake, for your soul's sake, beware of the sin of Lot's wife. Oh, it is a solemn saying of our Lord Jesus, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luk 9.62)

**III.** I will now speak, in the last place, of *the punishment which God inflicted on Lot's wife*.

The Scripture describes her end in few and simple words. It is written that "she looked back and became a pillar of salt." A miracle was wrought to execute God's judgment on this guilty woman. The same Almighty hand which first gave her life, took that life away in the twinkling of an eye. From living flesh and blood, she was turned into a pillar of salt.

That was a *fearful end* for a soul to come to! To die at any time is a solemn thing. To die amidst kind friends and relations, to die calmly and quietly in one's bed, to die with the prayers of godly men still sounding in your ears, to die with a good hope through grace in the full assurance of salvation, leaning on the Lord Jesus, buoyed up by Gospel promises — to die even so, I say, is a serious business. But to die suddenly and in a moment, in the very act of sin, to die in full health and strength, to die by the direct interposition of an angry God — this is fearful indeed. Yet this was the end of Lot's wife. I cannot blame the prayer-book Litany, as some do, for retaining this petition: "*From sudden death, good Lord, deliver us.*"

That was a *hopeless end* for a soul to come to! There are cases where one hopes against hope, as it were, about the souls of those we see go down to the grave. We try to persuade ourselves that our poor departed brother or sister may have repented unto salvation at the last moment, and laid hold on the hem of Christ's garment at the eleventh hour. We call to mind God's mercies; we remember the Spirit's power; we think on the case of the penitent thief; we whisper to ourselves that saving work may have gone on even on that dying bed which the dying person did not have the strength to tell. But there is an end of all such hopes when a person is suddenly cut down in the very act of sin. Charity itself can say nothing when the soul has been summoned away in the very midst of wickedness,

without even a moment's time for thought or prayer. Such was the end of Lot's wife. It was a hopeless end. She went to hell.

But it is good for us all to mark these things. It is good to be reminded that God can punish sharply those who sin wilfully, and that great privileges misused will bring down great wrath upon the soul.

- *Pharaoh* saw all the miracles which Moses worked
- *Korah, Dathan, and Abiram* had heard God speaking from Mount Sinai
- *Hophni and Phinehas* were sons of God's High Priest
- *Saul* lived in the full light of Samuel's ministry
- *Ahab* was often warned by Elijah the prophet
- *Absalom* enjoyed the privilege of being one of David's children
- *Belshazzar* had Daniel the prophet near by his door
- *Ananias and Sapphira* joined the Church in the days when the apostles were working miracles
- *Judas Iscariot* was a chosen companion of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

But they all sinned with a high hand against light and knowledge; and they were all suddenly destroyed without remedy. They had no time or space for repentance. As they lived, so they died: as they were, they hurried away to meet God. They went with all their sins upon them, unpardoned, unrenewed, and utterly unfit for heaven. And being dead they yet speak. They tell us, like Lot's wife, that it is a perilous thing to sin against light, that God hates sin, and that there is a hell.

I feel constrained to speak freely to my readers on the subject of hell. Allow me to use the opportunity which the end of Lot's wife affords. I believe the time has come when it is a positive duty to speak plainly about the reality and eternity of hell. A flood of false doctrine has lately broken in upon us. Men are beginning to tell us "that God is too merciful to punish souls forever — that there is a love of God lower even than hell — and that all mankind, however wicked and ungodly some of them may be, will sooner or later be saved." We are invited to leave the old paths of apostolic Christianity. We are told that the views of our fathers about hell, and the devil, and punishment, are obsolete and old-fashioned. We are to embrace what is called a "kinder theology," and treat hell as a Pagan fable, or a bugbear to frighten children and fools. I, for one, desire to protest against such false teaching. Painful, sorrowful, distressing as the controversy may be, we must not blink at it, or refuse to look the subject in the face. I, for one, am resolved to maintain the old position, and to assert the reality and eternity of hell.

Believe me, this is no mere speculative question. It is not to be classed with disputes about liturgies and Church government. It is not to be ranked with mysterious problems like the meaning of Ezekiel's temple, or the symbols of Revelation. It is a question which lies at the very foundation of the whole Gospel. The moral attributes of God, His justice, His holiness, His purity, are all involved in it. The necessity of personal faith in Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit, are all at stake. Let the old doctrine about hell be once overthrown, and the whole system of Christianity is unsettled, unscrewed, unpinning, and thrown into disorder.

Believe me, the question is not one in which we are obliged to fall back on the theories and inventions of man. The Scripture has spoken plainly and fully on the subject of hell.

I hold it to be impossible to deal honestly with the Bible, and to avoid the conclusions to which it will lead us on this point. If words mean anything, there is such a place as hell. If texts are to be interpreted fairly, there are those who will be cast into hell. If language has any sense belonging to it, hell is forever. I believe that the man who finds arguments for evading the evidence of the Bible on this question has arrived at a state of mind in which reasoning is useless. For my own part, it seems just as easy to argue that we do not exist, as to argue that the Bible does not teach the reality and eternity of hell.

(a) Settle it firmly in your mind, that the same Bible which teaches that God in mercy and compassion sent Christ to die for sinners, also teaches that God hates sin, and must from His very nature punish all who cling to sin, or refuse the salvation He has provided. The very same chapter which declares, “God so loved the world,” also declares that “the wrath of God abides” on the unbeliever. (Joh 3.16, 36) The very same Gospel which is launched into the earth with the blessed tidings, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved,” proclaims in the same breath, “He that does not believe shall be damned.” (Mar 16.16)

(b) Settle it firmly in your mind that God has given us proof upon proof in the Bible that He will punish the hardened and unbelieving, and that He can take vengeance on His enemies, as well as show mercy on the penitent.

- The drowning of the old world by the flood
- The burning of Sodom and Gomorrah
- The overthrow of Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea
- The judgment on Korah, Dathan, and Abiram
- The utter destruction of the seven nations of Canaan

All these teach the same awful truth. They are all given to us as *beacons*, and *signs*, and *warnings*, that we may not provoke God. They are all meant to lift up the corner of the curtain which hangs over things to come, and to remind us that there is such a thing as the wrath of God. They all tell us plainly that “the wicked shall be turned into hell.” (Psa 9.17)

(c) Settle it firmly in your mind, that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has spoken most plainly about the reality and eternity of hell. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus contains things which should make men tremble. But it does not stand alone. No lips have used so many words to express the awfulness of hell, as the lips of Him who spoke as never man spoke, and who said “The word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.” (Joh 14.24) Hell, hellfire, the damnation of hell, eternal damnation, the resurrection of damnation, everlasting fire, the place of torment, destruction, outer darkness, the worm that never dies, the fire that is not quenched, the place of weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, everlasting punishment <sup>58</sup> — these, these are the words which the Lord Jesus Christ Himself employs. Away with the miserable nonsense which people speak in this day, who tell us that the ministers of the Gospel should never speak of hell! They only show their own ignorance, or their own dishonesty, when they talk in such a manner. No man can honestly read the four Gospels and fail to see that he who would follow the example of Christ must speak of hell.

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<sup>58</sup> Mat 5.22; 29-30; 18.9; Mar 3.29; Joh 5.29; Mat 8.12; 22.13; 25.30; Mar 9.44-48; Mat 25.46.

(d) Settle it in your mind, lastly, that the comforting ideas which the Scripture gives us of heaven are at an end, once we deny the reality or eternity of hell. Is there no future separate abode for those who die wicked and ungodly? Are all men after death to be mingled together in one confused multitude? Why then, heaven will be no heaven at all! It is utterly impossible for two to dwell happily together unless they are agreed. [Amo 3.3](#) — Is there to be a time when the terms *hell* and *punishment* will be over? Are the wicked to be admitted into heaven after ages of misery? Why then, the need of the sanctification of the Spirit is cast aside and despised! I read that men can be sanctified and made fit for heaven, on earth. I read nothing of any sanctification in hell.<sup>59</sup> Away with such baseless and unscriptural theories! The eternity of hell is as clearly affirmed in the Bible as the eternity of heaven. Once you allow that hell is not eternal, you may as well say that God and heaven are not eternal. The same Greek word which is used in the expression, “everlasting punishment,” is the word that is used by the Lord Jesus in the expression, “life eternal,” and by St. Paul in the expression, “everlasting God.” (Mat 25.46; Rom 16.26)

I know that all this sounds dreadful in many ears. I do not wonder. But the only question we have to settle is this: — Is it Scriptural? Is it true? I maintain firmly that it is. And I maintain that professing Christians should often be reminded that they may be lost and go to hell. <sup>60</sup>

I know that it is easy to deny all plain teaching about hell, and to make it odious by invidious names. I have often heard of “narrow-minded views, and old-fashioned notions, and brimstone theology,” and the like. I have often been told that “broad” views are desired in the present day. I wish to be as broad as the Bible, neither less nor more. I say that he is the narrow-minded theologian, who pares down those parts of the Bible which the natural heart dislikes, and rejects any portion of the counsel of God.

God knows that I never speak of hell without pain and sorrow. I would gladly offer the salvation of the Gospel to the very chief of sinners. I would willingly say to the vilest and most profligate of mankind on his deathbed, “Repent, and believe on Jesus, and you shall be saved.” But God forbid that I should ever keep back from mortal man that Scripture reveals a hell as well as a heaven, and that the Gospel teaches that men may be lost as well as be saved. The watchman who keeps silent when he sees a fire, is guilty of gross neglect — the doctor who tells us we are getting well when we are dying, is a false friend — and the minister who keeps back hell from his people in his sermons is neither a faithful nor a charitable man.

Where is the charity in keeping back any portion of God’s truth? He is the kindest friend who tells me the whole extent of my danger. Where is the use of hiding the future from the impenitent and the ungodly? Surely it is like helping the devil if we do not tell them plainly that “the soul that sins shall surely die.” Who knows if the wretched carelessness of many baptized persons arises from this: that they have never been told plainly of hell? Who can tell if thousands might be converted, if ministers would urge them more faithfully to flee from the wrath to come? Truly, I fear that many of us are guilty in this matter: there is a morbid tenderness among us which is *not* the tenderness of Christ. We

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<sup>59</sup> Referring to the Roman Catholic teaching about purgatory.

<sup>60</sup> Not that they may lose their salvation, but that they may never have been converted at all (2Pet 1.10).

have spoken of mercy, but not of judgment; we have preached many sermons about heaven, but few about hell: we have been carried away by the wretched fear of being thought “low, vulgar, and fanatical.” We have forgotten that He who judges us is the Lord, and that the man who teaches the same doctrine that Christ taught cannot be wrong.

If you would ever be a healthy Scriptural Christian, I entreat you to *give hell a place in your theology*. Establish it in your mind as a fixed principle, that God is a God of judgment, as well as of mercy; and that the same everlasting counsels which laid the foundation of the bliss of heaven, have also laid the foundation of the misery of hell. Keep in full view of your mind that all who die unpardoned and unrenewed, are utterly unfit for the presence of God and must be lost forever. They are not capable of enjoying heaven: they could not be happy there. They must go to their own place: and that place is hell. — Oh, it is a great thing in these days of unbelief to believe the whole Bible!

If you would ever be a healthy and Scriptural Christian, I entreat you to *beware of any ministry which does not plainly teach the reality and eternity of hell*. Such a ministry may be soothing and pleasant, but it is far more likely to lull you to sleep than to lead you to Christ, or to build you up in the faith. It is impossible to leave out any portion of God’s truth without spoiling the whole. That preaching is sadly defective which dwells exclusively on the mercies of God and the joys of heaven, and never sets forth the terrors of the Lord and the miseries of hell. It may be popular, but it is not Scriptural: it may amuse and gratify, but it will not save. Give me the preaching which keeps back nothing that God has revealed. You may call it stern and harsh; you may tell us that to frighten people is not the way to do them good. But you are forgetting that the grand object of the Gospel is to persuade men to “flee from the wrath to come,” [Mat 3:7](#) and that it is vain to expect men to flee unless they are afraid. It would be good for many professing Christians if they were more afraid about their souls than they now are!

If you desire to be a healthy Christian, *consider often what your own end will be*. Will it be happiness, or will it be misery? Will it be the death of the righteous, or will it be a death without hope, like that of Lot’s wife? You cannot live forever: there must be an end one day. The last sermon will one day be heard; the last prayer will one day be prayed; the last chapter in the Bible will one day be read — meaning, wishing, hoping, intending, resolving, doubting, hesitating — all will at length be over. You will have to leave this world and stand before a holy God. Oh, that you would be wise! Oh, that you would consider your latter end!

You cannot trifle forever: a time will come when you must be serious. You cannot put off your soul’s concerns forever: a day will come when you must have a reckoning with God. You cannot always be singing, and dancing, and eating, and drinking, and dressing, and reading, and laughing, and jesting, and scheming, and planning, and money-making. The summer insects cannot always sport in the sunshine; the cold chilly evening will come at last and stop their sport forever. So it will be with you. You may put off religion now, and refuse the counsel of God’s ministers: but the cool of the day is drawing on, when God will come down to speak with you. And what will your end be? Will it be a hopeless one, like that of Lot’s wife?

I beseech you, by the mercies of God, to look this question squarely in the face. I entreat you not to stifle your conscience by vague hopes of God’s mercy, while your heart clings to the world. I implore you not to drown convictions by childish fancies about God’s love,

while your daily ways and habits plainly show that “the love of the Father is not in you.” There is mercy in God, like a river — but it is for the *penitent* believer in Christ Jesus. There is a love in God towards sinners which is unspeakable and unsearchable — but it is for those who “hear Christ’s voice and *follow* Him.” Seek to have an interest in that love. Break off every known sin; come out boldly from the world; cry mightily to God in prayer; cast yourself wholly and unreservedly on the Lord Jesus for time and eternity; lay aside every weight. Cling to nothing, however dear, which interferes with your soul’s salvation; give up everything, however precious, which comes between you and heaven. This old shipwrecked world is fast sinking beneath your feet: the one thing needful is to have a place in the lifeboat and to get safely to shore. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Whatever happens to your house and property, see that you make sure of heaven. Oh, it is better a million times to be laughed at and thought extreme in this world, than go down to hell from the midst of the congregation and end like Lot’s wife!

And now, let me conclude this paper by offering to all who read it, a few questions to impress the subject on their consciences. You have seen the history of Lot’s wife — her privileges, her sin, and her end. You have been told of the uselessness of privileges without the gift of the Holy Ghost, of the danger of worldliness, and of the reality of hell. Allow me to wind up all of this by a few direct appeals to your own heart. In a day of much light, and knowledge, and profession, I desire to set up a beacon to preserve souls from shipwreck. I would gladly moor a buoy in the channel of all spiritual voyagers, and paint upon it, “*Remember Lot’s wife.*”

(a) *Are you careless about the second Advent of Christ?* Alas, many are! They live like the men of Sodom, and the men of Noah’s day: they eat, and drink, and plant, and build, and marry, and are given in marriage, and behave as if Christ was never going to return. If you are such a one, I say to you this day, Take care: “Remember Lot’s wife.”

(b) *Are you lukewarm, and cold in your Christianity?* Alas, many are! They try to serve two masters: they labour to keep friends both with God and mammon. They strive to be a kind of spiritual bat,<sup>61</sup> neither one thing nor the other: not quite a thorough-going Christian, but not quite a man of the world. If you are such a one, I say to you this day, Take care: “Remember Lot’s wife.”

(c) *Are you halting between two opinions, and disposed to go back to the world?* Alas, many are! They are afraid of the cross: they secretly dislike the trouble and reproach of decided religion. They are weary of the wilderness and the manna, and would gladly return to Egypt if they could. If you are such a one, I say to you this day, Take care: “Remember Lot’s wife.”

(d) *Are you secretly cherishing some besetting sin?* Alas, many are! They go far in a profession of religion; they do many things that are right, and are very like the people of God. But there is always some darling evil habit which they cannot tear from their heart. Hidden worldliness, or covetousness, or lust, sticks to them like their skin. They are willing to see all their idols broken, *but this one*. If you are such a one, I say to you this day, Take care: “Remember Lot’s wife.”

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<sup>61</sup> Referring to a squash or tennis racket: two-sided.

(e) *Are you trifling with little sins?* Alas, many are! They hold the great essential doctrines of the Gospel. They keep clear of all gross profligacy, or open breach of God's law. But they are painfully careless about little inconsistencies, and painfully ready to make excuses for them. "It is only a little temper, or a little levity, or a little thoughtlessness, or a little forgetfulness" — they tell us: "God does not take account of such little matters. None of us is perfect. God will never require it." If you are such a one, I say to you this day, Take care: "Remember Lot's wife."

(f) *Are you resting on religious privileges?* Alas, many do! They enjoy the opportunity of hearing the Gospel regularly preached, and of attending many ordinances and means of grace: and they are settled down on their lees.<sup>62</sup> They seem to be "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Rev 3.17); while they have neither faith, nor grace, nor spiritual-mindedness, nor fitness for heaven. If you are such a one, I say to you this day, Take care: "Remember Lot's wife."

(g) *Are you trusting to your religious knowledge?* Alas, many do! They are not ignorant, as other men: they know the difference between true doctrine and false. They can dispute, they can reason, they can argue, they can quote texts; but all this time they are not *converted*, and they are still dead in trespasses and sins. If you are such a one, I say to you this day, Take care: "Remember Lot's wife."

(h) *Are you making some profession of religion, and yet clinging to the world?* Alas, many do! They aim at being thought of as Christians. They like the credit of being serious, steady, proper, regular, church-going people. Yet all the while their dress, their tastes, their companions, their entertainments, tell plainly that they are of the world. If you are such a one, I say to you this day, Take care: "Remember Lot's wife."

(i) *Are you trusting that you will have a death-bed repentance?* Alas, many do! They know they are not what they ought to be: they are not yet born again, and fit to die. But they flatter themselves that when their last illness comes, they will have time to repent and lay hold on Christ, and go out of the world pardoned, sanctified, and fit for heaven. They forget that people often die very suddenly, and that as they live they generally die. If you are such a one, I say to you this day, Take care: Remember Lot's wife."

(j) *Do you belong to an evangelical congregation?* Many do, and alas, they go no further! They hear the truth Sunday after Sunday and yet remain as hard as the nether-millstone.<sup>63</sup> Sermon after sermon sounds in their ears. Month after month they are invited to repent, to believe, to come to Christ, and to be saved. Year after year passes, and they are not changed. They keep their seat under the teaching of a favourite minister, *and they also keep their favourite sins*. If you are such a one, I say to you this day, Take care: "Remember Lot's wife."

Oh, may these solemn words of our Lord Jesus Christ be deeply graven on all our hearts! May they awaken us when we feel sleepy — revive us when we feel dead — sharpen us when we feel dull — warm us when we feel cold! May they prove a spur to quicken us when we are falling back, and a bridle to check us when we are turning aside! May they be a shield to defend us when Satan casts a subtle temptation at our heart; and a sword to fight

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<sup>62</sup> Zep 1.12 — They have become complacent, content with the scraps and dregs of Christian living.

<sup>63</sup> *Nether-millstone*: the lower of a pair of millstones against which the upper one grinds the grain into flour. It is a type of something hard and unyielding. Job 41:24, 'His heart is...as hard as a piece of the nether millstone.'

## A WOMAN TO BE REMEMBERED

with when he says boldly, "Give up Christ, come back to the world, and follow me!" Oh, may we say, in such hours of trial, "Soul, remember your Saviour's warning! Soul, soul, have you forgotten His words? Soul, soul, 'REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE!'"

## 11. CHRIST'S GREATEST TROPHY

*“And one of the malefactors who were hanged railed at Him, saying, If You are Christ, save Yourself and us.*

*“But the other, answering, rebuked him saying, Do you not fear God, seeing that you are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly so; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss.*

*“And he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into your kingdom.’*

*“And Jesus said to him, Truly I say to you, Today you shall be with Me in paradise.”*

— Luk 23.39-43.

THERE are few passages in the New Testament which are more familiar to men's ears than the verses which head this chapter. They contain the well-known story of “the penitent thief.”

And it is right and good that these verses should be well-known.

- They have comforted many troubled minds;
- they have brought peace to many uneasy consciences;
- they have been a healing balm to many wounded hearts;
- they have been a medicine to many sin-sick souls;
- they have smoothed down not a few dying pillows.

Wherever the Gospel of Christ is preached, they will always be honoured, loved, and had in remembrance.

I wish to say something about these verses. I will try to unfold the leading lessons which they are meant to teach. I cannot see the peculiar mental state of anyone into whose hands this paper may fall. But I can see truths in this passage which no man can ever know too well. Here is the greatest trophy which Christ ever won.

**I.** First of all, we are meant to learn from these verses, *Christ's power and willingness to save sinners.*

This is the main doctrine to be gathered from the history of the penitent thief. It teaches us what should be music in the ears of all who hear it — it teaches us that Jesus Christ is “mighty to save.” (Isa 63.1)

I ask anyone to say whether a case could look more hopeless and desperate than that of this penitent thief once did?

He was a *wicked man* — a malefactor — a thief, if not a murderer. We know this, for only such men were crucified. He was suffering a just punishment for breaking the laws. And as he had lived wickedly, so he seemed determined to die wickedly — for at first, when he was crucified, he railed at our Lord.

And he was a *dying man*. He hung there, nailed to a cross from which he was never to come down alive. He no longer had power to stir hand or foot. His hours were numbered: the grave was ready for him. There was but a step between him and death.

If ever there was a soul hovering on the brink of hell, it was the soul of this thief. If ever there was a case that seemed lost, gone, and past recovery, it was his. If ever there was a child of Adam whom the devil made sure of as his own, it was this man.

But now see what happened. He ceased to rail and blaspheme as he had done at first: he began to speak in another manner altogether. He turned to our blessed Lord in prayer. He prayed Jesus to “remember him when he came into His kingdom.” He asked that his soul might be cared for, his sins pardoned, and he might be thought of in another world. Truly this was a wonderful change!

And then mark what kind of answer he received. Some would have said he was too wicked a man to be saved; but it was not so. Some would have fancied it was too late: the door was shut, and there was no room for mercy; but it proved not too late at all.

The Lord Jesus,

- returned him an immediate answer
- spoke kindly to him
- assured him he would be with Him that day in paradise
- pardoned him completely
- cleansed him thoroughly from his sins
- received him graciously
- justified him freely
- raised him from the gates of hell,
- gave him a title to glory.

Of all the multitude of saved souls, none ever received so glorious an assurance of his own salvation as did this penitent thief. Go over the whole list, from Genesis to Revelation, and you will find none who had such words spoken to him as these — “Today you shall be with Me in paradise.”

I believe the Lord Jesus never gave so complete a proof of His power and will to save, as He did upon this occasion. In the day when He seemed most weak, He showed that He was a strong deliverer. In the hour when His body was racked with pain, He showed that He could feel tenderly for others. At the time when He Himself was dying, He conferred eternal life on a sinner.

Now, do I not have a right to say, Christ is “able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by Him”? (Heb 7.25) Behold the proof of it. If ever a sinner was too far gone to be saved, it was this thief. Yet he was plucked as a brand from the fire. [Zec 3.2](#)

Do I not have a right to say, Christ will receive any poor sinner who comes to Him with the prayer of faith, and cast out none? Behold the proof of it. If ever there was one who seemed too bad to be received, this was the man. Yet the door of mercy was wide open even for him.

Do I not have a right to say, “By grace you may be saved through faith, not of works: do not fear, only believe?” Behold the proof of it:

- This thief was never baptized;
- he belonged to no visible Church;
- he never received the Lord’s Supper;
- he never did any work for Christ;

- he never gave money to Christ's cause!
- *But he had faith, and so he was saved.*

Do I not have a right to say, "The youngest faith will save a man's soul, if only it is true?" Behold the proof of it. This man's faith was only one day old; but it led him to Christ, and it preserved him from hell.

Why then should any man or woman despair with such a passage as this in the Bible? Jesus is a Physician who can cure hopeless cases. He can quicken dead souls, and call the things which are not as though they were.

Never should any man or woman despair! Jesus is still the same now that He was eighteen hundred years ago. The keys of death and hell are in His hand. When He opens, none can shut. <sup>64</sup>

What, even if your sins are more in number than the hairs of your head? What, even if your evil habits have grown with your growth, and strengthened with your strength? What, even if you have hated good and loved evil all the days of your life? These things are sad indeed; but there is hope, even for you. Christ can heal you: Christ can raise you from your low estate. Heaven is not shut against you. Christ is able to admit you if you will humbly commit your soul into His hands.

*Are your sins forgiven?* If not, I set before you this day a full and free salvation. I invite you to follow the steps of the penitent thief: come to Christ and live. I tell you that Jesus is full of pity and tender mercy. I tell you that He can do everything that your soul requires. Though your sins are as scarlet, He can make them white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool. Why should you not be saved as well as another? Come to Christ and *live*.

*Are you a true believer?* If you are, you ought to glory in Christ. Do not glory in your own faith, your own feelings, your own knowledge, your own prayers, your own amendment, your own diligence. Glory in nothing but Christ. Alas! The best of us know but little of that merciful and mighty Saviour. We do not exalt Him and glory in Him enough. Let us pray that we may see more of the fulness there is in Him.

*Do you ever try to do good to others?* If you do, remember to tell them about Christ. Tell the young, tell the poor, tell the aged, tell the ignorant, tell the sick, tell the dying — tell them all about Christ. Tell them of His power, and tell them of His love; tell them of His doings, and tell them of His feelings; tell them what He has done for the chief of sinners; tell them what He is willing to do to the last day of time: tell it to them over and over again. Never be tired of speaking of Christ. Say to them broadly and fully, freely and unconditionally, unreservedly and undoubtingly, "Come to Christ, as the penitent thief did: come to Christ, and you shall be saved."

**II.** The second lesson we are meant to learn from this passage is this. — *If some are saved in the very hour of death, others are not.*

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<sup>64</sup> Isa 22.22; Rev 3.7. "O Saviour, what a precedent this is of your free and powerful grace! Where You give, what unworthiness can bar us from your mercy? When You give, what time can prejudice our vocation? Who can despair of your goodness, when someone who was posting to hell in the morning, is with You in Paradise in the evening?" — Bishop Hall.

This is a truth that should never be passed over, and I dare not leave it unnoticed. It is a truth that stands out plainly in the sad end of the *other* malefactor, and it is only too often forgotten. Men forget that there were “two thieves.”

What became of the other thief who was crucified? Why did he not turn from his sin, and call upon the Lord? Why did he remain hardened and impenitent? Why was he not saved? It is useless to try to answer such questions. Let us be content to take the fact as we find it, and see what it is meant to teach us.

We have no right whatever to say that this thief was a worse man than his companion: there is nothing to prove it. Plainly, both were wicked men; both were receiving the due reward of their deeds; both hung by the side of our Lord Jesus Christ; both heard Him pray for His murderers, both saw Him suffer patiently. But while one repented, the other remained hardened; while one began to pray, the other went on railing; while one was converted in his last hours, the other died a bad man, just as he had lived; while one was taken to paradise, the other went to his own place — the place of the devil and his angels.

Now, these things are written for our warning. There is warning, as well as comfort in these verses, and that is a very solemn warning too.

They tell me loudly that though some may repent and be converted on their deathbeds, it does not at all follow that *all* will. A deathbed is not always a saving time.

They tell me loudly that two men may have the same opportunities of getting good for their souls; they may be placed in the same position, see the same things, and hear the same things — and yet only one of the two will take advantage of them, repent, believe, and be saved.

They tell me above all, that repentance and faith are the gifts of God and are not in a man's own power; and that if anyone flatters himself that he can repent at his own time, choose his own season, seek the Lord when he pleases, and like the penitent thief, be saved at the very last — he may find at length that he is greatly deceived.

And it is good and profitable to bear this in mind. There is an immense amount of delusion in the world on this very subject. I see many allowing life to slip away, quite unprepared to die. I see many admitting that they ought to repent, but always putting off their own repentance. And I believe one grand reason is that most men suppose they can turn to God when they like! They wrest the parable of the labourer in the vineyard, which speaks of the eleventh hour, and use it as it was never meant to be used. They dwell on the pleasant part of the verses that I am now considering, and they forget the rest. They talk of the thief who went to paradise and was saved, and they forget the one who died as he had lived — and was lost. <sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> “He that puts off to the very last his repentance and seeking pardon, in reliance on this example, only tempts God, and turns that to his own poison, which God intended for better ends.

“The mercies of God are never recorded in Scripture for man's presumption, and the failings of men are never recorded for imitation.” — *Lightfoot. Sermon. 1684.*

“Most ungrateful and foolish is the conduct of those who take encouragement from the penitent thief, to put off repentance to a dying moment; most ungrateful in perverting the grace of their Redeemer into an occasion of renewing their provocations against Him; and most foolish to imagine that what our Lord did in such singular circumstances, is to be drawn into an ordinary precedent.” — *Doddridge.*

I entreat every man of common sense who reads this paper, to take heed that he does not fall into this mistake.

Look at the history of men in the Bible, and see how often these notions I have been speaking of are contradicted. Mark well how many proofs there are that two men may have the same light offered to them, and only one use it; and that no one has a right to take liberties with God's mercy, and presume that he will be able to repent when he likes.

Look at *Saul* and *David*:

- They lived about the same time;
- they rose from the same rank in life;
- they were called to the same position in the world;
- they enjoyed the ministry of the same prophet, Samuel;
- they reigned the same number of years!
- Yet one was *saved*, and the other *lost*.

Look at *Sergius Paulus* and *Gallio*:

- They were both Roman governors;
- they were both wise and prudent men in their generation;
- they both heard the Apostle Paul preach!
- But one believed and was baptised — the other “cared for none of those things.” (Act 18.17)

Look at the world around you. See what is going on continually under your eyes. Two sisters will often attend the same ministry, listen to the same truths, hear the same sermons; and yet only one will be converted to God while the other remains totally unmoved. Two friends often read the same religious book. One is so moved by it, that he gives up everything for Christ; the other sees nothing at all in it, and continues the same as before. Hundreds have read Doddridge's *Rise and Progress* without profit; with Wilberforce, it was one of the beginnings of his spiritual life. Thousands have read Wilberforce's *Practical View of Christianity* and laid it down again unaltered; from the time Legh Richmond read it, he became another man. No man has any warrant for saying, “Salvation is in my own power.”

I do not pretend to explain these things. I only put them before you as great facts; and I ask you to consider them well.

You must not misunderstand me. I do not want to discourage you. I say these things in all affection to warn you of danger. I do not say them to drive you back from heaven. I rather say them to draw you on, and bring you to Christ while He can be found.

I want you to beware of presumption. Do not abuse God's mercy and compassion. Do not continue in sin, I beseech you, and think that you can repent, and believe, and be saved when you like, when you please, when you will, and when you choose. I would always set before you an open door. I would always say, “While there is life there is hope.” But if you would be wise, put nothing off that concerns your soul.

I want you to beware of letting slip good thoughts and godly convictions if you have them. Cherish them and nourish them, lest you lose them forever. Make the most of them, lest they take on wings and fly away. Do you have an inclination to begin praying? Put it in practice at once. Do you have an idea of beginning to really serve Christ? Set about it at

once. Are you enjoying any spiritual light? See that you live up to your light. Do not trifle with opportunities, lest the day come when you want to use them, and will not be able. Do not linger, lest you become wise too late.

You may perhaps say, "It is never too late to repent." I answer — "That is right enough: but *late* repentance is seldom *true* repentance. And I say further, you cannot be certain that if you put off repenting, you will repent at all."

You may say, "Why should I be afraid? — the penitent thief was saved." I answer — "That is true: but look again at the passage which tells you that the *other* thief was LOST."

**III.** The third lesson we are meant to learn from these verses Is this: *The Spirit always leads saved souls in one way.*

This is a point that deserves particular attention, and is often overlooked. Men look at the broad fact that the penitent thief was saved when he was dying, and they look no further.

They do not consider the evidences that this thief left behind him. They do not observe the abundant proof he gave of the work of the Spirit in his heart. And these proofs I wish to trace out. I wish to show you that the Spirit always works in one way. And whether He converts a man in an hour, as He did the penitent thief, or whether it is by slow degrees, as He does others — the *steps* by which He leads souls to heaven are always the same.

Let me try to make this clear to everyone who reads this paper, I want to put you on your guard. I want you to shake off the common notion that there is some easy, royal road to heaven from a dying bed. I want you thoroughly to understand that every saved soul goes through the same experience, and that the leading principles of the penitent thief's religion were just the same as those of the oldest saint who ever lived.

(a) See then, for one thing, *how strong the faith of this man was.*

He called Jesus "Lord." He declared his belief that He would have a "kingdom." He believed that He was able to give him eternal life and glory, and he prayed to Him in this belief. He maintained Christ's innocence of all the charges brought against Him. "This Man," he said, "has done nothing amiss." Others perhaps may have *thought* the Lord innocent — none *said* so openly, except this poor dying man.

And when did all this happen? It happened when the whole nation had denied Christ — shouting, "Crucify Him, crucify Him: we have no king but Caesar," — when the chief priests and Pharisees had condemned and found Him "guilty of death" — when even His own disciples had forsaken Him and fled — when He was hanging, faint, bleeding, and dying on the cross, numbered with transgressors, and accounted accursed. This was the hour when the thief believed in Christ, and prayed to Him! Surely such faith was never seen since the world began. <sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "I do not know if, since the creation of the world, there was ever a more remarkable and striking example of faith." — *Calvin's Commentary on the Gospels.*

"A great faith that can see the sun under so thick a cloud; that can discover a Christ, a Saviour, under such a poor, scorned, despised, crucified Jesus, and call Him Lord.

"A great faith that could see Christ's kingdom through His cross, and grave, and death, and when there was so little sign of a kingdom, and pray to be remembered in that kingdom." — *Lightfoot. Sermon.* 1684.

The disciples had seen mighty signs and miracles. They had seen the dead raised with a word — and lepers healed with a touch — the blind receiving sight — the dumb made to speak — the lame made to walk. They had seen thousands fed with a few loaves and fishes. They had seen their Master walking on the water as on dry land. All of them had heard Him speak as no man ever spoke, and hold out promises of good things yet to come. Some of them had a foretaste of His glory in the mount of transfiguration. Doubtless their faith was “the gift of God,” but still they had much to help it.

The dying thief saw none of the things I mentioned. He only saw our Lord in agony, and in weakness, in suffering, and in pain. He saw Him undergoing a dishonourable punishment; deserted, mocked, despised, and blasphemed. He saw Him rejected by all the great, and wise, and noble of His own people — His strength dried up like a potsherd, His life drawing near to the grave. (Psa 22.15; 88.3) He saw no sceptre, no royal crown, no outward dominion, no glory, no majesty, no power, no signs of might. And yet the dying thief believed, and looked forward to Christ's kingdom.

Would you know if you have the Spirit? Then mark the question I put to you this day. — *Where is your faith in Christ?*

(b) See, for another thing, *what a right sense of sin* the thief had. He says to his companion, “We receive the due reward of our deeds.” He acknowledges his own ungodliness, and the justice of his punishment. He makes no attempt to justify himself or excuse his wickedness. He speaks like a man humbled and self-abased by the remembrance of past iniquities. This is what all God's children feel. They are ready to admit they are poor, hell-deserving sinners. They can say with their hearts as well as with their lips, “We have left undone the things that we should have done, and we have done those things that we should not have done, and there is no health in us.”

Would you know if you have the Spirit? Then mark my question. — Do you *feel* your sins?

(c) For another thing, see *what brotherly love* the thief showed to his companion. He tried to stop his railing and blaspheming, and bring him to a better mind. “Do you not fear God,” he says, “seeing that you are in the same condemnation?” There is no surer mark of grace than this! Grace shakes a man out of his selfishness, and makes him feel for the souls of others. When the Samaritan woman was converted, she left her water-pot and ran to the city saying, “Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did: is this not the Christ?” (Joh 4.28, 29) When Saul was converted, he immediately went to the synagogue at Damascus and testified to his brethren of Israel that “Christ was the Son of God.” (Act 9.20) Would you know if you have the Spirit? Then where is your charity and love toward souls?

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“The penitent thief was the first confessor of Christ's heavenly kingdom — the first martyr who bore testimony to the holiness of His sufferings — and the first apologist for His oppressed innocence.” — *Quesnel on the Gospel*.

“Probably there are few saints in glory who ever honoured Christ more illustriously than this dying sinner.” — *Doddridge*.

“Is this the voice of a thief or a disciple? Give me leave, O Saviour, to borrow Your own words, “Truly I have not found so great a faith, no not in Israel.” He saw You hanging miserably by him, and yet he styles You Lord. He saw You dying, and yet he talks of your kingdom. He felt himself dying, yet he talks of a future remembrance. O faith, stronger than death, which can look beyond the cross at a crown; beyond dissolution at a remembrance of life and glory! Which of Your eleven were heard to speak so gracious a word to You in these, your last pangs?” — *Bishop Hall*.

In one word, you see in the penitent thief a finished work of the Holy Ghost. Every part of the believer's character may be traced in him. Short as his life was after conversion, he found time to leave abundant evidence that he was a child of God. His faith, his prayer, his humility, his brotherly love, are unmistakable witnesses of the reality of his repentance. He was not a penitent in name only, but in deed and in truth.

Let no man therefore think, because the penitent thief was saved, that men can be saved without leaving any evidence of the Spirit's work. Let such a one consider well what evidences this man left behind, and take care.

It is mournful to hear what people sometimes say about what they call *deathbed evidences*. It is perfectly fearful to observe how little satisfies some persons, and how easily they can persuade themselves that their friends have gone to heaven. They will tell you when their relative is dead and gone that "he made such a beautiful prayer one day — or that he talked so well — or that he was so sorry for his old ways and intended to live so differently if he got better — or that he craved nothing in this world — or that he liked people to read to him, and pray with him." And because they have this to go on, they seem to have a comfortable hope that he is saved! Christ may never have been named — the way of salvation may never have been mentioned in the least. But it does not matter; there was a little talk of religion, and so they are content!

Now, I have no desire to hurt the feelings of anyone who reads this paper, but I must and will speak plainly upon this subject.

Once for all, let me say that as a general rule, nothing is so unsatisfactory as deathbed evidences. The things that men say, and the feelings they express when sick and frightened, are to be little depended on. Often, too often, they are the result of fear, and do not spring from the ground of the heart. Often, too often, they are things said by rote; caught from the lips of ministers and anxious friends, but evidently not felt. And nothing can prove all this more clearly than the well-known fact that the great majority of persons who make promises of amendment on a sick bed — and then for the first time talk about religion (if they recover) — go back to sin and to the world.

When a man has lived a life of thoughtlessness and folly, I want something more than a few fair words and good wishes to satisfy me about his soul, when he comes to his deathbed. It is not enough for me that he will let me read the Bible to him, and pray by his bedside — or that he says, "he has not thought so much as he should about religion, and he thinks he would be a different man if he got better." All this does not content me; it does not make me feel happy about his state. It is very well as far as it goes, *but it is not conversion*. It is very well in its way, *but it is not faith in Christ*. Until I see conversion, and faith in Christ, I cannot and dare not feel satisfied. Others may feel satisfied if they please, and say after their friend's death, that they hope he has gone to heaven. For my part, I would rather hold my tongue and say nothing. I would be content with the least measure of repentance and faith in a dying man, even though it is no bigger than a grain of mustard seed. But to be content with anything less than repentance and faith, seems to me next door to infidelity.

What kind of evidence do you mean to leave behind as to the state of your soul? Take for example the penitent thief, and you will do well.

When we have carried you to your narrow bed, may we not have to hunt up stray words, and scraps of religion, in order to make out that you were a true believer. Let us not have to say in a hesitating way one to another, "I trust he is happy; he talked so nicely one day; and he seemed so pleased with a chapter in the Bible on another occasion; and he liked such a person, who is a good man." Let us be able to speak decidedly as to your condition. Let us have some solid proof of your repentance, your faith, and your holiness, so that none will be able to question your state for a moment. Depend on it: without this, those you leave behind can feel no solid comfort about your soul. We may use the form of religion at your burial, and express charitable hopes. We may meet you at the churchyard gate and say, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." [Rev 14.13](#) But this will not alter your condition! If you die without conversion to God — without repentance, and without faith — your funeral will only be the funeral of a lost soul; better you had never been born.

**IV.** In the next place, we are meant to learn from these verses, *that believers in Christ, when they die, are with the Lord.*

You may gather this from our Lord's words to the penitent thief: "This day you shall be with Me in paradise." And you have an expression very like it in the Epistle to the Philippians, where Paul says he has a desire to "depart and be with Christ." (Phi 1.23)

I will say but little on this subject. I would simply lay it before you, for your own private meditations. To my own mind it is very full of comfort and peace.

Believers after death are "with Christ." That answers many a difficult question which otherwise might puzzle man's busy, restless mind. The abode of dead saints, their joys, their feelings, their happiness, all seem met by this simple expression: they are "with Christ."

I cannot enter into full explanations about the separate state of departed believers. It is a high and deep subject, such as man's mind can neither grasp nor fathom. I know their happiness falls short of what it will be when their bodies are raised again in the resurrection at the last day, when Jesus returns to earth. Yet I also know that they enjoy a blessed rest, a rest from labour — a rest from sorrow — a rest from pain — and a rest from sin. But it does not follow, because I cannot explain these things, that I am not persuaded that they are far happier than they ever were on earth. I see their happiness in this very passage, "They are with Christ;" and when I see that, I see enough.

If the sheep are with the Shepherd — if the members are with the Head — if the children of Christ's family are with Him who loved them and carried them all the days of their pilgrimage on earth — then all must be well, all must be right.

I cannot describe what kind of place paradise is, because I cannot understand the condition of a soul separate from the body. But I ask no brighter view of paradise than this: that Christ is there. <sup>67</sup> All other things in the picture which imagination draws of the state between death and resurrection, are nothing in comparison with this. How He is there, and in what way He is there, I do not know. Let me only see Christ in paradise when

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<sup>67</sup> "We should not enter into curious and subtle arguments about the place of paradise. Let us rest satisfied with knowing that those who are engrafted by faith into the body of Christ are partakers of life, and there enjoy after death a blessed and joyful rest, until the perfect glory of the heavenly life is fully manifested by the coming of Christ." — *Calvin's Commentary on the Gospels.*

my eyes close in death, and that suffices me. Well does the Psalmist say, "In your presence is fulness of joy." (Psa 16.11) It was a true saying of a dying girl, when her mother tried to comfort her by describing what paradise would be. "There," she said to the child, "there you will have no pains and no sickness; there you will see your brothers and sisters who have gone before you, and will always be happy." "Ah, mother!" was the reply, "but there is one thing better than all, and that is, Christ will be there."

It may be that you do not think much about your soul. It may be that you know little of Christ as your Saviour, and have never tasted by experience that He is precious. And yet perhaps you hope to go to paradise when you die. Surely this passage is one that should make you think: paradise is a place where Christ is; then can it be a place you would enjoy?

It may be that you are a believer, and yet you tremble at the thought of the grave. It seems cold and dreary. You feel as if all before you was dark and gloomy, and comfortless. Do not fear, but be encouraged by this text. You are going to paradise and Christ will be there!

V. The last thing we are meant to learn from these verses is this: *The eternal portion of every man's soul is close to him.*

"Today," our Lord says to the penitent thief, "today you shall be with Me in paradise." He names no distant period — He does not talk of His entering into a state of happiness as a thing "far away," He speaks of *today* — "this very day in which you are hanging on the cross."

How near that seems! How awfully near that word brings our everlasting dwelling-place! Happiness or misery — sorrow or joy — the presence of Christ, or the company of devils — all are close to us. "There is but a step," says David, "between me and death." (1Sam 20.3) There is but a step, we may say, between ourselves and either paradise or hell.

None of us realize this as we should. It is high time to shake off the dreamy state of mind in which we live on this matter. We are apt to talk and think, even about believers, as if death was a long journey — as if the dying saint had embarked on a long voyage. That is all wrong, very wrong! Their harbour and their home is close by, and they have entered it.

Some of us know by bitter experience what a long and weary time it is between the death of those we love, and the hour when we bury them out of our sight. Such weeks are the slowest, saddest, heaviest weeks in all our lives. But blessed be God, the souls of departed saints are free from the very moment their last breath is drawn. While we are weeping, and the coffin is preparing, and the mourning is being provided, and the last painful arrangements are being made, the spirits of our beloved ones are enjoying the presence of Christ. They are freed forever from the burden of the flesh. They are "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." (Job 3.17)

The very moment that believers die, they are in paradise. Their battle is fought: their strife is over. They have passed through that *gloomy valley* we must one day tread; they have gone over that *dark river* we must one day cross. They have drunk that *last bitter cup* which sin has mingled for man. They have reached that place where sorrow and sighing are no more. Surely we should not wish them back again! We should not weep for *them*, but for *ourselves*.

- We are *warring* still, but they are at peace.
- We are *labouring*, but they are at rest.

- We are *watching*, but they are sleeping.
- We are *wearing our spiritual armour*, but they have forever put it off.
- We are still *at sea*, but they are safe in harbour.
- We have *tears*, but they have joy.
- We are *strangers and pilgrims*, but as for them they are at home.

Surely, better are the dead in Christ than the living! Surely the very hour that the poor saint dies, he is at once higher and happier than the highest on earth. <sup>68</sup>

I fear there is a vast amount of delusion on this point. I fear that many who are not Roman Catholics, and do not profess to believe in purgatory, notwithstanding, have some strange ideas in their minds about the immediate consequences of death.

I fear that many have a sort of vague notion that there is some interval or space of time between death and their eternal state. They fancy they will go through a kind of purifying change, and that though they die unfit for heaven, they will yet be found fit for it after all!

But this is an entire mistake. There is no change after death; there is no conversion in the grave; there is no new heart given after the last breath is drawn. The very day we go, we launch forever; the day we go from this world, we begin an eternal condition. From that day there is no spiritual alteration — no spiritual change. As we die, so we shall receive our portion after death: as the tree falls, so it must lie. [Ecc 11.3](#)

If you are an unconverted man, this should make you think. Do you know you are close to hell? This very day you might die; and if you died out of Christ, you would open your eyes at once in in hell, and in torment.

If you are a true Christian, you are far nearer heaven than you think. This very day, if the Lord takes you, you would find yourself in paradise. The good land of promise is near to you. The eyes that you closed in weakness and pain would open at once on a glorious rest such as my tongue cannot describe.

And now let me say a few words in conclusion, and I am done.

(1) This paper may fall into the hands of some *humble-hearted and contrite sinner*. — Are you that man? Then here is encouragement for you. See what the penitent thief did, and do likewise. See how he prayed; see how he called on the Lord Jesus Christ; see what an answer of peace he obtained. Brother or sister, why should not you do the same? Why should not you also be saved?

(2) This paper may fall into the hands of some *proud and presumptuous man of the world*. — Are you that man? Then take warning. See how the impenitent thief died as he had lived, and beware lest you come to a like end. Oh, erring brother or sister, do not be too confident, lest you die in your sins! Seek the Lord while He may be found. Turn, turn: why will you die? [Eze 33.11](#)

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<sup>68</sup> “We give You hearty thanks, for it has pleased You to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world.” — *Church of England Burial Service*.

“I have some of the best news to impart. One beloved by you has accomplished her warfare; has received an answer to her prayers, and everlasting joy rests upon her head. My dear wife, the source of my best earthly comfort for twenty years, departed on Tuesday.” — *Venn's Letter to Stillingfleet, announcing the death of his wife*.

(3) This paper may fall into the hands of some *professing believer in Christ*. Are you such a one? Then take the penitent thief's religion as a measure by which to prove your own. See that you know something of true repentance and saving faith, of real humility and fervent charity. Brother or sister, do not be satisfied with the world's standard of Christianity. Be of one mind with the penitent thief, and you will be wise.

(4) This paper may fall into the hands of someone who is *mourning over departed believers*. Are you such a one? Then take comfort from this Scripture. See how your beloved ones are in the best of hands. They cannot be better off. They were never so well in their lives as they are now. They are with Jesus, whom their souls loved on earth. Oh, cease from your selfish mourning! Rather, rejoice that they are freed from trouble, and have entered into rest.

(5) And this paper may fall into the hands of some *aged servant of Christ*. Are you such a one? Then see from these verses how near you are to home. Your salvation is nearer than when you first believed. A few more days of labour and sorrow, and the King of kings shall send for you; and in a moment your warfare shall be at end, and all shall be peace.

## 12. THE RULER OF THE WAVES

*“And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. “And He was in the back part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awoke Him, and said to Him, Master, do You not care that we perish?”*

*“And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.*

*“And He said to them, Why are you so fearful. How is it that you have no faith?”*

— Mar 4.37-40.

It would be well if professing Christians in modern days studied the four Gospels more than they do. No doubt all Scripture is profitable. It is not wise to exalt one part of the Bible at the expense of another. But I think it would be good for some who are very familiar with the Epistles, if they knew a little more about Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Now, why do I say this? I say it because I want professing Christians to know more about *Christ*. It is well to be acquainted with all the doctrines and principles of Christianity. It is better to be acquainted with Christ Himself. It is well to be familiar with faith, and grace, and justification, and sanctification. They are all matters “pertaining to the King.” But it is far better to be familiar with Jesus Himself, to see the King’s own face, and to behold His beauty. This is one secret of eminent holiness. He that would be conformed to Christ’s image, and become a Christ-like man, must constantly study Christ Himself.

Now, the Gospels were written to make us acquainted with Christ. The Holy Ghost has told us the story of His life and death — His sayings and His doings, four times over. Four different, inspired hands have drawn the picture of the Saviour. His ways, His manners, His feelings, His wisdom, His grace, His patience, His love, His power, are graciously unfolded to us by four different witnesses.

- Should the *sheep* not be familiar with the Shepherd?
- Should the *patient* not be familiar with the Physician?
- Should the *bride* not be familiar with the Bridegroom?
- Should the *sinner* not be familiar with the Saviour?

Beyond doubt, it should be so. The Gospels were written to make men familiar with Christ, and therefore I wish men to study the Gospels.

On whom must we build our souls if we would be accepted with God? We must build on the *rock*, Christ. From whom must we draw that grace of the Spirit which we daily need in order to be fruitful? We must draw from the *vine*, Christ. To whom must we look for sympathy when earthly friends fail us or die? We must look to our *elder brother*, Christ. By whom must our prayers be presented, if they are to be heard on high? They must be presented by our *advocate*, Christ. With whom do we hope to spend the thousand years of glory, and eternity afterward? With the *King of kings*, Christ. Surely we cannot know this Christ too well! Surely there is not a word, nor a deed, nor a day, nor a step, nor a thought in the record of His life, which should not be precious to us. We should labour to be familiar with every line that is written about Jesus.

Come now, and let us study a page in our Master's history. Let us consider what we may learn from the verses of Scripture which stand at the head of this paper. There you see Jesus crossing the lake of Galilee, in a boat with His disciples. You see a sudden storm arise while He is asleep. The waves beat into the boat and fill it. Death seems to be close at hand. The frightened disciples wake their Master and cry for help. He arises and rebukes the wind and the waves, and at once there is a calm. He mildly reproves the faithless fears of His companions, and all is over. Such is the picture. It is one full of deep instruction. Come now, and let us examine what we are meant to learn.

**I.** Let us learn, first of all, that *following Christ will not prevent our having earthly sorrows and troubles.*

Here are the chosen disciples of the Lord Jesus in great anxiety. The faithful little flock which believed, when priests, scribes, and Pharisees were alike unbelieving, is allowed by the Shepherd to be much disquieted. The fear of death breaks in on them like an armed man. The deep water seems likely to go over their souls. Peter, James, and John — the pillars of the Church who are about to be planted in the world — are much distressed.

Perhaps they had not reckoned on all this. Perhaps they had expected that Christ's service would at any rate lift them above the reach of earthly trials. Perhaps they thought that He who could raise the dead, heal the sick, feed multitudes with a few loaves, and cast out devils with a word — that He would never allow His servants to be sufferers on earth. Perhaps they supposed He would always grant them smooth journeys, fine weather, an easy course, and freedom from trouble and care.

If the disciples thought so, they were much mistaken. The Lord Jesus taught them that a man may be one of His chosen servants, and yet have to go through many an anxiety, and endure many a pain.

Understand this clearly. It is good to understand that Christ's service never secured a man from all the ills that flesh is heir to, and it never will. If you are a believer, then you must reckon on having your share,

- of sickness and pain,
- of sorrow and tears,
- of losses and crosses,
- of deaths and bereavements,
- of partings and separations,
- of vexations and disappointments,

so long as you are in the body. Christ never undertakes that you will get to heaven without these. He has undertaken that all who come to Him will have all things pertaining to life and godliness; but He has never undertaken that He will make them prosperous, or rich, or healthy, and that death and sorrow will never come to their family.

I have the privilege of being one of Christ's ambassadors. In His name I can offer eternal life to any man, woman, or child who is willing to have it. In His name I do offer pardon, peace, grace, glory, to any son or daughter of Adam who reads this paper. But I dare not offer that person worldly prosperity as part and parcel of the Gospel. I dare not offer him long life, an increased income, and freedom from pain. I dare not promise the man who takes up the cross and follows Christ, that in following, he will never meet with a storm.

I well know that many do not like these terms. They would *prefer* having,

- Christ and good health
- Christ and plenty of money
- Christ and no deaths in their family
- Christ and no wearing cares
- Christ and a perpetual morning without clouds.

But they do *not* like,

- Christ and the cross
- Christ and tribulation
- Christ and conflict
- Christ and the howling wind
- Christ and the storm.

Is this the secret thought of anyone who is reading this paper? Believe me, if it is, you are very wrong. Listen to me, and I will try to show you that you still have much to learn.

How would you know who are true Christians, if following Christ was the way to be free from trouble? How would we discern the wheat from the chaff, if it were not for the winnowing of trial? How would we know whether men served Christ for His own sake or from selfish motives, if His service brought health and wealth with it as a matter of course? The winds of winter soon show us which of the trees are evergreen and which are not. The storms of affliction and care are useful in the same way. They uncover whose faith is real, and whose is nothing but profession and form.

How would the great work of sanctification go on in a man if he had no trial? Trouble is often the only fire which will burn away the dross that clings to our hearts. Trouble is the pruning-knife which the great Husbandman employs in order to make us fruitful in good works. The harvest of the Lord's field is seldom ripened by sunshine only. It must go through its days of wind, and rain, and storm.

If you desire to serve Christ and be saved, I entreat you to take the Lord on His own terms. Make up your mind to meet with your share of crosses and sorrows, and then you will not be surprised. For lack of understanding this, many seem to run well for a season, and then they turn back in disgust, and are cast away.

If you profess to be a child of God, leave it to the Lord Jesus to sanctify you in His own way. Rest satisfied that He never makes any mistakes. Be sure that He does all things well. The winds may howl around you, and the waters swell. But do not fear, "He is leading you by the right way, so that He may bring you to a city of habitation." (Psalm 107.7)

**II.** Let us learn, in the second place, that *the Lord Jesus Christ is truly and really Man.*

There are words used in this little history which, like many other passages in the Gospel, bring out this truth in a very striking way. We are told that when the waves began to break upon the ship, Jesus was in the back part, "asleep on a pillow." He was weary; and who can wonder at it, after reading the account given in the fourth chapter of Mark? After labouring all day to do good to souls — after preaching in the open air to vast multitudes, Jesus was fatigued. Surely if the sleep of the labouring man is sweet, the sleep of our blessed Lord must have been much sweeter!

Let us settle in our minds this great truth: that Jesus Christ was truly and indeed Man. He was equal to the Father in all things, and the eternal God. But He was also Man, and he took on flesh and blood, and was made like us in all things, except sin. He had a body like ours. Like us, He was born of a woman. Like us, He grew and increased in stature. Like us, He was often hungry and thirsty, faint and weary. Like us, He ate and drank, rested and slept. Like us, He sorrowed, and wept, and felt. It is all very surprising, but so it is. He that made the heavens went to and fro as a poor, weary Man on earth! He that ruled over principalities and powers in heavenly places, took on Himself a frail body like ours. He that might have dwelt forever in the glory which He had with the Father, amidst the praises of legions of angels, came down to earth and dwelt as a Man among sinful men. Surely this fact alone is an amazing miracle of condescension, grace, pity, and love.

I find a deep mine of comfort in this thought: that Jesus is perfect Man no less than perfect God. He in whom I am told by Scripture to trust, is not only a great High Priest, but a *feeling* High Priest. He is not only a powerful Saviour, but a *sympathising* Saviour. He is not only the Son of God, mighty to save, but the Son of man, *able to feel*.

Who does not know that sympathy is one of the sweetest things left to us in this sinful world? It is one of the bright seasons in our dark journey here below, when we can find a person who enters into our troubles, and goes along with us in our anxieties — who can weep when we weep, and rejoice when we rejoice.

Sympathy is far better than money, and far rarer too. Thousands can give, who do not know what it means to feel. Sympathy has the greatest power to draw us and to open our hearts. Proper and correct counsel often falls dead and useless on a heavy heart. Cold advice often makes us shut up, shrink, and withdraw into ourselves when tendered in the day of trouble. But genuine sympathy in such a day will call out all our better feelings, if we have any, and obtain an influence over us when nothing else can. Give me the friend who always has a sympathizing heart ready, though he is poor in gold and silver. [Act 3.6](#)

Our God knows all this well. He knows the very secrets of man's heart. He knows the ways by which that heart is most easily approached, and the springs by which that heart is most readily moved. He has wisely provided that the Saviour of the Gospel should be feeling as well as mighty.

He has given us one who not only has a strong hand to pluck us as brands from the burning, but a sympathizing heart on which the labouring and heavy-laden may find rest.

I see a marvellous proof of love and wisdom in the union of two natures in Christ's person. It was marvellous love in our Saviour to condescend to go through weakness and humiliation for our sakes, ungodly rebels as we are. It was marvellous wisdom to fit Himself in this way to be the very Friend of friends, who could not only save man, but meet him on his own ground. I want someone able to perform all things needful to redeem my soul. This Jesus can do, for He is the eternal Son of God. I want someone able to understand my weakness and infirmities, and to deal gently with my soul, while tied to a body of death. This again Jesus can do, for He was the Son of man, and he had flesh and blood like my own. Had my Saviour been God only, I might perhaps have trusted Him, but I never could have come near to Him without fear. Had my Saviour been Man only, I might have loved Him, but I never could have felt sure that He was able to take away my sins. But, blessed be God, my Saviour is God as well as Man, and Man as well as God —

God, and so able to deliver me — Man, and so able to feel with me. Almighty power and deepest sympathy are met together in one glorious person, Jesus Christ, my Lord. Surely a believer in Christ has a strong consolation. He may well trust, and not be afraid.

If any reader of this paper knows what it is to go to the throne of grace for mercy and pardon, let him never forget that the Mediator by whom he draws near to God is the Man Christ Jesus.

Your soul's business is in the hand of a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. You do not have to deal with a being of so high and glorious a nature that your mind can in no way comprehend Him. You have to deal with Jesus, who had a body like your own and was a Man on earth like yourself. He well knows that world through which you are struggling, for He dwelt in the midst of it thirty-three years. He well knows "the contradictions of sinners" which so often discourages you, for He endured it Himself. (Heb 12.3) He well knows the art and cunning of your spiritual enemy, the devil, for He wrestled with him in the wilderness. Surely, you may well feel bold with such an advocate.

If you know what it means to apply to the Lord Jesus for spiritual comfort in earthly troubles, you should well remember the days of His flesh, and His human nature.

You are applying to One who knows your feelings by experience, and has drunk deep of the bitter cup, for He was "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." (Isa 53.3) Jesus knows the heart of a man — the bodily pains of a man — the difficulties of a man, for he was a Man Himself, and had flesh and blood on earth.

- He sat *wearied* by the well at Sychar.
- He *wept* over the grave of Lazarus at Bethany.
- He *sweat great drops of blood* at Gethsemane.
- He *groaned with anguish* at Calvary.

He is no stranger to your sensations. He is acquainted with everything that belongs to human nature, sin excepted.

(a) Are you poor and needy? So also was Jesus. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had nowhere to lay His head. He dwelt in a despised city. Men used to say, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (Joh 1.46) He was esteemed a carpenter's son. He preached in a borrowed boat, rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed ass, and was buried in a borrowed tomb.

(b) Are you alone in the world, and neglected by those who ought to love you? So also was Jesus. He came to His own, and they did not receive Him. He came to be a Messiah to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and they rejected Him. The princes of this world would not acknowledge Him. The few who followed Him were publicans and fishermen. And even these forsook Him at the end, and were scattered every man to his own place.

(c) Are you misunderstood, misrepresented, slandered, and persecuted? So also was Jesus. He was called a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of publicans, a Samaritan, a madman, and a devil. His character was misrepresented. False charges were laid against Him. An unjust sentence was passed on Him; and though innocent, He was condemned as a malefactor, and as such he died on the cross.

(d) Does Satan tempt you, and offer horrid suggestions to your mind? So he also tempted Jesus. He bade Him to distrust God's fatherly providence. "Command these stones to be made bread." He proposed to Him to tempt God by exposing Himself to unnecessary danger. "Throw yourself down" from the pinnacle of the temple. He suggested to Him to obtain the kingdoms of the world for His own by one little act of submission to himself. "All these things I will give you, if you fall down and worship me." (Mat 4.1-10)

(e) Do you ever feel great agony and conflict of mind? Do you feel in darkness as if God had left you? So did Jesus. Who can tell the extent of the sufferings of mind He went through in the garden? Who can measure the depth of His soul's pain when He cried, "My God! my God! why have You forsaken me?" (Mat 27.46)

It is impossible to conceive of a Saviour more suited to the wants of man's heart than our Lord Jesus Christ — suited not only by His power, but by His sympathy — suited not only by His divinity, but by His humanity. Labour, I beseech you, to get firmly impressed on your mind that Christ, the refuge of souls, is Man as well as God. Honour Him as King of kings, and Lord of lords. But while you do this, never forget that He had a body and was a Man. Grasp this truth and never let it go. The unhappy Socinian errs fearfully when he says that Christ was only Man, and not God. But do not let the rebound from that error make you forget that while Christ was very God He was also very Man.

Do not listen for a moment to the wretched argument of the Roman Catholic when he tells you that the Virgin Mary and the saints are more sympathizing than Christ. Answer him that such an argument springs from ignorance of the Scriptures and of Christ's true nature. Answer him that you have not so learned Christ as to regard Him only as an austere Judge and a being to be feared. Answer him that the four Gospels have taught you to regard Him as the most loving and sympathizing of friends, as well as the mightiest and most powerful of Saviours. Answer him that you want no comfort from saints and angels, from the Virgin Mary or from Gabriel, so long as you can repose your weary soul on THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

**III.** Let us learn, in the third place, that *there may be much weakness and infirmity, even in a true Christian.*

You have a striking proof of this in the conduct of the disciples recorded here, when the waves broke over the ship. They awoke Jesus in haste. They said to Him, in fear and anxiety, "Master, do You not care that we perish?"

There was *impatience*. They might have waited till their Lord thought it fit to arise from His sleep.

There was *unbelief*. They forgot that they were in the keeping of One who had all power in His hand. "We perish."

There was *distrust*. They spoke as if they doubted their Lord's care and thoughtfulness for their safety and well-being. "Do You not care that we perish?"

Poor faithless men! What business did they have to be afraid? They had seen proof upon proof that all must be well so long as the Bridegroom was with them. They had witnessed repeated examples of His love and kindness towards them, sufficient to convince them that He would never let them come to real harm. But all was forgotten in the present

danger. The sense of immediate peril often makes men have a bad memory. Fear is often unable to reason from past experience. They heard the winds. They saw the waves. They felt the cold waters beating over them. They fancied death was close at hand. They could wait no longer in suspense. "Do You not care," they said, "that we perish?"

But, after all, let us understand that this is only a picture of what is constantly going on among believers in every age. I suspect that there are too many disciples at this very day, like those who are described here.

Many of God's children get on very well, so long as they have no trials. They follow Christ very tolerably in fair weather. They fancy that they are trusting Him entirely. They flatter themselves that they have cast every care on Him. They obtain the reputation of being very good Christians.

But suddenly, some unlooked-for trial assails them. Their *property* makes itself wings and flies away. Their own *health* fails. *Death* comes up into their house. Tribulation or *persecution* arises because of the word. And where now is their faith? Where is the strong confidence they thought they had? Where is their peace, their hope, their resignation? Alas, they are sought and not found. They are weighed in the balances and found wanting. *Fear*, and *doubt*, and *distress*, and *anxiety*, break in upon them like a flood, and they seem at their wits' end. I know that this is a sad description. I only put it to the conscience of every real Christian, whether it is not correct and true.

The plain truth is that there is no literal and absolute *perfection* among true Christians, so long as they are in the body. The best and brightest of God's saints is but a poor mixed being. Though he is converted, renewed, and sanctified, he is still compassed with infirmity. There is not a just man on earth who always does good and does not sin. We offend everyone in many things. A man may have true saving faith, and yet not always have it close at hand and ready to be used. (Ecc 7.20; Jas 3.2)

Abraham was the father of the faithful. By faith he forsook his country and his kindred and went out according to the command of God, to a land he had never seen. By faith he was content to dwell in the land as a stranger, believing that God would give it to him for an inheritance. And yet this very Abraham was so far overcome by unbelief, that he allowed Sarah to be called his sister and not his wife, through the fear of man. Here was great infirmity. Yet there have been few greater saints than Abraham.

David was a man after God's own heart. He had faith to go out to battle with the giant Goliath when he was but a youth. He publicly declared his belief that the Lord who delivered him from the paw of the lion and bear, would deliver him from this Philistine. He had faith to believe God's promise that he would one day be King of Israel, though he had few followers — though Saul pursued him like a partridge on the mountains, and there often seemed but a step between him and death. And yet this very David at one time was so far overtaken by fear and unbelief that he said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." (1Sam 27.1) He forgot the many wonderful deliverances he had experienced at God's hand. He only thought of his present danger, and took refuge among the ungodly Philistines. Surely here was great infirmity. Yet there have been few stronger believers than David.

I know it is easy for a man to reply, "All this is very true, but it does not excuse the fears of the disciples. They had Jesus actually with them. They should not have been afraid. I

would never have been so cowardly and faithless as they were!" I tell the man who argues in that way, that he knows little of his own heart. I tell him that no one knows the length and breadth of his own infirmities if he has not been tempted. No one can say how much weakness might appear in himself if he was placed in circumstances to call upon it.

Does any reader of this paper think that he believes in Christ? Do you feel such love and confidence in Him that you cannot understand being greatly moved by any event that could happen? It is all well. I am glad to hear it. But has this faith been tried? Has this confidence been put to the test? If not, take heed of condemning these disciples hastily. Do not be high-minded, but fear. Do not think, because your heart is in a lively frame now, that such a frame will always last. Do not say, because your feelings are warm and fervent today, "tomorrow will be as today, and much more abundant." Do not say, because your heart is lifted up just now with a strong sense of Christ's mercy, "I will never forget Him as long as I live." Oh, learn to abate something of this flattering estimate of yourself. You do not know yourself thoroughly. There are more things in your inward man than you are aware of at present. The Lord may leave you as He left Hezekiah, to show you all that is in your heart. (2Chr 32.31) Blessed is he that is "clothed with humility." — "Happy is he that fears always." "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." (1Pet 5.5; Pro 28.14; 1Cor 10.12)

Why do I dwell on this? Do I want to apologize for the corruptions of professing Christians and excuse their sins? God forbid! — Do I want to lower the standard of sanctification, and countenance anyone in being a lazy, idle soldier of Christ? God forbid! — Do I want to wipe out the broad line of distinction between the converted and the unconverted, and to wink at inconsistencies? Once more I say, God forbid! — I hold strongly that there is a mighty difference between the true Christian and the false, between the believer and the unbeliever, between the children of God and the children of the world. I hold strongly that this difference is not merely one of faith, but of life — not only one of profession, but of practice. I hold strongly that the ways of the believer should be as distinct from those of the unbeliever, as bitter from sweet, light from darkness, heat from cold.

But I do want young Christians to understand what they must expect to find *in themselves*. I want to prevent their being stumbled and puzzled by the discovery of their own weakness and infirmity. I want them to see that they may have true faith and grace, in spite of all the devil's whispers to the contrary, even if they feel doubts and fears within. I want them to observe that Peter, and James, and John, and their brethren, were true disciples; and yet they were not so spiritual that they could not be afraid. I do not tell them to make the unbelief of the disciples an excuse for themselves. But I do tell them that it shows plainly that, so long as they are in the body, they must not expect faith to be above the reach of fear.

Above all, I want all Christians to understand what they must expect *in other believers*. You must not hastily conclude that a man has no grace merely because you see some corruption in him. There are spots on the face of the sun; and yet the sun shines brightly and enlightens the whole world. There is quartz and dross mixed up with many a lump of gold that comes from Australia; and yet who thinks the gold on that account is worth nothing at all? There are flaws in some of the finest diamonds in the world; and yet they do not prevent their being rated at a priceless value. Away with this morbid squeamishness which makes many ready to excommunicate a man if he has only a few

faults! Let us be quicker to see grace and slower to see imperfections! Let us know that, if we cannot admit there is grace where there is corruption, we will find no grace in the world. We are still in the body. The devil is not dead. We are not yet like the angels. Heaven has not yet begun. The leprosy is not out of the walls of the house, however much we may scrape them, and it never will be till the house is taken down. Our bodies are indeed the temple of the Holy Ghost, but not a perfect temple until they are raised or changed. Grace is indeed a treasure, but it is a treasure in earthen vessels. It is possible for a man to forsake all for Christ's sake, and yet be overtaken occasionally with doubts and fears.

I beseech every reader of this paper to remember this. It is a lesson worth attention. The Apostles believed in Christ, loved Christ, and gave up all to follow Christ. And yet you see in this storm that the Apostles were afraid. Learn to be charitable in your judgment of them. Learn to be moderate in your expectations from your own heart. Contend to the death for the truth that no man is a true Christian who is not converted, and is not a holy man. But allow that a man may be converted, have a new heart, and be a holy man, and yet be liable to infirmity, doubts, and fears.

#### IV. Let us learn, in the fourth place, *the power of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

You have a striking example of His power in the history on which I am now dwelling. The waves were breaking into the ship where Jesus was. The terrified disciples awoke Him, and cried for help. "He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." This was a wonderful miracle. No one could do this but one who was almighty.

Make the winds cease with a word! Who does not know that it is a common saying, in order to describe an impossibility, "You might as well speak to the wind!" Yet Jesus rebukes the wind and at once it ceases. This was power.

Calm the waves with a voice! What reader of history does not know that a mighty King of England tried in vain to stop the tide rising on the shore? Yet here is one who says to raging waves in a storm, "Peace, be still," and at once there was a calm. Here was power.

It is good for all men to have clear views of the Lord Jesus Christ's power. Let the sinner know that the merciful Saviour to whom he is urged to flee, and in whom he is invited to trust, is nothing less than the Almighty, and he has power over all flesh to eternal life. (Rev 1.8; Joh 17.2) Let the anxious inquirer understand that if he will only venture on Jesus, and take up the cross, he ventures on One who has all power in heaven and earth. (Mat 28.18) Let the believer remember as he journeys through the wilderness, that his Mediator, and Advocate, and Physician, and Shepherd, and Redeemer, is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and that all things may be done through Him. (Rev 17.14; Phi 4.13) Let all study the subject, for it deserves to be studied.

(a) Study it in His works of *creation*. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made." (Joh 1. 3) The heavens and all their glorious host of inhabitants — the earth and all that it contains — the sea and all that is in it — all creation, from the sun on high to the least worm below, was the work of Christ. He spoke, and they came into being. He commanded, and they began to exist. That very Jesus, who was born of a poor woman at Bethlehem and lived in a carpenter's house at Nazareth, had been the Former of all things. Was this not power?

(b) Study it in His works of *providence*, and the orderly continuance of all things in the world. "By Him all things consist." (Col 1.17) Sun, moon, and stars roll round in a perfect system. Spring, summer, autumn, and winter follow one another in regular order. They continue to this day and do not fail, according to the ordinance of Him who died on Calvary. (Psa 119.91) The kingdoms of this world rise and increase, and decline and pass away. The rulers of the earth plan, and scheme, and make laws, and change laws, and war, and pull down one and raise up another. But they little think that they rule only by the will of Jesus and that nothing happens without the permission of the Lamb of God. They do not know that they and their subjects are all like a drop of water in the hand of the crucified One, and that He increases the nations and diminishes the nations, just according to His mind. Is this not power?

(c) Study the subject not least in the *miracles* worked by our Lord Jesus Christ during the three years of His ministry on earth. Learn from the mighty works which He did, that the things which are impossible with man are possible with Christ. Regard every one of His miracles as an emblem and figure of spiritual things. See in it a lovely picture of what He is able to do for your soul. He that could raise the dead with a word can just as easily raise man from the death of sin. He that could give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb, can also make sinners see the kingdom of God, hear the joyful sound of the Gospel, and speak forth the praise of redeeming love. He that could heal leprosy with a touch, can heal any disease of the heart. He that could cast out devils can bid every besetting sin to yield to His grace. Oh, begin to read Christ's miracles in this light! Wicked, and bad, and corrupt as you may feel, take comfort in the thought that you are not beyond Christ's power to heal. Remember that in Christ there is not only a fulness of mercy, but a fulness of power.

(d) Study the subject in particular *as placed before you this day*. I dare be sure that your heart has sometimes been tossed to and fro like the waves in a storm. You have found it agitated like the waters of the troubled sea when it cannot rest. Come and hear this day that there is One who can give you rest. Jesus can say to your heart, whatever its ailment may be, "Peace, be still!"

What, even if your conscience is lashed by the recollection of countless transgressions, and torn by every gust of temptation? What, even if the remembrance of past hideous profligacy is grievous to you, and the burden intolerable? What, even if your heart seems full of evil, and sin appears to drag you where it will like a slave? What, even if the devil rides to and fro over your soul like a conqueror, and tells you that it is vain to struggle against him, and there is no hope for you? I tell you, there is One who can give even you pardon and peace. My Lord and Master Jesus Christ can rebuke the devil's raging, can calm even your soul's misery, and say even to you, "Peace, be still!" He can scatter that cloud of guilt which now weighs you down. He can bid despair depart. He can drive fear away. He can remove the spirit of bondage and fill you with the spirit of adoption. Satan may hold your soul like an armed strong man, but Jesus is stronger than he is, and when He commands it, the prisoners *must* go free. Oh, if any troubled reader wants a calm within, let him go this day to Jesus Christ and all will yet be well!

But what if your heart is right with God, and yet you are pressed down with a load of earthly trouble? What if the fear of poverty is tossing you to and fro, and seems likely to overwhelm you? What if the pain of your body is racking you to distraction day after day?

What if you are suddenly laid aside from active usefulness, and compelled by infirmity to sit still and do nothing? What if death has come into your home and taken away your Rachael, or Joseph, or Benjamin and left you alone, crushed to the ground with sorrow? What if all this has happened? *Still* there is comfort in Christ. He can speak peace to wounded hearts as easily as calm troubled seas. He can rebuke rebellious wills as powerfully as raging winds. He can make storms of sorrow abate and silence tumultuous passions as surely as He stopped the Galilean storm. He can say to the heaviest anxiety, "Peace, be still!" The floods of care and tribulation may be mighty, but Jesus sits upon the waterfloods and is mightier than the waves of the sea. (Psa 93.4) The winds of trouble may howl fiercely round you, but Jesus holds them in His hand, and can stay them when He wishes. Oh, if any reader of this paper is broken-hearted, care-worn, and sorrowful, let him go to Jesus Christ and cry to Him, and he will be refreshed. "Come to Me," He says, "all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Mat 11.28)

I invite all who profess and call themselves Christians, to take large views of Christ's power. Doubt anything else if you will, but never doubt Christ's power. It may be doubtful whether you do not secretly love sin — whether you are not privately clinging to the world — whether the pride of your nature is not rising against the idea of being saved as a poor sinner by grace. But one thing is *not* doubtful, and that is that Christ is "able to save to the uttermost," and He will save you, if you let Him. (Heb 7.25)

**V.** Let us learn, in the last place, *how tenderly and patiently the Lord Jesus deals with weak believers.*

We see this truth brought out in His words to His disciples, when the wind ceased and there was a calm. He might well have rebuked them sharply. He might well have reminded them of all the great things He had done for them, and reproved them for their cowardice and mistrust. But there is nothing of anger in the Lord's words. He simply asks two questions. "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

The whole of our Lord's conduct towards His disciples on earth deserves close consideration. It throws a beautiful light on the compassion and longsuffering that there is in Him. Surely no master ever had scholars so slow to learn their lessons as Jesus had in the Apostles. Surely no scholars ever had so patient and forbearing a teacher as the Apostles had in Christ. Gather up all the evidence on this subject that lies scattered through the Gospels, and see the truth of what I say.

At no time of our Lord's ministry did the disciples seem to fully comprehend the object of His coming into the world. The humiliation, the atonement, the crucifixion, were hidden things to them. The plainest words and clearest warnings from their Master of what was going to befall Him seemed to have had no effect on their minds. They did not understand. They did not perceive. It was hidden from their eyes. Once Peter even tried to dissuade our Lord from suffering: "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" (Mat 16.22; Luk 18.34; 9.45)

Frequently you will see things in their spirit and demeanour which are not at all to be commended. We are told that one day they disputed among themselves as to who should be greatest. (Mar 9.34) Another day they did not consider His miracles and their hearts were hardened. (Mar 6.52) Once, two of them wished to call down fire from heaven upon a village, because it did not receive them. (Luk 9.54) In the garden of Gethsemane, the

three best of them slept when they should have watched and prayed. In the hour of His betrayal, they all forsook Him and fled. And worst of all, Peter, the most forward of the twelve, denied his Master three times with an oath.

Even after the resurrection, you see the same unbelief and hardness of heart cling to them; though they saw their Lord with their eyes, and touched Him with their hands, even *then* some doubted. So weak were they in faith! So slow of heart were they to “believe all that the prophets had spoken.” (Luk 24.25) So backward were they in understanding the meaning of our Lord’s words, and actions, and life, and death.

But what do you see in our Lord’s behaviour towards these disciples all through His ministry? You see nothing but unchanging pity, compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, and love. He does not toss them away for their stupidity. He does not reject them for their unbelief. He does not dismiss them forever for cowardice. He teaches them as they are able to bear. He leads them on step by step, as a nurse does an infant when it first begins to walk. He sends them kind messages as soon as He is risen from the dead. “Go,” He said to the women, “Go tell my brethren to go into Galilee, and there they will see Me.” (Mat 28.10) He gathers them round Himself once more. He restores Peter to his place, and bids him to “feed His sheep.” (Joh 21.17) He condescends to sojourn with them forty days before He finally ascends. He commissions them to go out as His messengers, and preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. He blesses them in parting, and encourages them with that gracious promise, “I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” (Mat 28.20) Truly, this was a love that surpasses knowledge. This is not the manner of man.

Let all the world know that the Lord Christ is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. As a father pities his children, so He pities those who fear Him. As one whom his mother comforts, so He will comfort His people. (Jas 5.11; Mat 12.20; Psa 103.13; Isa 66.13) He cares for the lambs of His flock, as well as the old sheep. He cares for the sick and feeble ones of His fold, as well as the strong. It is written that He will carry them in His bosom rather than let one of them be lost. (Isa 40.11) He cares for the least members of His body, as well as the greatest. He cares for the babes of His family as well as the grownups. He cares for the tenderest little plants in His garden, as well as for the cedar of Lebanon. All are in His book of life, and all are under His charge. All are given to Him in an everlasting covenant. And He has undertaken, in spite of all our weaknesses, to bring every one safe home. Only let a sinner lay hold on Christ by faith and then, however feeble, Christ’s word is pledged to him, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” He may correct him occasionally in love. He may gently reprove him at times. But He will never, never give him up. The devil will never pluck him from Christ’s hand. [Joh 10.28-29](#)

Let all the world know that the Lord Jesus will not cast away His believing people because of shortcomings and infirmities. The husband does not put away his wife because he finds failings in her. The mother does not forsake her infant because it is weak, feeble, and ignorant. And the Lord Christ does not cast away poor sinners who have committed their souls into His hands, just because He sees blemishes and imperfections in them. Oh, no! It is His glory, to pass over the faults of His people, and to heal their backslidings; to make much of their weak graces, and to pardon their many faults.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a wonderful chapter. It is marvellous to observe how the Holy Ghost speaks of the worthies whose names are recorded in that chapter. The faith of the Lord's people is brought forward there and held in remembrance. But the faults of many a one, which might easily have been brought up also, are left alone, and not mentioned at all.

Who is there now among the readers of this paper that feels a desire for salvation, but is afraid to become decided, lest by-and-by he fall away? Consider, I beseech you, the tenderness and patience of the Lord Jesus and be afraid no more. Do not fear to take up the cross and come out boldly from the world. That same Lord and Saviour who bore with the disciples is ready and willing to bear with you. If you stumble, He will raise you. If you err, He will gently bring you back. If you faint, He will revive you. He will not lead you out of Egypt, and then allow you to perish in the wilderness. He will conduct you safely into the promised land. Only commit yourself to His guidance, and then, my soul for yours, He will carry you safely home. Only hear Christ's voice, and follow Him — and you will never perish.

Who is there among the readers of this paper that has been converted and desires to do his Lord's will? Take as an example this day, your Master's gentleness and long-suffering, and learn to be tender-hearted and kind to others. Deal gently with *young beginners*. Do not expect them to know everything and understand everything all at once. Take them by the hand. Lead them on and encourage them. Believe all things, and hope all things, rather than make that heart sad which God would not have made sad. Deal gently with *backsliders*. Do not turn your back on them as if their case was hopeless. Use every lawful means to restore them to their former place. Consider yourself, and your frequent infirmities, and do as you would be done by. Alas, there is a painful absence of the Master's mind among many of His disciples. There are few churches in the present day, I fear, which would have received Peter into communion again for many a long year, after denying His Lord. There are few believers ready to do the work of Barnabas — willing to take young converts by the hand, and encourage them at their first beginnings. Truly, we want an outpouring of the Spirit upon *believers* almost as much as upon the world.

And now, I have only to ask my readers to make a practical use of the lessons I have brought before them. You have heard *five things* this day.

FIRST. That Christ's service will not secure you against troubles. The holiest saints are liable to them.

SECOND. That Christ is very Man as well as very God.

THIRD. That believers may have much weakness and infirmity, and yet be true believers.

FOURTH. That Christ has all power.

FIFTH. That Christ is full of patience and kindness towards His people.

Remember these five lessons, and you will do well.

Bear with me a few moments while I say a few words to impress the things you have been reading more deeply on your heart.

(1) This paper will very likely be read by *some who know nothing of Christ's service by experience, or of Christ Himself*.

There are only too many who take no interest whatever in the things about which I have been writing. Their treasure is all below. They are wholly taken up with the things of the world. They care nothing about the believer's *conflict, struggles, and infirmities*; and his *doubts and fears*.

They care little whether Christ did miracles or not. It is all a matter of words, and names, and forms, about which they do not trouble themselves. They are without God in the world.

If perhaps you are such a man as this, I can only warn you solemnly that your present course cannot last. You will not live forever. There must be an end. Grey hairs, age, sickness, infirmities, death — all, all are before you, and must be met one day. What will you do when that day comes?

Remember my words this day. You will find no comfort when you are sick and dying, unless Jesus Christ is your friend. You will discover to your sorrow and confusion, that however much men may talk and boast, they cannot do without Christ when they come to their deathbed. You may send for ministers, and get them to read prayers, and give you the sacrament. You may go through every form and ceremony of Christianity. But if you persist in living a careless and worldly life, and despising Christ in the morning of your days, you must not be surprised if Christ leaves you to yourself in your latter end. Alas! These are solemn words, and are often sadly fulfilled: "I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes." (Pro 1.26)

Come then, *this* day, and be advised by one who loves your soul. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Forsake the foolish, and go in the path of understanding. Cast away that pride which hangs about your heart, and seek the Lord Jesus while He may be found. Cast away that spiritual sloth which is palsying your soul, and resolve to make the effort about your Bible, your prayers, and your Sundays. Break off from a world which can never really satisfy you, and seek that treasure which alone is truly incorruptible. Oh, that the Lord's own words might find a place in your conscience! "How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and that fools hate knowledge? Turn at my reproof: behold I will pour out my Spirit to you, I will make known my words to you." (Pro 1.22, 23) I believe the crowning sin of Judas Iscariot was that he would not seek pardon and turn back to his Lord. Beware, lest that be your sin also.

(2) This paper will probably fall into the hands of *some who love the Lord Jesus, and believe in Him, and yet desire to love Him better*.

If you are such a man, suffer the word of exhortation and apply it to your heart.

For one thing, keep before your mind, as an ever-present truth, that *the Lord Jesus is an actual, living Person*, and deal with Him as such.

I fear the personality of our Lord is sadly lost sight of by many professors in the present day. Their talk is more about salvation than about the Saviour — more about redemption than about the Redeemer — more about justification than about Jesus — more about Christ's work than about Christ's person. This a great fault, and one that fully accounts for the dry and sapless character of the religion of many professors of Christ.

If ever you would grow in grace, and have joy and peace in believing, beware of falling into this error. Cease to regard the Gospel as a mere collection of dry doctrines. Look at it

rather as the revelation of a mighty, living Being in whose sight you are daily to live. Cease to regard it as a mere set of abstract propositions and abstruse principles and rules. Look at it as the introduction to a glorious, personal *Friend*. This is the kind of Gospel that the Apostles preached. They did not go about the world telling men about love, and mercy, and pardon, in the abstract. The leading subject of all their sermons was the loving heart of *an actual living Christ*. This is the kind of Gospel which is most calculated to promote sanctification and fitness for glory. Nothing, surely, is so likely to prepare us for that heaven where Christ's personal presence will be all — and that glory where we will meet Christ face to face — as to realize communion with Christ, as an actual living Person here on earth. There is all the difference in the world, between an *idea* and a *person*.

For another thing, try to keep before your mind, as an ever-present truth, that *the Lord Jesus is utterly unchanged*. That Saviour, in whom you trust, is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He knows no variableness, nor shadow of turning. Though high in heaven at God's right hand, He is just the same in heart that He was 1900 years ago on earth. Remember this and you will do well.

Follow Him all through His journeys to and fro in Palestine. Mark how He received all who came to Him and cast out none. Mark how He had an *ear* to listen to every tale of sorrow, a *hand* to help every case of distress, a *heart* to feel for all who needed sympathy. And then say to yourself, "This same Jesus is He who is my Lord and Saviour. Place and time have made no difference in Him. What He was, He is, and He will be for evermore."

Surely this thought will give life and reality to your daily religion. Surely this thought will give substance and shape to your expectation of good things to come. Surely it is matter for joyful reflection, that He who was thirty-three years on earth, and whose life we read in the Gospels, is the very Saviour in whose presence we will spend eternity.

The last word of this paper will be the same as the first. I want men to read the four Gospels more than they do. I want men to become better acquainted with Christ. I want unconverted men to know Jesus, that they may have eternal life through Him. I want believers to know Jesus better, that they may become more happy, more holy, and more fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. He will be the holiest man, who learns to say with St. Paul, "To me, to live is Christ." (Phi 1.21)

### 13. THE CHURCH WHICH CHRIST BUILDS

*“Upon this rock I will build my church,  
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*  
— Mat 16.18.

Do we belong to the Church which is built upon a rock? Are we members of the only Church in which our souls can be saved? — These are serious questions. They deserve serious consideration. I ask the attention of all who read this paper, while I try to show the one true, holy, Catholic Church, and to guide men’s feet into the only safe fold. “What is this Church? What is it like? What are its marks? Where is it to be found?” I have something to say on all these points. I am going to unfold the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, which stand at the head of this page. He declares, *“Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*

There are five things in these famous words which demand our attention: —

- I. *A Building*: “My Church.”
- II. *A Builder*: Christ says, “I will build my Church.”
- III. *A Foundation*: “Upon this rock I will build my Church.”
- IV. *Perils Implied*: “The gates of hell.”
- V. *Security Asserted*: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

The whole subject demands special attention in the present day. Holiness, we must never forget, is the prominent characteristic of all who belong to the one true Church.

**I.** We have, firstly, a *Building* mentioned in the text. The Lord Jesus Christ speaks of “*My Church*.”

Now, what is this Church? Few inquiries can be made of more importance than this. For lack of due attention to this subject, the errors that have crept into the world are neither few nor small.

The Church of our text is no material building. It is no temple made with hands of wood, or brick, or stone, or marble. It is a company of men and women. — It is no particular visible Church on earth. It is not the Eastern Church or the Western Church. It is not the Church of England or the Church of Scotland. — Above all, it certainly is not the Church of Rome. The Church of our text is one that makes far less show than any visible Church in the eyes of man, but it is of far more importance in the eyes of God.

The Church of our text is made up of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, of all who are really holy and converted people. It comprehends, all who have repented of sin, and fled to Christ by faith, and been made new creatures in Him. It comprises all God’s elect, all who have received God’s grace, all who have been washed in Christ’s blood, all who have been clothed in Christ’s righteousness, all who have been born again and sanctified by Christ’s Spirit. All such — of every name, rank, nation, people, and tongue — compose the Church of our text.

- This is the *body* of Christ.
- This is the *flock* of Christ.
- This is the *bride*.
- This is the Lamb’s *wife*.

This is “the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church” of the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed. This is “the blessed company of all faithful people” spoken of in the Communion Service of the Church of England. This is “THE CHURCH ON THE ROCK.”

The members of this Church do not all worship God in the same way, or use the same form of government. Some of them are governed by bishops and some by elders. Some of them use a prayer-book when they meet for public worship, and some use none. The thirty-fourth Article of the Church of England most wisely declares, “It is not necessary that ceremonies should be in all places one and alike.” But the members of this Church all come to one throne of grace. They all worship with one heart. They are all led by one Spirit. They are all really and truly holy. They can all say “Alleluia,” <sup>69</sup> and they can all reply, “Amen.” [Rev 19.4](#)

This is that Church to which all visible churches on earth are servants and handmaidens. Whether they are Episcopalian, Independent, or Presbyterian, they all serve the interests of the one true Church. They are the scaffolding behind which the great building is carried on. They are the husk under which the living kernel grows. They have their various degrees of usefulness. The best and worthiest of them is that which most trains up members for Christ’s true Church. But no *visible* church has any right to say, “We are the only True Church. We are the men, and wisdom will die with us.” [Job 12.2](#) No *visible* Church should ever dare to say, “We shall stand forever. The gates of hell will not prevail against me.”

This is that Church to which belong the Lord’s gracious promises of preservation, continuance, protection, and final glory. — “Whatever,” says Hooker, “we read in Scripture concerning the endless love and saving mercy which God shows towards His Churches, its only proper subject is this Church which we properly term the *mystical* body of Christ.” <sup>70</sup> — Small and despised as the true Church may be in this world, it is precious and honourable in the sight of God. The temple of Solomon in all its glory was mean and contemptible in comparison with that Church which is built upon a rock.

I trust that the things I have just been saying will sink down into the minds of all who read this paper. See that you hold sound doctrine upon the subject of “the Church.” A mistake here may lead on to dangerous and soul-ruining errors. The Church which is made up of true believers is the Church for which we, who are ministers, are specially ordained to preach. The Church which comprises all who repent and believe the Gospel is the Church to which we desire you to belong. Our work is not done, and our hearts are not satisfied until you are made a new creature, and are a member of the one true Church. Outside of the Church which is “built on the rock,” there can be NO SALVATION.<sup>71</sup>

**II.** I pass on to the second point to which I propose to invite your attention. Our text contains not merely a building, but a *Builder*. The Lord Jesus Christ declares, “I will build my Church.”

The true Church of Christ is tenderly cared for by all the three Persons in the blessed Trinity. In the plan of salvation revealed in the Bible, it is beyond doubt that God the

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<sup>69</sup> *Alleluia*: praise you the Lord. *Amen*: we affirm; truly.

<sup>70</sup> Hooker, *Eccles. Pol. b. lit.*, 3. 1. 1600.

<sup>71</sup> Ryle is not saying that membership in the *visible* church conveys salvation; that is a Roman Catholic view.

Father *chooses*, God the Son *redeems*, and God the Holy Ghost *sanctifies* every member of Christ's mystical body. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost — three Persons and one God — co-operate for the salvation of every saved soul. This is a truth which should never be forgotten. Nevertheless, there is a peculiar sense in which the help of the Church is laid on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is peculiarly and pre-eminently the Redeemer and Saviour of the Church. Therefore, we find Him saying in our text, "I will build — the work of building is My special work."

- It is Christ who *calls* the members of the Church in due time. They are "the called of Jesus Christ." (Rom 1.6)
- It is Christ who *quickens* them. "The Son quickens whom He will." (Joh 5.21)
- It is Christ who *washes* away their sins. He "has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." (Rev 1.5)
- It is Christ who *gives them peace*. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you." (Joh 14.27)
- It is Christ who *gives them eternal life*. "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish." (Joh 10.28)
- It is Christ who *grants them repentance*. "God has exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance." (Act 5.31)
- It is Christ who *enables them* to become God's children. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." (Joh 1.12)
- It is Christ who *carries on the work* within them once it has begun. "Because I live, you also shall live." (Joh 14.19)

In short, it has "pleased the Father that in Christ all fullness should dwell." (Col 1.19) He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the life. He is the head. From Him every joint and member of the mystical body of Christians is supplied. Through Him they are kept from falling. He shall preserve them to the end, and present them faultless before the Father's throne with exceeding great joy. He is all things in all believers.

The mighty agent by whom the Lord Jesus Christ carries out this work in the members of His Church, is without doubt the Holy Ghost. It is He who is ever renewing, awakening, convincing, leading to the cross, transforming, taking stone after stone out of the world, and adding to the mystical building. But the great chief Builder, who has undertaken to execute the work of redemption and bring it to completion, is the Son of God, the "Word who was made flesh." It is Jesus Christ who "builds."

In building the true Church, the Lord Jesus condescends to use many subordinate instruments:

- The ministry of the Gospel,
- the circulation of the Scriptures,
- the friendly rebuke,
- the word spoken in season,
- the drawing influence of afflictions;

*all these*, all are means and appliances by which His work is carried on, and the Spirit conveys life to souls. But Christ is the great superintending Architect — ordering, guiding, directing all that is done. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God gives the increase,

(1Cor 3.6) Ministers may preach and writers may write, but the Lord Jesus Christ alone can build. And unless He builds, the work stands still.

Great is the *wisdom* with which the Lord Jesus Christ builds His Church! All is done at the right time, and in the right way. Each stone in its turn is put in its right place. Sometimes He chooses great stones, and sometimes He chooses small stones. Sometimes the work goes on fast, and sometimes it goes on slowly. Man is frequently impatient and thinks that nothing is doing. But man's time is not God's time. A thousand years in His sight are but as a single day. The great Builder makes no mistakes. He knows what He is doing. He sees the end from the beginning. He works by a perfect, unalterable, and certain plan. The mightiest conceptions of architects, like Michelangelo and Wren, are mere trifling and child's play in comparison with Christ's wise counsels respecting His Church.

Great is the *condescension and mercy* which Christ exhibits in building His Church! He often chooses the most unlikely and roughest stones, and fits them into a most excellent work. He despises none, and rejects none, on account of former sins and past transgressions. He often makes Pharisees and Publicans become pillars of His house. He delights to show mercy. He often takes the most thoughtless and ungodly, and transforms them into polished corners of His spiritual temple.

Great is the *power* which Christ displays in building His Church! He carries on His work in spite of opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil. In storm, in tempest, through troublesome times — silently, quietly, without noise, without stir, without excitement — the building progresses, like Solomon's temple. "I will work," He declares, "and who shall turn it back?" (Isa 43.13)

The children of this world take little or no interest in the building of this Church. They care nothing for the conversion of souls. What are broken spirits and penitent hearts to them? What is conviction of sin, or faith in the Lord Jesus to them? It is all "foolishness" in their eyes. But while the children of this world care nothing, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God. For preserving the true Church, the laws of nature have oftentimes been suspended. For the good of that Church, all the providential dealings of God in this world are ordered and arranged. For the elect's sake, wars are brought to an end, and peace is given to a nation. Statesmen, rulers, emperors, kings, presidents, heads of governments, have their schemes and plans, and think they are of vast importance. But there is another work going on of infinitely greater moment, for which they are only the "axes and saws" in God's hands. (Isa 10.15) That work is the erection of Christ's spiritual temple, the gathering in of living stones into the one true Church.

We ought to feel deeply thankful that the building of the true Church is laid on the shoulders of One who is mighty. If the work depended on man, it would soon stand still. But, blessed be God, the work is in the hands of a Builder who never fails to accomplish His designs! Christ is the *almighty Builder*. He will carry on His work, though nations and visible Churches may not know their duty. Christ will never fail. That which He has *undertaken*, He will certainly *accomplish*.

**III.** I pass on to the third point which I propose to consider — *The Foundation* upon which this Church is built. The Lord Jesus Christ tells us, "Upon this rock will I build my Church."

What did the Lord Jesus Christ mean when He spoke of this foundation? Did He mean the Apostle Peter, to whom He was speaking? I think assuredly not. I can see no reason, if He meant Peter, why He did not say, "Upon *you* I will build my Church." If He meant Peter, He would surely have said, "I will build my Church on you," as plainly as He said, "I will give the keys to you." [Mat 16.19](#) — No, it was not the person of the Apostle Peter, but the good confession which the Apostle had just made! It was not Peter, the erring, unstable man, but the mighty truth which the Father had revealed to Peter. It was *the truth concerning Jesus Christ Himself* which was the rock. It was Christ's Mediatorship, and Christ's Messiahship. It was the blessed truth that Jesus was the promised Saviour, the true Surety, the real Intercessor between God and man. *This* was the rock, and *this* was the foundation, upon which the Church of Christ was to be built.

The foundation of the true Church was *laid at a mighty cost*. It needed that the Son of God should take our nature upon Him, and in that nature live, suffer, and die, not for His own sins, but for ours. It needed that in that nature Christ should go to the grave, and rise again. It needed that in that nature Christ should go up to heaven, to sit at the right hand of God, having obtained eternal redemption for all His people. No other foundation could have met the necessities of lost, guilty, corrupt, weak, and helpless sinners.

That foundation, once obtained, is very strong. It can bear the weight of the sins of all the world. It has borne the weight of all the sins of all the believers who have built on it.

- Sins of thought,
- sins of the imagination,
- sins of the heart,
- sins of the head,
- sins which everyone has seen,
- sins which no man knows,
- sins against God,
- sins against man,
- sins of all kinds and descriptions:

That mighty rock can bear the weight of all these sins, and not give way. The mediatorial office of Christ is a remedy sufficient for all the sins of all the world.

To this one foundation every member of Christ's true Church is joined. In many things, believers are disunited and disagreed. In the matter of their soul's foundation, they are all of one mind. Whether Episcopalians or Presbyterians, Baptists or Methodists, believers all meet at one point. They are all built on the rock. Ask where they get their peace, and hope, and joyful expectation of good things to come. You will find that all flows from that one mighty source, Christ the Mediator between God and man, and the office that Christ holds as the High Priest and Surety of sinners.

Look to your foundation, if you would know whether or not you are a member of the one true Church. It is a point that may be known to yourself. Your public worship we can see; but we cannot see whether you are personally built upon the rock. Your attendance at the Lord's table we can see; but we cannot see whether you are joined to Christ, and one with Christ, and whether Christ is in you. Take heed that you make no mistake about your own personal salvation. See that your own soul is upon the rock. Without this, all else is

nothing. Without this, you will never stand in the day of judgment. It is a thousand times better in that day, to be found in a cottage “upon the rock,” than in a palace upon the sand!

**IV.** I proceed in the fourth place to speak of *the Implied Trials* of the Church, to which our text refers. Mention is made of “the gates of hell.” By that expression, we understand the power of the prince of hell, even the devil. (Compare Psa 9.13; 107.18; Isa 38.10)

The history of Christ’s true Church has always been one of conflict and war. It has been constantly assailed by a deadly enemy, Satan, the prince of this world. The devil hates the true Church of Christ with an undying hatred. He is ever stirring up opposition against all its members. He is ever urging the children of this world to do his will, and to injure and harass the people of God. If he cannot bruise the head, he will bruise the heel. If he cannot rob the believers of heaven, he will *vex* them along the way.

Warfare with the powers of hell has been the experience of the whole body of Christ for six thousand years. It has always been a bush burning though not consumed — a woman fleeing into the wilderness but not swallowed up. (Exo 3.2; Rev 12.6, 16) The visible Churches have their times of prosperity and seasons of peace; but never has there been a time of peace for the true Church. Its conflict is *perpetual*. Its battle never ends.

Warfare with the powers of hell is the experience of every individual member of the true Church. Each has to fight. What are the lives of all the saints, but records of battles? What were men such as Paul, James, Peter, John, Polycarp, Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Latimer, and Baxter, but soldiers engaged in a constant warfare? Sometimes the *persons* of the saints have been assailed, and sometimes their *property*. Sometimes they have been harassed by calumnies and slanders, and sometimes by open persecution. But in one way or another, the devil has been continually warring against the Church. The “gates of hell” have been continually assaulting the people of Christ.

We who preach the Gospel can hold out to all who come to Christ, “exceeding great and precious promises.” (2Pet 1.4) We can boldly offer to you, in our Master’s name, the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. Mercy, free grace, and full salvation, are offered to everyone who comes to Christ and believes in Him. But we promise you no peace with the world, nor with the devil. We warn you, on the contrary, that there must be warfare so long as you are in the body. We would not keep you back, or deter you from Christ’s service. But we would have you “count the cost,” and fully understand what Christ’s service entails. (Luk 14.28)

(a) *Do not marvel* at the enmity of the gates of hell. “If you were of the world, the world would love its own.” (John 15.19) So long as the world is the world, and the devil the devil, that is how long there must be warfare, and believers in Christ must be soldiers. The world hated Christ, and the world will hate true Christians, as long as the earth stands. As the great reformer Luther said, “Cain will go on murdering Abel so long as the Church is on earth.”

(b) *Be prepared* for the enmity of the gates of hell. Put on the whole armour of God. The tower of David contains a thousand bucklers, all ready for the use of God’s people. The weapons of our warfare have been tried by millions of poor sinners like ourselves, and have never been found to fail.

(c) *Be patient* under the enmity of the gates of hell. It is all working together for your good.

- It tends to sanctify.
- It will keep you awake.
- It will make you humble.
- It will drive you nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- It will wean you from the world.
- It will help to make you pray more.
- Above all, it will make you long for heaven.

It will teach you to say with heart as well as lips, “Come, Lord Jesus. Your kingdom come.”

(d) *Do not be cast down* by the enmity of hell. The warfare of the true child of God is as much a mark of grace as the inward peace which he enjoys. No cross, no crown! No conflict, no saving Christianity! “Blessed are you,” said our Lord Jesus Christ, “when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” If you are never persecuted for religion’s sake, and all men speak well of you, you may well doubt whether you belong to “the Church on the rock.” (Mat 5.11; Luk 6.26)

V. There remains one more thing to be considered — *the Security* of the true Church of Christ. There is a glorious promise given by the Builder, “The gates of hell shall not prevail.”

He who cannot lie has pledged His word that all the powers of hell shall never overthrow His Church. It shall continue, and stand, in spite of every assault. It shall never be overcome. All other created things perish and pass away, but not the Church which is built on the rock.

Empires have risen and fallen in rapid succession — Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Tyre, Carthage, Rome, Greece, Venice — Where are all these now? They were all the creations of man’s hand, and have passed away. But the true Church of Christ lives on.

The mightiest cities have become heaps of ruins. The broad walls of Babylon have sunk to the ground. The palaces of Nineveh are covered with mounds of dust. The hundred gates of Thebes are only matters of history. Tyre is a place where fishermen hang their nets. Carthage is a desolation. Yet all this time, the true Church stands. The gates of hell do not prevail against it.

The earliest visible Churches have in many cases decayed and perished. Where is the Church of Ephesus and the Church of Antioch? Where is the Church of Alexandria and the Church of Constantinople? Where are the Corinthian, Philippian, and Thessalonian Churches? Where, indeed, are they all? They departed from the Word of God. They were proud of their bishops, and synods, and ceremonies, and learning, and antiquity. They did not glory in the true cross of Christ. They did not hold fast the Gospel. They did not give the Lord Jesus His rightful office, or faith its rightful place. They are now among the things that *have been*. Their candlestick has been taken away. But all this time, the true Church has lived on.

Has the true Church been oppressed in one country? It has fled to another. — Has it been trampled on and oppressed in one soil? It has taken root and flourished in some other

climate. Fire, sword, prisons, fines, penalties, have never been able to destroy its vitality. Its persecutors have died and gone to their own place, — but the Word of God has lived, and grown, and multiplied. Weak as this true Church may appear to the eye of man, it is an anvil which has broken many a hammer in times past, and perhaps will break many more before the end. “He that lays hands on it, is touching the apple of his eye.” (Zec 2.8)

The promise of our text is true of *the whole body* of the true Church. Christ will never be without witness in the world. He has had a people in the worst of times. He had seven thousand in Israel even in the days of Ahab. There are some now, I believe, in dark places of the Roman and Greek Churches, who are serving Christ in spite of much weakness. The devil may rage horribly. The Church in some countries may be brought exceedingly low. But the gates of hell shall never entirely “prevail.”

The promise of our text is true of every *individual member* of the Church. Some of God’s people have been so cast down and disquieted, that they have despaired of their safety. Some have sadly fallen, as David and Peter did. Some have departed from the faith for a time, like Cranmer and Jewell. Many have been tried by cruel doubts and fears. But all have gotten safe home at last, the youngest as well as the oldest, the weakest as well as the strongest. And so it will be to the end. Can you prevent tomorrow’s sun from rising? Can you prevent the tide in the Bristol Channel from ebbing and flowing? Can you prevent the planets moving in their respective orbits? Then, and then alone, can you prevent the salvation of any believer, however feeble, the final safety of any living stone in that Church which is built upon the rock, however small or insignificant that stone may appear.

The true Church is Christ’s *body*. Not one bone in that mystical body shall ever be broken.

The true Church is Christ’s *bride*. Those whom God has joined in everlasting covenant, shall never be put asunder.

The true Church is Christ’s *flock*. When the lion came and took a lamb out of David’s flock, David arose and delivered the lamb from his mouth. Christ will do the same. He is David’s greater son. Not a single sick lamb in Christ’s flock shall perish. He will say to His Father in the last day, “Of them which You gave Me, I have lost none.” (Joh 18.9)

The true Church is the *wheat* of the earth. It may be sifted, winnowed, buffeted, tossed to and fro. But not one grain shall be lost. The tares and chaff shall be burned. The wheat shall be gathered into the barn.

The true Church is Christ’s *army*. The Captain of our salvation loses none of His soldiers. His plans are never defeated. His supplies never fail. His muster-roll is the same at the end as it was at the beginning. Of the men who marched gallantly out of England many years ago in the Crimean war, how many never came back! Regiments that went forth, strong and cheerful, with bands playing and banners flying, laid their bones in a foreign land and never returned to their native country. But it is not so with Christ’s army. Not one of His soldiers shall be missing at last. He Himself declares, “They shall never perish.” (Joh 10.28)

The devil may cast some of the members of the true Church into prison. He may kill, and burn, and torture, and hang. But after he has killed the body, there is nothing more that he can do. He cannot hurt the soul. When the French troops took Rome years ago, they found on the walls of a prison cell, under the Inquisition, the words of a prisoner. Who he was, we do not know. But his words are worthy of remembrance. “Though dead, he yet

speaks.” [Heb 11.4](#) He had written on the walls, very likely after an unjust trial and a still more unjust excommunication, the following striking words: — “Blessed Jesus, they cannot cast me out of your true Church.” That record is true! Not all the power of Satan can cast one single believer out of Christ’s true Church.

I trust that no reader of this paper will ever allow fear to prevent his beginning to serve Christ. He to whom you commit your soul has all power in heaven and earth, and He will keep you. He will never let you be cast away. Relatives may oppose. Neighbours may mock. The world may slander, and ridicule, and jest, and sneer. Do not fear! Do not fear! The powers of hell shall never prevail against your soul. Greater is He that is for you, than all those who are against you.

Do not fear for the Church of Christ when ministers die, and saints are taken away. Christ can ever maintain His own cause. He will raise up better servants and brighter stars. The stars are all in His right hand. Leave all anxious thought about the future. Cease to be cast down by the measures of statesmen, or the plots of wolves in sheep’s clothing. Christ will ever provide for His own Church. Christ will take care that “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” All is going on well, though our eyes may not see it. The kingdoms of this world shall yet become the kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ.

I will now conclude this paper with a few words of practical application.

(1) My first word of application will be *a question*. What will that question be? What will I ask? I will return to the point with which I began. I will go back to the first sentence with which I opened my paper. I ask you whether you are a member of the one true Church of Christ? Are you in the highest, the best sense, a “churchman” in the sight of God? You know now what I mean. I look far beyond the Church of England. I am not speaking of church or chapel. I speak of “the Church built upon the rock.” I ask you, with all solemnity — Are you a member of that Church? Are you joined to the great Foundation? Are you on the rock? Have you received the Holy Ghost? Does the Spirit witness with your spirit, that you are one with Christ, and Christ with you? — I beseech you, in the name of God, to lay to heart these questions, and to ponder them well. If you are not converted, you do not yet belong to the “Church of the Rock.”

Let every reader of this paper take heed to himself, if he cannot give a satisfactory answer to my inquiry. Take heed, *take heed*, that you do not make shipwreck of your soul to all eternity. Take heed, lest at last the gates of hell prevail against you, the devil claim you as his own, and you be cast away forever. Take heed, lest you go down to the pit from the land of Bibles, and in the full light of Christ’s Gospel. Take heed, lest you are found at the left hand of Christ at last — a lost Episcopalian or a lost Presbyterian, a lost Baptist or a lost Methodist — lost because, with all your zeal for your own party and your own communion table, you never joined the one true Church.

(2) My second word of application will be *an invitation*. I address it to everyone who is not yet a true believer. I say to you, come and join the one true Church without delay. Come and join yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ in an everlasting covenant not to be forgotten.

Consider well what I say. I charge you solemnly not to mistake the meaning of my invitation. I do not bid you to leave the visible Church to which you belong. I abhor all idolatry of forms and parties. I detest a proselytising spirit. But I do bid you come to Christ

and be saved. The day of decision must come some time. Why not this very hour? Why not today, while it is called today? — Why not this very night, before sunrise tomorrow morning? — Come to Him who died for sinners on the cross, and who invites all sinners to come to Him by faith and be saved. Come to my Master, Jesus Christ. Come, I say, for all things are now ready. Mercy is ready for you. Heaven is ready for you. Angels are ready to rejoice over you. Christ is ready to receive you. Christ will receive you gladly, and welcome you among His children. Come into the ark. — The flood of God's wrath will soon break upon the earth; come into the ark and be safe.

Come into the lifeboat of the one true Church. This old world will soon break into pieces! Do you not hear its tremblings? The world is but a wreck, hard upon a sandbank. The night is far spent — the waves are beginning to rise — the wind is getting up — the storm will soon shatter the old wreck. But the lifeboat is launched and we, the ministers of the Gospel, beseech you to come into the lifeboat and be saved. — We beseech you to arise at once and come to Christ.

Do you ask, "How can I come? My sins are too many. I am too wicked yet. I dare not come." — Away with the thought! That is a temptation of Satan. Come to Christ *as a sinner*. Come *just as you are*. Hear the words of that beautiful hymn: —

"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God I come."

This is the way to come to Christ. You should come waiting for nothing and tarrying for nothing. You should come as a hungry sinner to be filled — as a poor sinner to be enriched — as a bad, undeserving sinner to be clothed with righteousness. Coming so, Christ would receive you. "Whoever comes" to Christ, He "will by no means cast out." Oh, come, come to Jesus Christ! Come into the true Church by faith and be saved.

(3) Last of all, let me give a word of *exhortation* to all believers into whose hands this paper may fall.

Strive to live a *holy* life. Walk worthy of the Church to which you belong. Live like citizens of heaven. Let your light so shine before men, that the world may profit by your conduct. Let them know whose you are, and whom you serve. Be epistles of Christ, known and read by all men — written in such clear letters that none can say of you, "I do not know whether this man is a member of Christ or not." He that knows nothing of real, practical holiness is no member of "the Church on the Rock."

Strive to live a *courageous* life. Confess Christ before men. Whatever station you occupy, confess Christ in that station. Why should you be ashamed of Him? He was not ashamed of you on the cross. He is ready to confess you now before His Father in heaven. Why should you be ashamed of Him? Be bold. Be very bold. The good soldier is not ashamed of his uniform. The true believer should never be ashamed of Christ.

Strive to live a *joyful* life. Live like men who look for that blessed hope — the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is the prospect to which we should all look forward. It is not so much the thought of going to heaven as of heaven coming to us, that should fill our minds. "There is a good time coming" for all the people of God — a good time for all the Church of Christ — a good time for all believers — a bad time for the impenitent and

## THE CHURCH WHICH CHRIST BUILDS

unbelieving, but a good time for true Christians. For that good time, let us wait, and watch, and pray.

The *scaffolding* will soon be taken down. — The last stone will soon be brought out. — The top-stone will be placed upon the edifice. Yet a little while, and the full beauty of the Church which Christ is building will be clearly seen.

The great Master Builder will soon come Himself. A building will be shown to assembled worlds in which there will be no imperfection. The Saviour and the saved will rejoice together. The whole universe will acknowledge that in the building of Christ's Church, all was well done. "Blessed" — it will be said in that day, if it was never said before — "BLESSED ARE ALL THOSE WHO BELONG TO THE CHURCH ON THE ROCK!"

## 14. VISIBLE CHURCHES WARNED

*“He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.” — Rev 3.22.*

I SUPPOSE I may take it for granted that every reader of this paper belongs to some *visible* Church of Christ. I do not ask now whether you are an Episcopalian, or a Presbyterian, or an Independent. I only suppose that you would not like to be called an atheist or an infidel. You attend the public worship of some visible, particular, or national body of professing Christians.

Now, whatever the name of your Church may be, I invite your special attention to the verse of Scripture before your eyes. I charge you to remember that the words of that verse concern yourself.

They are written for your learning, and for all who call themselves Christians. “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.”

This verse is repeated seven times over in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation. There the Lord Jesus sends seven different letters by the hand of His servant John to the seven Churches of Asia. Seven times over He winds up His letter by the same solemn words, “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.”

Now, the Lord God is perfect in all His works. He does nothing by chance. He caused no part of the Scriptures to be written by chance. In all His dealings you may trace design, purpose, and plan. There was design in the size and orbit of each planet. There was design in the shape and structure of the least fly’s wing. There was design in every verse of the Bible. There was design in every repetition of a verse, wherever it took place. There was design in the sevenfold repetition of the verse before our eyes. It had a meaning, and we were intended to observe it.

This verse appears to me to call the special attention of all true Christians to the seven “Epistles to the Churches.” I believe it was meant to make believers take particular notice of the things which these seven Epistles contain.

Let me try to point out certain leading truths which these seven Epistles seem to me to teach. They are truths for the times we live in — truths for the latter days — truths which we cannot know too well — truths which it would be good for us all to know and feel far better than we do.

**I.** I ask my readers to observe in the first place, that the Lord Jesus, in all the seven Epistles, *speaks of nothing but matters of doctrine, practice, warning, and promise.*

I ask you to look over these seven Epistles to the Churches, quietly and at your leisure, and you will soon see what I mean,

You will observe that the Lord Jesus sometimes finds fault with false doctrines, and ungodly, inconsistent practices, and rebukes them sharply.

You will observe that He sometimes praises faith, patience, work, labour, perseverance, and bestows high commendation on these graces.

You will sometimes find Him enjoining repentance, amendment, return to the first love, renewed application to Himself — and the like.

But I want you to observe that you will not find the Lord in any of the epistles dwelling on *church government* or *ceremonies*. He says nothing about *sacraments* or *ordinances*. He makes no mention of *liturgies* or *forms*. He does not instruct John to write one word about baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or the apostolic succession of ministers. In short, the leading principles of what may be called "the sacramental system" are not brought forward in any one of the seven epistles from first to last.

Now, why do I dwell on this? — I do it because many professing Christians in the present day would have us believe these things are of first, of cardinal, of paramount importance.

There are not a few who seem to hold that there can be no Church without a bishop — and no godliness without a liturgy. — They appear to believe that to teach the value of the *sacraments* is the first work of a minister, and to keep the first business of a people to their parish church.

Now, let no man misunderstand me when I say this. Do not run away with the notion that I see no importance in sacraments. On the contrary, I regard them as great blessings to all who receive them "rightly, worthily, and with faith." Do not fancy that I attach no value to Episcopacy, a liturgy, and the parochial system. On the contrary, I consider that a Church well-administered, which has these three things, and an evangelical ministry, is a far more complete and useful Church than one in which they are not to be found.

But this I say, that sacraments, Church government, the use of a liturgy, the observance of ceremonies and forms, are as nothing compared to faith, repentance, and holiness. And my authority for saying so is the whole tenor of our Lord's words to the seven Churches.

I can never believe, if a certain form of Church government was so important as some say, that the great Head of the Church would have said nothing about it here. I would have expected to find something said about it to Sardis and Laodicea. But I find nothing at all. And I think that *silence* is a great fact.

I cannot help remarking just the same fact in Paul's parting words to the Ephesian elders. (Act 20.27-35) He was then leaving them forever. He was giving his last charge on earth, and spoke as one who would see the faces of his hearers no more. And yet there is not a word in the charge about the sacraments and Church government. If there was ever a time for speaking of them, it was then. But he says nothing at all; and I believe it was an intentional silence.

Now, here lies one reason why we who, rightly or wrongly, are called evangelical clergy, do not preach about bishops, and the Prayer-book, and ordinances more than we do. It is not because we do not value them in their place, proportion, and way. We do value them as really and truly as any, and are thankful for them. But we believe that *repentance* toward God, *faith* toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and a *holy life*, are subjects of far more importance to men's souls. Without these, no man can be saved. These are the first and most weighty matters, and therefore we dwell on these.

Here again lies one reason why we so often urge on men not to be content with the mere *outward* part of religion. You must have observed that we often warn you not to rest on Church membership and Church privileges. We tell you not to be satisfied all is right because you come to church on Sunday and come up to the Lord's table. We often urge you to remember that he is not a Christian who is one *outwardly* — you must be "born again" — you must have a "faith that works by love" — there must be a "new creation" by

the Spirit in your heart. We do it because this seems to us the mind of Christ. These are the kind of things He dwells upon, when writing seven times over to seven different Churches. We feel that if we follow Him, we cannot greatly err.

I am aware that men charge us with taking “low views” of the subjects to which I have referred. It is a small thing that our views are thought “low,” so long as our consciences tell us that they are *Scriptural*. High ground, as it is called, is not always safe ground. What Balaam said must be our answer, “What the Lord says, I will speak.” (Num 24.13)

The plain truth is, there are two distinct and separate systems of Christianity in England at the present day. It is useless to deny it. Their existence is a great fact and one that cannot be too clearly known.

According to one system, religion is a mere *corporate business*. You are to belong to a certain body of people. By virtue of your membership of this body, vast privileges are conferred upon you, both for time and eternity. It matters little what you are and what you feel. You are not to try yourself by your *feelings*. You are a member of a great ecclesiastical corporation — and all its privileges and immunities are your own. Do you belong to the one true, visible corporation? That is the grand question.

According to the *other* system, religion is eminently a *personal business* between yourself and Christ. It will not save your soul to be an outward member of any ecclesiastical body whatever — however sound that body may be. Such membership will not wash away one sin, or give you confidence in the day of judgment. There must be personal faith in Christ — personal dealings between yourself and God — personally felt communion between your own heart and the Holy Ghost. Do you have this personal faith? Do you have this felt work of the Spirit in your soul? This is the grand question. If not, you will be lost.

This last system is the system which those who are called evangelical ministers cling to and teach. They do so because they are satisfied that it is the system of Holy Scripture. They do so because they are convinced that any other system produces most dangerous consequences, and is calculated to delude men fatally as to their actual state. They do so because they believe it to be the only system of teaching which God will bless, and that no Church will flourish so much as that in which repentance, faith, conversion, and the work of the Spirit are the grand subjects of the minister’s sermon.

Once more I say, let us often look carefully over the seven “Epistles to the Churches.”

**II.** I ask my readers, in the second place, to observe that *the Lord Jesus says in every epistle, I KNOW your WORKS.*

That repeated expression is very striking. It is not for nothing that we read these words seven times over.

To one Church the Lord Jesus says, I know your *labour* and *patience* — to another, your *tribulation* and *poverty* — to a third, your *charity*, and *service*, and *faith*. But to all, He uses the words I now dwell on: “I know your *works*.” It is not, “I know your profession — your desires — your resolutions — your wishes,” — but your WORKS. “I know your WORKS.”

The works of a professing Christian are of great importance. They cannot save your soul. They cannot justify you. They cannot wipe out your sins. They cannot deliver you from the wrath of God. But it does not follow, because they cannot save you, that they are of no

importance. Take heed and beware of such a notion. The man who thinks so is fearfully deceived.

I often think I could willingly die for the doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of the law. But I must earnestly contend, as a general principle, that a man's *WORKS* are the *evidence* of a man's RELIGION. If you call yourself a Christian, you must show it in your daily ways and daily behaviour. Call to mind that the faith of Abraham and of Rahab was proved by their works. (Jas 2.21-25) Remember, it avails you and me nothing to profess that we know God, if we deny Him in our works. (Tit 1.16) Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "Every tree is known by its own fruit." (Luk 6.44)

But whatever the works of a professing Christian may be, Jesus says, "I know them!" "His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." (Pro 15.3)

- You never did an *action*, however private, that Jesus did not see.
- You never spoke a *word*, no, not even in a whisper, that Jesus did not hear.
- You never wrote a *letter*, even to your dearest friend, that Jesus did not read.
- You never thought a *thought*, however secret, that Jesus was not familiar with.

His eyes are as a flaming fire. The darkness is no darkness with Him. All things are open and manifest before Him. He says to every one, "I know your works."

(a) *The Lord Jesus knows the works of all impenitent and unbelieving souls*, and one day He will punish them. They are not forgotten in heaven, though they may be on earth. When the great white throne is set, and the books are opened, the wicked dead will be judged "according to their works."

(b) *The Lord Jesus knows the works of His own people*, and WEIGHS them. "By Him actions are weighed." (1Sam 2.3) He knows the why and the wherefore of the deeds of all believers. He sees their motives in every step they take. He discerns how much is done for His sake, and how much is done for the sake of praise. Alas! not a few things are done by believers which seem very good to you and me, but are rated very low by Christ.

(c) *The Lord Jesus knows the works of all His own people*, and will one day REWARD them. He never overlooks a kind word or a kind deed done in His name. He will own the least fruit of faith, and declare it before the world in the day of His appearing. If you love the Lord Jesus and follow Him, you may be sure your work and labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. The works of those who die in the Lord "shall follow them." (Rev 14.13) They will not go before them, nor by their side; but they will follow them, and be owned in the day of Christ's appearing. The *parable of the pounds* will be made good. "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour." (1Cor 3.8) The world does not know you, for it does not know your Master. But Jesus sees and knows all. "I know your works."

Think what a solemn warning there is here to all worldly and hypocritical professors of religion. Let them all read, mark, and digest these words. Jesus says to you, "I know your works." You may deceive me or any other minister; it is easy to do so. You may receive the bread and wine from my hands, and yet be clinging to iniquity in your hearts. You may sit under the pulpit of an evangelical preacher week after week, and hear his words with a serious face, but not believe them. Remember this: you cannot deceive

Christ. He who discovered the deadness of Sardis and the lukewarmness of Laodicea, sees you through and through, and He will expose you at the last day, unless you repent.

Oh! believe me, *hypocrisy is a losing game*. It will never serve to *seem* one thing, and *be* another; to have the name of Christian, and not the reality. Be sure, if your conscience strikes you and condemns you in this matter — be sure your sin will find you out. The eye which saw Achan steal the golden wedge and hide it, is upon you. The book that recorded the deeds of Gehazi, and Ananias, and Sapphira, is recording your ways. Jesus mercifully sends you a word of warning today. He says, “I know your works.”

But also think *what encouragement is here for every honest and true-hearted believer*. To you also Jesus says, “I know your works.” You see no beauty in any action that you do. All seems imperfect, blemished, and defiled. You are often sick at heart of your own short-comings. You often feel that your whole life is one great unpaid debt, and that every day is either a blank or a blot. But know now that Jesus can see some beauty in everything that you do from a conscientious desire to please Him. His eye can discern excellence in the least thing which is a fruit of His own Spirit. He can pick out the grains of gold from amidst the dross of your performances, and sift the wheat from amidst the chaff, in all your doings. Your tears are all put into His bottle. Your endeavours to do good to others, however feeble, are written in His book of remembrance. The least cup of cold water given in His name will not lose its reward. He does not forget your work and labour of love, however little the world may regard it.

It is very surprising; but so it is. Jesus loves to honour the *work of His Spirit* in His people, and to pass over their *frailties*. He dwells on the *faith* of Rahab, but not on her *lie*. He commends His Apostles for continuing with Him in His temptations, and passes over their ignorance and lack of faith. (Luk 22.28) “As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him.” (Psa 103.13) And as a father finds pleasure in the least acts of his children, of which a stranger knows nothing, so I suppose the Lord finds pleasure in our poor feeble efforts to serve Him.

But it is all very surprising. I can well understand the *righteous* in the day of judgment saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger, and take You in? or naked, and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick or in prison, and come to You?” (Mat 25.37-39) It may well seem incredible and impossible that they can have done anything worth naming in the great day! Yet so it is. Let all believers take the comfort of it. The Lord says, “I know your works.” It should humble you. But it should not make you afraid.

**III.** I ask my readers to observe, in the third and last place, that *in every epistle the Lord Jesus makes a promise to the man that OVERCOMES*.

Seven times over Jesus gives to the Churches exceedingly great and precious promises. Each is different, and each is full of strong consolation: but each is addressed to the *overcoming* Christian. It is always “he that overcomes,” or “to him that overcomes.” I ask you to take notice of this.

Every professing Christian is the *soldier* of Christ. He is bound by his baptism to fight Christ’s battle against sin, the world, and the devil. The man that does not do this breaks his vow. He is a spiritual defaulter. He does not fulfil the engagements made for him. The man that does not do this is practically renouncing his Christianity. The very fact that he

belongs to a Church, attends a Christian place of worship, and calls himself a Christian, is a public declaration that he desires to be reckoned a soldier of Jesus Christ.

*Armour* is provided for the professing Christian, if he will only use it. “Put on,” says Paul to the Ephesians, “the whole armour of God.” “Stand, having your loins girded about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.” “Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” “Above all, take the shield of faith.” (Eph 6.13-17)

And not least, the professing Christian has the best of *leaders*: Jesus the Captain of Salvation, through whom he may be more than a conqueror — the best of *provisions*, the bread and water of life — and the best of *pay* promised to him: an eternal weight of glory.

All these are ancient things. I will not be drawn away from my subject in order to dwell on them now.

The one point I want to impress upon your soul just now is this: that the true believer is not only a *soldier*, but a *victorious* soldier. — He not only professes to fight on Christ’s side against sin, the world, and the devil, but he actually fights and overcomes.

Now, this is one grand distinguishing mark of true Christians. Other men, perhaps, like to be numbered in the ranks of Christ’s army. Other men may have lazy wishes, and languid desires after the crown of glory. But it is the *true* Christian alone who does the work of a soldier. He alone fairly meets the enemies of his soul — really fights with them, and in that fight overcomes them.

One great lesson I want men to learn from these seven epistles is this: that if you would prove you are born again and going to heaven, you must be a *victorious soldier* of Christ. If you would make it clear that you have any title to Christ’s precious promises, you must *fight* the good fight in Christ’s cause, and in that fight you must conquer.

*Victory* is the only satisfactory evidence that you have a saving religion. You like good sermons perhaps. You respect the Bible, and read it occasionally. You say your prayers night and morning. You have family prayers, and give to Religious Societies. I thank God for this. It is very good. But how goes the *battle*? How does the great *conflict* go on all this time? Are you overcoming the love of the world and the fear of man? Are you overcoming the passions, tempers, and lusts of your own heart? Are you resisting the devil and making him flee from you? How is it in this matter? You must either *rule* — or *serve* sin, and the devil, and the world. There is no middle course. You must either *conquer* — or be lost.

I know well it is a hard battle that you have to fight, and I want you to know it too. You must fight the good fight of faith, and endure hardships, if you would lay hold of eternal life. You must make up your mind to a daily struggle, if you would reach heaven. There may be short roads to heaven invented by man; but ancient Christianity, the good old way, is the way of the *cross* — the way of *conflict*. Sin, the world, and the devil must be actually mortified, resisted, and overcome.

This is the road that saints of old have trodden in, and left their record on high.

(a) When *Moses* refused the pleasures of sin in Egypt, and chose affliction with the people of God — this was overcoming: he overcame the *love of pleasure*.

(b) When *Micaiah* refused to prophesy smooth things to king Ahab, though he knew he would be persecuted if he spoke the truth — this was overcoming: he overcame *the love of ease*.

(c) When *Daniel* refused to give up praying, though he knew the den of lions was prepared for him — this was overcoming: he overcame *the fear of death*.

(d) When *Matthew* rose from the receipt of custom at our Lord's bidding, left all and followed Him — this was overcoming: he overcame *the love of money*.

(e) When *Peter* and *John* stood up boldly before the council and said, "We cannot help but speak of the things we have seen and heard" — this was overcoming: they overcame *the fear of man*.

(f) When *Saul* the Pharisee gave up all his prospects of preferment among the Jews, and preached that very Jesus whom he had once persecuted — this was overcoming: he overcame *the love of man's praise*.

The same kind of thing which these men did, you must also do if you would be saved. They were men of like passions with yourself, and yet they overcame. They had as many trials as you can possibly have, and yet they overcame. They fought. They wrestled. They struggled. You must do the same.

What was the *secret of their victory*? — their *faith*. They believed on Jesus, and believing were made strong. They believed on Jesus, and believing were held up. In all their battles, they kept their eyes on Jesus, and He never left them nor forsook them. "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony," and so may you. (Rev 12.11)

I set these words before you. I ask you to lay them to heart. Resolve, by the grace of God, to be an *overcoming Christian*.

I fear much for many professing Christians. I see no sign of fighting in them, much less of victory. They never strike one stroke on the side of Christ. They are at peace with His enemies. They have no quarrel with sin. — I warn you, this is not Christianity. This is not the way to heaven.

I often fear much for those who hear the Gospel regularly. I fear lest you become so familiar with the sound of its doctrines, that insensibly you become dead to its power. I fear lest your religion sink down into a little *vague talk* about your own weakness and corruption, and a few *sentimental expressions* about Christ, while *real practical fighting* on Christ's side is altogether neglected. Oh! beware of this state of mind. "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only." No victory — no crown! Fight and overcome! (Jas 1.22)

Young men and women, and specially those who have been brought up in religious families, I fear much for you. I fear lest you get a habit of giving way to every temptation. I fear lest you become afraid of saying, "No!" to the world and the devil — and when sinners entice you, you think it the least trouble to consent. Beware, I beseech you, of giving way. Every *concession* will make you weaker. Go into the world resolved to fight Christ's battle — and fight your way on.

Believers in the Lord Jesus, of every Church and rank in life, I feel much for you. I know your course is hard. I know it is a sore battle that you have to fight. I know you are often tempted to say, "It is of no use," and to lay down your arms altogether.

Cheer up, dear brothers and sisters. Take comfort, I entreat you. Look at the bright side of your position. Be encouraged to fight on. The time is short. The Lord is at hand. The night is far spent. Millions as *weak* as you have fought the same fight. Not one of all those millions has been finally led captive by Satan. Mighty are your enemies — but the Captain of your salvation is mightier still. — His arm, His grace, and His Spirit shall hold you up. Cheer up. Do not be cast down.

What, even if you *lose* a battle or two? You shall not lose all. What, even if you *faint* sometimes? You shall not be quite cast down. What, even if you *fall* seven times? You shall not be destroyed. Watch against sin, and sin shall not have dominion over you. Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you. Come out boldly from the world, and the world shall be obliged to let you go. You shall find yourselves in the end more than conquerors — you shall “overcome.”

Let me draw from the whole subject a few words of APPLICATION, and then I am done.

(1) For one thing, *let me warn all who are living only for the world, to take heed what they are doing.* You are enemies to Christ, though you may not know it. He marks your ways, though you turn your backs on Him, and refuse to give Him your hearts. He is observing your *daily life*, and reading your *daily ways*. There will yet be a resurrection of all your *thoughts, words* and *actions*. You may *forget* them, but God does not. You may be *careless* about them, but they are carefully marked down in the book of remembrance. Oh! worldly man, think of this! Tremble, tremble and repent.

(2) For another thing, *let me warn all formalists and self-righteous people to take heed that they are not deceived.* You fancy that you will go to heaven because you go regularly to church. You indulge an expectation of eternal life, because you are always at the Lord's table, and are never missing in your pew. But where is your *repentance*? Where is your *faith*? Where are your evidences of a *new heart*? Where is the *work of the Spirit*? Where are your evidences of *regeneration*? Oh, formal Christian, consider these questions! Tremble, tremble and repent.

(3) For another thing, *let me warn all careless members of Churches to beware lest they trifle their souls into hell.* You live on year after year as if there was no battle to be fought with sin, the world, and the devil. You pass through life a smiling, laughing, gentleman-like or lady-like person, and behave as if there was no devil, no heaven, and no hell. Oh, careless Churchman, or careless Dissenter, careless Episcopalian, careless Presbyterian, careless Independent, careless Baptist, awake to see *eternal realities* in their true light! Awake and put on the *armour* of God! Awake and *fight hard* for life! Tremble, tremble and repent.

(4) For another thing, *let me warn everyone who wants to be saved, not to be content with the world's standard of religion.* Surely, no man with his eyes open can fail to see that the Christianity of the New Testament is something far higher and deeper than the Christianity of most professing Christians. The formal, easy-going, do-little thing which most people call “religion,” is evidently not the religion of the Lord Jesus. The things that He praises in these seven Epistles are not praised by the world. The things that He blames are not things in which the world sees any harm. Oh, if you would follow Christ, do not be content with *the world's Christianity*! Tremble, tremble and repent.

(5) In the last place, *let me warn everyone who professes to be a believer in the Lord Jesus, not to be content with a little religion.*

Of all sights in the Church of Christ, I know none more painful to my own eyes than a Christian contented and satisfied with a *little* grace, a *little* repentance, a *little* faith, a *little* knowledge, a *little* charity, and a *little* holiness. I do beseech and entreat every believing soul that reads this tract, not to be that kind of man. If you have any desires for usefulness — if you have any wishes to promote your Lord's glory — if you have any longings after much inward peace — do not be content with a little religion.

Let us rather seek, every year we live,

- to make more spiritual progress than we have done
- to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus
- to grow in humility and self-acquaintance
- to grow in spirituality and heavenly-mindedness
- to grow in conformity to the image of our Lord.

Let us beware,

- of leaving our first love like Ephesus
- of becoming lukewarm like Laodicea
- of tolerating false practices like Pergamos
- of tampering with false doctrine like Thyatira
- of becoming half dead, ready to die, like Sardis.

Let us rather covet the best gifts. *Let us aim at eminent holiness.* Let us endeavour to be like Smyrna and Philadelphia. Let us hold fast what we have already, and continually seek to have more. Let us labour to be *unmistakable* Christians. Let it not be our distinctive character that we are,

- men of science
- or men of literary attainments
- or men of the world
- or men of pleasure
- or men of business
- but “*men of God.*”

Let us so live that all may see that *to us*,

- the things of God are the *first things*
- and the glory of God is the *first aim* in our lives
- to follow Christ is our *grand object* in the present
- to be with Christ is our *grand desire* in times to come.

Let us live in this way, and we will be happy.

Let us live in this way, and we will do good to the world.

Let us live in this way, and we will leave good evidence behind us when we are buried.

Let us live in this way, and the Spirit's word to the Churches will not have been spoken to us in vain.

## 15. “DO YOU LOVE ME?”

“Do you love Me?” — John 21.16.

THE question which heads this paper was addressed by Christ to the Apostle Peter. A more important question could not be asked. Nineteen hundred years have passed since the words were spoken. But to this very day, the inquiry is most searching and useful.

A disposition to love somebody is one of the commonest feelings which God has implanted in human nature. Too often, unhappily, people set their affection on *unworthy objects*. I want this day to claim a place for Him who *alone is worthy* of all our hearts’ best feelings. I want men to give some of their love to that Divine Person who loved us, and gave Himself for us. In all their loving, I would have them not forget TO LOVE CHRIST.

Allow me to press this mighty subject upon the attention of every reader of this paper. This is no matter for mere *enthusiasts* and *fanatics*. It deserves the consideration of every reasonable Christian who believes the Bible. Our very salvation is bound up with it. Life or death, heaven or hell, depend on our ability to answer the simple question, “Do you love Christ?”

There are two points which I wish to bring forward in opening up this subject.

**I.** In the first place, let me show *the peculiar feeling of a true Christian towards Christ* — he *loves* Him.

A true Christian is not a mere baptized man or woman. He is something more. He is not a person who only goes, as a matter of *form*, to a church or chapel on Sundays and lives the rest of the week as if there was no God. *Formality* is not Christianity. *Ignorant lip worship* is not true religion. The Scripture says expressly: “They are not all Israel which are of Israel.” (Rom 9.6) The practical lesson of those words is clear and plain. All are not true Christians who are members of the visible Church of Christ.

The true Christian is one whose religion is in his heart and life. It is *felt* by himself in his heart. It is *seen* by others in his conduct and life. He feels his sinfulness, guilt, and badness, and repents. He sees that Jesus Christ is that Divine Saviour whom his soul needs, and he commits himself to Him. He puts off the old man with his corrupt and carnal habits, and puts on the new man. He lives a new and holy life, fighting habitually against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Christ Himself is the cornerstone of his Christianity. Ask him in what he trusts for the forgiveness of his many sins, and he will tell you he trusts in the death of Christ. — Ask him in what righteousness he hopes to stand innocent at the judgment day, and he will tell you it is the righteousness of Christ. — Ask him by what pattern he tries to frame his life, and he will tell you that it is the example of Christ.

But beside all this, there is one thing in a true Christian which is eminently peculiar to him. That thing is *love* to Christ. Knowledge, faith, hope, reverence, obedience, are all marked features in a true Christian’s character. But his picture would be very imperfect if you omitted his “love” to his Divine Master. He not only knows, trusts, and obeys. He goes further than this — he *loves*.

This peculiar mark of a true Christian is one which we find mentioned several times in the Bible. “Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” is an expression which many Christians are

familiar with. Let it never be forgotten that *love* is mentioned by the Holy Ghost in almost as strong terms as *faith*. Great as the danger is of him “that believes not,” the danger of him that “loves not” is equally great. Not *believing* and not *loving* are both steps to everlasting ruin.

Hear what St. Paul says to the Corinthians: “If any man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.” (1Cor 16.22) St. Paul allows no way of escape to the man who does not love Christ. He leaves him no loophole or excuse. A man may lack clear head-knowledge and yet be saved. He may fail in courage and be overcome by the fear of man, like Peter. He may fall tremendously, like David, and yet rise again. But *if a man does not love Christ, he is not in the way of life*. The curse is yet upon him. He is on the broad road that leads to destruction.

Hear what St. Paul says to the Ephesians, “Grace be with all those who *love* our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” (Eph 6.24) The Apostle is here sending his good wishes, and declaring his good will to all true Christians. Many of them, no doubt, he had never seen. Many of them in the early Churches, we may be very sure, were weak in faith, and knowledge, and self-denial. How then will he describe them in sending his message? What words can he use which will not discourage the weaker brethren? He chooses a sweeping expression which exactly describes all true Christians under one common name. All had not attained to the same degree, whether in doctrine or practice. *But all loved Christ in sincerity*.

Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says to the Jews, “If God were your Father, you would *love* Me.” (Joh 8.42) He saw His misguided enemies satisfied with their spiritual condition, on the one single ground that they were children of Abraham. He saw them, like many ignorant Christians of our own day, claiming to be God’s children for no better reasons than this: that they were circumcised and belonged to the Jewish Church. He lays down the broad principle that no man is a child of God who does not love God’s only begotten Son. No man has a right to call God “Father” who does not love Christ. It would be well for many Christians if they were to remember that this mighty principle applies to them, as well as to the Jews. *No love to Christ — then no sonship to God!*

Hear once more what our Lord Jesus Christ said to the Apostle Peter, after He rose from the dead. Three times He asked him the question, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” (Joh 21.15-17) The occasion was remarkable. He meant to gently remind His erring disciple of His thrice-repeated fall. He desired to call forth from him a new confession of faith before publicly restoring to him his commission to feed the Church. And what was the question that He asked him? He might have said: — “Do you *believe*? Are you *converted*? Are you ready to *confess* Me? Will you *obey* Me?” He uses none of these expressions. He simply says, “*Do you love Me?*” This is the point which He would have us know, and on which a man’s Christianity hinges. Simple as the question sounded, it was most searching. Plain and easy to be understood by the most unlearned poor man, it contains matter which tests the reality of the most advanced apostle. If a man truly loves Christ, all is right — if not, all is wrong.

Would you know the secret of this peculiar feeling towards Christ which distinguishes the true Christian? You have it in the words of St. John, “We love Him because He first loved us.” (1Joh 4.19) That text, no doubt, applies specially to God the Father. But it is no less true of God the Son.

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A true Christian loves Christ *for all He has done for him*. He has *suffered* in his stead, and *died* for him on the cross. He has *redeemed* him from the guilt, power, and consequences of sin, by His blood. He has *called* him by His Spirit to self-knowledge, repentance, faith, hope, and holiness. He has *forgiven* all his many sins and blotted them out. He has *freed* him from the captivity of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He has taken him from the brink of hell, placed him in the narrow way, and set his face toward heaven. He has given him *light* instead of darkness, *peace* of conscience instead of uneasiness, *hope* instead of uncertainty, *life* instead of death. Can you wonder that the true Christian loves Christ?

And he loves Him besides, *for all that He is still doing*. He feels that He is daily washing away his many shortcomings and infirmities, and pleading his soul's cause before God. He is daily supplying all the needs of his soul, and providing him with an hourly provision of mercy and grace. He is daily *leading* him by His Spirit to a city of habitation, *bearing* with him when he is weak and ignorant, *raising* him up when he stumbles and falls, *protecting* him against his many enemies, *preparing* an eternal home for him in heaven. Can you wonder that the true Christian loves Christ?

Does the debtor in jail love the friend who unexpectedly and undeservedly pays all his debts, supplies him with fresh capital, and takes him into partnership with himself? Does the prisoner in war love the man who at the risk of his own life breaks through the enemy's lines, rescues him, and sets him free? Does the drowning sailor love the man who plunges into the sea, dives after him, catches him by the hair of his head, and by a mighty effort saves him from a watery grave? A mere child can answer such questions as these. Just in the same way, and upon the same principles, a true Christian loves Jesus Christ.

(a) This love to Christ is the *inseparable companion of saving faith*. A faith of devils, a mere intellectual faith, a man may have *without* love; but not that faith which saves. Love cannot usurp the office of faith. It cannot justify. It does not join the soul to Christ. It cannot bring peace to the conscience. But where there is real justifying faith in Christ, there will always be heart-love to Christ. He that is really *forgiven*, is the man who will really *love*. <sup>Luk 7:47</sup> If a man has no love to Christ, you may be sure he has no saving faith.

(b) Love to Christ is the *mainspring of work for Christ*. There is little done for His cause on earth from sense of duty, or from knowledge of what is right and proper. The heart must be interested before the hands will move and continue moving. Excitement may galvanize the Christian's hands into a fitful and spasmodic activity. But without love there will be no patient continuance in well-doing, no unwearied labour in missionary work at home or abroad. The nurse in a hospital may do her duty properly and well, may give the sick man his medicine at the right time, may feed him, minister to him, and attend to all his wants. But there is a vast difference between *that* nurse, and a *wife* tending the sick-bed of a beloved husband, or a *mother* watching over a dying child. The one acts from a sense of duty — the other from affection and love. The one does her duty because she is paid for it — the other is what she is because of her heart. It is just the same in the matter of the service of Christ. The great workers of the Church — the men who have led forlorn hopes in the mission-field and turned the world upside down — have all been eminently lovers of Christ.

Examine the characters of Owen and Baxter, of Rutherford and George Herbert, of Leighton and Hervey, of Whitefield and Wesley, of Henry Martyn and Judson, of Bickersteth and Simeon, of Hewitson and McCheyne, of Stowell and McNeile. These

men have left a mark on the world. And what was the common feature of their characters? They all loved Christ. They not only held a *creed*. They loved a *Person*, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

(c) Love to Christ is the *point which we should specially dwell on in teaching religion to children*. Election, imputed righteousness, original sin, justification, sanctification, and even faith itself, are matters which sometimes puzzle a child of tender years. But love to Jesus seems far more within reach of their understanding. That He loved them even to His death, and that they ought to love Him in return, is a creed which meets the span of their minds. How true it is that “out of the mouths of babes and sucklings You have perfected praise!” (Mat 21.16) There are myriads of Christians who know every article of the Athanasian, Nicene, and Apostolic Creeds, and yet they know less of real Christianity than a little child who only knows that he loves Christ.

(d) Love to Christ is the *common meeting-point of believers* of every branch of Christ’s Church on earth. Whether Episcopalian or Presbyterian, Baptist or Independent, Calvinist or Arminian, Methodist or Moravian, Lutheran or Reformed, Established or Free — here, at least, they are agreed. About forms and ceremonies, about Church government and modes of worship, they often differ widely. But on one point, at any rate, they are united. They all have one common feeling towards Him on whom they build their hope of salvation. They “love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” (Eph 6.24) Many of them, perhaps, are ignorant of systematic divinity and could argue but feebly in defence of their creed. But they all know what they feel toward Him who died for their sins. — “I cannot speak much for Christ, sir,” said an old, uneducated Christian woman to Dr. Chalmers; “but if I cannot *speak* for Him, I could *die* for Him!”

(e) Love to Christ will be the *distinguishing mark of all saved souls in heaven*. The multitude which no man can number, will all be of one mind. Old differences will be merged in one common feeling. Old doctrinal peculiarities, fiercely wrangled for on earth, will be covered over by one common sense of debt to Christ. Luther and Zwingli will no longer dispute. Wesley and Toplady will no longer waste time in controversy. Churchmen and Dissenters will no longer bite and devour one another. All will find themselves joining with one heart and voice in that hymn of praise, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sin in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (Rev 1.5, 6)

The words which John Bunyan puts in the mouth of Mr. Standfast as he stood in the river of death are very beautiful. He said, “This river has been a terror to many; indeed, thoughts of it have often frightened me also. But now I think I stand easy: my foot is fixed upon that on which the priests that bear the ark stood while Israel went over Jordan. The waters indeed are bitter to the palate, and cold to the stomach; yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the convoy that waits for me on the other side, lie as a glowing coal at my heart. I see myself now at the end of my journey; my toilsome days are ended. I am going to see that Head which was crowned with thorns, and that Face which was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearing and faith, but now I go where I will live by sight, and be with Him in whose company I delight myself. I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been a perfume-box to me; indeed sweeter than all perfumes!

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His voice has been most sweet to me; and I have desired His countenance more than those who have desired the light of the sun!” Happy are those who know something of this experience! He that would be in tune for heaven, must know something of love to Christ. He who dies ignorant of that love, had better never have been born.

**II.** Let me show, in the second place, *the peculiar marks by which love to Christ makes itself known.*

The point is one of vast importance. If there is no salvation without love to Christ — if he that does not love Christ is in peril of eternal condemnation, then it becomes us all to find out very distinctly what we know about this matter. Christ is in heaven, and we are on earth. In what way will the man be discerned who loves Him?

Happily the point is one which it is not very hard to settle. How do we know whether we love any person here on earth? In what way and manner does love show itself between people in this world — between husband and wife — between parent and child — between brother and sister — between friend and friend? Let these questions be answered by common sense and observations, and I ask no more. Let these questions be honestly answered, and the knot before us is untied. How does affection show itself among ourselves?

(a) If we love a person, *we like to think about him.* We do not need to be reminded of him. We do not forget his name, or his appearance, or his character, or his opinions, or his tastes, or his position, or his occupation. He comes up before our mind’s eye many a time in the day. Though perhaps far distant, he is often present in our thoughts. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! Christ “dwells in his heart,” and is thought of more or less every day. (Eph 3.17)

The true Christian does not need to be reminded that he has a crucified Master. He often thinks of Him. He never forgets that He has a day, a cause, and a people, and that he is one of His people. Affection is the real secret of a good memory in religion. No worldly man can think much about Christ unless Christ is pressed upon his notice, because he has no affection for Him. The true Christian has thoughts about Christ every day that he lives, for this one simple reason, that he loves Him.

(b) If we love a person, *we like to hear about him.* We find pleasure in listening to those who speak of him. We feel an interest in any report which others make of him. We are all attention when others talk about him and describe his ways, his sayings, his doings, and his plans. Some may hear him mentioned with utter indifference, but our own hearts bound within us at the very sound of his name. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian delights to hear something about his Master. He likes those sermons best which are full of Christ. He enjoys that society most in which people talk of the things which are Christ’s. I have read of an old Welsh believer who used to walk several miles every Sunday to hear an English clergyman preach, though she did not understand a word of English. She was asked why she did so. She replied that this clergyman named the name of Christ so often in his sermons that it did her good. She loved even the name of her Saviour.

(c) If we love a person, *we like to read about him.* What intense pleasure a letter from an absent husband gives to a wife, or a letter from an absent son to his mother. Others may see little worth their notice in the letter. They can scarcely take the trouble to read

it through. But those who love the writer see something in the letter which no one else can. They carry it about with them as a treasure. They read it over and over again. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian delights to read the Scriptures, because they tell him about his beloved Saviour. It is no wearisome task with him to read them. He rarely needs reminding to take his Bible with him when he goes on a journey. He cannot be happy without it. And why is all this? It is because the Scriptures testify of Him whom his soul loves, even Christ.

(d) If we love a person, *we like to please him*. We are glad to consult his tastes and opinions, to act upon his advice, and do the things which he approves. We even deny ourselves in order to meet his wishes, abstain from things which we know he dislikes, and learn to do things to which we are not naturally inclined, because we think it will give him pleasure. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian studies to please Him, by being holy both in body and spirit. Show him anything in his daily practice that Christ hates, and he will give it up. Show him anything that Christ delights in, and he will follow after it. He does not murmur at Christ's requirements as being too strict and severe, as the children of the world do. Christ's commandments are not grievous to him, and Christ's burden is light. And why is all this? Simply because he loves Him.

(e) If we love a person, *we like his friends*. We are favourably inclined toward them, even before we know them. We are drawn to them by the common tie of common love to one and the same person. When we meet them, we do not feel that we are altogether strangers. There is a bond of union between us. They love the person that we love, and that alone is an introduction. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian regards all Christ's friends as his friends, members of the same body, children of the same family, soldiers in the same army, travellers to the same home. When he meets them, he feels as if he had known them a long time. He is more at home with them in a few minutes than he is with many worldly people after an acquaintance of several years. And what is the secret of all this? It is simply affection to the same Saviour, and love to the same Lord.

(f) If we love a person, *we are jealous about his name and honour*. We do not like to hear him spoken against without speaking up for him and defending him. We feel bound to maintain his interests and his reputation. We regard the person who treats him poorly with almost as much disfavour as if he had poorly treated us. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ. The true Christian regards with a godly jealousy all efforts to disparage his Master's word, or name, or Church, or day. He will confess Him before princes if need be, and be sensitive of the least dishonour put upon Him. He will not hold his peace and allow his Master's cause to be put to shame without testifying against it. And why is all this? Simply because he loves Him.

(g) If we love a person, *we like to talk to him*. We tell him all our thoughts, and pour out all our heart to him. We find no difficulty in discovering subjects of conversation. However silent and reserved we may be to others, we find it easy to talk to a much-loved friend. However often we may meet, we are never at a loss for matter to talk about. We always have much to say, much to ask about, much to describe, much to communicate. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian finds no difficulty in speaking to his Saviour. Every day he has something to tell Him, and he is

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not happy unless he tells it. He speaks to Him in prayer every morning and night. He tells Him his wants and desires, his feelings and his fears. He asks counsel of Him in difficulty. He asks comfort of Him in trouble. He cannot help it. He must converse with his Saviour continually, or he would faint by the way. And why is this? Simply because he loves Him.

(h) Finally, if we love a person, *we like to be with him always*. Thinking, and hearing, and reading, and occasionally talking are all well in their way. But when we really love people, we want something more. We long to be always in their company. We wish to be continually in their society, and to hold communion with them without interruption or farewell. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ. The heart of a true Christian longs for that blessed day when he will see his Master face to face, and go out no more. He longs to be done with *sinning* and *repenting*, and *believing*, and to begin that endless life when he will see as he has been seen, and sin no more. He has found it sweet to live by *faith*, and he feels it will be sweeter still to live by *sight*. He has found it pleasant to *hear* of Christ, and *talk* of Christ, and *read* of Christ. How much more pleasant will it be to see Christ with his own eyes, and to never leave Him anymore! “Better,” he feels, “is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desires” (Ecc 6.9) And why is all this? Simply because he loves Him.

Such are the *marks* by which true love may be discovered. They are all plain, simple, and easy to understand. There is nothing dark, abstruse, and mysterious about them. Use them honestly, and handle them fairly, and you cannot fail to get some light on the subject of this paper.

Perhaps you had a beloved son in the army at the time of a great war. Perhaps he was actively engaged in that war, and in the very midst of the struggle. Can you not remember how strong, and deep, and anxious your feelings were about that son? — That was love!

Perhaps you have known what it is to have a beloved husband in the navy, often called from home by duty, often separated from you for many months and even years. Can you not recollect your sorrowful feelings at that time of separation? — That was love!

Perhaps you have at this moment a beloved brother in London, launched for the first time amidst the temptations of a great city, in order to make his way in business. How will he turn out? How will he get on? Will you ever see him again? Do you not know that you often think about that brother? — That is affection!

Perhaps you are engaged to be married to a person in every way suited to you. But prudence makes it necessary to defer the marriage to a distant period, and duty makes it necessary to be at a distance from the one you have promised to make your wife. Must you not confess that she is often in your thoughts? — Must you not confess that you like to hear of her, and hear from her, and that you long to see her? — That is affection!

I speak of things that are familiar to everyone. I need not dwell upon them any further. They are as old as the hills. They are understood all over the world. There is hardly a branch of Adam’s family that does not know something of affection and love. Then let it never be said that we cannot find out whether a Christian really loves Christ. It can be known; it may be discovered; the proofs are all ready to your hand. You have heard them this very day. Love to the Lord Jesus Christ is no hidden, secret, impalpable thing. It is like the light — it will be seen. It is like sound — it will be heard. It is like heat — it will be

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felt. Where it exists it cannot be hidden. Where it cannot be seen you may be sure there is none.

It is time for me to draw this paper to a conclusion. But I cannot end without an effort to press its subject home to the individual conscience of each into whose hands it has fallen. I do it in all love and affection. My heart's desire and prayer to God, in writing this paper, is to do good to souls.

1. Let me ask you, for one thing, to look the question in the face, which Christ asked of Peter, and *try to answer it for yourself*. Look at it seriously. Examine it carefully. Weigh it well. After reading all that I have said about it, can you honestly say that you love Christ?

It is no answer to tell me that you believe the truth of Christianity, and hold the articles of the Christian faith. Such religion as this will never save your soul. The devils believe in a certain way, and tremble. (Jas 2.19) True, saving Christianity is not merely believing a certain set of opinions, and holding a certain set of notions. Its essence is knowing, trusting, and loving a certain living Person who died for us — even Christ the Lord. The early Christians, like Phoebe, and Persis, and Tryphena, and Tryphosa, and Gaius, and Philemon, probably knew little of dogmatic theology. But they all had this grand leading feature in their religion: they loved Christ.

It is no answer to tell me that you disapprove of a religion of feelings. If you mean that you dislike a religion consisting of nothing *but* feelings, I agree with you entirely. But if you mean to shut out feelings altogether, then you can know little of Christianity. The Bible teaches us plainly that a man may have good feelings without any true religion. But it teaches us no less plainly that there can be no true religion without some feeling towards Christ.

It is vain to conceal that if you do not love Christ, your soul is in great danger. You can have no saving faith now, while you live. You are unfit for heaven, if you die. He that lives without love to Christ can be sensible of no obligation to Him. He that dies without love to Christ could never be happy in that heaven where Christ is all, and in all. Awake to know the peril of your position! Open your eyes. Consider your ways, and be wise. I can only warn you as a friend. But I do it with all my heart and soul. May God grant that this warning may not be in vain!

2. In the next place, if you do not love Christ, let me tell you plainly what the reason is. You have no sense of debt to Him. You have no feeling of obligation to Him. You have no abiding recollection of having gotten anything from Him. This being the case, it is not likely, it is not probable, it is not reasonable, that you should love Him.

There is but one remedy for this state of things. That remedy is self-knowledge, and the teaching of the Holy Ghost. The eyes of your understanding must be opened. You must find out what you are by nature. You must discover that grand secret: your guilt and emptiness in God's sight.

Perhaps you never read your Bible at all, or only read an occasional chapter as a mere matter of form, without interest, understanding, or self-application. Take my advice this day, and change your plan. Begin to read the Bible like a man in earnest, and never rest till you become familiar with it. Read what the law of God requires, as expounded by the Lord Jesus in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew. Read how St. Paul describes human nature in the first two chapters of his Epistle to the Romans. Study such passages as these with

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prayer for the Spirit's teaching, and *then* say whether you are not a debtor to God and a debtor in mighty need of a Friend like Christ.

Perhaps you are one who has never known anything of real, hearty, business-like prayer. You have been used to regarding religion as an affair of churches, chapels, forms, services, and Sundays, but not as a thing requiring the serious, heartfelt attention of the inward man. Take my advice this day and change your plan. Begin the habit of real, earnest pleading with God about your soul. Ask Him for light, teaching, and self-knowledge. Beseech Him to show you anything you need to know for saving your soul. Do this with all your heart and mind, and I have no doubt that before long you will feel your need of Christ.

The advice I offer may seem simple and old-fashioned. Do not despise it on that account. It is the good old way in which millions have walked already and found peace for their souls. Not to love Christ is to be in imminent danger of eternal ruin. To see your need of Christ and your amazing debt to Christ, is the first step towards loving Him. To know yourself and find out your real condition before God, is the only way to see your need. To search God's Book and ask God for light in prayer, is the right course by which to attain saving knowledge. Do not be above taking the advice I offer. Take it and be saved.

(3) In the last place, if you really know anything of love towards Christ, accept two parting words of *comfort and counsel*. The Lord grant they may do you good.

*For one thing*, if you love Christ in deed and truth, rejoice in the thought that you have good evidence about the state of your soul. *Love*, I tell you this day, is an evidence of *grace*.

What, even if you are sometimes perplexed with doubts and fears? What, even if you find it hard to say whether your faith is genuine and your grace real? What, even if your eyes are often so dimmed with tears that you cannot clearly see your calling and election of God? Still there is ground for hope and strong consolation if your heart can testify that you love Christ. Where there is true love, there is faith and grace. You would not love Him if He had not done something for you. Your very love is a token for good.

*For another thing*, if you love Christ, never be ashamed to let others see it and know it. Speak for Him. Witness for Him. Live for Him. Work for Him. If He has loved you and washed you from your sins in His own blood, you never need shrink from letting others know that you feel it, and love Him in return.

“Man,” said a thoughtless, ungodly English traveller to a North American Indian convert, “Man, what is the reason that you make so much of Christ, and talk so much about Him? What has this Christ done for you, that you should make so much ado about Him?”

The converted Indian did not answer him in words. He gathered together some dry leaves and moss and made a ring with them on the ground. He picked up a live worm and put it in the middle of the ring. He struck a light and set the moss and leaves on fire. The flame soon rose, and the heat scorched the worm. It writhed in agony, and after trying in vain to escape on every side, curled itself up in the middle, as if about to die in despair. At that moment the Indian reached forth his hand, took up the worm gently and placed it on his bosom. “Stranger,” he said to the Englishman, “Do you see that worm? I was that perishing creature. I was dying in my sins, hopeless, helpless, and on the brink of eternal fire. It was Jesus Christ who put forth the arm of His power. It was Jesus Christ who delivered me with the hand of His grace, and plucked me from everlasting burnings. It

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was Jesus Christ who placed me, a poor sinful worm, near the heart of His love. Stranger, that is the reason why I talk of Jesus Christ and make much of Him. I am not ashamed of it, because I love Him.”

If we know anything of love to Christ, may we have the mind of this North American Indian! May we never think that we can love Christ too well, live to Him too thoroughly, confess Him too boldly, lay ourselves out for Him too heartily! Of all the things that will surprise us in the resurrection morning, I believe *this* will surprise us most: that we did not love Christ more before we died.

## 16. WITHOUT CHRIST

*"You were without Christ."* — Eph 2.12.

THE text which heads this paper describes the state of the Ephesians before they became Christians. But that is not all. It describes the state of every man and woman in England who is not converted to God. A more miserable state cannot be conceived! It is bad enough to be without money, or without health, or without home, or without friends. But it is far worse to be "without Christ."

Let us examine the text this day, and see what it contains. Who can tell if it may not prove a message from God to some reader of this paper?

**I.** Let us consider, in the first place, *when it can be said of a man that he is "without Christ."*

The expression "without Christ," let it be remembered, is not one of my own invention. The words were not first coined by me, but were written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. They were used by St. Paul when he was reminding the Ephesian Christians what their former condition was, before they heard the Gospel and believed. No doubt they had been ignorant and dark, buried in idolatry and heathenism, worshippers of the false goddess Diana. But he passes over all this completely. He seems to think that this would only partially describe their state. So he draws a picture of which the very first feature is the expression before us: "At that time you were without Christ." (Eph 2.12) Now, what does the expression mean?

(a) A man is "without Christ" *when he has no head-knowledge of Him*. Millions, no doubt, are in this condition. They do not know who Christ is — nor what He has done — nor what He taught — nor why He was crucified — nor where He is now — nor what He is to mankind. In short, they are *entirely ignorant* of Him. The heathen, of course, who never yet heard the Gospel, come first under this description. But unhappily, they do not stand alone. There are thousands of people living in England at this very day who have hardly any clearer ideas about Christ than the very heathen. Ask them what they know about Jesus Christ, and you will be astounded at the gross darkness which covers their minds. Visit them on their deathbeds and you will find that they can tell you no more about Christ than about Mahomet. Thousands are in this state in country parishes, and thousands in towns. And only one account can be given about all such persons. They are "without Christ."

I am aware that some modern divines do not take the view which I have just stated. They tell us that all mankind have a part and interest in Christ, whether they know Him or not. They say that all men and women, however ignorant while they live, will be taken by Christ's mercy to heaven when they die! Such views, I firmly believe, cannot be reconciled with God's Word. It is written, "This is eternal life: that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." (Joh 17.3) It is one of the marks of the wicked, on whom God will take vengeance at the last day, that they "do not know God." (2Th 1.8) An unknown Christ is no Saviour. What will be the state of the heathen after death? — how will the savage, who never heard the Gospel, be judged? — in what manner will God deal with the helplessly ignorant and uneducated? — all these are questions which we may safely let alone. We may rest assured that "the Judge of all

the earth will do right.” (Gen 18.25) But we must not fly in the face of Scripture. If Bible words mean anything, *to be ignorant of Christ* is to be “*without Christ*.”

(b) But this is not all. A man is “without Christ” *when he has no heart-faith in Him* as his Saviour. It is quite possible to know all about Christ, and yet not to put our trust in Him. There are multitudes who know every article of the Belief, and can tell you glibly that Christ was “born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.” They learned it at school. They have it sticking fast in their memories. But they make no practical use of their knowledge. They put their trust in something which is not “Christ.” They hope to go to heaven because they are moral and well-conducted — because they say their prayers and go to Church — because they have been baptized and go to the Lord’s Table. But as to a lively faith in God’s mercy through Christ — a real, intelligent confidence in Christ’s blood and righteousness and intercession — these are things of which they know nothing at all. And of all such persons I can see but one true account. They are “without Christ.”

I am aware that many do not admit the truth of what I have just said. Some tell us that all baptized people are members of Christ by virtue of their baptism. Others tell us that where there is a head-knowledge, we have no right to question a person’s interest in Christ. To these views I have only one plain answer. The Bible forbids us to say that any man is joined to Christ until he *believes*.

Baptism is no proof that we are joined to Christ. Simon Magus was baptized, and yet he was distinctly told that he had “no part or lot in this matter.” (Act 8.21) Head-knowledge is no proof that we are joined to Christ. The devils know Christ well enough, but have no portion in Him. God knows, no doubt, who are His from all eternity. But man knows nothing of anyone’s justification until he believes. The grand question is, “Do we believe?” It is written, “He that does not believe the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.” “He that does not believe shall be damned.” (Joh 3.36; Mar 16.16) If Bible words mean anything, *to be without faith* is to be “without Christ.”

(c) But I have yet one thing more to say. A man is “without Christ” *when the Holy Spirit’s work cannot be seen in his life*. If he uses his eyes, who can avoid seeing that myriads of professing Christians know nothing of inward conversion of heart? They will tell you that they believe the Christian religion; they go to their places of worship with tolerable regularity; they think it a proper thing to be married and buried with all the ceremonies of the Church; they would be much offended if their Christianity were doubted. But where is the Holy Ghost to be seen in their lives? What are their hearts and affections set upon? Whose is the image and superscription that stands out in their tastes, and habits, and ways? Alas, there can only be one reply! They know nothing experientially of the renewing, sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost. They are yet dead to God. And of all such, only one account can be given. They are “without Christ.”

I am well aware, again, that few will admit this. The vast majority will tell you that it is extreme, and wild, and extravagant to require so much in Christians, and to press conversion on everyone. They will say that it is impossible to keep up the high standard which I have just referred to, without going out of the world; and that we may surely go to heaven without being such very great saints. To all this I can only reply, What does the Scripture say? What does the Lord say? It is written, “Unless a man is *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” — “Unless you are *converted*, and become as little

children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” — “He that says he abides in Christ, should himself also walk, even as He walked.” — “If any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” (Joh 3.3; Mat 18.3; 1Joh 2.6; Rom 8.9) The Scripture cannot be broken. If Bible words mean anything, *to be without the Spirit* is to be “without Christ.”

I commend the three propositions I have just laid down, to your serious and prayerful consideration. Mark well what they come to. Examine them carefully on every side. In order to have a saving interest in Christ, *knowledge*, *faith*, and the *grace* of the Holy Ghost are absolutely needful. He that is without them is “without Christ.”

How painfully *ignorant* are many! They know literally nothing about religion. Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and faith, and grace, and conversion, and sanctification are mere “words and names” to them. They could not explain what they mean, if it were to save their lives. And can such ignorance as this take anyone to heaven? Impossible! *Without knowledge*, “without Christ!”

How painfully self-righteous are many! They can talk complacently about having “done their duty,” and being “kind to everybody,” and having always “kept to their Church,” and having “never been so very bad” as some — and therefore they seem to think they must go to heaven! As to deep sense of sin and simple faith in Christ’s blood and sacrifice, these seem to have no place in their religion. Their talk is all of *doing* and never of *believing*. And will such self-righteousness as this land anyone in heaven? Never! *Without faith*, “without Christ!”

How painfully ungodly are many! They live in the habitual neglect of God’s Sabbath, God’s Bible, God’s ordinances, and God’s sacraments. They think nothing of doing things which God has flatly forbidden. They are constantly living in ways which are directly contrary to God’s commandments. And can such ungodliness end in salvation? Impossible! *Without the Holy Ghost*, “without Christ!”

I know well that at first sight these statements seem hard, and sharp, and rough, and severe. But after all, are they not God’s truth as revealed to us in Scripture? If they are truth, should they not be made known? If they are necessary to be known, should they not be plainly laid down? If I know anything of my own heart, I desire above all things to magnify the riches of God’s love to sinners. I long to tell all mankind what a wealth of mercy and loving-kindness there is laid up in God’s heart for all who seek it. But I cannot find anywhere that ignorant, and unbelieving, and unconverted people have any part in Christ! If I am wrong, I will be thankful to anyone who will show me a more excellent way. But till I am shown it, I must stand fast on the positions I have already laid down. I dare not forsake them, lest I be found guilty of handling God’s Word deceitfully. I dare not be silent about them, lest the blood of souls be required at my hands. The man without *knowledge*, without *faith*, and without *the Holy Ghost*, is a man “without Christ!”

**II.** Let me now turn to another point which I wish to consider. *What is the actual condition of a man “without Christ”?*

This is a branch of our present subject that demands very special attention. I should be thankful indeed if I could exhibit it in its true colours. I can easily imagine some reader saying to himself, “Well, suppose I am without Christ, where is the mighty harm? I hope God will be merciful. I am no worse than many others. I trust all will be right at last.”

Listen to me, and, by God's help I will try to show that you are sadly deceived. "Without Christ" all will not be right, but all will be desperately wrong.

(a) For one thing, to be without Christ is to be *without God*. The Apostle St. Paul told the Ephesians as much as this in plain words. He ends the famous sentence which begins, "You were without Christ," by saying, "You were without *God* in the world." And who that thinks can wonder at that? That man can have very low ideas of God who does not conceive Him to be a most pure, and holy, and glorious, and spiritual Being. That man must be very blind who does not see that human nature is corrupt, and sinful, and defiled. How then can such a worm as man draw near to God with comfort?

How can he look up to Him with confidence and not feel afraid? How can he speak to Him, have dealings with Him, look forward to dwelling with Him, without dread and alarm? There must be a *Mediator* between God and man, and there is but One who can fill the office. That One is Christ.

Who are you that talk of God's mercy and God's love separate from and independent of Christ? There is no such love and mercy recorded in Scripture. Know this day that God *without Christ* is "a consuming fire." (Heb 12.29) He is Merciful, beyond all question: rich in mercy, plenteous in mercy. But His mercy is *inseparably connected* with the mediation of His beloved Son Jesus Christ. It must flow *through Him* as the appointed channel, or it cannot flow at all. It is written, "He that does not honour the Son, does not honour the Father who sent Him." — "I am the way, the truth, and the life: No man comes to the Father but by Me." (Joh 5.23; 14.6) "Without Christ" we are *without God*.

(b) For another thing, to be without Christ is to be *without peace*. Every man has a conscience within him, which must be satisfied before he can be truly happy. So long as this conscience is asleep or half dead, so long he gets along pretty well, no doubt. But as soon as a man's conscience wakes up, and he begins to think of past sins, and present failings, and future judgment, at once he finds out that he needs something to give him inward rest. But what can do it? Repenting, and praying, and Bible-reading, and church-going, and sacrament-receiving, and self-mortification may be tried, and tried in vain. They never yet removed the burden from anyone's conscience. Yet peace must be had!

There is only *one thing* that can give peace to the conscience, and that is the blood of Jesus Christ sprinkled on it. A clear understanding that Christ's death was an *actual payment of our debt to God* — and that the *merit* of that death is made over to man when he believes — is the grand secret of inward peace. It meets every craving of conscience. It answers every accusation. It calms every fear. It is written, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace." "He is our peace." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Joh 16.33; Eph 2.14; Rom 5.1) We have peace through the blood of His cross — peace like a deep mine — peace like an ever-flowing stream. But "without Christ," we are *without peace*.

(c) For another thing, to be without Christ is to be *without hope*. Almost everyone thinks that he possesses hope of some sort or other. Rarely indeed will you find a man who will boldly tell you that he has no hope at all about his soul. But how few there are who can give "a reason of the hope that is in them!" (1Pet 3.15) How few can explain it, describe it, and show its foundations! How many a hope is nothing better than a *vague, empty*

*feeling*, which the day of sickness and the hour of death will prove to be utterly useless — impotent alike to comfort or to save.

There is but one hope that has roots, life, strength, and solidity — and that is the hope which is built on the great rock of Christ's work and office as man's Redeemer. "No man can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1Cor 3.11) He that builds on this cornerstone "shall not be confounded." <sup>1Pet 2.6</sup> About this hope there is reality. It will bear looking at and handling. It will fit every enquiry. Search it through and through, and you will find no flaw whatever in it. All other hopes besides this are worthless. Like summer-dried fountains, they fail man just when his need is sorest. They are like unsound ships, which look good so long as they lie quiet in harbour. But when the winds and the waves of the ocean begin to try them, their rotten condition is discovered, and they sink beneath the waters. There is no such thing as a good hope without Christ, and to be "without Christ" is to have "*no hope*." (Eph 2.12)

(d) For another thing, to be without Christ is to be *without heaven*. In saying this I do not merely mean that there is no *entrance* into heaven, but that "without Christ" there could be no *happiness* in being there. A man without a Saviour and Redeemer could never feel at home in heaven. He would feel that he had no lawful right or title to be there: boldness and confidence and ease of heart would be impossible. Amidst pure and holy angels, under the eyes of a pure and holy God, he could not hold up his head: he would feel confounded and ashamed. It is the very essence of all true views of heaven, that Christ is there.

Who are you that dream of a heaven in which Christ has no place? Awake to know your folly. Know that in every description of heaven which the Bible contains, the presence of Christ is one essential feature. "In the midst of the throne," says St. John, "stood a Lamb as if it had been slain." The very throne of heaven is called the "throne of God and of the Lamb." — "The Lamb is the light of heaven, and its temple." — The saints who dwell in heaven are to be "fed by the Lamb," and "led to living fountains of waters." The meeting of the saints in heaven is called, "the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Rev 5.6; 22.3; 21.22, 23; 7.17; 19.9) A heaven without Christ would not be the heaven of the Bible. To be "without Christ" is to be *without heaven*.

I might easily add to these things. I might tell you that to be without Christ is to be without life, without strength, without safety, without foundation, without a friend in heaven, without righteousness. None are so badly off as those who are without Christ!

What the ark was to Noah, what the *Passover lamb* was to Israel in Egypt — what the *manna*, the *struck rock*, the *brazen serpent*, the *pillar of cloud and fire*, the *scapegoat* were to the tribes in the wilderness — all this the Lord Jesus is meant to be to man's soul. None are so destitute as those who are without Christ!

What the *root* is to the branches, what the *air* is to our lungs, what *food* and *water* are to our bodies, what the *sun* is to creation — all this and much more, Christ is intended to be to us. None are so helpless, none are so pitiable, as those who are without Christ!

I grant that, if there were no such things as sickness and death — if men and women never grew old, and lived on this earth forever — the subject of this paper would be of no importance. But you must know that *sickness*, *death*, and the *grave* are sad realities.

If this life were all there is — if there were no judgment, no heaven, no hell, no eternity — it would be mere waste of time to trouble yourself with such inquiries as this tract suggests. But you have a conscience. You know well that there is a reckoning-day beyond the grave. There is a judgment yet to come.

Surely the subject of this paper is no light matter. It is not a small thing, nor one that signifies nothing. It demands the attention of every sensible person. It lies at the very root of that all-important question, the salvation of our souls. To be “without Christ” is to be most miserable.

(1) And now I ask every one who has read this paper through *to examine himself* and find out his own precise condition. Are you without Christ?

Do not allow life to pass away without some serious thoughts and self-inquiry. You cannot always go on as you do now. A day must come when *eating, drinking, sleeping, dressing, making merry, and spending money*, will have an end. There will be a day when your place will be empty, and you will only be spoken of as one dead and gone. And where will you be then, if you have lived and died without any thought about your soul, without God, and without Christ? Oh, remember, it is a thousand times better to be without money, and health, and friends, and company, and good cheer — than to be without Christ!

(2) If you have lived without Christ up to now, *I invite you* in all affection, to change your course without delay. Seek the Lord Jesus while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. He is sitting at God’s right hand, able to save to the uttermost everyone who comes to Him, however sinful and careless he may have been. He is sitting at God’s right hand, willing to hear the prayer of every one who feels that his past life has been all wrong, and wants to be set right. Seek Christ, seek Christ without delay. Acquaint yourself with Him. Do not be ashamed to apply to Him. Only become one of Christ’s friends this year, and you will say one day that it was the happiest year you ever had.

(3) If you have become one of Christ’s friends already, *I exhort you* to be a thankful man. Awake to a deeper sense of the infinite mercy of having an Almighty Saviour, a title to heaven, a home that is eternal, a Friend who never dies! A few more years and all our family gatherings will be over. What a comfort to think that we have in Christ something that we can never lose!

Awake to a deeper sense of the sorrowful state of those who are “without Christ.” We are often reminded of the many who are without food, or clothing, or school, or church. Let us pity them, and help them, as far as we can. But let us never forget that there are people whose state is far more pitiable. Who are they? The people “without Christ!”

Do we have relatives “without Christ”? Let us feel for them, pray for them, speak to the King about them, strive to recommend the Gospel to them. Let us leave no stone unturned in our efforts to bring them to Christ.

Do we have neighbours “without Christ”? Let us labour in every way for their souls’ salvation. The night comes when none can work. Happy is he who lives under the abiding conviction that to be “in Christ” is peace, safety, and happiness; and that to be “without Christ” is to be on the brink of destruction.

## 17. THIRST RELIEVED

*“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If any man thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” — John 7.37, 38.*

THE text which heads this chapter contains one of those mighty sayings of Christ which deserve to be printed in letters of gold. All the stars in heaven are bright and beautiful; yet even a child can see that one star excels another in glory. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; but that heart must indeed be cold and dull which does not feel that some verses are peculiarly rich and full. This text is one of those.

In order to see the whole force and beauty of the text, we must remember the *place*, the *time*, and the *occasion* when it comes in.

The PLACE, then, was Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judaism, and the stronghold of priests and scribes, of Pharisees and Sadducees. — The OCCASION was the Feast of Tabernacles, one of those great annual feasts when every Jew, if he could, went up to the temple, according to the law. — The TIME was “the last day of the feast,” when all the ceremonies were drawing to a close, when the water drawn from the fountain of Siloam, according to traditional custom, had been solemnly poured on the altar, and nothing remained for worshippers but to return home.

At this critical moment, our Lord Jesus Christ “stood” forward on a prominent place, and spoke to the assembled crowds. I do not doubt that He read their hearts. He saw them going away with aching consciences and unsatisfied minds, having gotten nothing from their blind teachers, the Pharisees and Sadducees, and carrying away nothing but a barren recollection of pompous forms. He saw and pitied them, and cried aloud like a herald, “If any man thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.” — I take leave to doubt that this was all our Lord said on this memorable occasion. I suspect it is only the key-note of His address. But I imagine this was the first sentence that fell from His lips: “If any man thirsts, let him come to Me.” If anyone wants living, satisfying water, let him come to ME.

Let me remind my readers, in passing, that no prophet or apostle ever took it upon himself to use such language as this. “Come with us,” said Moses to Hobab (Num 10.29); “Come to the waters,” says Isaiah (Isa 55.1); “Behold the Lamb,” says John the Baptist (Joh 1.29); “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” says St. Paul (Act 16.31) But no one except Jesus of Nazareth ever said, “Come to ME.” That fact is very significant. He who said, “Come to Me,” knew and felt, when He said it, that He was the eternal Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

There are three points in this great saying of our Lord, to which I now propose to direct your attention.

I. You have a CASE SUPPOSED: “If any man thirsts.”

II. You have a REMEDY PROPOSED: “Let him come to Me, and drink.”

III. You have a PROMISE HELD OUT: “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters.”

Each of these points concerns all those into whose hands this paper may fall. I have something to say on each of them.

I. In the first place, then, *you have a case supposed*. Our Lord says, “If any man thirsts.”

Bodily thirst is notoriously the most painful sensation to which the frame of mortal man is liable. Read the story of the miserable sufferers in the black hole at Calcutta. — Ask anyone who has travelled over desert plains under a tropical sun. — Hear what any old soldier will tell you is the chief want of the wounded on a battlefield. — Remember what the crews of ships lost in mid-ocean go through, tossed for days in boats without water. — Mark the awful words of the rich man in the parable: “Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame.” (Luk 16.24) The testimony is unvarying. There is nothing so terrible and hard to bear as thirst.

But if bodily thirst is so painful, how much more painful is the thirst of our soul? Physical suffering is not the worst part of eternal punishment. It is a light thing, even in this world, compared to the suffering of the mind and inward man. To see the value of our souls, and find out that they are in danger of eternal ruin — to feel the burden of unforgiven sin, and not to know where to turn for relief — to have a conscience sick and ill at ease, and to be ignorant of the remedy — to discover that we are dying, dying daily, and yet unprepared to meet God — to have some clear view of our own guilt and wickedness, and yet to be in utter darkness about absolution — this is the highest degree of pain — the pain which drinks up soul and spirit, and pierces joints and marrow! And this no doubt is the thirst of which our Lord is speaking. It is thirst after *pardon, forgiveness, absolution, and peace* with God. It is the craving of a really awakened conscience — wanting satisfaction and not knowing where to find it — walking through dry places and unable to get rest.

This is the thirst which the Jews felt when Peter preached to them on the day of Pentecost. It is written that they were “pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brothers, what shall we do?” (Act 2.37)

This is the thirst which the Philippian jailor felt when he awoke to a consciousness of his spiritual danger, and felt the earthquake making the prison reel under his feet. It is written that he “came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, saying, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Act 16.30)

This is the thirst which many of the greatest servants of God seem to have felt when light first broke in on their minds.

- Augustine seeking rest among the Manichean heretics and finding none,
  - Luther groping after truth among monks in Erfurt Monastery,
  - John Bunyan agonizing amidst doubts and conflicts in his Elstow cottage,
  - George Whitefield groaning under self-imposed austerities, for lack of clear teaching when he was an undergraduate at Oxford,
- all have left their experience on record. I believe they all knew what our Lord meant when He spoke of “thirst.”

And surely it is not too much to say that all of us ought to know *something* of this thirst, if not as much as Augustine, Luther, Bunyan, or Whitefield. Living as we do in a dying world — knowing as we do (if we will confess it) that there is a world beyond the grave, and that after death comes the judgment — feeling as we must do in our better moments, what poor, weak, unstable, defective creatures we all are, and how unfit to meet God — conscious as we must be in our inmost heart of hearts, that our place in eternity depends

on our use of time — we ought to feel and to realise *something* like “thirst,” for a sense of peace with the living God.

But alas, nothing proves so conclusively the fallen nature of man as the general, common lack of spiritual appetite! For money, power, pleasure, rank, honour, distinction — for all these, the vast majority are now intensely thirsting. To lead forlorn hopes, to dig for gold, to storm a breach, to try to hew a way through thick-ribbed ice to the North Pole — for all these objects, there is no lack of adventurers and volunteers. Fierce and unceasing is the competition for these corruptible crowns! But few indeed, by comparison, are those who *thirst after eternal life*. No wonder that in Scripture the natural man is called “dead,” and “sleeping,” and “blind,” and “deaf.” No wonder that he is said to need a second birth and a new creation. There is no surer symptom of mortification in the body, than the loss of all feeling. There is no more painful sign of an unhealthy state of soul, than an utter absence of spiritual thirst. Woe to that man of whom the Saviour can say, “You do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” (Rev 3.17)

But who is there among the readers of this paper that feels the burden of sin, and longs for peace with God? Who is there that really feels the words of our Prayer-book Confession: “I have erred and strayed like a lost sheep — there is no health in me — I am a miserable offender”? Who is there that enters into the fullness of our Communion Service, and can say with truth, “The remembrance of my sins is grievous, and their burden is intolerable”? You are the man that ought to thank God.

A sense of sin, guilt, and poverty of soul, is the *first stone* laid by the Holy Ghost when He builds a spiritual temple. He convinces us of sin. Light was the first thing called into being in the *material* creation. (Gen 1.3) Light about our own state is the first work in the *new* creation. Thirsting soul, I say again, *you* are the person who ought to thank God. The kingdom of God is near you. It is not when we begin to feel *good*, but when we feel *bad*, that we take the first step towards heaven. Who taught you that you were naked? Where did this inward light come from? Who opened your eyes and made you see and feel? Know this day that flesh and blood has not revealed these things to you, but our Father who is in heaven. Universities may confer degrees, and schools may impart knowledge of all mysteries, but they cannot make men feel sin. To realise our spiritual need, and feel true spiritual thirst, is the A-B-C in saving Christianity.

It is a great saying of Elihu, in the book of Job — “God looks upon men, and if any says, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it did not profit me; He will deliver his soul from death, and his life shall see the light.” (Job 33.27, 28) Let him who knows anything of spiritual “thirst” not be ashamed. Rather, let him lift up his head and begin to hope. Let him pray that God would carry on the work He has begun, and make him feel more.

**II.** I pass from *the case supposed to the remedy proposed*. “If any man thirsts,” says our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, “let him come to Me, and drink.”

There is a grand simplicity about this little sentence which cannot be admired too much. There is not a word in it of which the literal meaning is not plain to a child. Yet, simple as it appears, it is rich in spiritual meaning. Like the Kohinoor diamond, which you may carry between finger and thumb, it is of unspeakable value. It solves that mighty problem which all the philosophers of Greece and Rome could never solve — “How can man have

peace with God?" Place it in your memory side by side with six other golden sayings of your Lord.

"I am the *Bread of life*: he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he who believes in me shall never thirst." (Joh 6.35)

"I am the *Light of the world*: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (Joh 8.12)

"*I am the Door*: if any man enters by ME, he shall be saved." (Joh 10.9)

"I am *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*: no one comes to the Father but by ME." (Joh 14.6)

"Come to ME, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Mat 11.28

"Whoever comes to ME I will by no means cast out." Joh 6.37

— Add to these six texts, the one before you today. Learn the whole seven by heart. Rivet them down in your mind, and never let them go. When your feet touch the cold river on the bed of sickness and in the hour of death, you will find these seven texts above all price.

For what is the sum and substance of these simple words? It is this: Christ is that Fountain of living water which God has graciously provided for thirsting souls. From Him, as out of the rock struck by Moses, there flows an abundant stream for all who travel through the wilderness of this world. In Him, as our Redeemer and Substitute — crucified for our sins and raised again for our justification — there is an endless supply of all that men can need: pardon, absolution, mercy, grace, peace, rest, relief, comfort, and hope.

Christ has bought this rich provision for us at the price of His own precious blood. To open this wondrous fountain, He suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, and bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (1Pet 2.24; 3.18; 2Cor 5.21) And now He is sealed and appointed to be the Reliever of all who are labouring and heavy laden, and the Giver of living water to all who thirst. It is His office to receive sinners. It is His pleasure to give them pardon, life, and peace. And the words of the text are a proclamation that He makes to all mankind — "If any man thirsts, let him come to Me, and drink."

The efficacy of a medicine depends in great measure on the manner in which it is used. The best prescription of the best physician is useless if we refuse to follow the directions which accompany it. Allow a word of exhortation, while I offer some caution and advice about the Fountain of living water.

(a) He that thirsts and wants relief must come *to Christ Himself*. He must not be content with coming to His Church and His ordinances, or to the assemblies of His people for prayer and praise. He must not stop short even at His holy table, or rest satisfied with privately opening his heart to His ordained ministers. Oh, no! He that is content with only drinking these waters "shall thirst again." (Joh 4.13) He must go higher, further, much further than this. He must have personal dealings with Christ Himself: all else in religion is worthless without Him. The King's palace, the attendant servants, the richly furnished banqueting house, the very banquet itself — all are nothing unless we speak with the King. His hand alone can take the burden off our backs and make us feel free. The hand of man may take the stone from the grave and show the dead; none but Jesus

can say to the dead, "Come forth and live." (Joh 11.41-43) We must deal directly with Christ.

(b) Again: he that thirsts and wants relief from Christ must actually *come to Him*. It is not enough to wish, and talk, and mean, and intend, and resolve, and hope. Hell, that awful reality, is truly said to be paved with good intentions. Thousands are yearly lost in this fashion, and perish miserably just outside the harbour. They live, meaning and intending; and they die, meaning and intending. Oh, no! We must "arise and come!" If the prodigal son had been content with saying, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! *I hope some day* to return home," he might have remained forever among the swine. It was when he AROSE AND CAME to his father that his father ran to meet him and said, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him. — Let us eat and be merry." (Luk 15.20-23) Like him, we must not only "come to ourselves" and *think*, but we must *actually come* to the High Priest, to Christ. We must come to the Physician.

(c) Once again: he that thirsts and wants to come to Christ must remember that SIMPLE FAITH IS THE ONE THING REQUIRED. By all means let him come with a penitent, broken, and contrite heart; but let him not dream of resting on that for acceptance. *Faith* is the only hand that can carry the living water to our lips. *Faith* is the hinge on which everything turns in the matter of our justification. It is written again and again that "whoever believes shall not perish, but have eternal life." (Joh 3.15, 16) "To him that does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom 4.5) Happy is he that can lay hold on the principle laid down in that matchless hymn —

Just as I am! without one plea  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee —  
O Lamb of God, I come!

How simple this remedy for thirst appears! But oh, how hard it is to persuade some persons to receive it! Tell them to do some great thing, to mortify their bodies, to go on a pilgrimage, to give all their goods to feed the poor, and thus to merit salvation, and they will try to do as they are bid. Tell them to throw overboard any idea of merit, working, or doing, and to come to Christ as empty sinners, with nothing in their hands, and like Naaman, they are ready to turn away in disdain. (2Kng 5.12) Human nature is always the same in every age. There are still some people just like the Jews, and some like the Greeks. To the Jews Christ crucified is still a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks it is foolishness. Their succession, at any rate, has never ceased! Never did our Lord say a truer word than what He spoke to the proud scribes in the Sanhedrin — "YOU WILL NOT COME TO ME that you might have life." (Joh 5.40)

But, simple as this remedy for thirst appears, it is the only cure for man's spiritual disease, and the only bridge from earth to heaven. Kings and their subjects, preachers and hearers, masters and servants, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all alike must drink of this water of life, and drink in the same way. For eighteen centuries men have laboured to find some other medicine for weary consciences; but they have laboured in vain. Thousands, after blistering their hands, and growing grey in hewing out "broken cisterns which can hold no water" (Jer 2.13), have been obliged to come back at last to the

old Fountain, and have confessed in their latest moments that here, in Christ alone, is true peace.

And simple as the old remedy for thirst may appear, it is the root of the inward life of all God's greatest servants in all ages. What have the saints and martyrs been in every era of Church history, but men who came to Christ daily by faith, and found "His flesh food indeed and His blood drink indeed"? (Joh 6.55) What have they all been but men who lived the life of faith in the Son of God, and drank daily out of the fulness that there is in Him? (Gal 2.20) Here, at all events, the truest and best Christians, who have made a mark on the world, have been of one mind. Holy Fathers and Reformers, holy Anglican divines and Puritans, holy Episcopalians and Nonconformists, have *all* in their best moments borne uniform testimony to the value of the Fountain of life. Separated and contentious as they may sometimes have been in their lives, they have not been divided in their deaths. In their last struggle with the king of terrors, they have simply clung to the cross of Christ, and gloried in nothing but the "precious blood," and the Fountain open for all sin and uncleanness.

How thankful we ought to be that we live in a land where the great remedy for spiritual thirst is known — in a land of open Bibles, preached Gospel, and abundant means of grace — in a land where the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is still proclaimed, with more or less fulness, in 20,000 pulpits every Sunday! We do not realise the value of our privileges. The very familiarity of the manna makes us think of it just as Israel loathed "the light bread" in the wilderness. (Num 21.5) But turn to the pages of a heathen philosopher like the incomparable Plato, and see how he groped after light like one blindfolded, and wearied himself to find the door. The humblest peasant who grasps the four "comfortable words" of our beautiful Communion Service in the Prayer-book, knows more of the way of peace with God than the Athenian sage. — Turn to the accounts which trustworthy travellers and missionaries give of the state of the heathen who have never heard the Gospel. Read of the human sacrifices in Africa, and the ghastly, self-imposed tortures of the devotees of Hindustan, and remember they are all the result of an unquenched "thirst" and a blind and unsatisfied desire to get near to God. And then learn to be thankful that your lot is cast in a land like your own. Alas, I fear God has a controversy with us for our unthankfulness! Cold indeed, and dead, must that heart be which can study the condition of Africa, China, and Hindustan, and not thank God that he lives in Christian England.

**III.** I turn, in the last place, to *the promise held out to all who come to Christ*. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

The subject of *Scripture promises*, is a vast and most interesting one. I doubt it receives the attention which it deserves in the present day. "Clarke's Scripture Promises" is an old book <sup>72</sup> which is far less studied now, I suspect, than it was in the days of our fathers. Few Christians realize the number, and length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and variety of the precious "shalls" and "wills" laid up in the Bible for the special benefit and encouragement of all who will use them.

Yet *promise* lies at the bottom of nearly all the transactions of man with man in the affairs of this life. The vast majority of Adam's children in every civilized country are acting every

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<sup>72</sup> Samuel Clarke (1684-1750) *Scripture Promises* — [http://www.theoldtimegospel.org/comm/clarke\\_index.html](http://www.theoldtimegospel.org/comm/clarke_index.html)

day on the faith of promises. The labourer on the land works hard from Monday morning to Saturday night, because he believes that at the end of the week he will receive his promised wages. The soldier enlists in the army, and the sailor enters his name on the ship's books in the navy, in the full confidence that those under whom they serve will at some future time give them their promised pay. The humblest maid-servant in a family works on from day to day at her appointed duties, in the belief that her mistress will give her the promised wages. In the business of great cities, among merchants, bankers, and tradesmen, nothing could be done without incessant faith in promises. Every man of sense knows that cheques and bills, and promissory notes, are the only means by which the immense majority of mercantile affairs can possibly be carried on. Men of business are compelled to act by faith and not by sight. They believe promises, and expect to be believed themselves. In fact, promises, and faith in promises, and actions springing from faith in promises, are the back-bone of nine-tenths of all the dealings of man with his fellow-men throughout Christendom.

Now, in like manner, promises in the religion of the Bible are one grand means by which God is pleased to approach the soul of man. The careful student of Scripture cannot fail to observe that God is continually holding out inducements to man to listen to Him, obey Him, and serve Him — and undertaking to do great things if man will only attend and believe. In short, as St. Peter says, "There are given to us exceedingly great and precious promises." (2Pet 1. 4) He who has mercifully caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning, has shown His perfect knowledge of human nature by spreading over the Book a perfect wealth of promises, suitable to every kind of experience and every condition of life. He seems to say, "Would you know what I undertake to do for you? Do you want to hear my terms?" — "Take up the Bible and read."

But there is one grand difference between the promises of Adam's children and the promises of God, which should never be forgotten. The promises of man are not sure to be fulfilled. With the best wishes and intentions, he cannot always keep his word. Disease and death may step in like an armed man, and take this world away from the one that promises. War, pestilence, famine, failure of crops, or hurricanes, may strip him of his property, and make it impossible for him to fulfil his engagements.

The promises of *God*, on the contrary, are *certain* to be kept. He is Almighty: nothing can prevent His doing what He has said. He never changes: He is always "of one mind": and with Him there is "no variableness or shadow of turning." (Job 23.13; Jas 1.17) He will always keep His word. There is one thing which God cannot do, as a little girl once told her teacher (to her surprise): "It is impossible for God to lie." (Heb 6.18) The most unlikely and improbable things, once God has said that He will do them, have always come to pass. The destruction of the old world by a flood, and the preservation of Noah in the ark, the birth of Isaac, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the raising of David to the throne of Saul, the miraculous birth of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the scattering of the Jews all over the earth, and their continued preservation as a distinct people — who could imagine events more *unlikely* and *improbable* than these? Yet God said they should be, and in due time they all came to pass. In truth, with God it is just as easy to do a thing as to say it. Whatever He promises, He is certain to perform.

Concerning the *variety* and *riches* of Scripture promises, far more might be said than it is possible to say in a short paper like this. Their name is legion. The subject is almost

inexhaustible. There is hardly a step in man's life, from childhood to old age — hardly any position in which man can be placed — for which the Bible has not held out encouragement to everyone who desires to do right in the sight of God. There are “shalls” and “wills” in God's treasury *for every condition*.

About God's infinite mercy and compassion — about His readiness to receive all who repent and believe — about His willingness to *forgive, pardon, and absolve* the chief of sinners — about His power to change hearts and alter our corrupt nature — about the encouragements to pray, and hear the Gospel, and draw near to the throne of grace — about,

- *strength* for duty,
- *comfort* in trouble,
- *guidance* in perplexity,
- *help* in sickness,
- *consolation* in death,
- *support* under bereavement,
- *happiness* beyond the grave,
- *reward* in glory

— about all these things, there is an abundant supply of promises in the Word. No one can form an idea of its abundance unless he carefully searches the Scriptures, keeping the subject steadily in view.

If anyone doubts it, I can only say, “Come and see.” Like the Queen of Sheba at Solomon's Court, you will soon say, “The half was not told me.” (1Kng 10.7)

The promise of our Lord Jesus Christ which heads this paper is somewhat peculiar. It is singularly rich in encouragement to all who feel spiritual thirst, and come to Him for relief; and therefore it deserves peculiar attention. Most of our Lord's promises refer specially to the benefit of the person to whom they are addressed. The promise before us takes a far wider range: it seems to refer to many others beside those to whom He spoke. For what does He say? “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said” (and everywhere teaches), “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke of the Spirit, which those who believe on Him should receive.” These words are undoubtedly *figurative* — figurative like the earlier words of the sentence — figurative like “thirst” and “drinking.” But all the figures of Scripture contain great truth; and I will now try to show what the figure before us was meant to convey.

(1) For one thing, then, I believe our Lord meant that he who comes to Him by faith shall receive an abundant supply of everything that he can desire *for the relief of his own soul's wants*. The Spirit shall convey to him such an abiding sense of pardon, peace, and hope, that in his inward man it will be like a well-spring, never dry. He will feel so satisfied with “the things of Christ,” which the Spirit will show him (John 16.15), that he will rest from spiritual anxiety about death, judgment, and eternity. He may have his seasons of darkness and doubt, through his own infirmities or the temptations of the devil. But, speaking generally, once he has come to Christ by faith, he will find in his heart of hearts an unfailing fountain of consolation. Let us understand, this is the first thing which the promise before us contains. “Only come to Me, poor anxious soul,” our Lord seems to say — “Only come to Me, and your spiritual anxiety will be relieved. I will place in your heart, by the power of the Holy Spirit, such a sense of pardon and peace, through My atonement

and intercession, that you will never completely thirst again. You may have your doubts, and fears, and conflicts, while you are in the body. But once you have come to Me, and taken Me for your Saviour, you will never feel yourself entirely hopeless. The condition of your inward man will be so thoroughly changed that you will feel as if there were within you an ever-flowing spring of water.”

What will we say to these things? I declare my own belief that whenever a man or woman really comes to Christ by faith, he finds this promise fulfilled. He may possibly be weak in grace, and have many misgivings about his own condition. He may possibly not dare to say that he is converted, justified, sanctified, and fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. But for all that, I am bold to say, the humblest and feeblest believer in Christ has something within him which he would not part with, though he may not yet fully understand it. And what is that “*something*”? It is just that “river of living water” which begins to run in the heart of every child of Adam as soon as he comes to Christ and drinks. In this sense, I believe this wonderful promise of Christ is always fulfilled.

(2) But is this all that is contained in the promise which heads this paper? By no means. There yet remains much behind. There is more to follow. I believe our Lord meant us to understand that he who comes to Him by faith will not only have an abundant supply of everything which he needs for his own soul, but will also become *a source of blessing to the souls of others*. The Spirit who dwells in him will make him a fountain of good to his fellow-men, so that at the last day there will be found to have flowed from him “rivers of living water.”

This is a most important part of our Lord’s promise, and it opens up a subject which is seldom realized and grasped by many Christians. But it is one of deep interest, and deserves far more attention than it receives. I believe it to be a truth of God. I believe that just as “no man lives unto himself” (Rom 14.7), so also no man is converted only for himself; and that the conversion of one man or woman always leads on, in God’s wonderful providence, to the conversion of others. I do not say for a moment that all believers know it. I think it far more likely that many live and die in the faith, who are not aware that they have done good to any soul. But I believe the resurrection morning and the judgment day, when the secret history of all Christians is revealed, will prove that the full meaning of the promise before us has never failed. I doubt if there will be a believer who will not have been to some one or other a “river of living water” — a channel through whom the Spirit has conveyed saving grace. Even the penitent thief, short as his time was after he repented, has been a source of blessing to thousands of souls!

(a) Some believers are “rivers of living water” *while they live*. Their words, their conduct, their preaching, their teaching, are all means by which the water of life has flowed into the hearts of their fellow-men. For example, such were the Apostles who wrote no Epistles, and only preached the Word. Such were Luther, Whitefield, Wesley, Berridge, and Rowlands, and thousands of others, of whom I cannot now speak particularly.

(b) Some believers are “rivers of living water” *when they die*. Their courage in facing the king of terrors, their boldness in the most painful sufferings, their unswerving faithfulness to Christ’s truth even at the stake, their manifest peace on the edge of the grave — all this has set thousands thinking, and led hundreds to repent and believe. Such, for example, were the primitive martyrs whom the Roman Emperors persecuted. Such were John Huss, and Jerome of Prague. Such were Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer,

Hooper, and the noble army of Marian martyrs. The work that they did at their deaths, like Samson, was far greater than the work done in their lives.

(c) Some believers are “rivers of living water” *long after they die*. They do good by their books and writings in every part of the world, long after the hands which held the pen are mouldering in the dust. Such men were Bunyan, Baxter, Owen, George Herbert, and Robert McCheyne. These blessed servants of God do more good probably by their books at this moment, than they did by their tongues when they were alive. “Being dead they yet speak.” (Heb 11.4)

(d) Finally, there are some believers who are “rivers of living water” *by the beauty of their daily conduct and behaviour*. There are many quiet, gentle, consistent Christians who make no show and no noise in the world, and yet insensibly exercise a deep influence for good on all around them. They “win without the Word.” (1Pet 3.1) Their love, their kindness, their sweet temper, their patience, their unselfishness, tell silently on a wide circle, and sow seeds of thought and self-inquiry in many minds. It was a fine testimony of an old lady who died in great peace, saying that under God she owed her salvation to Mr. Whitefield: — “It was not any sermon that he preached; it was not anything that he ever said to me. It was the beautiful consistency and kindness of his daily life in the house where he was staying when I was a little girl. I said to myself, if I ever have any religion, Mr. Whitefield’s God shall be my God.”

Let us all lay hold on this view of our Lord’s promise, and never forget it. Do not think for a moment that your own soul is the only soul that will be saved if you come to Christ by faith and follow Him. Think of the blessedness of being a “river of living water” to others. Who can tell if you may not be the means of bringing many others to Christ? Live, act, speak, pray, and work, keeping this continually in view.

I knew a family consisting of a father, mother, and ten children, in which true religion began with one of the daughters; and when it began, she stood alone, and all the rest of the family were in the world. And yet, before she died, she saw both her parents and all her brothers and sisters converted to God, and all this, humanly speaking, began from her influence! Surely, in the face of this, we need not doubt that a believer may be a “river of living water” to others. Conversions may not be in your time, and you may die without seeing them. But never doubt that conversion generally leads to conversions, and that few go to heaven alone. When Grimshaw of Haworth <sup>73</sup> died, the apostle of the north, he left his son graceless and godless. Afterwards, the son was converted, never having forgotten his father’s advice and example. And his last words were, “What will my old father say when he sees me in heaven?” Let us take courage and hope on, believing Christ’s promise.

And now, before I close this paper, let me ask you a plain question.

(1) *Do you know anything of spiritual thirst?* Have you ever felt anything of genuine deep concern about your soul? — I fear that many know nothing about it. I have learned by the painful experience of a third of a century, that people may go on for years attending God’s house and yet never feel their sins, or desire to be saved. The cares of this world, the love of pleasure, the “lust of other things” choke the good seed every Sunday and make it unfruitful. They come to church with hearts as cold as the stone pavement on which they

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<sup>73</sup> William Grimshaw (1709-1763) – rector at Haworth 1742-1763, and close friend of John Wesley.

walk. They go away as thoughtless and unmoved as the old marble busts which look down on them from the monuments on the walls. Well, it may be so; but I do not despair of anyone so long as he is alive. That grand old bell in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, which has struck the hours for so many years, is seldom heard by many during the business hours of the day. The roar and din of traffic in the streets have a strange power to deaden its sound, and prevent men hearing it. But when the daily work is over, and desks are locked, and doors are closed, and books are put away, and quiet reigns in the great city, the case is altered. As the old bell at night strikes eleven, and twelve, and one, and two, and three, thousands hear it who never heard it during the day. And so I hope it will be with many a one in the matter of his soul.

Now, in the plenitude of health and strength, in the hurry and whirl of business, I fear the voice of your conscience is often stifled, and you cannot hear it. But the day may come when the great bell of conscience will make itself heard, whether you like it or not. The time may come when, laid aside in quietness, and obliged by illness to sit still, you may be forced to look within, and consider your soul's concerns. And then, when the great bell of awakened conscience is sounding in your ears, I trust that many a man who reads this paper may hear the voice of God and repent, may learn to thirst, and learn to come to Christ for relief. Yes, I pray to God that you may be taught to feel before it be too late!

(2) *But do you feel anything at this very moment?* Is your conscience awake and working? Are you sensible of spiritual thirst, and longing for relief? Then *hear the invitation* which I bring you in my Master's name this day: — "If any man," no matter who he may be — if any man, high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned — "if any man thirsts, let him come to Christ and drink." Hear and accept that invitation without delay. Wait for nothing. Wait for nobody. Who can tell, if you wait for "a convenient season," that it may not be too late? The hand of a living Redeemer is now held out from heaven; but it may be withdrawn. The Fountain is now open; but it may soon be closed forever. "If any man thirsts, let him come and drink" *without delay*. Though you have been a great sinner, and have resisted warnings, counsel, and sermons — yet *come*. Though you have sinned against light and knowledge, against a father's advice, and a mother's tears, though you have lived for years without a Sabbath, and without prayer — yet *come*. Do not say that you do not know how to come, that you do not understand what it means to believe, that you must wait for more light. Will a tired man say that he is too tired to lie down? or a drowning man, that he does not know how to lay hold on the hand stretched out to help him? Or the shipwrecked sailor, with a life-boat alongside the stranded hulk, that he does not know how to jump in? Oh, toss away these vain excuses! Arise, and come! The door is not shut. The fountain is not yet closed. The Lord Jesus invites you. It is enough that you feel thirsting, and desire to be saved. *Come* — come to Christ without delay. Who ever came to the fountain for sin and found it dry? Who ever went away unsatisfied?

(3) But have you come to Christ already, and found relief? Then *come nearer, nearer still*. The closer your communion with Christ, the more comfort you will feel. The more you daily live by the side of the Fountain, the more you will feel in yourself "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (Joh 4.14) You will not only be blessed yourself, but you will be a source of blessing to others.

In this evil world, you may not perhaps feel all the sensible comfort you could desire. But remember that you cannot have two heavens. Perfect happiness is yet to come. The devil

is not yet bound. There is “a good time coming” for all who feel their sins and come to Christ, and commit their thirsting souls to His keeping. When He comes again, they will be completely satisfied. They will remember the entire way by which they were led, and see the need of everything that befell them. Above all, they will wonder that they could ever live so long without Christ, and hesitate about coming to Him.

There is a pass in Scotland called Glencroe, which supplies a beautiful illustration of what heaven will be to the souls who come to Christ. The road through Glencroe carries the traveller up a long and steep ascent, with many a little turn and winding in its course. But once the top of the pass is reached, a stone is seen by the wayside with these simple words inscribed on it: — “*Rest, and be thankful.*” Those words describe the feelings with which every thirsting one who comes to Christ will enter heaven. The summit of the narrow way will at length be ours. We will cease from our weary journeyings, and sit down in the kingdom of God. We will look back on all the way of our lives with thankfulness, and see the perfect wisdom of every step in the steep ascent by which we were led. We will forget the toil of the upward journey in the glorious rest. Here in this world, our sense of rest in Christ at best is feeble and partial: we hardly seem at times to taste fully “the living water.” But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is imperfect will be done away. “When we awake in His likeness, we shall be satisfied.” (Psa 17.15) We will drink out of the river of His pleasures and thirst no more.

#### NOTE

THERE is a passage in an old writer which throws so much light on some points mentioned in this paper, that I make no excuse for giving it to the reader in its entirety. It comes from a work which is little known and less read. It has done me good, and I think it may do good to others.

“When a man is awakened, and brought to what all must be brought to (or to worse) — ‘What must I do to be saved?’ (Act 16.30, 31), we have the apostolic answer to it: ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, and your house.’ This answer is so old that, with many, it seems out of date. But it is still and will ever be fresh, and new, and savoury; and it is the only resolution of this grand case of conscience, as long as conscience and the world lasts. No wit or art of man will ever find a crack or flaw in it, or devise another or better answer; nor can anything but this alone rightly heal the wound of an awakened conscience.

“Let us set this man to seek resolution and relief in this case, from some masters in our Israel. According to their principles, they must say to him, ‘Repent, and mourn for your known sins, and leave them and loath them; and God will have mercy on you.’ ‘Alas!’ (says the poor man), ‘my heart is hard, and I cannot repent aright: indeed I find my heart more hard and vile than when I was secure in sin.’ If you speak to this man of qualifications for Christ, he knows nothing of them; if you speak of sincere obedience, his answer is native and ready: ‘Obedience is the work of a living man, and sincerity is only in a renewed soul.’ Therefore, *sincere* obedience is as impossible to a dead unrenewed sinner as *perfect* obedience is. Why should the right answer not be given to the awakened sinner: ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved?’ Tell him who Christ is, what He has done and suffered to obtain eternal redemption for sinners, and that it is according to the will of God His Father. Give him a plain downright narrative of the Gospel salvation wrought by the Son of God; tell him the history and mystery of the Gospel plainly. It may be that the Holy Ghost will work faith thereby, as He did in those first fruits of the Gentiles. (Act 10.44)

“If he asks what warrant he has to believe on Jesus Christ, tell him that he has an utter and indispensable necessity for it — for *without* believing on Him, he must perish eternally. Tell him

that he has God's gracious offer of Christ and all His redemption, with a promise that upon accepting the offer by faith, Christ and salvation with Him is his. Tell him that he has God's express commandment to believe on Christ's name (1Joh 3.23); and that he should be conscientious to obey *that* command, as well as *any* in the moral law. Tell him of Christ's ability and good-will to save; that no man was ever rejected by Him who cast himself upon Him; that desperate cases are the glorious triumphs of His art of saving. Tell him that there is no midst (or medium) between faith and unbelief; that there is no excuse for neglecting the one and continuing in the other; that believing on the Lord Jesus for salvation is more pleasing to God than all obedience to His law; and that, of all sins, unbelief is the most provoking to God, and the most damning to man. Against the greatness of his sins, the curse of the law, and the severity of God as Judge, there is no relief to be held out to him except the free and boundless grace of God in the merit of Christ's satisfaction, by the sacrifice of Himself.

"If he asks, What does it mean to believe on Jesus Christ? I find no such question in the Word. Rather, everyone in some way understood the notion of it: the Jews who did not believe on Him (Joh 6.28-30), nor the chief priests and Pharisees (Joh 7.48). The blind man (Joh 9.35), when Christ asked him, Do you believe on the Son of God? answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe on Him?" Immediately, when Christ told him (verse 37), he does not ask, "What does it mean to believe on Him?" Rather, "Lord, I believe;" and he worshipped Him: and so he both professed and exercised faith in Him. So too the father of the lunatic (Mar 9.23, 24), and the eunuch (Act 8.37). They all, both Christ's enemies and His disciples, knew that faith in Him was believing that the Man, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Son of God, the Messiah, and Saviour of the world, so as to receive and look for salvation in His name. (Act 4.12) This was the common report published by Christ, and His apostles, and His disciples, and known by all who heard it.

"If he still asks what he is to believe, tell him that he is not called to believe that he is in Christ, that his sins are pardoned, and that he is a justified man; but that he is to believe God's record concerning Christ. (1Joh 5.10-12) And this record is that God gives (that is, He offers) us eternal Life in His Son Jesus Christ; and that all who believe this report with their heart, and rest their souls on these glad tidings, shall be saved. (Rom 10.9-11) And thus he is to *believe*, that he may be *justified*. (Gal 2.16)

"If he still says that believing this is hard, this is a good doubt, but easily resolved. It tells of a man deeply humbled. Anybody may see his own impotence to *obey* the law of God fully; but few find the difficulty of *believing*. For his relief and resolution, ask him what he finds that makes believing so difficult for him? Is it unwillingness to be justified and saved? Is it unwillingness to be saved by Jesus Christ, to the praise of God's grace in Christ — thus voiding all boasting in himself? This he will surely deny. Is it a distrust of the truth of the Gospel record? This he dares not admit. Is it doubt of Christ's ability or good-will to save? This would contradict the testimony of God in the Gospel. Is it because he doubts having an interest in Christ and His redemption? Tell him that believing on Christ *makes* the interest in Him.

"If he says that he cannot believe on Jesus Christ because of the difficulty of exercising this faith, and that a Divine power is needed to draw it out, which he does not find, then you must tell him that believing in Jesus Christ is not *work*, but *resting* on Jesus Christ. You must tell him that this pretence is as unreasonable as if a man, wearied with a journey and not able to go one step further, should argue, 'I am so tired, that I am not able to lie down,' when indeed he can neither stand nor go. The poor wearied sinner can never believe on Jesus Christ till he finds that he can do nothing for himself; and in his first believing, he applies to Christ always for salvation, as a man hopeless and helpless in himself. And by such reasonings with him from the Gospel, the Lord will (as He has often done) convey faith, and joy, and peace by believing."

— Robert Traill's Works, 1696. Vol. I, 266-269.

## 18. “UNSEARCHABLE RICHES”

*“To me, who am less than the least of all saints, this grace is given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Eph 3.8.*

If we heard that sentence read for the first time, I think we would all feel it was a very remarkable one, even though we did not know by whom it was written. It is remarkable on account of the bold and striking figures of speech which it contains. “Less than the least of all saints;” — “Unsearchable riches of Christ;” — these are indeed “thoughts that breathe and words that burn.” <sup>74</sup>

But the sentence is doubly remarkable when we consider the man who wrote it. The writer was none other than the great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul — the leader of that noble little Jewish army which went forth from Palestine nineteen centuries ago, and turned the world upside down — that good soldier of Christ who left a deeper mark on mankind than any born of woman, except his sinless Master — a mark which abides to this very day. Surely such a sentence from the pen of such a man demands peculiar attention.

Let us fix our eyes steadily on this text, and notice in it three things: —

- I. First, *what St. Paul says of himself*. He says, “I am less than the least of all saints.”
- II. Secondly, *what St. Paul says of his ministerial office*. He says, “Grace is given to me to preach.”
- III. Thirdly, *what St. Paul says of the great subject of his preaching*. He calls it “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

I trust that a few words on each of these three points may help to fasten down the whole text in memories, consciences, hearts, and minds.

**I.** In the first place, let us *notice what St. Paul says of himself*.

The language he uses is singularly strong. The founder of famous Churches, the writer of fourteen inspired epistles, the man who was “not behind the very chiefest apostles,” “in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft,” — the man who “spent and was spent” for souls, and “counted all things but loss for Christ,” — the man who could truly say, “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,” <sup>75</sup> — what do we find him saying of himself? He employs an emphatic comparative and superlative. He says, “I am less than the least of all saints.” What a poor creature is the least saint! Yet St. Paul says, “I am less than that man.”

Such language as this, I suspect, is almost unintelligible to many who profess and call themselves Christians. Ignorant of the Bible and their own hearts alike, they cannot understand what a saint means when he speaks so humbly of himself and his attainments. “It is a mere fashion of speaking,” they will tell you; “it can only mean what St. Paul used to be when he was a novice, and first began to serve Christ.” It is so true that “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.” (1Cor 2.14) The prayers, the praises, the conflicts, the fears, the hopes, the joys, the sorrows of the true Christian, the whole

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<sup>74</sup> Thomas Gray, English poet (1716-1771), on poetry.

<sup>75</sup> 2Cor 11.5, 23, 12; Phi 3.8; 1.21.

experience of the seventh chapter of Romans — all, all are “foolishness” to the man of the world. Just as the blind man is no judge of a Reynolds, or a Gainsborough, and the deaf cannot appreciate Handel’s Messiah, so the unconverted man cannot fully understand an apostle’s lowly estimate of himself.

But we may rest assured that what St. Paul wrote with his pen, he palpably felt in his heart. The language of our text does not stand alone. It is even exceeded in other places. To the Philippians he says, “I have not attained, nor am I already perfect: I follow after.” To the Corinthians he says, “I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle.” To Timothy he says, “I am chief of sinners.” To the Romans he cries, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Phi 3.12; 1Cor 15.9; 1Tim 1.15; Rom 7.24) The plain truth is that St. Paul saw in his own heart of hearts, far more defects and infirmities than he saw in anyone else. The eyes of his understanding were so fully opened by the Holy Spirit of God, that he detected a hundred things wrong in himself which the dull eyes of other men never observed at all. In short, possessing great spiritual light, he had great insight into his own natural corruption, and was clothed from head to foot with humility. (1Pet 5.5)

Now, let us clearly understand that humility like St. Paul’s was not a peculiar characteristic of the great apostle of the Gentiles. On the contrary, it is one leading mark of *all* the most eminent saints of God in *every* age. The more real grace men have in their hearts, the deeper is their sense of sin. The more light the Holy Ghost pours into their souls, the more they discern their own infirmities, defilements, and darkness. The dead soul feels and sees nothing; with life comes clear vision, a tender conscience, and spiritual sensibility. Observe what lowly expressions Abraham, Jacob, Job, David, and John the Baptist, used about themselves. Study the biographies of modern saints like Bradford, Hooker, George Herbert, Beveridge, Baxter, and McCheyne. Mark how one common feature of character belongs to them all — a very deep sense of sin.

Superficial and shallow professors in the warmth of their first love may talk, if they will, of *perfection*. The great saints, in every era of Church history, from St. Paul down to this day, have always been “clothed with humility.”

He that desires to be saved, among the readers of this paper, let him know this day that the first steps towards heaven are a deep sense of sin, and a lowly estimate of ourselves. Let him cast away that weak and silly tradition that the beginning of religion is to feel we are “good.” Let him rather grasp that grand Scriptural principle that we must begin by feeling “*bad*,” and that until we really feel “*bad*,” we know nothing of true goodness or saving Christianity. Happy is he who has learned to draw near to God with the prayer of the publican, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” (Luk 18.13)

Let us all seek *humility*. No grace suits man so well. What are we that we should be proud? Of all creatures born into the world, none is so dependent as the child of Adam. *Physically* looked at, what body requires such care and attention, and is such a daily debtor to half of creation for food and clothing, as the body of man? *Mentally* looked at, how little do the wisest men know (and they are but few), and how ignorant the vast majority of mankind are, and what misery they create by their own folly! “We are but of yesterday,” says the book of Job, “and know nothing.” (Job 8.9) Surely there is no created being on earth or in heaven, that ought to be so humble as man.

Let us *seek humility*. There is no grace which so befits an English churchman. Our matchless Prayer-book, from first to last, puts the humblest language into the mouths of all who use it. The sentences at the beginning of morning and evening prayer, the General Confession, the Litany, the Communion Service — all, all are replete with lowly-minded and self-abasing expressions. All, with one harmonious voice, supply Church of England worshippers with clear teaching about our right position in the sight of God.

Let us all *seek more humility*, if we know anything of it now. The more we have of it, the more Christlike we will be. It is written of our blessed Master (though in Him there was no sin) that “being in the form of God He did not think it robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phi 2.6-8) And let us remember the words which precede that passage “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Depend on it: the nearer men draw to heaven, the more humble they become. In the hour of death, with one foot in the grave, with something of the light of heaven shining down upon them, hundreds of great saints and Church dignitaries — such men as Selden, Bishop Butler, Archbishop Longley — have left on record their confession that never till that hour did they see their sins so clearly, and feel so deeply their debt to mercy and grace. Heaven alone, I suppose, will fully teach us how humble we ought to be. Only then, when we stand within the veil, and look back on the whole way of life by which we were led, only then will we completely understand the need and beauty of humility. Strong language like St. Paul’s will not appear to us too strong in that day. No, indeed! We will cast our crowns before the throne, and realize what a great divine meant when he said, “The anthem in heaven will be, *What has God wrought*.” <sup>76</sup>

## II. In the second place, let us notice *what St. Paul says of his ministerial office*.

There is a grand simplicity in the Apostle’s words about this subject. He says, “Grace is given to me that I should preach.” The meaning of the sentence is plain: “To me is granted the privilege of being a messenger of good news. I have been commissioned to be a herald of glad tidings.” — Of course, we cannot doubt that St. Paul’s conception of the minister’s office included the administration of the sacraments, and doing all other things needful for edifying the body of Christ. But here, as in other places, it is evident that the leading idea continually before his mind was that the chief business of a minister of the New Testament is to be a preacher, an evangelist, God’s ambassador, God’s messenger, and the proclaimer of God’s good news to a fallen world. He says in another place, “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.” (1Cor 1.17)

I fail to see that St. Paul ever supports the favourite theory that there was intended to be a *sacerdotal* ministry, a *sacrificing priesthood* in the Church of Christ. There is not a word in the Acts, or in his Epistles to the Churches, to warrant such a notion. It is nowhere written, “God has set some in the Church, first apostles, then priests.” (1Cor 12.28) There is a conspicuous absence of the theory in the Pastoral Epistles to Timothy and Titus, where if anywhere, we might have expected to find it. On the contrary, in these very Epistles, we read such expressions as these: “God has manifested His Word through preaching,” “I am

<sup>76</sup> George Whitefield quoting Ralph Erskine (*Eighteen Sermons Preached by the Late Rev. George Whitefield*, Revised by Andrew Gifford, D.D., Newburyport, 1797) Sermon X, p. 195.

appointed a preacher.” “I am ordained a preacher.” “That by me the preaching might be fully known.” (1Tim 2.7; 2Tim 1.11; 2Tim 4.17; Tit 1.3) And to crown it all, one of his last injunctions to his friend Timothy when he leaves him in charge of an organized Church, is this pithy sentence: “Preach the Word.” (2Tim 4.2) In short, I believe St. Paul would have us understand that, however various the works for which the Christian minister is set apart, his first, foremost, and principal work is to be the preacher and proclaimer of God’s Word.

But, while we refuse to allow that a sacrificing priesthood has any warrant from Scripture, let us beware in these days that we do not rush into the extreme of undervaluing the office which the minister of Christ holds. There is some danger in this direction. Let us grasp firmly certain fixed principles about the Christian ministry and, however strong our dislike of priesthood and aversion to Romanism, let nothing tempt us to let these principles slip out of our hands. Surely there is solid middle ground between a grovelling idolatry of sacerdotalism <sup>77</sup> on one hand, and a disorderly anarchy on the other. Surely it does not follow, because we will not be Papists in this matter of the ministry, that we must be Quakers or Plymouth Brethren. <sup>78</sup> This, at any rate, was not in the mind of St. Paul.

(a) For one thing, let us settle it firmly in our minds that the ministerial office is a *Scriptural Institution*. I need not weary you with quotations to prove this point. I will simply advise you to read the Epistles to Timothy and Titus and judge for yourselves. If these Epistles do not authorize a ministry, there is, to my mind, no meaning in words. Take a jury of the first twelve intelligent, honest, disinterested, and unprejudiced men you can find, and set them down with a New Testament to examine this question by themselves: “Is the Christian ministry a Scriptural thing or not?” I have no doubt what their verdict would be.

(b) For another thing, let us settle it in our minds that the ministerial office is a *most wise and useful provision of God*. It secures the regular maintenance of all Christ’s ordinances and means of grace. It provides an undying machinery for promoting the awakening of sinners and the edification of saints. All experience proves that everybody’s business soon becomes nobody’s business; and if this is true in other matters, it is no less true in the matter of religion. Our God is a God of order, and a God who works by means, and we have no right to expect His cause to be kept up by constant miraculous interpositions, while His servants stand idle. For the uninterrupted preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments, no better plan can be devised than the appointment of a regular order of men who will give themselves wholly to Christ’s business.

(c) For another thing, let us settle it firmly in our minds that the ministerial office is an *honourable privilege*. It is an honour to be the Ambassador of a King: the very PERSON of such an officer of state is *respected*, and called *legally sacred*. It is an honour to bear the tidings of a victory such as Trafalgar and Waterloo. Before the invention of telegraphs, it was a highly coveted distinction. But how much greater honour is it to be the ambassador of the King of kings, and to proclaim the good news of the conquest achieved on Calvary! To directly serve such a Master, to carry such a message, to know

<sup>77</sup> *Sacerdotalism*: a belief that priests can act as mediators between human beings and God.

<sup>78</sup> Every well-informed person knows that, to the apprehension of most people, the Quakers and Plymouth Brethren appear to ignore the ministerial office altogether.

that the results of our work, if God blesses it, are eternal, this is indeed a privilege. Other labourers may work for a corruptible crown, but the minister of Christ works for an incorruptible crown. Never is a land in worse condition than when the ministers of religion have caused their office to be ridiculed and despised. It is a tremendous word in Malachi: “I have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept my ways.” (Mal 2.9) But whether men will hear or forbear, the office of a faithful ambassador is honourable. It was a fine saying of an old missionary on his death-bed, who died at the age of ninety-six, “The very best thing that a man can do is to preach the Gospel.”

Let me leave this branch of my subject with an earnest request that all who pray will never forget to make supplications and prayers and intercession for the ministers of Christ — that there never may be lacking a due supply of them at home and in the mission field — that they may be kept sound in the faith and holy in their lives, and that they make take heed to *themselves* as well as to the *doctrine*. (1Tim 4.16)

Oh, remember that while our office is honourable, useful, and Scriptural, it is also one of deep and painful responsibility! We watch for souls “as those who must give account” at the judgment day. (Heb 13.17) If souls are lost through unfaithfulness, their blood will be required at our hands. If we had only to read services and administer sacraments, to wear a peculiar dress and go through a round of ceremonies, and bodily exercises, and gestures, and postures, our position would be comparatively light. But this is *not* all. We have got to deliver our Master’s message — to keep back nothing that is profitable — to declare all the counsel of God. If we tell our congregations *less* than the truth or *more* than the truth, we may ruin immortal souls forever. Life and death are in the power of the preacher’s tongue. “Woe to us if we do not preach the Gospel!” (1Cor 9.16)

Once more I say, *Pray for us*. Who is sufficient for these things? Remember the old saying of the Fathers: “None are in more spiritual danger than ministers.” It is easy to criticise and find fault with us. We have a treasure in earthen vessels. We are men of like passions with yourselves, and not infallible. Pray for us in these trying, tempting, controversial days, that our Church may never lack bishops, priests, and deacons who are sound in the faith, bold as lions, “wise as serpents, and yet harmless as doves.” (Mat 10.16) The very man who said, “Grace is given to me to preach,” is the same man who said in another place, “Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men do not have faith.” (2Th 3.1, 2)

**III.** Let us now notice, in the last place, *what St. Paul says of the great subject of his preaching*. He calls it “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

That the converted man of Tarsus should preach “*Christ*” is no more than we might expect from his antecedents. Having found peace through the blood of the cross himself, we may be sure that he would always tell the story of the cross to others. He never wasted precious time in exalting a mere rootless morality, in descanting on vague abstractions and empty platitudes — such as “the true,” and “the noble,” and “the earnest,” and “the beautiful,” and “the germs of goodness in human nature,” and the like. He always went to the root of the matter, and showed men their great family disease, their desperate state as sinners, and the Great Physician needed by a sin-sick world.

That he should preach Christ among “*the Gentiles*” again, is in keeping with all we know of his line of action in all places and among all people. Wherever he travelled and stood up to preach, Jesus and His vicarious death, Jesus and His resurrection, was the keynote of his sermons — at Antioch, Lystra, Philippi, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, among Greeks or Romans, among learned or unlearned, among Stoics and Epicureans, before rich or poor, barbarians, Scythians, bond or free. Varying his mode of address according to his audience, as he wisely did, the pith and heart of his preaching was *Christ crucified*.

But in the text before us, you will observe that he uses a very peculiar expression, an expression which unquestionably stands alone in his writings — “*the unsearchable riches of Christ*” It is the strong, burning language of one who always remembered his debt to Christ’s mercy and grace, and loved to show how intensely he felt it by his words. St. Paul was not a man to act or speak by halves. (*Quicquid fecit valdè fecit*) He never forgot the road to Damascus, the house of Judas in the street called Strait, the visit of good Ananias, the scales falling from his eyes, and his own marvellous passage from death to life. These things are always fresh and green before his mind; and so he is not content to say, “Grace is given me to preach Christ.” No, he amplifies his subject. He calls it “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

But what did the Apostle mean when he spoke of “unsearchable riches”? This is a hard question to answer. No doubt he saw in Christ such a boundless provision for all the wants of man’s soul, that he knew no other phrase to convey his meaning. From whatever standpoint he beheld Jesus, he saw in Him far more than mind could conceive, or tongue could tell. What he precisely intended must necessarily be a matter of conjecture. But it may be useful to set down in detail some of the things which most probably were in his mind. It *may*, it *must*, it *ought* to be useful. For after all, let us remember that these “*riches of Christ*” are riches which you and I need in England just as much as St. Paul; and best of all, these “*riches*” are treasured up in Christ for you and me as much as they were 1900 years ago. *They are still there*. They are still offered freely to all who are willing to have them. They are still the property of everyone who repents and believes. Let us glance briefly at some of them.

(a) Set down in your minds, first and foremost, that there are unsearchable riches in *Christ’s person*. That miraculous union of perfect Man and perfect God in our Lord Jesus Christ is a great mystery, no doubt, which we have no line to fathom. It is a high thing; and we cannot attain to it. But mysterious as that union may be, it is a mine of comfort and consolation to all who can rightly regard it. Infinite power and infinite sympathy are met together and combined in our Saviour. If He had been only *Man* He could not have saved us. If He had been only *God* (I speak with reverence) He could not have been “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” nor “allowed Himself to be tempted.” (Heb 2.18; 4.15) As God, He is mighty to save; and as Man, He is exactly suited to be our Head, Representative, and Friend. Let those who never think deeply, taunt us if they will, with squabbling about creeds and dogmatic theology. But let thoughtful Christians never be ashamed to believe and hold fast the neglected doctrine of the *Incarnation*, and the union of two natures in our Saviour. It is a rich and precious truth that our Lord Jesus Christ is both “God and Man.”

(b) Set down, next, in your minds that there are unsearchable riches in the *work which Christ accomplished for us*, when He lived on earth, died, and rose again. Truly and indeed, “He finished the work which His Father gave Him to do.” (Joh 17.4)

- the work of *atonement* for sin,
- the work of *reconciliation*,
- the work of *redemption*,
- the work of *satisfaction*,
- the work of *substitution* as “the just for the unjust.”

It pleases some men, I know, to call these short phrases “man-made theological terms, human dogmas,” and the like. But they will find it hard to prove that each of these much-abused phrases does not honestly contain the substance of plain texts of Scripture — which for convenience’ sake, like the word *Trinity*, divines have packed into a single word. And each phrase is very rich.

(c) Set down next in your minds, that there are unsearchable riches in the *offices which Christ fills at this moment*, as He lives for us at the right hand of God. He is at once our *Mediator, Advocate, Priest, Intercessor, Shepherd, Bishop, Physician, Captain, King, Master, Head, Forerunner, Elder Brother*, and the *Bridegroom* of our souls. No doubt these offices are worthless to those who know nothing of vital religion. But to those who live the life of faith, and seek first the kingdom of God, each office is precious as gold.

(d) Set down next in your minds, that there are unsearchable riches in the *names and titles which are applied to Christ* in the Scriptures. Their number is very great, as every careful Bible-reader knows, and I cannot of course pretend to do more than select a few of them. Think for a moment of such titles as,

- the Lamb of God
- the Bread of Life
- the Fountain of living waters
- the Light of the World
- the Door
- the Way
- the Vine
- the Rock
- the Cornerstone
- the Christian’s robe
- the Christian’s altar.

Think of all these names, I say, and consider how much they contain. To the careless, worldly man they are mere “words,” and nothing more; but to the true Christian, each title, if beaten out and developed, will be found to have within its bosom a wealth of blessed truth.

(e) Set down lastly in your minds, that there are unsearchable riches in the *characteristic qualities, attributes, dispositions, and intentions of Christ’s mind towards man*, as we find them revealed in the New Testament. In Him there are,

- riches of mercy, love, and compassion for sinners;
- riches of power to cleanse, pardon, forgive, and to save to the uttermost;
- riches of willingness to receive all who come to Him repenting and believing;

- riches of ability to change by His Spirit the hardest hearts and worst characters;
- riches of tender *patience* to bear with the weakest believer;
- riches of *strength* to help His people to the end, notwithstanding every foe without and within;
- riches of *sympathy* for all who are cast down and who bring their troubles to Him; and last but not least,
- riches of *glory* to reward when He comes again to raise the dead and gather His people to be with Him in His kingdom.

Who can estimate these riches? The children of this world may regard them with indifference, or turn away from them with disdain; but those who feel the value of their souls, know better. They will say with one voice, “There are no riches like those which are laid up in Christ for His people.”

For best of all, these riches are *unsearchable*. They are a mine which, however long it may be worked, is never exhausted. They are a *fountain* which, however many draw its waters, never runs dry. The sun in heaven has been shining for thousands of years, and giving light, and life, and warmth, and fertility to the whole surface of the globe. There is not a tree or a flower in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America which is not a debtor to the sun. And *still* the sun shines on for generation after generation, and season after season, rising and setting with unbroken regularity, giving to all, taking from none, and to all ordinary eyes the same in light and heat that it was in the day of creation — the great common benefactor of mankind. Just so it is, if any illustration can approach the reality, just so it is with *Christ*. He is still “the Sun of righteousness” to all mankind. (Mal 4.2) Millions have drawn from Him in days gone by; and looking to Him, they have lived with comfort, and died with comfort. Myriads at this moment are drawing from Him daily supplies of mercy, grace, peace, strength, and help, and they find “all fulness” dwelling in Him. And yet, half the riches laid up in Him for mankind, I do not doubt, is utterly unknown! Surely the Apostle might well use that phrase, “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

Let me now conclude this paper with three words of PRACTICAL APPLICATION. For convenience’ sake I will put them in the form of questions; and I invite each reader of this volume to examine them quietly and try to answer them.

(1) First then, let me ask, *What do you think of yourself?* You have seen and heard what St. Paul thought of himself. Now, what are your thoughts about yourself? Have you found out the grand foundation-truth that you are a sinner, a guilty sinner in the sight of God?

The cry for more education in this day is loud and incessant. Ignorance is universally deplored. But you may depend, there is no ignorance so common and so mischievous as ignorance of ourselves. Yes, men may know all arts, sciences, languages, political economy, and state-craft, and yet be miserably ignorant of their own hearts and their own state before God.

Be very sure that self-knowledge is the first step towards heaven. To know God’s unspeakable perfection, and our own immense imperfection — to see our own unspeakable defectiveness and corruption, is the A-B-C in saving religion. The more real inward light we have, the more humble and lowly-minded we will be, and the more we will understand the value of that despised thing, the Gospel of Christ. He that thinks worst

of himself and his own doings, is perhaps the best Christian before God. It would be well for many if they would pray night and day this simple prayer: "Lord, show me myself."

(2) Secondly, *what do you think of the ministers of Christ?* Strange as that question may seem, I truly believe that the kind of answer a man would give to it, if he speaks honestly, is very often a fair test of the state of his heart.

Observe that I am not asking what you think of an idle, worldly, inconsistent clergyman — a sleeping watchman and faithless shepherd. No! I ask what you think of the faithful minister of Christ, who honestly exposes sin, and pricks your conscience. Mind how you answer that question. Too many, nowadays, only like those ministers who prophesy smooth things and let their sins alone; who flatter their pride and amuse their intellectual taste, but never sound an alarm; and never tell them of a wrath to come. When Ahab saw Elijah, he said, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" (1Kng 21.20) When Ahab heard Micaiah's name, he cried, "I hate him because he does not prophesy good of me, but evil." (1Kng 22.8) Alas, there are many like Ahab in the nineteenth century! They like a ministry which does not make them uncomfortable, and send them home ill at ease. How is it with you? Oh, believe me, he is the best friend who tells you the most truth! It is an evil sign in the Church when Christ's witnesses are silenced, or persecuted, and men hate the man who reproves. (Isa 29.21) It was a solemn saying of the prophet to Amaziah: "Now, I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this, and not hearkened to my counsel." (2Chr 25.16)

(3) Last of all, *what do you think of Christ Himself?* Is He great or little in your eyes? Does He come first or second in your estimation? Is He before or behind His Church, His ministers, His sacraments, His ordinances? Where is He in your heart and your mind's eye?

After all, this is the question of questions! Pardon, peace, rest of conscience, hope in death, heaven itself — all hinge upon our answer. To know Christ is eternal life. To be without Christ is to be without God. "He that has the Son has life; and he that does not have the Son of God, does not have life." (1Joh 5.12) The friends of purely secular education, the enthusiastic advocates of reform and progress, the worshippers of reason, intellect, mind, and science, may say what they please, and do all they can to mend the world. But they will find their labour in vain if they do not make allowance for the fall of man — if there is no place for Christ in their schemes. There is a sore disease at the heart of mankind, which will baffle all their efforts, and defeat all their plans — and that disease is sin. Oh, that people would only see and recognize the corruption of human nature, and the uselessness of all efforts to improve man which are not based on the remedial system of the Gospel! Yes, the plague of sin is in the world; and no waters will ever heal that plague except those which flow from the fountain for all sin — *a crucified Christ*.

But, to wind it all up, where is *boasting*? As a great divine said on his death-bed, "We are all of us only half awake." The best Christian among us knows but little of his glorious Saviour, even after he had learned to believe. We see through a glass darkly. We do not realize the "unsearchable riches" there are in Him. When we wake up in His likeness in another world, we will be amazed that we knew Him so imperfectly, and loved Him so little. Let us seek to know Him better now, and live in closer communion with Him. So living, we will feel no need of human priests and earthly confessionals. We will feel,

“I have all and I abound: I want nothing more:

- Christ dying for me on the cross
- Christ ever interceding for me at God’s right hand
- Christ dwelling in my heart by faith
- Christ soon coming again to gather me and all His people together to part no more.
- Christ is enough for me.

Having Christ, I have ‘*unsearchable riches!*’”

“The good I have is from His stores supplied,  
The ill is only what He deems the best;  
He for my Friend, I’m rich with nought beside,  
And poor without Him, though of all possess’d:  
Changes may come, I take or I resign,  
Content while I am His, and He is mine.

“While here, alas! I know but half His love,  
But half discern Him, and but half adore;  
But when I meet Him in the realms above,  
I hope to love Him better, praise Him more,  
And feel, and tell, amid the choir divine,  
How fully I am His, and He is mine.” <sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Hymn: “Long Did I Toil and Knew No Earthly Rest” by Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847).

## 19. WANTS OF THE TIMES

*“Men that had understanding of the times.” — 1Chr 12.32.*

THESE words were written about the tribe of Issachar, in the days when David first began to reign over Israel. It seems that after Saul’s unhappy death, some of the tribes of Israel were undecided what to do. “Under which king?” was the question of the day in Palestine. Men doubted whether they should cling to the family of Saul, or accept David as their king. Some hung back, and would not commit themselves; others came forward boldly, and declared for David. Among these last were many of the children of Issachar; and the Holy Ghost gives them a special word of praise. He says, “They were men that had understanding of the times.”

I cannot doubt that this sentence, like every sentence in Scripture, was written for our learning. These men of Issachar are set before us as a pattern to be imitated and an example to be followed; for it is a most important thing to understand the *times* in which we live, and to know what those times require. The wise men in the court of Ahasuerus “knew the times.” (Est 1.13) Our Lord Jesus Christ blames the Jews because they “did not know the time of their visitation,” and did not “discern the signs of the times.” (Mat 16.3; Luk 19.44) Let us take heed lest we fall into the same sin. The man who is content to sit ignorantly by his own fireside, wrapped up in his own private affairs, and has no public eye for what is going on in the Church and the world, is a miserable patriot, and a poor style of Christian. Next to our Bibles and our own hearts, our Lord would have us study our own times.

Now, I propose in this paper to consider what *our own times* require at our hands. All ages have their own peculiar dangers for professing Christians, and all consequently demand special attention to peculiar duties. I ask my readers to give me their minds for a few minutes while I try to show them what the times require of English Christians, and particularly of English Churchmen. There are five points which I propose to bring before you, and I will speak of them plainly and without reserve. “If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for the battle?” (1Cor 14.8)

**I.** First and foremost, the times require of us *a bold and unflinching maintenance of the entire truth of Christianity, and the Divine authority of the Bible.*

Our lot is cast in an age of abounding *unbelief, scepticism*, and I fear that I must add, *infidelity*. Never, perhaps, since the days of Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, was the truth of revealed religion so openly and unblushingly assailed; and never was the assault so speciously and plausibly conducted. The words which Bishop Butler wrote in 1736 are curiously applicable to our own days: — “It has come to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not even a subject of inquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this was an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were, by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.” (*Butter’s Analogy*, Introduction) I often wonder what the good Bishop would have now said, if he had lived in the present day.

In reviews, magazines, newspapers, lectures, essays, and sometimes even in sermons, scores of clever writers are incessantly waging war against the very foundations of

Christianity. Reason, science, geology, anthropology, modern discoveries, free thought, are all boldly asserted to be on their side. No educated person, we are constantly told nowadays, can really believe supernatural religion, or the plenary inspiration of the Bible, or the possibility of miracles. Such ancient doctrines as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the atonement, the obligation of the Sabbath, the necessity and efficacy of prayer, the existence of the devil, and the reality of future punishment, are quietly put on the shelf as useless old Almanacs, or contemptuously thrown overboard as lumber! And all this is done so cleverly, and with such an appearance of candour and liberality, and with such compliments to the capacity and nobility of human nature, that multitudes of unstable Christians are carried away as by a flood, and become partially unsettled, if they do not make complete shipwreck of their faith.

The existence of this plague of unbelief must not surprise us for a moment. It is only an old enemy in a new dress, an old disease in a new form. Since the day when Adam and Eve fell, the devil has never ceased to tempt men not to believe God; and he has said, directly or indirectly, "You shall not die even if you do not believe." In the latter days especially, we have the warrant of Scripture for expecting an abundant crop of unbelief: — "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" — "Evil men and seducers will grow worse and worse." — "There will come in the last days scoffers." (Luk 18.8; 2Tim 3.13; 2Pet 3.3) Here in England, scepticism is that natural rebound from semi-popery and superstition, which many wise men have long predicted and expected. It is precisely that swing of the pendulum which far-sighted students of human nature looked for; and it has come.

But as I tell you not to be surprised at the widespread scepticism of the times, so I must also urge you not to be *shaken in mind by it*, or moved from your steadfastness. There is no real cause for alarm. The ark of God is not in danger, though the oxen seem to shake it. Christianity has survived the attacks of Hume and Hobbes and Tindal — of Collins and Woolston and Bolingbroke and Chubb — of Voltaire and Payne and Holyoak. These men made a great noise in their day, and frightened weak people; but they produced no more effect than idle travellers produce by scratching their names on the great pyramid of Egypt. Depend on it, Christianity in like manner will survive the attacks of the clever writers of these times. The startling novelty of many modern objections to Revelation, no doubt, makes them seem more weighty than they really are. It does not follow, however, that hard knots cannot be untied because our fingers cannot untie them, or formidable difficulties cannot be explained because our eyes cannot see through or explain them. When you cannot answer a sceptic, be content to wait for more light; but never forsake a great principle. In religion, as in many scientific questions, said Faraday, "the highest philosophy is often a judicious suspense of judgment." He who believes will not make haste: he can afford to wait.

When sceptics and infidels have said all they can, we must not forget that there are three great broad facts which they have never explained away; and I am convinced they never can, and never will. Let me tell you briefly what they are. They are very simple facts, and any plain man can understand them.

(a) The first fact is *Jesus Christ Himself*. If Christianity is a mere invention of man, and the Bible is not from God, how can infidels explain Jesus Christ? They cannot deny His existence in history. How is it that without force or bribery, without arms or money, He

has made such an immensely deep mark on the world, as He certainly has? Who was He? What was He? Where did He come from? How is it that there has never been one like Him, neither before nor after, since the beginning of historical times? They cannot explain it. Nothing can explain it but the great foundation principle of revealed religion, that Jesus Christ is God, and His Gospel is all true.

(b) The second fact is *the Bible itself*. If Christianity is a mere invention of man, and the Bible is of no more authority than any other uninspired volume, how is it that the Book is what it is? How is it that a Book written by a few Jews in a remote corner of the earth — written at distant periods without consort or collusion among the writers — written by members of a nation which, compared to Greeks and Romans, did nothing for literature — how is it that this Book stands entirely alone, and there is nothing that even approaches it,

- for high views of God,
- for true views of man,
- for solemnity of thought,
- for grandeur of doctrine, and
- for purity of morality?

What account can the infidel give of this Book — so deep, so simple, so wise, so free from defects? He cannot explain its existence and nature on his principles. We alone can do that, who hold that the Book is Supernatural and of God.

(c) The third fact is *the effect which Christianity has produced on the world*. If Christianity is a mere invention of man, and not a supernatural, Divine revelation, how is it that it has wrought such a complete alteration in the state of mankind? Any well-read man knows that the moral difference between the condition of the world *before* Christianity was planted and since Christianity took root, is the difference between night and day — the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of the devil. At this very moment, I defy anyone to look at the map of the world, and compare the countries where men are Christians, with those where men are not Christians, and to deny that these countries are as different as light and darkness, black and white. How can any infidel explain this on his principles? He cannot do it. We alone can, who believe that Christianity came down from God, and is the only Divine religion in the world.

Whenever you are tempted to be alarmed at the progress of infidelity, look at the three facts I have just mentioned, and cast your fears away. Take up your position boldly behind the ramparts of these three facts, and you may safely defy the utmost efforts of modern sceptics. They may often ask you a hundred questions you cannot answer, and start ingenious problems about various readings, or inspiration, or geology, or the origin of man, or the age of the world, which you cannot solve. They may vex and irritate you with wild speculations and theories, of which you cannot prove the fallacy at the time, though you feel it. But be calm and fear not. Remember the three great facts I have named, and boldly challenge sceptics to explain them away. The difficulties of Christianity no doubt are great; but depend on it: they are nothing compared to the DIFFICULTIES OF INFIDELITY.

**II.** In the second place, the times require at our hands *distinct and decided views of Christian doctrine*.

I cannot withhold my conviction that the professing Church of the nineteenth century is as much damaged by laxity and indistinctness about matters of doctrine *within*, as it is by sceptics and unbelievers *without*. Myriads of professing Christians nowadays seem utterly unable to distinguish things that differ. Like people afflicted with colour-blindness, they are incapable of discerning what is true and what is false, what is sound and what is unsound. If a preacher of religion is only clever, eloquent, and earnest, they appear to think he is all right, however strange and heterogeneous his sermons may be. They are apparently destitute of spiritual sense, and cannot detect error. Popery or Protestantism, an atonement or no atonement, a personal Holy Ghost or no Holy Ghost, future punishment or no future punishment, High Church or Low Church or Broad Church, Trinitarianism, Arianism, or Unitarianism, nothing comes amiss to them: they can swallow it all, if they cannot digest it! Carried away by a fancied liberality and charity, they seem to think that, everybody is right and nobody is wrong — every clergyman is sound and none are unsound — everybody is going to be saved and nobody is going to be lost. Their religion is made up of negatives; and the only positive thing about them is that they dislike *distinctness*, and think all extreme, decided, and positive views are very naughty and very wrong!

These people live in a kind of mist or fog. They see nothing clearly, and do not know what they believe. They have not made up their minds about any great point in the Gospel, and they seem content to be *honorary members of all schools of thought*. For their lives they could not tell you what they think is truth about justification, regeneration, sanctification, the Lord's Supper, baptism, faith, conversion, inspiration, or the future state. They are eaten up with a morbid dread of CONTROVERSY and an ignorant dislike of PARTY SPIRIT; and yet they really cannot define what they mean by these phrases. The only point you can make out is that they admire earnestness and cleverness and charity, and cannot believe that any clever, earnest, charitable man can ever be in the wrong! And so they live on *undecided*; and too often undecided, they drift down to the grave, without comfort in their religion, and I am afraid, often without hope.

The explanation of this boneless, nerveless, jelly-fish condition of soul is not difficult to find. To begin with, the heart of man is naturally in the dark about religion — has no intuitive sense of truth — and really NEEDS instruction and illumination. Besides this, the natural heart in most men hates exertion in religion, and cordially dislikes patient, painstaking inquiry. Above all, the natural heart generally likes the praise of others, shrinks from collision, and loves to be thought charitable and liberal. The whole result is that a kind of broad religious “agnosticism” just suits an immense number of people, and specially suits young persons. They are content to shovel aside all disputed points as rubbish; and if you charge them with indecision, they will tell you: “I do not pretend to understand controversy; I decline to examine controverted points. I daresay it is all the same in the long run.” — Who does not know that such people swarm and abound everywhere?

Now, I beseech all who read this paper to beware of this undecided state of mind in religion. It is a pestilence which walks in darkness, and a destruction that kills in noonday. It is a lazy, idle frame of soul which, doubtless, saves men the trouble of thought and investigation; but it is a frame of soul for which there is no warrant in the Bible, nor yet in the Articles or Prayer-book of the Church of England. For your own soul's sake, dare to make up your mind what you believe, and dare to have positive, distinct views of truth

and error. Never, never be afraid to hold decided doctrinal opinions; and let no fear of man and no morbid dread of being thought party-spirited, narrow, or controversial, make you rest contented with a bloodless, boneless, tasteless, colourless, lukewarm, undogmatic Christianity.

Mark what I say. If you want to *do good* in these times, you must throw aside indecision, and take up a distinct, sharply-cut, doctrinal religion. If you believe *little*, those to whom you try to do good will believe *nothing*. The victories of Christianity, wherever they have been won, have been won by distinct doctrinal theology; by telling men roundly of Christ's vicarious death and sacrifice; by showing them Christ's substitution on the cross, and His precious blood; by teaching them justification by faith, and bidding them to believe on a crucified Saviour; by preaching ruin by sin, redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Spirit; by lifting up the brazen serpent; by telling men to look and live — to believe, repent, and be converted. This — *this* is the only teaching which for eighteen centuries God has honoured with success, and is honouring at the present day both at home and abroad. Let the clever advocates of a broad and undogmatic theology — the preachers of the Gospel of earnestness, and sincerity, and cold morality — let them, I say, show us at this day any English village or parish, city, town, or district, which has been evangelized without “dogma,” by their principles. They cannot do it, and they never will. Christianity without distinct doctrine is a powerless thing. It may be beautiful to some minds, but it is childless and barren. There is no getting over the facts. The good that is done in the earth may be comparatively small. Evil may abound, and ignorant impatience may murmur and cry out that Christianity has failed. But depend on it, if we want to “do good” and shake the world, we must fight with the old apostolic weapons, and stick to “dogma.” No dogma, no fruits! No positive evangelical doctrine, no evangelization!

Mark once more what I say. *The men who have done most for the Church of England*, and made the deepest mark on their day and generation, have always been men of most decided and distinct doctrinal views. It is the bold, decided, outspoken man, like Capel Molyneux, or our grand old Protestant champion Hugh McNeile, who makes a deep impression, and sets people thinking, and “turns the world upside down.” It was “dogma” in the apostolic ages which emptied the heathen temples and shook Greece and Rome. It was “dogma” which awoke Christendom from its slumbers at the time of the Reformation, and spoiled the Pope of one third of his subjects. It was “dogma” which 100 years ago revived the Church of England in the days of Whitefield, Wesley, Venn, and Romaine, and blew up our dying Christianity into a burning flame. It is “dogma” at this moment which gives power to every successful mission, whether at home or abroad. It is doctrine — *doctrine*, clear ringing doctrine — which, like the ram's horns at Jericho, casts down the opposition of the devil and sin. Let us cling to *decided* doctrinal views, whatever some may please to say in these times, and we will do well for ourselves, well for others, well for the Church of England, and well for Christ's cause in the world.

**III.** In the third place, the times require of us an *awakened and livelier sense of the unscriptural and soul-ruining character of Romanism*.

This is a painful subject; but it imperatively demands some plain speaking.

The FACTS of the case are very simple. No intelligent observer can fail to see that the tone of public feeling in England about Romanism has undergone a great change in the last

forty years. Father Oakley, the well-known pervert, an ally of Cardinal Newman, asserts this triumphantly in a recent number of the *Contemporary Review*. And I am sorry to say that, in my judgment, he speaks the truth. There is no longer that general dislike, dread, and aversion to Popery, which was once almost universal in this realm. The edge of the old British feeling about Protestantism seems blunted and dull. Some profess to be tired of all religious controversy, and are ready to sacrifice God's truth for the sake of peace. — Some look on Romanism as simply one among many English forms of religion, and neither worse nor better than others. — Some try to persuade us that Romanism has changed, and is not nearly so bad as it used to be. — Some boldly point to the faults of Protestants, and loudly cry that Romanists are quite as good as ourselves. — Some think it fine and liberal to maintain that we have no right to think anyone wrong who is in earnest about his creed. — And yet the two great historical facts, (a) that ignorance, immorality, and superstition reigned supreme in England 400 years ago *under Popery*, (b) that the Reformation was the greatest blessing God ever gave to this land — both these are *facts* which no one but a Papist ever thought of disputing fifty years ago! In the present day, alas, it is convenient and fashionable to forget them! In short, at the rate we are going, I will not be surprised if it is soon proposed to repeal the Act of Settlement and to allow the Crown of England to be worn by a Papist.

The *causes* of this melancholy change of feeling are not hard to discover.

(a) It arises partly from the untiring zeal of the Romish Church herself. Her agents never slumber or sleep. They compass sea and land to make one proselyte. They creep in everywhere, like the Egyptian frogs, and leave no stone unturned, in the palace or the workhouse, to promote their cause.

(b) It has been furthered immensely by the proceedings of the Ritualistic party in the Church of England. That energetic and active body has been vilifying the Reformation and sneering at Protestantism for many years, with only too much success. It has corrupted, leavened, blinded, and poisoned the minds of many Churchmen by incessant misrepresentation. It has gradually familiarized people with every distinctive doctrine and practice of Romanism — the real presence — the mass — auricular confession and priestly absolution — the sacerdotal character of the ministry — the monastic system — and a histrionic, sensuous, showy style of public worship — and the natural result is that many simple people see no mighty harm in downright genuine Popery!

Last, but not least, the spurious liberality of the way we live furthers the Romeward tendency. It is fashionable now to say that all sects should be equal — that the State should have nothing to do with religion — that all creeds should be regarded with equal favour and respect — and that there is a substratum of common truth at the bottom of all kinds of religion, whether Buddhism, Mohammedanism, or Christianity! The consequence is that myriads of ignorant folk begin to think there is nothing peculiarly dangerous in the tenets of Papists any more than in the tenets of Methodists, Independents, Presbyterians, or Baptists — and that we ought to let Romanism alone and never expose its unscriptural and Christ-dishonouring character.

The *consequences* of this changed tone of feeling, I am bold to say, will be most disastrous and mischievous, unless it can be checked. Once we let Popery get her foot again on the neck of England, there will be an end of all our national greatness. God will forsake us and we will sink to the level of Portugal and Spain.

- With Bible-reading discouraged;
- with private judgment forbidden;
- with the way to Christ's cross narrowed or blocked up;
- with priestcraft re-established;
- with auricular confession set up in every parish;
- with monasteries and nunneries dotted over the land;
- with women everywhere kneeling like serfs and slaves at the feet of clergymen;
- with men casting off all faith, and becoming sceptics;
- with schools and colleges made seminaries of Jesuitism;
- with free thought denounced and anathematized;

*with all these things*, the distinctive manliness and independence of the British character will gradually dwindle, wither, pine away, and be destroyed; and England will be ruined. And all these things, I firmly believe, will come unless the old feeling about the value of Protestantism can be revived.

I warn all who read this paper, and I warn my fellow-churchmen in particular, that the times require you to awake and be on your guard. Beware of Romanism and beware of any religious teaching which, wittingly or unwittingly, paves the way to it. I beseech you to realize the painful fact that the protestantism of this country is gradually ebbing away; and I entreat you, as Christians and patriots, to resist the growing tendency to forget the blessings of the English Reformation.

For Christ's sake, for the sake of the Church of England, for the sake of our country, for the sake of our children, let us not drift back to Romish ignorance, superstition, priestcraft, and immorality. Our fathers tried Popery long ago, for centuries, and threw it off at last with disgust and indignation. Let us not put the clock back and return to Egypt. Let us have no peace with Rome till Rome adjures her errors and is at peace with Christ. Till Rome does *that*, the vaunted re-union of Western Churches, which some talk of and press upon our notice, is an insult to Christianity.

Read your Bibles and store your minds with Scriptural arguments. A Bible-reading laity is a nation's surest defence against error. I have no fear for English Protestantism if the English laity will only do their duty. Read your Thirty-nine Articles, and "Jewell's Apology,"<sup>80</sup> and see how those neglected documents speak of Romish doctrines. We clergymen, I fear, are often sadly to blame. We break the first Canon, which bids us to preach four times every year against the Pope's supremacy! Too often we behave as if "giant Pope" was dead and buried, and never name him. Too often, for fear of giving offence, we neglect to show our people the real nature and evil of Popery.

I entreat my readers, beside the Bible and Articles, to read history and see what Rome did in days gone by. Read how she trampled on your country's liberties, plundered your forefathers' pockets, and kept the whole nation ignorant, superstitious, and immoral. Read how Archbishop Laud ruined Church and State, and brought himself and King Charles to the scaffold by his foolish, obstinate, and God-displeasing effort to unprotestantize the Church of England. Read how the last Popish King of England, James the second, lost his crown by his daring attempt to put down protestantism and

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<sup>80</sup> <https://www.anglican.net/works/john-jewel-apology-answer-defence-church-of-england/>

reintroduce Popery. And do not forget that Rome never changes. It is her boast and glory that she is infallible, and always the same.

Read facts, standing out at this minute on the face of the globe, if you will not read history. What has made Italy and Sicily what they were till very lately? *Popery*. — What has made the South American States what they are? *Popery*. — What has made Spain and Portugal what they are? *Popery*. — What has made Ireland what she is in Munster, Leinster, and Connaught? *Popery*. — What makes Scotland, the United States, and our own beloved England the powerful, prosperous countries they are, and I pray God they may long continue? I answer, unhesitatingly, *Protestantism* — a free Bible, and the principles of the Reformation. Oh, think twice before you cast aside the principles of the Reformation! Think twice before you give way to the prevailing tendency to favour Popery and go back to Rome.

The Reformation,

- found Englishmen steeped in ignorance, and left them in possession of knowledge
- found them without Bibles, and placed a Bible in every parish
- found them in darkness, and left them in comparative light
- found them priest-ridden, and left them enjoying the liberty which Christ bestows
- found them strangers to the blood of atonement, to faith and grace and real holiness, and left them with the key to these things in their hands
- found them blind, and left them seeing
- found them slaves, and left them free.

Forever let us thank God for the Reformation! It lighted a candle which we should never allow to be extinguished or burn dim. Surely I have a right to say that the times require of us a renewed sense of the evils of Romanism, and of the enormous value of the Protestant Reformation!

**IV.** In the fourth place, the times require of us *a higher standard of personal holiness, and an increased attention to practical religion in daily life.*

I must honestly declare my conviction that, since the days of the Reformation, there never has been so much profession of religion without practice, so much talking about God without walking with Him, so much hearing God's words without doing them, as there is in England at this present date. Never were there so many empty tubs and tinkling cymbals! Never was there so much formality and so little reality.

The whole tone of men's minds on what constitutes practical Christianity seems lowered. The old golden standard of the behaviour which becomes a Christian man or woman appears debased and degenerated. You may see scores of religious people (so-called) continually doing things which in days gone by would have been thought utterly inconsistent with vital religion. They see no harm in such things as card-playing, theatre-going, dancing, incessant novel-reading, and Sunday-travelling, and they cannot in the least understand what you mean by objecting to them! The ancient tenderness of conscience about such things seems dying away and becoming extinct, like the dodo-bird.

And when you venture to remonstrate with young communicants who indulge in them, they only stare at you as an old-fashioned, narrow-minded, fossilized person, and say, "Where is the harm?" In short, laxity of ideas among young men, and "fastness" and levity

among young women, are only too common characteristics of the rising generation of Christian professors.

Now, in saying all this I would not be mistaken. I disclaim the slightest wish to recommend an ascetic religion. Monasteries, nunneries, complete retirement from the world, and refusal to do our duty in it, all these I hold to be unscriptural and mischievous nostrums. Nor can I ever see my way clear to urging on men an ideal standard of *perfection* for which I find no warrant in God's Word — a standard which is unattainable in this life, and hands over the management of the affairs of society to the devil and the wicked. No, I always wish to promote a genial, cheerful, manly religion, such as men may carry everywhere and yet glorify Christ.

The pathway to a higher standard of holiness which I commend to the attention of my readers is a very simple one, so simple that I can fancy many smiling at it with disdain. But simple as it is, it is a path sadly neglected and overgrown with weeds, and it is high time to direct men into it. We need, then, to examine more closely our good old friends the *Ten Commandments*. Beaten out, and properly developed as they were by Bishop Andrews and the Puritans, the two tables of God's law are a perfect mine of practical religion. I think it an evil sign of our day that many clergymen neglect to have the commandments put up in their new, or restored, churches, and coolly tell you "they are not wanted now!" I believe they never were wanted so much! — We need to examine more closely such portions of our Lord Jesus Christ's teaching as the *Sermon on the Mount*. How rich is that wonderful discourse in food for thought! What a striking sentence that is, "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mat 5.20) Alas, that text is rarely used! —

Last, but not least, we need to study more closely *the latter part of nearly all St. Paul's Epistles to the Churches*. They are far too slurred over and neglected. Scores of Bible readers, I am afraid, are well acquainted with the first eleven chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, but know comparatively little of the last five. When Thomas Scott expounded the Epistle to the Ephesians at the old Lock Chapel, he remarked that the congregations became much smaller when he reached the practical part of that blessed book! Once more I say you may think my recommendations very simple. I do not hesitate to affirm that attention to them would, by God's blessing, be most useful to Christ's cause. I believe it would raise the standard of English Christianity about such matters as,

- home religion,
  - separation from the world,
  - diligence in the discharge of relative duties,
  - unselfishness,
  - good temper,
  - general spiritual-mindedness,
- to a pitch which it seldom attains now.

There is a common complaint in these latter days that there is a lack of *power* in modern Christianity, and that the true Church of Christ, the body of which He is the Head, does not shake the world in the twentieth century as it used to do in former years. Will I tell you in plain words what is the reason? It is the low tone of *life* which is so sadly prevalent among professing believers. We want more men and women who walk *with* God and *before* God, like Enoch and Abraham. Though our numbers at this date far exceed those

of our evangelical forefathers, I believe we fall far short of them in our *standard* of Christian practice. Where is,

- the self-denial,
- the redemption of time,
- the absence of luxury and self-indulgence,
- the unmistakable separation from earthly things,
- the manifest air of always being about our Master's business,
- the singleness of eye,
- the simplicity of home life,
- the high tone of conversation in society,
- the patience,
- the humility,
- the universal courtesy
- all of which marked so many of our forerunners seventy or eighty years ago?

Yes, where is it indeed? We have inherited their principles and we wear their armour, but I fear we have not inherited their *practice*. The Holy Ghost sees it, and is grieved; and the world sees it, and despises us. The world sees it, and cares little for our testimony. It is life, *life* — a heavenly, godly, Christ-like life — depend on it, which influences the world. Let us resolve, by God's blessing, to shake off this reproach. Let us awake to a clear view of what the times require of us in this matter. Let us aim at a much higher standard of practice. Let the time past, suffice us to have been content with a half-and-half holiness. For the time to come, let us endeavour to walk with God, to be "thorough" and unmistakable in our daily life, and to *silence*, if we cannot *convert*, a sneering world.

**V.** In the fifth and last place, the times require of us *more regular and steady perseverance in the old ways of getting good for our souls*.

I think no intelligent Englishman can fail to see that there has been in recent years an immense increase of what I must call, for lack of a better phrase, *public religion* in the land. Services of all sorts are strangely multiplied. Places of worship are thrown open for prayer and preaching and administration of the Lord's Supper, at least ten times as much as they were fifty years ago. Services in cathedral naves, meetings in large public rooms like the Agricultural Hall and Mildmay Conference Building, Mission Services carried on day after day and evening after evening — all these have become common and familiar things. They are, in fact, established institutions of the day; and the crowds who attend them supply plain proof that they are popular. In short, we find ourselves face to face with the undeniable fact that the last quarter of the nineteenth century is an age of an immense amount of *public religion*.

Now, I am not going to find fault with this. Let no one suppose that for a moment. On the contrary, I thank God for the revival of the old apostolic plan of "aggressiveness" in religion, and the evident spread of a desire "by all means to save some." (1Cor 9.22) I thank God for shortened services, home missions, and evangelistic movements like that of Moody and Sankey. Anything is better than torpor, apathy, and inaction. "If Christ is preached I rejoice; indeed and I *will* rejoice." (Phi 1.18) Prophets and righteous men in England once desired to see those things, and never saw them. If Whitefield and Wesley had been told in their day that a time would come when English Archbishops and Bishops

would not only sanction mission services but take an active part in them, I can hardly think they would have believed it. Rather, I suspect they would have been tempted to say, like the Samaritan nobleman in Elisha's time, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be." (2Kng 7.2)

But while we are thankful for the increase of *public religion*, we must never forget that, unless it is accompanied by *private religion*, it is of no real solid value, and may even produce most mischievous effects. Incessant running after sensational preachers, incessant attendance at hot, crowded meetings protracted to late hours, incessant craving after fresh excitement and highly-spiced pulpit novelties — all this kind of thing is calculated to produce a very unhealthy style of Christianity; and in many cases, I am afraid the end is the utter ruin of the soul. For, unhappily, those who make public religion everything, are often led away by mere temporary emotions — after some grand display of ecclesiastical oratory — into professing far more than they really feel. After this, they can only be kept up to the mark which they imagine they have reached, by a constant succession of religious excitements. By and by, as with opium-eaters and dram-drinkers, there comes a time when their dose loses its power, and a feeling of exhaustion and discontent begins to creep over their minds. Too often, I fear, the conclusion of the whole matter is a relapse into utter deadness and unbelief, and a complete return to the world. And all this results from having nothing but a *public religion*! Oh, that people would remember that it was not the wind, or the fire, or the earthquake, which showed Elijah the presence of God, but "the still, small voice." (1Kng 19.12)

Now, I desire to lift up a warning voice on this subject. I want to see no decrease of public religion, remember. But I do want to promote an increase of that religion which is private — private between each man and his God. The root of a plant or tree makes no show above ground. If you dig down to it and examine it, it is a poor, dirty, coarse-looking thing, and not nearly so beautiful to the eye as the fruit, or leaf, or flower. But that despised root, nevertheless, is the true source of all the life, health, vigour and fertility which your eyes see; and without it, the plant or tree would soon die. Now, private religion is the root of all vital Christianity. Without it, we may make a brave show in the meeting or on the platform, and sing loud, and shed many tears, and have a name to live, and the praise of man. But without it we have no wedding garment, and are "dead before God." I tell my readers plainly, that the times require of us all, more attention to our private religion.

(a) Let us *pray more heartily in private*, and throw our whole souls more into our prayers. There are live prayers and there are dead prayers — prayers that cost us nothing and prayers which often cost us strong crying and tears. What are yours? When great professors backslide in public, and the Church is surprised and shocked, the truth is that they had long ago backslidden on their knees. They had neglected the throne of grace.

(b) Let us *read our Bibles in private more*, and with more pains and diligence. Ignorance of Scripture is the root of all error and makes a man helpless in the hand of the devil. There is less private Bible-reading, I suspect, than there was fifty years ago. I never can believe that so many English men and women would have been "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine," some falling into scepticism, some rushing into the wildest and narrowest fanaticism, and some going over to Rome, if there had not grown up a habit of lazy, superficial, careless, perfunctory reading of God's Word. "You err, not

knowing the Scriptures.” (Mat 22.29) The Bible in the pulpit must never supersede the Bible at home.

(c) Let us cultivate the habit of *keeping up more private meditation and communion with Christ*. Let us resolutely make time for getting alone occasionally, for talking with our own souls like David, for pouring out our hearts to our Great High Priest, Advocate, and Confessor at the right hand of God. We want more auricular confession: *but not to man*. The confessional we want is not a box in the vestry, but the throne of grace. I see some professing Christians always running about after spiritual food, always in public, and always out of breath and in a hurry, and never allowing themselves leisure to sit down quietly to digest and take stock of their spiritual condition. I am never surprised if such Christians have a dwarfish, stunted religion and do not grow, and if, like Pharaoh’s lean cows, they look no better for their public religious feasting, but rather worse. Spiritual prosperity depends immensely on our private religion; and private religion cannot nourish unless we determine that, by God’s help, we will make time — whatever trouble it may cost us — time for thought, for prayer, for the Bible, and for private communion with Christ. Alas! That saying of our Master is sadly overlooked: “Enter into your closet and shut the door.” (Mat 6.6)

Our evangelical forefathers had far fewer means and opportunities than we have. Full religious meetings and crowds, except occasionally at a Church or in a field when such men as Whitefield, or Wesley, or Rowlands preached, these were things of which they knew nothing. Their proceedings were neither fashionable nor popular, and they often brought on them more persecution and abuse than praise. But the few weapons they used, they used well. With less noise and applause from man, I believe they made a far deeper mark for God on their generation than we do, with all our Conferences, and Meetings, and Mission rooms, and Halls, and multiplied religious appliances. Their converts, I suspect, like the old-fashioned cloths and linens, wore better, and lasted longer, and faded less, and kept colour, and were more stable, and rooted, and grounded than many of the newborn babes of this day. And what was the reason of all this? Simply, I believe, because they gave more attention to *private* religion than we generally do. They walked closely with God and honoured Him in private; and so He honoured them in public. Oh, let us follow them as they followed Christ! Let us go and do likewise.

Let me now conclude this paper with a few words of practical application.

(1) First of all, would you understand what the times require of you *in reference to your own soul*? Listen, and I will tell you. You live in times of peculiar spiritual danger. Never perhaps were there more traps and pitfalls in the way to heaven; never certainly were those traps so skilfully baited and those pitfalls so ingeniously made. Mind what you are about. Look well to your goings. Ponder the paths of your feet. Take heed lest you come to eternal grief, and ruin your own soul. Beware of practical infidelity under the specious name of *free thought*. Beware of a helpless state of indecision about doctrinal truth under the plausible idea of not being *party spirited*, and under the baneful influence of so-called liberality and charity. Beware of frittering away life in wishing, and intending, and hoping for the day of decision, until the door is shut and you are given over to a dead conscience, and die without hope. Awake to a sense of your danger. Arise and give diligence to make your calling and election sure, whatever else you leave uncertain. The kingdom of God is very near. Christ the Almighty Saviour, Christ the sinner’s Friend, Christ and eternal life,

are ready for you if you will only come to Christ. Arise and cast away excuses — this very day Christ calls you. Do not wait for company if you cannot have it; wait for *nobody*. The times, I repeat, are desperately dangerous. If only a few are in the narrow way of life, then resolve that by God's help *you* at any rate will be among the few.

(2) In the next place, would you understand what the times require of all Christians *in reference to the souls of others*? Listen, and I will tell you. You live in times of great liberty and abounding opportunities of doing good. Never were there so many open doors of usefulness, so many fields white to the harvest. Mind that you use those open doors, and try to reap those fields. Try to do a little good before you die. Strive to be useful. Determine that, by God's help, you will leave the world a better world in the day of your burial than it was in the day you were born. Remember the souls of relatives, friends and companions; remember that God often works by weak instruments, and try with holy ingenuity to lead them to Christ. The time is short: the sand is running out of the glass of this old world; then redeem the time, and endeavour not to go to heaven alone. No doubt you cannot command success. It is not certain that your efforts to do good will always do good to others; but it is quite certain that they will always do good to yourself. Exercise, exercise, is one grand secret of health, both for body and soul. "He that waters shall be watered himself." (Pro 2.25) It is a deep and golden saying of our Master's, but seldom understood in its full meaning — "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Act 20.35)

(3) In the last place, would you understand what the times require of you *in reference to the Church of England*? Listen to me, and I will tell you. No doubt you live in days when our time-honoured Church is in a very perilous, distressing, and critical position. Her *rowers* have brought her into troubled waters. Her very existence is endangered by Papists, Infidels, and Liberationists *without*. Her life-blood is drained away by the behaviour of traitors, false friends, and timid officers *within*. Nevertheless, so long as the Church of England sticks firmly to the Bible, the Articles, and the principles of the Protestant Reformation — so long I strongly advise you to stick to the Church.

When the Articles are thrown overboard and the old flag is hauled down — then, and not till then, it will be time for you and me to launch the boats and quit the wreck. At present, let us stick to the old ship.

Why should we leave her now, like cowards, because she is in difficulties and the truth cannot be maintained within her pale without trouble? How can we better ourselves? To whom can we go? Where will we find better prayers? In what communion will we find so much good being done, in spite of the existence of much evil? No doubt there is much to sadden us; but there is not a single visible Church on earth at this day doing better. There is not a single communion where there are no clouds, and all is serene. "The evils everywhere are mingled with the good:" the wheat never grows without tares. But for all that, there is much to gladden us, more evangelical preaching than there ever was before in the land, more work done both at home and abroad.

If old William Romaine of St. Anne's, Blackfriars, who stood alone with some half-a-dozen others in London last century, had lived to see what our eyes see, he would have sharply rebuked our faint-heartedness and unthankfulness. No! the battle of the Reformed Church of England is not yet lost, in spite of semi-popery and scepticism, whatever jealous onlookers without and melancholy grumblers within may please to say. As Napoleon said at four o'clock on the battlefield of Marengo, "there is yet time to win a victory." If the

really loyal members of the Church will only stand by her boldly, and not look coolly at one another, and refuse to work the same fire-engine, or man the same lifeboat — if they will not squabble and quarrel and “fall out by the way,” the Church of England will live and not die, and be a blessing to our children’s children. Then let us set our feet down firmly and stand fast in our position. Let us not be in a hurry to quit the ship because of a few leaks: let us rather man the pumps, and try to keep the good ship afloat. Let us work on, and fight on, and pray on, and stick to the Church of England. The Churchman who walks in these lines, I believe, is the Churchman who “understands the times.”

## 20. “CHRIST IS ALL”

*“Christ is all.”* — Col 3.11.

THE words of the text which heads this page are few, short, and soon spoken; but they contain great things. Like those golden sayings, “To me to live is Christ” — “I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me” — they are singularly rich and suggestive. (Phi 1.21; Gal 2.20)

These three words are the essence and substance of Christianity. If our hearts can really go along with them, it is well with our souls. If not, we may be sure we yet have much to learn.

Let me try to set before my readers in what sense “Christ is all”; and let me ask them, as they read, to judge themselves honestly, so that they may not make shipwreck in the judgment of the last day.

I purposely close this volume with a paper on this remarkable text. Christ is the mainspring both of *doctrinal* and *practical* Christianity. A right knowledge of Christ is essential to a right knowledge of *sanctification* as well as *justification*. He that follows after holiness will make no progress unless he gives to Christ His rightful place. I began the volume with a plain statement about sin. Let me end it with an equally plain statement about Christ.

I. First of all, let us understand that *Christ is all, in all the counsels of God concerning man.*

(a) There was a time when this earth had no being. Solid as the mountains look, boundless as the sea appears, high as the stars in heaven look — they once did not exist. And man, with all the high thoughts he now has of himself, was an unknown creature.

*And where was Christ then?*

Even then Christ was “with God” — and “was God” — and was “equal with God.” (Joh 1.1; Phi 2.6) Even then He was the beloved Son of the Father: “You loved Me,” He says, “before the foundation of the world.” — “I had glory with You before the world began.” — “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before ever the earth was.” (Joh 17.5, 24; Pro 8.23) Even then He was the Saviour “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1Pet 1.20), and believers were “chosen in Him.” (Eph 1.4)

(b) There came a time when this earth was created in its present order. Sun, moon and stars — sea, land and all their inhabitants — were called into being and made out of chaos and confusion. And, last of all, man was formed out of the dust of the ground.

*And where was Christ then?*

Hear what the Scripture says: “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made.” (Joh 1.3) “By Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth.” (Col 1.16) “And You, Lord, in the beginning, have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Your hands.” (Heb 1.10) “When He prepared the heavens, I was there; when He set a compass upon the face of the depth; when He established the clouds above; when He strengthened the foundations of the deep; when He gave His decree to the sea, that the water should not pass His commandment; when He appointed the foundations of the earth — then I was

by Him, as one brought up with Him.” (Pro 8.27-30) Can we wonder that the Lord Jesus, in His preaching, should continually draw lessons from the book of nature? When He spoke of the sheep, the fish, the ravens, the corn, the lilies, the fig-tree, the vine — He spoke of things which He Himself had made.

(c) There came a day when sin entered the world. — Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and fell. They lost that holy nature in which they were first formed. They forfeited the friendship and favour of God and became guilty, corrupt, helpless, hopeless sinners. Sin came as a barrier between themselves and their holy Father in heaven. Had He dealt with them according to their deserts, there would have been nothing before them but death, hell, and everlasting ruin.

*And where was Christ then?*

In that very day, He was revealed to our trembling parents, as the only hope of salvation. The very day they fell, they were told that “the seed of the woman would yet bruise the serpent’s head,” — that a Saviour born of a woman would overcome the devil and win for sinful man an entrance to eternal life. (Gen 3.15) Christ was held up as the true light of the world, in the very day of the fall; and never has any name been made known from that day by which souls could be saved, except His. By Him all saved souls have entered heaven, from Adam downwards; and without Him none have ever escaped hell.

(d) There came a time when the world seemed sunk and buried in ignorance of God. After 4000 years, the nations of the earth appeared to have clean forgotten the God who made them. Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires had done nothing but spread superstition and idolatry. Poets, historians, philosophers had proved that, with all their intellectual powers, they had no right knowledge of God; and that man, left to himself, was utterly corrupt. “The world, by wisdom, did not know God.” (1Cor 1.21) Excepting a few despised Jews in a corner of the earth, the whole world was dead in ignorance and sin.

*And what did Christ do then?*

He left the glory He had had from all eternity with the Father, and came down into the world to provide a salvation. He took our nature upon Him, and was born as a man. As a man He did the will of God perfectly, which we all had left undone; as a man He suffered on the cross the wrath of God which we ought to have suffered. He brought in everlasting righteousness for us. He redeemed us from the curse of a broken law. He opened a fountain for all sin and uncleanness. He died for our sins. He rose again for our justification. He ascended to God’s right hand, and there He sat down, waiting till His enemies would be made His footstool. And there He sits now, offering salvation to all who will come to Him, interceding for all who believe in Him, and managing by God’s appointment, all that concerns the salvation of souls.

(e) There is a time coming when sin shall be cast out from this world. — *Wickedness* shall not always flourish unpunished — *Satan* shall not always reign — *Creation* shall not always groan, being burdened. There shall be a time of restitution of all things. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Rom 8.22; Act 3.21; 2Pet 3.13; Isa 11.9)

*And where shall Christ be then? And what shall He do?*

Christ Himself shall be King. He shall return to this earth and make all things new. He shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and the kingdoms of the world shall become His. The heathen shall be given to Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. To Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. His dominion shall be an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom shall be that which shall not be destroyed. (Mat 24.30; Rev 11.15; Psa 2.8; Phi 2.10, 11; Dan 7.14)

(f) There is a day coming when all men shall be judged. The sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them. All that sleep in the grave shall awake and come forth, and all shall be judged according to their works. (Rev 20.13; Dan 12.2)

*And where will Christ be then?*

Christ Himself will be the Judge. “The Father has committed all judgment to the Son.” — “When the Son of man comes in His glory, then He shall sit upon the throne of His glory: — and before Him all nations shall be gathered: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.” — “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad.” (Joh 5.22; Mat 25.32; 2Cor 5.10)

Now, if any reader of this paper thinks little of Christ, let him know this day that he is very unlike God! You are of one mind, and God is of another. You think it enough to give Christ a *little* honour, a *little* reverence, a *little* respect. But in all the eternal counsels of God the Father, in creation, redemption, restitution, and judgment — in *all* these, Christ is “all.”

Surely we would do well to consider these things. Surely it is not written in vain, “He that does not honour the Son, does not honour the Father who has sent Him.” (Joh 5.23)

**II.** In the second place, let us understand that “*Christ is all*” in the inspired books which make up the Bible.

In every part of both Testaments, Christ is to be found — dimly and indistinctly at the beginning — more clearly and plainly in the middle — fully and completely at the end — but really and substantially everywhere.

Christ’s sacrifice and death for sinners, and Christ’s kingdom and future glory, are the light we must bring to bear on any book of Scripture we read. Christ’s cross and Christ’s crown are the clue we must hold fast if we would find our way through Scripture difficulties. Christ is the only key that will unlock many of the dark places of the Word. Some people complain that they do not understand the Bible. And the reason is very simple. They do not use the key. To them the Bible is like the hieroglyphics in Egypt. It is a mystery, just because they do not know and employ the key.

(a) It was Christ crucified who was set forth in *every* Old Testament sacrifice. Every animal slain and offered on an altar was a practical confession that a Saviour was looked for who would die for sinners — a Saviour who would take away man’s sin, by suffering, as his Substitute and Sin-bearer, in his stead. (1Pet 3.18) It is absurd to suppose that an unmeaning slaughter of innocent beasts, without a distinct object in view, could please the eternal God!

(b) It was Christ to whom Abel looked when he offered a better sacrifice than Cain. Not only was the heart of Abel better than that of his brother, but he showed his knowledge of vicarious sacrifice and his faith in an atonement. He offered the firstlings of his flock, with its blood; and in so doing, he declared his belief that without the shedding of blood, there is *no* remission of sin. (Heb 11.4)

(c) It was Christ of whom Enoch prophesied in the days of abounding wickedness before the flood. — “Behold,” he said, “the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon *all*.” (Jude 15)

(d) It was Christ to whom Abraham looked when he dwelt in tents in the land of promise. He believed that in his seed — in one born of his family — *all* the nations of the earth should be blessed. By faith he saw Christ’s day, and was glad. (Joh 8.56)

(e) It was Christ of whom Jacob spoke to his sons, as he lay dying. He marked out the tribe out of which He would be born, and foretold of that “gathering together” to Him which is yet to be accomplished. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to Him shall be the gathering of the people.” (Gen 49.10)

(f) It was Christ who was the substance of the ceremonial law which God gave to Israel by the hand of Moses. The morning and evening sacrifice — the continual shedding of blood — the altar — the mercy-seat — the high priest — the Passover — the day of atonement — the scapegoat — *all* these were so many pictures, types, and emblems of Christ and His work. God had compassion upon the weakness of His people. He taught them “Christ” line upon line, and as we teach little children, by similitudes. It was in this sense especially that “the law was a schoolmaster to lead” the Jews “to Christ.” (Gal 3.24)

(g) It was Christ to whom God directed the attention of Israel by *all* the daily miracles which were done before their eyes in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud and fire which guided them — the manna from heaven which every morning fed them — the water from the struck rock which followed them — *all* and *each* were figures of Christ. The brazen serpent, on that memorable occasion when the plague of fiery serpents was sent upon them, was an emblem of Christ. (1Cor 10.4; Joh 3.14)

(h) It was Christ of whom all the Judges were types. Joshua, and David, and Gideon, and Jephthah, and Samson, and all the rest whom God raised up to deliver Israel from captivity — all were emblems of Christ. Weak and unstable and faulty as some of them were, they were set for example of better things in the distant future. All were meant to remind the tribes of that far higher Deliverer who was yet to come.

(i) It was Christ of whom David the king was a type. Anointed and chosen when few gave him honour — despised and rejected by Saul and all the tribes of Israel — persecuted and obliged to flee for his life — a man of sorrow all his life, and yet at length a conqueror — in *all* these things, David represented Christ.

(j) It was Christ of whom *all* the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi spoke. They saw through a glass darkly. They sometimes dwelt on His sufferings, and sometimes on His glory that would follow. (1Pet 1.11) They did not always mark out for us the distinction between Christ’s first coming and Christ’s second coming. Like two candles in a straight line, one behind the other, they sometimes saw both advents at the same time, and spoke of them in one breath. They were sometimes moved by the Holy Ghost to write of the

times of Christ crucified, and sometimes of Christ’s kingdom in the latter days. But Jesus dying, or Jesus reigning, was the thought you will ever find uppermost in their minds.

(k) It is Christ, I need hardly say, of whom the *whole* New Testament is full.

- The Gospels are “Christ” living, speaking, and moving among men.
- The Acts are “Christ” preached, published, and proclaimed.
- The Epistles are “Christ” written of, explained, and exalted.

But all through, from first to last, there is one name above every other, and that is the name of Christ.

I charge every reader of this paper to ask himself frequently what the Bible is to him. Is it a Bible in which you have found nothing more than good moral precepts and sound advice? Or is it a Bible in which you have found *Christ*? Is it a Bible in which “Christ is *all*”? If not, I tell you plainly, up to now you have used your Bible to very little purpose. You are like a man who studies the solar system, and in his studies he leaves out the sun, which is the centre of all. It is no wonder if you find your Bible a dull book!

**III.** In the third place, let us understand that “*Christ is all*” in the religion of all true Christians on earth.

In saying this, I wish to guard myself against being misunderstood. I hold the absolute necessity of the election of God the Father, and the sanctification of God the Spirit, in order to effect the salvation of everyone who is saved. I hold that there is a perfect harmony and unison in the action of the three Persons of the Trinity, in bringing any man to glory, and that all three co-operate and work a joint work in his deliverance from sin and hell. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father is merciful, the Son is merciful, the Holy Ghost is merciful. The same three who said at the beginning, “Let us create,” also said, “Let us redeem and save.” I hold that everyone who reaches heaven will ascribe all the glory of his salvation to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons in one God.

But, at the same time, I see clear proof in Scripture that it is the mind of the blessed Trinity that Christ should be prominently and distinctly exalted in the matter of saving souls. Christ is set forth as the “Word,” through whom God’s love to sinners is made known. Christ’s incarnation and atoning death on the cross are the great cornerstone on which the whole plan of salvation rests.

- Christ is the way and door, by which alone approaches to God are to be made.
- Christ is the root into which all elect sinners must be grafted.
- Christ is the only meeting-place:
  - between God and man,
  - between heaven and earth,
  - between the Holy Trinity and the poor sinful child of Adam.
- It is Christ whom God the Father has “sealed” and appointed to convey life to a dead world. (Joh 6.27)
- It is Christ to whom the Father has given a people to be brought to glory.
- It is Christ of whom the Spirit testifies, and to whom He always leads a soul for pardon and peace.

In short, it has “pleased the Father that in Christ all fulness should dwell.” (Col 1.19) What the *sun* is in the firmament of heaven, that *Christ* is in true Christianity.

I say these things by way of explanation. I want my readers to clearly understand that in saying “Christ is all,” I do not mean to shut out the work of the Father and of the Spirit. Now, let me show what I *do* mean.

(a) Christ is *all in a sinner’s justification before God*.

Through Him alone we can have peace with a Holy God. By Him alone we can have admission into the presence of the Most High, and stand there without fear. “We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.” In Him alone can God be just, and justify the ungodly. (Eph 3.12; Rom 3.26)

With what can any mortal man come before God? What can we bring as a plea for acquittal before that Glorious Being, in whose eyes the very heavens are not clean?

Will we say that we have done our duty to God? Will we say that we have done our duty to our neighbour? Will we bring forward our prayers? — our regularity? — our morality? — our amendments? — our church-going? Will we ask to be accepted because of any of these?

Which of these things will stand the searching inspection of God’s eye? Which of them will actually justify us? Which of them will carry us clear through judgment, and land us safe in glory?

None, none, *none!* Take any commandment of the ten, and let us examine ourselves by it. We have broken it repeatedly. We cannot answer God one of a thousand. — Take any of us, and look narrowly into our ways — and we are nothing but sinners. There is but one verdict: we are *all* guilty — *all* deserve hell — *all* ought to die.

With what can we come before God?

We must come in the name of Jesus — standing on no other ground — pleading no other plea than this, “Christ died on the cross for the ungodly, and I trust in Him. Christ died for me, and I believe on Him.”

The *garment* of our Elder Brother — the righteousness of Christ — this is the *only robe* which can cover us and enable us to stand in the light of heaven without shame.

The *name* of Jesus is the *only name* by which we will obtain an entrance through the gate of eternal glory. If we come to that gate in our own names, we are lost, we will not be admitted, we will knock in vain. If we come in the name of Jesus, it is a passport and Shibboleth, and we shall enter and live.

The *mark* of the blood of Christ is the *only mark* that can save us from destruction. When the angels are separating the children of Adam in the last day, if we are not found marked with that atoning blood, we had better never have been born.

Oh, let us never forget that Christ must be “all” to that soul who would be justified! — We must be content to go to heaven as beggars — saved by free grace, simply as believers in Jesus — or we shall never be saved at all.

Is there a thoughtless, worldly soul among the readers of this book? Is there one who thinks to reach heaven by saying hastily at the last, “Lord have mercy on me” without

Christ? Friend, you are sowing misery for yourself; and unless you alter, you will awake to endless woe.

Is there a proud, formal soul among the readers of this book? Is there anyone thinking to make himself fit for heaven and good enough to pass muster by his own doings? — Brother, you are building a Babel, and you will never reach heaven in your present state.

But is there a labouring, heavy-laden one among the readers of this book? Is there one who wants to be saved, and feels a vile sinner? I say to such a one, “Come to Christ, and He shall save you. Come to Christ, and cast the burden of your soul on Him. Fear not: only believe.”

Do you fear wrath? Christ can deliver you from the wrath to come. — Do you feel the curse of a broken law? Christ can redeem you from the curse of the law. — Do you feel far away? Christ has suffered, to bring you near to God. — Do you feel unclean? Christ’s blood can cleanse all sin away. — Do you feel imperfect? You shall be complete in Christ. — Do you feel as if you were nothing? Christ shall be “all in all” to your soul. — Never did a saint reach heaven with any tale but this, “I was washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Rev 7.14)

(b) But again, Christ is not only *all in the justification* of a true Christian, but He is also *all in his sanctification*.

I would not have anyone misunderstand me. I do not mean for a moment to undervalue the work of the Spirit. But this I say: that no man is ever holy till he comes to Christ and is united to Him. Till then his works are dead works, and he has no holiness at all. — *First* you must be joined to Christ, and *then* you shall be holy. “Without Him — separate from Him — you can do nothing.” (Joh 15.5)

And no man can grow in holiness unless he abides in Christ. Christ is the great root from which every believer must draw his strength to go forward. The Spirit is His special gift, His purchased gift for His people. A believer must not only “receive Christ Jesus the Lord,” but “walk in Him, and be rooted and built up in Him.” (Col 2.6, 7)

Would you be holy? Then Christ is the manna you must eat daily, like Israel in the wilderness of old. Would you be holy? Then Christ must be the rock from which you must drink the living water daily. Would you be holy? Then you must be ever looking to Jesus — looking at His cross, and learning fresh motives for a closer walk with God — looking at His example, and taking Him for your pattern. Looking at Him, you would become like Him. Looking at Him, your face would shine without your knowing it. Look less at yourself and more at Christ, and you will find besetting sins dropping off and leaving you, and your eyes enlightened more and more every day. (Heb 12.2; 2Cor 3.18)

The true secret of coming up out of the wilderness is to come up “leaning on the Beloved.” (Song 8.5) The true way to be strong is to realize our weakness, and to feel that Christ must be *all*. The true way to grow in grace is to make use of Christ as a fountain for every minute’s necessities. We ought to employ Him as the prophet’s wife employed the oil — not only to pay our debts, but to live on also. We should strive to be able to say, “The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” (2Kng 4.7; Gal 2.20)

## “CHRIST IS ALL”

I pity those who try to be holy without Christ! Your labour is all in vain. You are putting money in a bag with holes. You are pouring water into a sieve. You are rolling a huge round stone uphill. You are building up a wall with untempered mortar. Believe me, you are beginning at the wrong end. You must come to Christ first, and He will give you His sanctifying Spirit. You must learn to say with Paul, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Phi 4.13)

(c) But again, Christ is not only *all in the sanctification* of a true Christian, but *all in his present comfort*.

A saved soul has many sorrows. He has a body like other men — weak and frail. He has a heart like other men — and often a more sensitive one, too. He has trials and losses to bear like others — and often more. He has his share of bereavements, deaths, disappointments, and crosses. He has,

- the world to oppose
- a place in life to fill blamelessly
- unconverted relatives to bear with patiently
- persecutions to endure
- and a death to die.

And who is sufficient for these things? What will enable a believer to bear all this? Nothing but “the consolation that is in Christ.” (Phi 2.1)

Jesus is indeed the brother born for adversity. He is the friend that sticks closer than a brother; and He alone can comfort His people. He can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, for He suffered Himself. (Heb 4.15) He knows what sorrow is, for He was a Man of sorrows. He knows what an aching body is, for His body was racked with pain. He cried, “All my bones are out of joint.” (Psa 22.14) He knows what poverty and weariness are, for He was often wearied and had nowhere to lay His head. He knows what family unkindness is, for even His brothers did not believe Him. He had no honour in His own house.

And Jesus knows exactly how to comfort His afflicted people. He knows,

- how to pour oil and wine into the wounds of the spirit
- how to fill the gaps in empty hearts
- how to speak a word in season to the weary
- how to heal the broken heart
- how to make all our bed in sickness
- how to draw near when we are faint, and say,  
“Fear not: I am your salvation.” (Lam 3.57)

We talk of sympathy being pleasant. There is no sympathy like that of Christ. In all our afflictions, He is afflicted. He knows our sorrows. In all our pain, He is pained; and like the good Physician, He will not measure out to us one drop too much of sorrow. David once said, “In the multitude of my thoughts within me, your comforts delight my soul.” (Psa 94.19) I am sure that many a believer could say as much. “If the Lord Himself had not stood by me, the deep waters would have gone over my soul,” (Psa 124.5)

How a believer gets through all his troubles appears surprising. How he is carried through the fire and water he passes through seems past comprehension. But the true

account of it is just this: that Christ is not only *justification* and *sanctification*, but *consolation* also.

Oh, you who want unfailing comfort, I commend you to Christ! In Him alone there is no failure.

- Rich men are disappointed in their treasures.
- Learned men are disappointed in their books.
- Husbands are disappointed in their wives.
- Wives are disappointed in their husbands.
- Parents are disappointed in their children.

Statesmen are disappointed when, after many a struggle, they attain place and power. They find out, to their cost, that it is more pain than pleasure — that it is disappointment, annoyance, incessant trouble, worry, vanity, and vexation of spirit. But no man was ever disappointed in Christ.

(d) But just as Christ is *all in the comforts* of a true Christian in the present, so Christ is *all in his hopes for the time to come*.

Few men and women, I suppose, are to be found who do not indulge in hopes of some kind about their souls. But the hopes of the vast majority are nothing but vain fancies. They are built on no solid foundation. No living man but the real child of God — the sincere, thoroughgoing Christian — can give a reasonable account of the hope that is in him. No hope is reasonable which is not Scriptural.

A true Christian has a good hope when he looks forward: the worldly man has none. A true Christian sees light in the distance: the worldly man sees nothing but darkness. And what is the hope of a true Christian? It is just this: that Jesus Christ is coming again, coming without sin — coming with all His people, coming to wipe away every tear — coming to raise His sleeping saints from the grave — coming to gather together all His family, that they may be with Him forever.

Why is a believer patient? Because he looks for the coming of the Lord. He can bear hard things without murmuring. He knows the time is short. He waits quietly for the King.

Why is he *moderate* in all things? Because he expects his Lord to return soon. His treasure is in heaven, his good things are yet to come. The world is not his rest, but an inn; and an inn is not home. He knows that “He that shall come, will *soon* come, and will not tarry.” Christ is coming, and that is enough. (Heb 10.37)

This is indeed a “blessed hope!” (Tit 2.13)

- Now is the school-time — *then* the eternal holiday.
- Now is the tossing on the waves of a troublesome world — *then* the quiet harbour.
- Now is the scattering — *then* the gathering.
- Now is the time of sowing — *then* the harvest.
- Now is the working season — *then* the wages.
- Now is the cross — *then* the crown.

People talk of their “expectations” and hopes from this world. None have such solid expectations as a saved soul. He can say, “My soul, wait only upon God; my expectation is from Him.” (Psa 62.5)

## “CHRIST IS ALL”

In all true saving religion, *Christ is all*: all in justification — all in comfort — all in hope. Blessed is that mother’s child who knows it, and far more blessed is he that *feels* it too. Oh that men would prove themselves, and see what they know of it for their own souls!

**IV.** One thing more I will add, and then I am done. Let us understand that *Christ will be all in heaven*.

I cannot dwell long on this point. I do not have power, even if I had space and room. I can poorly describe things unseen and a world unknown. But this I know, that all men and women who reach heaven will find that even there also, “Christ is all.”

Like the altar in Solomon’s temple, Christ crucified will be the grand object in heaven. That altar struck the eye of everyone who entered the temple gates. It was a great brazen altar, twenty cubits broad — as broad as the front of the temple itself. (2Chr 3.4; 4.1) So in like manner will Jesus fill the eyes of all who enter glory. In the midst of the throne, and surrounded by adoring angels and saints, *there* will be “the Lamb that was slain.” And “the Lamb shall be the light” of the place. (Rev 5.6; 21.23)

The *praise* of the Lord Jesus will be the eternal song of all the inhabitants of heaven. They will say with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to Him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.” (Rev 5.12, 13)

The *service* of the Lord Jesus will be one eternal occupation of all the inhabitants of heaven. We will “serve Him day and night in His temple.” (Rev 7.13) Blessed is the thought that at length we will attend on Him without distraction, and work for Him without weariness.

The *presence* of Christ Himself will be one everlasting enjoyment of the inhabitants of heaven. We will “see His face,” and hear His voice, and speak with Him as a friend with a friend. (Rev 22.4) Sweet is the thought that whoever may be wanting at the marriage supper, the Master Himself will be there. His presence will satisfy all our wants. (Psa 17.15)

What a sweet and glorious home heaven will be to those who have loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity! *Here* we live by faith in Him, and we find peace, though we do not see Him. *There* we will see Him face to face, and find He is altogether lovely. “Better” indeed will be the “sight of the eyes, than the wandering of the desire!” (Ecc 6.9)

But alas, how little fit for heaven are many who talk of “going to heaven” when they die, while they manifestly have no saving faith, and no real acquaintance with Christ. You give Christ no honour here. You have no communion with Him. You do not love Him. Alas! what could you do in heaven? It would be no place for you. Its joys would be no joys for you. Its happiness would be a happiness into which you could not enter. Its employments would be a weariness and a burden to your heart. Oh, repent and change before it is too late!

I trust I have shown how deep are the foundations of that little expression, “Christ is all.”

I might easily add to the things I have said, if space permitted. The subject is not exhausted. I have barely walked over the surface of it. There are mines of precious truth connected with it, which I have left unopened.

I might show how *Christ ought to be all in a visible Church*. Splendid religious buildings, numerous religious services, gorgeous ceremonies, troops of ordained men, all, all are nothing in the sight of God if the Lord Jesus Himself in all His offices is not honoured, magnified, and exalted. That Church is but a dead carcass in which Christ is not “all.”

I might show how *Christ ought to be all in a ministry*. The great work which ordained men are intended to do, is to lift up Christ. We are to be like the pole on which the brazen serpent was hung. We are useful so long as we exalt the great object of our faith, but we are useful no further. We are to be ambassadors to carry tidings to a rebellious world about the King’s Son; but if we teach men to think more about us and our office than about Him, we are not fit for our place. The Spirit will never honour that minister who does not testify of Christ — who does not make Christ “all.”

I might show how language seems exhausted in the Bible, in describing Christ’s various offices. I might describe how figures seem endless which are employed in unfolding Christ’s fulness. The High Priest, the Mediator, the Redeemer, the Saviour, the Advocate, the Shepherd, the Physician, the Bridegroom, the Head, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Way, the Door, the Vine, the Rock, the Fountain, the Sun of Righteousness, the Forerunner, the Surety, the Captain, the Prince of Life, the Amen, the Almighty, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, the Lamb of God, the King of Saints, the Wonderful, the Mighty God, the Counsellor, the Bishop of Souls — *all* these, and many more, are names given to Christ in Scripture. Each is a fountain of instruction and comfort for everyone who is willing to drink of it. Each supplies matter for useful meditation.

But I trust I have said enough to throw light on the point I want to impress on the minds of all who read this paper. I trust I have said enough to show the immense importance of the practical conclusions with which I now desire to finish the subject.

(1) Is Christ all? Then let us LEARN THE UTTER USELESSNESS OF A CHRISTLESS RELIGION.

There are only too many baptized men and women who practically know nothing at all about Christ. Their religion consists in a few vague notions and empty expressions. “They trust they are no worse than others. They keep to their church. They try to do their duty. They do nobody any harm. They hope God will be merciful to them. They trust the Almighty will pardon their sins, and take them to heaven when they die.” This is about the whole of their religion!

But what do these people know *practically* about Christ? Nothing: nothing at all! What experiential acquaintance do they have with His offices and work, His blood, His righteousness, His mediation, His priesthood, His intercession? None: none at all! Ask them about saving faith — ask them about being born again by the Spirit — ask them about being sanctified in Christ Jesus. What answer will you get? You are a barbarian to them. You have asked them simple Bible questions. But they know no more about them experientially than a Buddhist or a Turk. And yet, this is the religion of hundreds and thousands of people who are called Christians, all over the world!

If any reader of this paper is a man of this kind, I warn him plainly that such Christianity will never take him to heaven. It may do very well in the eye of man. It may pass muster very decently at the vestry-meeting, in the place of business, in the House of Commons, or in the streets. But it will never *comfort* you. It will never *satisfy* your conscience. It will never *save* your soul.

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I warn you plainly that all notions and theories about God being merciful *without* Christ, and except *through* Christ, are baseless delusions and empty fancies. Such theories are as purely an idol of man’s invention, such as the idol of Juggernaut. They are all of the earth, *earthy*. They never came down from heaven. The God of heaven has sealed and appointed Christ as the one and only Saviour and way of life. And all who would be saved, must be content to be saved by Him, or they will never be saved at all.

Let every reader take notice. I give you fair warning this day. A religion without Christ will never save your soul.

(2) Let me say another thing. Is Christ all? Then LEARN THE ENORMOUS FOLLY OF JOINING ANYTHING WITH CHRIST IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION.

There are multitudes of baptized men and women who profess to honour Christ, but in reality they do Him great dishonour. They give Christ a certain place in their system of religion, but not the place which God intended Him to fill. Christ alone is not “all in all” to their souls. — No! It is either Christ and the Church — or Christ and the sacraments — or Christ and His ordained ministers — or Christ and their own repentance — or Christ and their own goodness — or Christ and their own prayers — or Christ and their own sincerity and charity, on which they practically rest their souls.

If any reader of this paper is a Christian of this kind, I also warn him plainly that his religion is an offence to God. You are changing God’s plan of salvation into a plan of your own devising. You are in effect deposing Christ from His throne, by giving to another the glory due to Him.

I do not care who it is that teaches such religion and on whose word you build. Whether he is Pope or Cardinal, Archbishop or Bishop, Dean or Archdeacon, Presbyter or Deacon, Episcopalian or Presbyterian, Baptist or Independent, Wesleyan or Plymouth brother, whoever adds anything to Christ teaches you wrong.

I care not what it is that you add to Christ. Whether it is the necessity of joining the Church of Rome, or of being an Episcopalian, or of becoming a Free Churchman, or of giving up the Liturgy, or of being dipped — whatever you may practically add to Christ in the matter of salvation, you do Christ an injury.

Take heed what you are doing. Beware of giving to Christ’s servants the honour due to none but Christ. Beware of giving the Lord’s ordinances the honour due to the Lord. Beware of resting the burden of your soul on anything but Christ, and Christ alone.

(3) Let me say another thing. Is Christ all? Then LET ALL WHO WANT TO BE SAVED, APPLY DIRECTLY TO CHRIST.

There are many who hear of Christ with the ear, and believe all they are told about Him. They allow that there is no salvation except in Christ. They acknowledge that Jesus alone can deliver them from hell and present them faultless before God.

But they never seem to get beyond this general acknowledgment. They never fairly lay hold on Christ for their souls. They stick fast in a state of wishing, and wanting, and feeling, and intending, and never get any further. They see what we mean; they know it is all true. They hope one day to get full benefit from it; but at present, they get no benefit whatever. The *world* is their “all.” *Politics* are their “all.” *Pleasure* is their “all.” *Business* is their “all.” But Christ is *not* their all.

If any reader of this paper is a man of this kind, I also warn him plainly, he is in a bad state of soul. You are as truly in the way to hell in your present condition, as Judas Iscariot, or Ahab, or Cain. Believe me, there must be *actual* faith in Christ, or else Christ died in vain so far as you are concerned. It is not looking at the bread that feeds the hungry man, but the actual eating of it. It is not gazing at the lifeboat that saves the shipwrecked sailor, but actually getting into it. It is not knowing and believing that Christ is a Saviour that can save your soul — unless there are actual transactions between you and Christ. You must be able to say, “Christ is my Saviour, because I have come to Him by faith, and taken Him for my own.” — “Much of religion,” said Luther, “turns on being able to use possessive pronouns. Take from me the word ‘*my*,’ and you take from me God!”

Hear the advice I give you this day, and act upon it at once. Stand still no longer, waiting for some imaginary frames and feelings which will never come. Hesitate no longer under the idea that you must first of all obtain the Spirit, and then come to Christ. Arise and come to Christ *just as you are*. He waits for you, and is as willing to save as He is mighty. He is the appointed Physician for sin-sick souls. Deal with Him as you would with your doctor about the cure of a disease of your body. Make a direct application to Him, and tell Him all your wants. Take words with you this day, and cry mightily to the Lord Jesus for pardon and peace, as the thief did on the cross. Do as that man did. Cry, “Lord, remember me.” (Luk 23.42) Tell Him you have heard that He receives sinners, and that *you* are such. Tell Him you want to be saved, and ask Him to save you. Do not rest till you have actually tasted for yourself that the Lord is gracious. Do this and you will find, sooner or later, if you are really in earnest, that “Christ is all.”

(4) Let me add one more thing. Is Christ all? Then LET ALL HIS CONVERTED PEOPLE DEAL WITH HIM AS IF THEY REALLY BELIEVED IT. LET THEM LEAN ON HIM, AND TRUST HIM, FAR MORE THAN THEY EVER HAVE.

Alas, there are many of the Lord’s people who live far below their privileges! There are many truly Christian souls who rob themselves of their own peace, and forsake their own mercies. There are many who *insensibly* join their own faith, or the work of the Spirit in their own hearts, to Christ — and they so miss the fullness of Gospel peace. There are many who make little progress in their pursuit of holiness, and shine with a very dim light. And why is all this? Simply because, in nineteen cases out of twenty, men do not make Christ *all in all*.

Now I call on every reader of this paper who is a believer, I beseech him for his own sake, to make sure that Christ is really, and thoroughly, his *all in all*. Beware of allowing yourself to mingle anything of your own with Christ.

Do you have faith? It is a priceless blessing! Happy indeed are those who are willing and ready to trust Jesus. But take heed that you do not make a Christ of your faith. Do not rest on your own faith, but on *Christ*.

Is the work of the Spirit in your soul? Thank God for it! It is a work that will never be overthrown. But oh, beware, lest unaware to yourself, you make a Christ of the work of the Spirit! Do not rest on the work of the Spirit, but on *Christ*.

Do you have any inward feelings of religion and experience of grace? Thank God for it! Thousands have no more religious feeling than a cat or dog. But oh, beware lest you make

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a Christ of your feelings and sensations! They are poor, uncertain things; and they are sadly dependent on our bodies and outward circumstances. Rest only on *Christ*.

Learn, I entreat you, to look more and more at the great *object of faith*, Jesus Christ, and to keep your mind dwelling on Him. So doing, you will find faith and all the other graces grow, though the growth at the time might be imperceptible to yourself. He that would prove a skilful archer must not look at the *arrow*, but at the *mark*.

Alas, I fear there is a great piece of pride and unbelief still sticking in the hearts of many believers! Few seem to realize how much they need a Saviour. Few seem to understand how thoroughly they are indebted to Him. Few seem to comprehend how much they need Him every day. Few seem to feel how simply and like a child they ought to hang their souls on Him. Few seem to be aware how full of love He is to His poor, weak people, and how ready to help them! And few therefore seem to know the peace, and joy, and strength, and power to live a godly life, which is to be had in Christ.

Change your plan, reader, if your conscience tells you that you are guilty; change your plan, and learn to trust Christ more. Physicians love to see patients coming to consult them: it is their office to receive the sickly and, if possible, to effect cures. The advocate loves to be employed: it is his calling. The husband loves his wife to trust him and lean upon him: it is his delight to cherish her and promote her comfort. And Christ loves His people to *lean* on Him, to *rest* in Him, to *call* on Him, to *abide* in Him.

Let us all learn and strive to do so more and more. Let us live *on* Christ. Let us live *in* Christ. Let us live *with* Christ. Let us live *to* Christ. So doing, we will prove that we fully realize that “Christ is all.” So doing, we will feel great peace, and attain more of that “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” (Heb 12.14)

## 21. EXTRACTS FROM OLD WRITERS

THE passages I append from *Traill* and *Brooks* on the subject of HOLINESS, appear to me so valuable that I make no apology for introducing them.

They are the product of an age when, I am obliged to say, experiential religion was more deeply studied and far better understood than it is now.

(I) REVEREND ROBERT TRAILL, sometime Minister of Cranbrook, Kent. 1696.

“Concerning sanctification, there are three things that I would speak to.

“I. What *sanctification* is.

“II. *Where it agrees with justification.*

“III. *Where it differs from justification.*

“**I. What is sanctification?** It is a great deal better to feel it than to express it,

“Sanctification is the same as regeneration — the same as the renovation of the whole man. Sanctification is the forming and framing of the new creature; it is the implanting and engraving of the image of Christ on the poor soul. It is what the Apostle breathed after — ‘That Christ might be formed in them’ (Gal 4.19); That they might ‘bear the image of the heavenly.’ (1Cor 15.49)

“There are only two men that all the world is like; and so will it fare with the world as they are like the one, or like the other: the *first* Adam, and the *second* Adam. Every man by nature is like the first Adam *and* like the devil: for the devil and the first fallen Adam were like one another. ‘You are of your father the devil.’ says our Lord (Joh 8.44), and he was ‘a murderer from the beginning.’ All the children of the first Adam are the devil’s children; there is no difference here. And all the children of the other sort are like Jesus Christ, the second Adam; and when His image is perfected in them, then they will be perfectly happy. ‘As we have also borne the image of the earthly, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly.’ (1Cor 15.49)

“I pray you, observe this: we bear the image of the earthly by being *born* in sin and misery; we bear the image of the earthly by *living* in sin and misery; we bear the image of the earthly by *dying* in sin and misery; and we bear the image of the earthly in the rottenness of the *grave*. But we bear the image of the heavenly Adam when we are sanctified by His Spirit. This image increases in us according to our growth in sanctification: and we perfectly bear the image of the heavenly Adam when we are just like the Man Christ, both in soul and body — perfectly happy, and perfectly holy; — when we have overcome death by His grace, as He overcame it by His own strength. It will never be known how alike believers are to Jesus Christ, till they are risen again: when they shall arise from their graves like so many little suns shining in glory and brightness. Oh, how alike they will be to Jesus Christ! — though *His* personal transcendent glory will be His property and prerogative to all eternity.

“**II. Where are justification and sanctification alike?** I answer, in many things.

“1st. They are like one another and have the *same author*: it is God who justifies, and it is God who sanctifies. ‘Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God who justifies.’ (Rom 8.33) ‘I am the Lord who sanctifies you,’ is a common word in the Old Testament. (Exo 31.13; Lev. 20.8)

“2ndly. They are alike and *arise the same*: both arise from free grace — justification is an act of free grace, and sanctification is the same. ‘Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.’ (Tit 3.5) They are *both* of grace.

“3rdly. They are alike in that they are both towards the *same persons*. A man is never justified unless he is also sanctified; and a man is never sanctified unless he is also justified. All the elect of God, all the redeemed, have both these blessings passing upon them.

“4thly. They are alike as to the time; they are the *same in time*. It is a hard matter for us to talk or think of time when we are speaking of the works of God. These saving works of His are always done *at the same time*: a man is not justified before he is sanctified, though it may be conceived so in order of nature; yet at the same time, the same grace works both. ‘Such were some of you,’ says the Apostle, ‘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.’ (1Cor 6.11)

“5thly. They are the same as to the operation of them by the *same means* — that is, by the Word of God: we are justified by the Word, sentencing us to eternal life by the promise; and we are also sanctified by the power of the same Word. ‘Now you are clean,’ says our Lord, ‘through the Word that I have spoken to you.’ (Joh 15.3) ‘That He might sanctify and cleanse His Church,’ says the Apostle, ‘with the washing of water by the Word.’ (Eph 5.26)

“6th and lastly. They are the same as to their *equal necessity* to eternal life. I do not say equal as to their order, but equal as to their necessity: that is, just as it is determined that no man who is not *justified* shall be saved, so it is determined that no man who is not *sanctified* shall be saved — no unjustified man can be saved, and no unsanctified man can be saved. They are of equal necessity in order to possess eternal life.

**“III. Where do justification and sanctification differ?** This is a matter of great concern for people’s practice and daily exercise; where they differ. They agree in many things, as has just now been declared, but they likewise differ vastly.

“1st. JUSTIFICATION is an act of God about the state of a man’s *person*; but SANCTIFICATION is the work of God about the *nature* of a man: and these two are very different, as I will illustrate by a similitude. JUSTIFICATION is an act of God as a judge about a *delinquent*, absolving him from a sentence of death; but SANCTIFICATION is an act of God about *us* personally — as a physician, He is curing us of a mortal disease. There is a criminal who comes to the bar, and is arraigned for high treason; that same criminal has a mortal disease that he may die of, even if there was no judge on the bench to pass the sentence of death upon him for his crime. Justification is an act of grace which absolves the man from the sentence of the law, so that he will not suffer death for his treason — *that* saves the man’s life. But notwithstanding this, unless his disease is cured, he may die quickly afterward, despite the judge’s pardon. Therefore, I say, JUSTIFICATION is an act of God as a gracious Judge, SANCTIFICATION is a work of God as a merciful Physician. David joins them both together: ‘Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.’ (Psa 103.3) It is promised ‘that iniquity shall not be your ruin’ (Eze 18.30) in the *guilt* of it; that is JUSTIFICATION — and it shall not be your ruin in the *power* of it; there lies SANCTIFICATION.

“2ndly. Justification is an act of God’s grace on the account of the righteousness *of another*; but sanctification is a work of God, infusing a righteousness *into us*. Now, there is a great difference between these two: for the one is by imputation, and the other by infusion.<sup>81</sup>

“In JUSTIFICATION, the sentence of God proceeds this way: the righteousness that Christ wrought out by His life and death, and the obedience that He paid to the law of God, is reckoned to the guilty sinner for his absolution; so that when a sinner comes to stand at God’s bar, when the question is asked, Has this man not broken the law of God? *Yes*, says God; *yes*, says the conscience of the poor sinner: I have broken it in innumerable ways. And does the law not condemn you to die for your transgression? *Yes*, says the man; *yes*, says the law of God. The law

<sup>81</sup> This is not to be confused with the Roman Catholic concept of *infused righteousness*. Traill will therefore distinguish *righteousness* (which is of God, Rom 3.21-22; Phi 3.9), and *personal holiness* (1Pet 1.15).

knows nothing more than this: 'the soul that sins must die.' Well then, is there no hope in this case? Yes, and Gospel grace reveals this hope. There is One who took sin on Him, and died for our sins, and His righteousness is reckoned for the poor sinner's justification; and thus we are absolved. We are absolved in justification by God's reckoning what Christ has done and suffered for us on our account, on our behalf, and for our advantage.

"In SANCTIFICATION, the Spirit of God infuses a *holiness* into the soul. I do not say He infuses a righteousness; for I would desire these words, righteousness and holiness, better distinguished than they generally are. Righteousness and holiness are, in this case, to be kept vastly apart. Our righteousness is without us; our holiness is within us — it is our own; the Apostle plainly makes that distinction. 'Not having my own righteousness.' (Phi 3.9) It is our own, not *originally*, but our own *inherently*; not our own so as to be of our own working, but our own because it is indwelling in us. But our righteousness is neither our own originally *nor* inherently; it is neither wrought by us, nor does it dwell in us; but it is wrought by Jesus Christ, and it eternally dwells in Him, and is only to be pleaded by faith, by a poor creature. But our holiness, though it is not our own originally, it is yet our own inherently: it dwells in us. This is the distinction that the Apostle makes: 'That I may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' (Phi 3.9)

"3rdly. JUSTIFICATION is *perfect*, but SANCTIFICATION is *imperfect*; here lies a great difference between them. Justification, I say, is perfect, and admits no degrees; admits no decays, admits no intermission or interruption: but sanctification admits all these. When I say justification is *perfect*, I mean, that every justified man is equally and perfectly justified. The poorest believer in the world today, is justified as much as the Apostle Paul ever was; and every true believer is as much justified now as he will be a thousand years from now. Justification is perfect in all those who are partakers of it, and to all eternity; it admits no degrees. And the plain reason for it is this: the *ground* of it is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ; and entitling us to it, is an act of God the gracious Judge — and that act stands forever. 'It is God who justifies; who shall condemn?' (Rom 8.33) But sanctification is an imperfect, incomplete, changeable thing. One believer is more sanctified than another. I am apt to believe that the Apostle Paul was more sanctified in the first hour of his conversion, than any man in the world today.

"SANCTIFICATION differs greatly as to the persons who partake of it; and it differs greatly too as to the same man; for a true believer, a truly sanctified man, may be more holy and sanctified at one time than at another. There is a *work* required of us — to be 'perfecting *holiness* in the fear of God' (2Cor 7.1). But nowhere are we required to be perfecting *righteousness* in the sight of God; for God has brought in a perfect righteousness, in which we stand. But we are to take care, and be diligent to perfect holiness in the fear of God. A saint in glory is more *sanctified* than he ever was, for he is perfectly so; but he is not more *justified* than he was. No indeed, a saint in heaven is not more justified than a believer on earth is: he only knows it better. And the glory of that light in which they see it, reveals it to them more brightly and more clearly."

From *Traill's Sermons*, on 1Pet 1.1-3, vol. 4, p. 71. *Edinburgh edition of Traill's Works*. 1810.

(2) REV. THOMAS BROOKS, Rector of St. Margaret, Fish Street Hill, London. 1662.

"Consider the necessity of holiness. It is impossible that you should ever be happy, unless you are holy. No holiness *here*, no happiness *hereafter*. The Scripture speaks of three bodily inhabitants of heaven — *Enoch*, before the law; *Elijah*, under the law; and *Jesus Christ*, under the Gospel. All three are eminent in holiness to teach us that even in an ordinary course, there is no going to heaven without holiness. There are many thousands of thousands now in heaven, but there is not one *unholy one* among them all; not one *sinner* among all those saints; not one *goat* among all those sheep; not one *weed* among all those flowers; not one *thorn or prickle*

among all those roses; not one *pebble* among all those glistering diamonds. There is not one *Cain* among all those Abels; nor one *Ishmael* among all those Isaacs; nor one *Esau* among all those Jacobs in heaven. There is not one *Ham* among all the patriarchs; not one *Saul* among all the prophets; nor one *Judas* among all the apostles; nor one *Demas* among all the preachers; nor one *Simon Magus* among all the professors.

“Heaven is only for the holy man, and the holy man is only for heaven: heaven is a garment of glory, that is only suited to one who is holy. God, who is truth itself, and cannot lie, has said that ‘without holiness no man shall see the Lord.’ <sup>Heb 12.14</sup> Mark that term ‘no man.’ Without holiness the *rich man* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *poor man* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *nobleman* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *lowly man* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *prince* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *peasant* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *ruler* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *ruled* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *learned* man shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *ignorant* man shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *husband* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *wife* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *father* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *child* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *master* shall not see the Lord; without holiness the *servant* shall not see the Lord. ‘For faithful and strong is the Lord of hosts that has spoken it.’ (Jos 23.14)

“In this day some advocate one form, some another; some advocate one Church state, some another; some advocate one way, some another; but certainly the way of holiness is the good old way (Jer 6.16); it is the King of kings’ highway to heaven and happiness: ‘And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for others: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err in *therein*.’ (Isa 35.8) Some men say, ‘Lo, *here* is the way;’ other men say, ‘Lo, *there* is the way;’ but certainly the way of holiness is the surest, the safest, the easiest, the noblest, and the shortest way to happiness.

“Among the heathen, no man could enter into the temple of *honour*, but must first enter the temple of *virtue*.<sup>82</sup> There is no entering the temple of *happiness*, unless you enter into the temple of *holiness*. Holiness must first enter into you, before you can enter into God’s holy hill. As Samson cried out, ‘Give me water, or I die’; or as Rachel cried out, ‘Give me children, or I die’; so all unsanctified souls may well cry out, ‘Lord, give me holiness, or I die: give me holiness or I eternally die.’ If the angels, those princes of glory, once fall from their holiness, they shall be forever excluded from everlasting happiness and blessedness. If Adam in paradise falls from his purity, he shall quickly be driven out from the presence of Divine glory. Augustine would not be a wicked man, an unholy man, for one hour — not for all the world — because he did not know if he might die that hour; and if he were to die in an unholy estate, he knew he would be forever separated from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power.

“O, sirs, do not deceive your own souls; holiness is of absolute necessity; without it you shall never see the Lord (Heb 12.14). It is not absolutely necessary that you be great or rich in the world; but it is absolutely necessary that you be holy; it is not absolutely necessary that you enjoy health, strength, friends, liberty, and life; but it is absolutely necessary that you be holy. A man may see the Lord without worldly prosperity, but he can never see the Lord unless he is holy. A man may get to heaven, to happiness, without honour or worldly glory; but he can never get to heaven, to happiness, without holiness. Without holiness *here*, no heaven *hereafter*.

<sup>82</sup> “Among the heathen Romans, they joined the Temple of Virtue to the Temple of Honor, and so linked them together, that whoever would come to the Temple of Honor, must first pass through the Temple of Virtue. Do not, then, boast about your honorable place, but see that you are justly worthy of it; use the Spurs of Industry, rather than the Stirrups of Insolence.” *Prudence the First of the Foure Cardinall Virtues*, by Sir Miles Sandys (1634), p. 231.

‘And there shall in no way enter into it anything that defiles.’ (Rev 21.27) God will at last shut the gates of glory against every person who is without heart-purity.

“Ah, sirs, holiness is a flower that does not grow in Nature’s garden. Men are not born with holiness in their hearts, as they are born with tongues in their mouths. Holiness is of a Divine offspring. It is a pearl of price, that is not to be found in any nature but a renewed nature, in no bosom but a sanctified bosom. There is not the least beam or spark of holiness in any natural man in the world. ‘Every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart is only evil continually.’ (Gen 6.5) ‘How can man be clean who is born of a woman?’ (Job 25.4) The question carries in it a strong negation: ‘How can man be clean?’ That is, man cannot be clean who is born of a woman: a man who is born of a woman is born in sin, and born both under wrath and under the curse. ‘And who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?’ (Job 14.4) ‘But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.’ (Isa 64.6) ‘There is none righteous, no not one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks after God.’ (Rom 3.10, 11) Every man by nature is a stranger, indeed an enemy to holiness. (Rom 8.7) Every man who comes into this world, comes with his face towards sin and hell, and with his back to God and holiness.

“The corruption of our nature is such that, propound any Divine good to it, and it reacts as fire to water, or wet wood — with hissing. Propound any evil, then it is like fire to straw; it is like the foolish satyr that made haste to kiss the fire; it is like that oily matter which, the naturalists say, sucks and snatches the fire to it, with which it is consumed. All men are born sinners, and there is nothing but an infinite power that can make them saints. All men would be *happy*, and yet they naturally loathe to be *holy*. By all this, you may clearly see that food is not more necessary for the preservation of natural life, than holiness is necessary for the preservation and salvation of the soul. If a man had the wisdom of Solomon, the strength of Samson, the courage of Joshua, the policy of Ahithophel, the dignities of Haman, the power of Ahasuerus, and the eloquence of Apollos — yet all those without holiness would never save him. The days and times in which we live call aloud for holiness. If you look at them as days and times of grace, what greater and higher engagements to holiness were ever put upon a people, than those that God has put upon us, who enjoy so many ways, means, and helps to make us holy?

“Oh, the pains, the care, the cost, the charge, that God has been at, and that God is *daily* at, to make us holy! Has He not sent, and does He not *still* send His messengers, rising up early, and going to bed late, and all to provoke you to be holy? Have not many of them spent their time, and spent their strength, and spent their spirits, and spent their lives to make you holy? O, sirs, what do holy ordinances call for, but holy hearts and holy lives? What do days of light call for, but walking in the light, and casting off the deeds of darkness? What is the voice of all the means of grace, but this: Oh, labour to be gracious? And what is the voice of the Holy Spirit, but this: Oh, labour to be holy? And what is the voice of all the miracles of mercy that God has wrought in the midst of you, but this: ‘Be holy, be holy’? O, sirs, what could the Lord have done that He has not done to make you holy? Has He not lifted you up to heaven in respect to holy helps? Has He not to this very day followed you close with holy offers, and holy entreaties, and holy counsels, and holy encouragements, and all to make you holy? And would you be still loose, and still proud, and still worldly, and still malicious, and still envious, and still contentious, and still unholy? “Oh, what is this, but to provoke the Lord to put out all the lights of heaven, to drive your teachers into corners, to remove your candlesticks, and to send His everlasting Gospel that has long stood on tip-toe, among a people who may *more* highly prize it, and dearly love it, and stoutly defend it, and conscientiously practise it, than you have done to this very day? (Rev 2.4, 5; Isa 42.25) <sup>83</sup>

<sup>83</sup> **Rev 2:4** "Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. <sup>5</sup> "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its

I suppose there is nothing more evident than that the times and seasons in which we live call aloud upon every one of us to look for holiness, and to labour for holiness. Never complain of the times, but cease to do evil, and labour to do well, and all will be well; only get better hearts and better lives, and you will quickly see better times. (Isa 1.16-19) <sup>84</sup>

From Brooks' *"Crown and Glory of Christianity; or, Holiness the only way to Happiness"*  
— *Brooks' Works*, vol. 4, pp. 151-153, 187-188. — *Grosart's edition*. 1866.

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place-- unless you repent." **Isa 42:25** Therefore He has poured on him the fury of His anger And the strength of battle; It has set him on fire all around, Yet he did not know; And it burned him, Yet he did not take *it* to heart.

<sup>84</sup> **Isa 1:16** "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, <sup>17</sup> Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow. <sup>18</sup> "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. <sup>19</sup> If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land..."