

## APPENDIX.

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THE term "Eternal Generation," (p.14) I am aware, is liable to be both misunderstood and misrepresented; and it could be wished that our early divines had found some other word less obscure and more adequate to represent their idea; but it is no easy thing to find words that could not possibly be misconstrued, especially when persons are disinclined to accept the meaning intended, or if it crosses their own preconceived notions; but as it is, I see no reason why one should forego the use of a term which has become current amongst those who do receive the meaning conveyed. It has been well said, "The mind and meaning of a writer should be taken from his known doctrine and general drift; and though all writers are liable to express themselves on some points obscurely, or at least not satisfactorily to every mind, yet there is such a thing as making a man an offender for a word, and imputing to him, from some misunderstood expression, views of doctrine quite contrary to his generally known and avowed sentiments." The word "procession," for instance, in reference to the Holy Ghost and the Father, is subject to the same misconstruction as eternal generation, and yet it is strictly scriptural; for it appears, in reference to the word "procession," that both Arius and Sabellius, (third century,) admitted the word, but perverted it. Arius held that the Son and the Holy Ghost proceeded as creatures from the Father. Sabellius held that they proceeded as offices of the Father, or, as it were, developments. "The mistake of both," says Mr. Peter M'Laren, "arose from supposing procession to infer motion *ad extra*; while the orthodox understood it as wholly beginning and ending within the Godhead. Of course, from beginning and ending, we exclude all idea of any era, or of time when; referring merely to the mutual aspect of the Persons. The action in *proceeding* is immanent, not emanative."

The distinction here pointed out by this learned author

as to the word procession is important, and applies equally to the term eternal generation, to which he also refers and he thus states it: "Allowance must be made for obscurity of idea and of speech in this matter; our ideas must be inadequate and obscure. No word can be used in precisely the same sense regarding the Creator and his creatures. They are finite in duration and in being; he is eternal, infinite, and unchangeable. It must suffice that the idea is correct, through inadequate and obscure. Our conceptions and words are images of creatures, and yet we have none else to use. Were God himself to reveal all the truth as it is, it would be unintelligible, for no human words would be perfectly applicable. Whatever a man knows, he can express; and whatever man can express, man can comprehend; but nothing else.

"But groping as best we may, we may attain certain ideas of God, correct though obscure. God made man in his own image, we may assume, in his spiritual as well as his moral nature; for God speaks of his image in man, even after the fall had blotted out the moral likeness; as in 1 Cor. xi. 7; James iii. 9. It is commonly granted that the fall erased no faculty from the essence of men. It is also granted generally that the powers of the soul may be reduced to two, understanding and will. \* \* \* Of course the moral attributes fall to be classed under the will.

"Both these, the intellect and the will, are capable of immanent action. The immanent action of the intellect is a proceeding of a thing conceived and understood so as to become objective to the intellect, while still within it. The concept, the idea, has a certain real existence, whether it be uttered or not; so the distinction is granted between *verbum cordis* and *verbum vocis*: the idea not uttered, or uttered.

"This procession, Augustine believed, (fourth century,) represents to us the generation of the Son, who is called the Wisdom and the Word of God. Others, indeed, as Tertullian, (third century,) perceived and taught the same thing; but Augustine set himself formally to defend the doctrine, which is, therefore, generally traced to him.

"It is the *proprium* of the Son to be 'begotten of the Father.' There are two meanings attached to the word generation,—one large, common to all corruptible things, denoting a change from nonentity to being, the beginning

of existence; the other of more limited application, denoting the origin in the same species of one living being from another. The origin of beings in a different species, as of worms in animals, falls under the first and large meaning, but not under the second and limited meaning.

"In those living beings which proceed from possible to actual being and life, both senses of the word generation are found. But the generation of the Son of God is not in this category; in God there is no changeableness; with him there is no '*potentia passiva*,'—no power to become what he is not, or to receive what he is not, or to suffer change in what he is or has proper to himself. With God, then, generation is the origin in the same species of one living being from another. But the species of God comprehends but one nature; and, therefore, to say that the generation of the Son of God is the origin in the same *nature* of one being from another, is of the same power, and is truly called generation. The origin of the manhood or human nature of our Lord was not generation by the Holy Spirit; for the human nature of Christ was not of the same species with the Holy Spirit; it was created by the Spirit.

"Voetius, to the question, Wherein does creation differ from eternal generation? answers, 'The procession of the Son from the Father is an acting, necessary, natural, emanative, eternally, within God,—a real relation signified by action. Creation is action of free-will, producing change, temporal, to without God, and external, and, considered in regard to God, is a relation to the creatures not real but nominal.'\*

"We have used the words, 'one living being from another,' because we could find no other expression; but though the Son is another Person, he is not another nature from the Father; though '*alius*,' he is not '*aliud*.'

"We must join the two ideas, generation and conception,—understanding from the two, the origin in the same species as in generation, and the origin wholly within and immanent, as in the conception of an idea in the mind; and this procession of the Word, it must be remembered, is eternal, without beginning. The two expressions,—the conceived Word, and the begotten Son,—define the manner of substance of the Second Person in a

\* Vol. I.—Prob. de Creatione i.

way that no expression alone could do it. The word of our heart, or wisdom, or an idea, is immanent, conceived, and, as it were, begotten within us; but then it is not another person. A man's son is another person, in the species of his father, and as truly subsisting as his father; but then a son is a different essence and being from his father. But the Second Person of the Trinity being scripturally named both the Wisdom and the Son of the Father, we join both ideas, and out of them compound one, if not clear, yet intelligible and practical."—*The Glory of the Holy Ghost*, by Rev. Peter M'Laren, pp. 19–21.

*The author of the book containing the above extract has kindly favoured C. G. with a MS. copy of a portion of his work, intended for a second edition, from which the two following paragraphs have been selected, and are added here as tending further to explain and to elucidate this great subject, so little understood and so much misrepresented.*

"My idea is, as it were, begotten within me; it is of me, and in me; but it is not another person. My son is another person, and is of me and from me; but he is not in me, he is outside of me. But God, be it repeated, for it is the thing which the assailants of eternal generation strangely forget, God has no outside. He that is God's begotten Son is everlastingly in God, as truly as my idea is in me; and he that is God's Word and Wisdom is as truly distinct from God's Being and God's Spirit, as my son is distinct from me. The Second Person of the Godhead is both the Wisdom and the Son of the first; another person though not another thing, *alius*, though not *aliud*."

"This procession of the Son, is natural, necessary, and eternal. The Father was not before the Son, God's being was not before his knowing. His word was in him, and of him from all eternity. We cannot conceive the Father as *ever* being without the Son, of God *ever* being without his Wisdom; both are eternal, eternally distinct, eternally one. This was the archetype of two of the elements of human nature, the *I am*, and the *I think*."

# JESUS MORE PRECIOUS THAN THE GOLDEN WEDGE OF OPHIR.

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A SERMON,  
BY CHARLES GORDELIER.

PREACHED AT HEPHZIBAH CHAPEL, DARLING PLACE, NEAR MILE END GATE,

On Lord's Day Evening, 21st May, 1865.

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"I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir."—ISAIAH xiii. 12.

OUR text appears disconnected with either the context in the foregoing or that which follows. I will just refer you to both; you see there is a sudden transition from one subject to another. The prophet announces the destruction of Babylon, and its utter desolation. Cloud upon cloud appear to accumulate, making the darkness intensely felt, with just, as it were, one ray of light suddenly darted in to make it the more palpable and awful. Some of our commentators interpret this passage as referring to the scarcity of men after the destruction of that populous city; but I confess, if we are to confine this view to the letter of Scripture, I am at a loss to discover the bearing of such a sense or the advantage of such a declaration. Others, however, looking out for Christ in his word, consider he is the man here spoken of; certain it is, many of the ancient Jews consider that it refers to "the Messiah, who shall be more precious than all the children of the world." My own impression is, that it refers only to Jesus: in point of fact it is so; it applies well to him, and can apply to no other. To employ such a simile to a mere man is most unusual, and the comparison is beyond what is needed; but if we do err in applying it to Jesus, we err on the right side; we cannot make too much of him; we had better, I was

going to say, see him where he is not expressly revealed, than not to see him where he is. May the spirit of truth take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to us, and then, with his help and blessing, we shall see something of the beauties which make Jesus to the believer more precious than fine gold or the golden wedge of Ophir.

*Gold* has ever been esteemed as an article in commerce of great value, and, when obtained, it procures for its possessor wealth, honour, dignity, respect, and all that this world can bestow. Gold has its price; and though Jesus is compared to it, he is without price; whatever advantages the men of this world derive from the possession of gold, our Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely beyond it in his personal excellences and in the benefits and advantages which the church of God derive from their union to him, and the knowledge and enjoyment they have of him and his salvation. There is indeed no comparison between gold and Jesus. His Person and his work are incomparable to any thing on earth. Our text indeed says as much; it says, "more precious than fine gold;" so that, in fact, he is above it, even the golden wedge of Ophir. *Ophir* is a place not now known; it was once in great repute. It seems to have been located somewhere in the East, probably in the East Indies; but being exhausted of its precious metal, it has lost the name which once gave a charm and value to its produce. The gold from California is now with us in repute. Indian gold has had its day, and so have Peruvian and Mexican; these have passed away, and so will Californian and Australian gold. But the name of Jesus is ever precious to the church of God, and will be throughout all ages. The *wedge* here spoken of is not to be understood of the shape so called, but refers to some large native lump in which it had been found, and so had become famous. You may perhaps remember, that a few years ago there were exhibited in this country large masses of native gold called nuggets, meaning the same thing as wedge; one, for instance, weighed 146 lbs., called the Victoria nugget. Thus the facts of our times will illustrate those of past times; there is little that is new; we have a perpetual recurrence of the same ideas and facts generation after generation.

Let us now attempt, in humble dependence upon the divine blessing, to say a few things in the *first* place, on the GOD MADE MAN; "*I will make a man;*" and then, in

the *second* place, notice some POINTS OF COMPARISON in which Jesus is said to be more precious "*than fine gold, even the golden wedge of Ophir.*"

I. THE GOD MADE MAN: "I will make a man." The God made man, not the man made God. This is a most important distinction to make, for there is an essential difference in the two statements; and as it lies at the basis of your faith, you will do well to inquire "What is truth?" There are those who say Christ was not the Son of God till he became the Son of man; but this notion is not only contrary to God's word, but is most derogatory to the Person of our blessed Lord. Jesus was the eternal God before he became man; he was the Son of God in his own divine and proper Personality before he became the Son of man; his taking our nature was but a revelation of his love, and that of his Father, in the salvation of man; there was a necessity for his taking our nature that he might become and perform the part of a mediator and substitute; this he did by being in himself both our Sacrifice and Priest. His divine Sonship was his qualification for the work he undertook; his manhood was but the condition in which it was effected; *his Person as the Son of God* was eternally pre-existent; his assumption of our nature was an act in time on this earth, being the fulfilment of Jehovah's purpose in the covenant transaction in eternity, whose goings have been from everlasting. Here we have God's word before us, "I will make a man," not I will make a God. This is most certainly the doctrine of the Old Testament; and the doctrine of the New Testament fully agrees with it. John, in his gospel, sets out with this truth, "In the beginning was the Word;" he then describes who and what this Word is; "and the Word was with God. The same was in the beginning with God; and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" (John i. 1, 14;) in other words, God became man. I ask you, can your own common sense put any other construction on such an obvious declaration? Then we have the same truth put forth by the apostle Paul, who, in writing to the Galatians, (iv. 4,) says, "In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Thus it was that the Son of God became the Son of man; it was not the Son of man that became the Son of God. This is

reversing the word of God, indeed, a sad perversion of the truth as it is in Christ.

The doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ being made man, was decreed and foretold to our first parents at their fall. It was afterwards more fully declared by the prophets. Isaiah especially, as in our text; and the greatly beloved Daniel had the exact time revealed to him. This fulness of time was the precise moment of its accomplishment according to God's decree; and—bear with me in repeating the Scriptures just now quoted—then it was, that God, the eternal Father, sent forth his eternally self-existent Son. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” In the fulness of time the Word was made flesh, became incarnate, made of a woman, made under the law. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh; and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. His human nature was a creation, created by the Holy Ghost; (see Matt. i. 20;) “for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Ghost.” See also Luke i. 35: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Here we have a revelation made to Joseph as to *the fact* itself, and to Mary the *manner* of its taking place. Surely the evidence of two such independent and competent witnesses ought to satisfy the most sceptical objectors; but alas it will not! for where there is no love to the truth, no amount of evidence will be received. It is not truth they are seeking, but the establishing of their own vain conceits, and to draw away disciples after them.

The doctrine of the Person of Christ, according to the Scriptures, is revealed as with a sunbeam; but it is only the spiritual eye, when enlightened by the divine Spirit, that can perceive the glory of the Son of God. He is God and Man, in two distinct, whole, and perfect natures; the Godhead and the Manhood united in one person, being very God and very Man, and constituting one most glorious Christ. He is the God-man Christ Jesus. In his mysterious incarnation we perceive him to be the first-born and the only begotten Son of God. Though made of a woman under the law, yet he was perfectly sinless, born without sin; possessing all the essential properties of immaculate humanity; made in all points like unto



his brethren, sin excepted; by taking our nature he was thereby fitted to take our law place, to act as our Substitute, made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He came to fulfil his Father's holy law; he magnified it, and made it honourable. Here the purpose of God is set forth, and the exceeding riches of his grace.

II. THE POINTS OF COMPARISON. We now proceed, in the second place, to notice some points of comparison in which Jesus is said to be "more precious than fine gold, even the golden wedge of Ophir."

Gold, in the Scriptures, is often made an emblem of what is divine, pure, solid, useful, incorruptible, or lasting and glorious. Such is our most glorious Christ, both in his Person and in his work. In the song which is Solomon's, his *head* is likened not only to gold, but the most fine gold. And the same writer, in his Book of Proverbs, sets before the young seeker of divine truth, for his encouragement, the infinite worth and value of Christ Jesus the Lord as the wisdom of his church; his own language being, "Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment; that I may cause them that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." (Prov. viii. 18-21.) "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" "for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." The church itself is "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him." Thus we see the great preacher Solomon and the great apostle Paul are united in ascribing to the Lord Jesus Christ the excellency and superiority he possesses over all things esteemed good and great among men. He is the Treasure-house of all blessedness, and all who are found in union with him are enriched by him in all good things. For he is of God, made unto all true believers "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. i. 30.) Here is, standing first in the category of blessings—WISDOM; and mark what is said of its unspeakable value: it cannot be estimated by that which is most precious to men, "it cannot be gotten for gold." "It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir," "neither shall it be valued with pure gold." (Job xxviii. 15,

16, 19.) And again, the great preacher argues, (Prov. xvi. 16,) "How much better it is to get wisdom than gold." Here in our text Jehovah declares, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold, even the golden wedge of Ophir." This, then, we hope to put before you in several points of view, though they may not all be equally striking. 1st. Gold is the *first metal* spoken of in the Scriptures, as you will find in Genesis ii. 11, being a reference to the place where it was found, namely, Havilah, a word which signifies, "that suffers pain, that brings forth." Gold, indeed, is acquired by much toil and suffering; and Christ is first made known to the believer as being more precious than fine gold, through the sufferings and pain he has endured in his conscience by the terrors of a broken law. Pardon for sin through the atoning blood of Immanuel, he having made peace by the blood of his cross, is a truth which endears the Saviour to him more than all the riches the world could bestow. Well has the poet written:

"Not gems nor gold could buy our peace,  
Nor the whole world's collected store  
Suffice to purchase our release;  
A thousand worlds were all too poor."

But we were speaking of gold being the first metal spoken of; and here we cannot but see the superiority of Christ; he is *ALPHA*, he is first, he is before all things, he is the beginning of all things, he is the creator of all things, gold was created by him, he is the beginning of the creation of God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (John i. 1-3.) Gold is the first metal spoken of, because it is the chiefest. So we find Christ is the chiefest of ten thousand; and how early in the beginning of creation was he manifested to our first parents as the Redeemer and Saviour of his Church; I doubt not to Adam in his state of innocency, but certainly in a way of grace and mercy after the fall, and that the atoning work of the Redeemer was set forth to them under the type of the first animal sacrificed, as may be inferred by the skins with which our first parents were clothed, the use of which setting forth the righteousness of God. In the sacrifice which Abel offered, we perceive how early in the history of man the atonement of Christ

was figured forth; certainly long before the use and nature of gold was discovered or appreciated. Whatever may have been the reason which led Moses to notice the existence and locality of gold in the early history of man, there is something far superior in the thought that the love and mercy of our covenant God should reveal to the first fallen man the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

2. *Gold is good*, goodness is its quality; it is innocuous; the use of most metals in many purposes is found to be injurious, but gold may be used with safety where the inferior metals could not; but even in gold there is a difference of quality, and the Jews have always been known as connoisseurs in this precious metal; you see in the very expression as to the first mention of gold, 1st Gen. 12—"the gold of that land is good," that they could tell the value and quality of gold; they have been always dealers in it, as they are now: so may it be said of the true Israelite, the Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile, he will only trade with Christ; from him he derives all his goodness, Christ is precious to him, because he is good, and doeth good continually. "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good." Here we see that Christ is more precious than fine gold; for the love of gold, as it is said of money, is the root of all evil, but the love of Christ is the root of all blessedness: "blessed are all they that put their trust in him;" the seeker, the believer in Christ is counselled to "buy gold tried in the fire," for it is only such gold which has been tried, that is found to be genuine, that is good. Christ is the believer's only good. "Unto you who believe he is precious," and it is the love of Christ that constrains him to every good word and work.

3. Gold is remarkable for its *purity*. It is seldom found in a state of ore, natively it is pure. Other metals are found mixed with stones, earth, clay, and inferior metals. Native gold occurs crystallised, capillary, and massive; not unfrequently is found alloyed with silver. To separate it from the various substances with which it is mixed is the design of heating it in a furnace. Such is its purity, it suffers no change by the heating of the furnace, no exposure to the air or moisture; it is only by use and wear that its quantity or bulk decreases. So to the believer in Jesus, Christ is revealed to him as being

pure in himself; the pure, holy, harmless, spotless Lamb of God, separated from sinners, unmixed with sins or infirmities. He knew no sin, (2 Cor. v. 21.) The Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was in his nature pure and holy; it was impossible that he could sin, being holy in his nature; and as a fountain could not send out at the same time sweet and bitter waters, so no more could Christ by any possibility become sinful in himself; for when he took our nature, he took not its sinfulness; and though he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, it was as our Surety and Substitute, but he, in his own personality as the Son of God, remained ever the holy, spotless Lamb of God; had it been otherwise, his soul could not have made an offering for sin, for the sacrifice must be without defect, or otherwise it could not be accepted. And so, as our High Priest, he was free from sin, separate from sinners; hence his work, his priesthood avails; the Father smiles upon him, and his people are complete in him. Here again is the superiority of Christ over gold; it is liable to wear and become less in bulk; it may require refining, it may be alloyed, it may even by chemical processes be evaporated and dissipated, but no such changes or alterations can occur with the power and work of Christ; if it were, where would be the foundation of a sinner's hope? His righteousness is everlasting, and the redemption he has obtained is eternal. He is more precious than fine gold.

4. *Fine gold* is a distinction well understood by dealers. Gold is gold, but all gold is not *fine* gold. Though gold may be good and pure, it may not be of a kind regarded as superior in quality, brightness, or texture. There is a quality known as fine gold, and this has a superior value accordingly. So Jesus in his Person and excellences is known and admired as the chiefest of ten thousand, the fairest of ten thousand fairs, the altogether lovely; he is more precious than all that can be esteemed by man; he had the Spirit of God without measure, no coarseness of nature, life, or manners, nothing to deteriorate his character, being perfect in every gift and grace as God and man united. His head is as the *most fine* gold, the most superior of its kind; so Jesus is the most exalted personage that can be conceived, he is head over all things to his body the church; and in all things he has the pre-eminence, for he is super-excellent. As Jesus is of

God made to the church to be more precious than fine gold, so the Holy Spirit leads and teaches each individual member to find that it is indeed so of a truth; the believer is made to feel his need of him in every way, that there is no other way of salvation but by Christ, no other name under heaven by which men can be saved; that Jesus is the only Saviour. What God has made Christ to be, so the believing sinner finds that he is so, more precious than fine gold, even the golden wedge of Ophir.

5. Gold is *tried*; sometimes to prove that it is gold, and sometimes to purge it from dross or alloy. True gold suffers no loss by trial, its value is enhanced by it. Hence believers are comforted by the thought that the work of grace in their hearts suffers no loss by the trials they are called to pass through. Job said that when God had tried him, he should come forth as gold—all gold—purified from all fleshly notions, all creature dependences, all carnal things; these would be consumed or separated and made to appear what they are in themselves. Believers have their gold tried in the fire. Every gift, every grace of God's Spirit undergoes furnace work; grace must be tried, it must be tested, it shall be proved of what sort it is, and be found to the praise and honour of God. Trials strengthen every grace, as well as manifest whose work it is: and that which tends to the glory of God is found also to result in the comforting and establishing the believer in his hope and assurance of eternal bliss. Gold perisheth in the using if not in the fire, but the work of divine grace in the heart is for eternity. Every wave of trouble, every sorrow, every stroke of affliction will be found to have had its appointed work, and to have fully accomplished the design of him who sits as a refiner to purify the sons of Levi; not by washing but by melting; precious thought, the Lord will spare no pains, no exercise, till all sin, earth, and self is thoroughly purged, and his work perfected in infinite wisdom, power, and glory. Was not Jesus tried when on this earth, was he not proved as gold is proved? he was manifested to be, and declared to be the Son of God with power. As the Son of man; he learned obedience by the things which he suffered, and as the Captain of our salvation he was made perfect through suffering.

6. In ancient times *gold was plentiful*. The Jews pos-

sessed it in abundance, it seemed to be everything to them; even Job was suspected of having made it his confidence. The rich man's wealth is his strong city is a proverb. Money indeed is said to answer all things, and while it lasts it is everything to its owner, but riches make to themselves wings. Gold becomes, in process of time and wear, exhaustible; now Jesus is not only everything to the believer, possessing in him abundance, plentifulness, a fulness of blessing, (Eph. i. 3,) but there is in him an inexhaustible fulness: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The present Jews have lost their gold, where can it be found? but Jesus is as precious as ever, he is as rich to the believer now as ever he was to Adam, to Abel, or any other saint who lived before the flood.

" Millions of happy spirits live,  
On thy exhaustless store,  
From thee they all their bliss receive,  
And still thou givest more."

7. *Gold is precious* because of its excellences. The golden wedge of Ophir was famous for its size and its quality; but it is no longer precious; where is its excellency? it has ceased to exist. The Victoria nugget, of 146 lbs. weight, its fame has dropped; these extraordinary lumps of precious metal have only a temporary name, it passes away with the flight of time; the lump is reduced, manufactured, and becomes dispersed. Here we see our text illustrated, Jesus is more precious than the fine gold, the wedge of Ophir; he remains ever what he was when first known and loved by the believer. Jesus is always precious to them who believe in all his offices and characters; he is their life, their meat, their drink, their clothing, their home, their comfort, their light, their joy, their hope; he is their all in all; they are redeemed not with silver and gold, which are corruptible, but with the precious blood of Christ. The more believers live on Christ, the more they love him, the more they delight in him, the more they feel they cannot do without him; they count everything of earth and home but as dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. O my friends in the gospel, do you know anything about this feeling of high esteem for the Lord Jesus Christ? Has he been made more precious to you

than fine gold, even the golden wedge of Ophir? Come, let the question go home close to your conscience, for be you sure of this—

“None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good.”

8. Gold *is beautiful*. It is always admired, it is always beautiful, it is always valuable, it cannot be excelled; whatever is manufactured of it has a superiority and a magnificence above any other metal. But O how superior, super-excellent is Christ to the believer in his Person as the God-man Mediator! His excellences are indescribable; he is the chiefest of ten thousand of all that can be valuable and useful; he is without comparison; he is above all that can be compared to him. How beautiful he is as the Rose of Sharon, how beautiful he is as the Lily of the Valley, as the Cedar of Lebanon; a Sun among ten thousand stars; he is altogether lovely. In all things of nature, whether on earth or in heaven, he has the pre-eminence. He is to be glorified above everything that can be named. His name shall endure for ever, and men shall be blessed in him. He is the beloved of his Father, his own Elect, in whom the eternal Jehovah delighteth; his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. He is most glorious in the sight of all angels in heaven, who worship and adore him, and who eternally will contemplate the wonders of his mysterious and glorious Person. And how he will be admired of all his saints, when brought to their heavenly home to behold him in his glory, the glory which he had with his Father before the world was. If faith, even now, can discover something of his inconceivable beauty, what will it be then? The very thought of it fills the heart with a joy that is unspeakable; it draws down a foretaste of the blessings, and anticipates the heavenly felicity. The fine gold, the golden wedge of Ophir shall perish when the world shall be burnt up; but the glory, the beauty of Jesus will ever shine forth more bright and more splendid.

9. Gold is noted for *its strength*. In itself its tenacity is so great that a wire the eighteenth part of an inch will bear 500 lbs. without breaking. Well, this is a remarkable property of gold; but how super-excellent is the Lord Jesus Christ above all things in nature! He who made gold so strong, did he not give it its strength?

Speak we of strength? His arm is strong. He is strength. Happy is he who can say, "In the Lord have I righteousness *and strength*." "God is our refuge *and strength*." How infinitely strong was he when he bore all the sins of all his people in his own body on the tree. He upholds all things by the word of his power. The things which are seen display his eternal power and Godhead. What a matter of eternal rejoicing is the truth that Jesus Christ is the mighty God! The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe.

10. Gold is *weighty*. Gold, when unmixed and unalloyed, is the most solid, and therefore the heaviest of all metals. Its substantialness, whether for use or for ornament, makes it valuable, and causes it to be so much appreciated. Hence the Lord Jesus Christ is compared to it. But he is infinitely beyond it in the benefits and advantages which result from the knowledge and enjoyment of him and his salvation. The soul who is brought to know Christ inherits substance; his riches are unsearchable; the knowledge of Christ Jesus is the most weighty and durable of all sciences. It is heavenly wisdom; it is life eternal. The believer in Jesus has more in him than all the wealth which all the mines on earth could supply. In him we have all our souls can want, or that can make us blest and truly happy.

11. Gold is *ornamental*. It is chiefly used for splendour and ornament; it has attractions beyond all other metals, on account of its brilliancy. When the bright sun shines upon the burnished gold, it has a most dazzling glory. Thus it is, though inadequately, that gold represents the glories of our Immanuel, whether in reference to his divine nature or his exalted and glorified manhood. Thus the heavenly Jerusalem is described as being "pure gold," the streets thereof being of pure gold, as it were transparent glass. There is nothing on earth beyond gold to which the Lord Jesus can be compared; his superior glory and excellency is infinitely beyond its brightest splendour, its perfect purity, its utmost solidity or durability. His very name is an ornament to every true believer; they value his name as being far more precious than fine gold, even the golden wedge of Ophir. It is their crown of glory; it is their diadem of beauty; and I can say for myself,



“ So, gracious Saviour! on my breast,  
 May thy dear name be worn;  
 A sacred ornament and guard,  
 To endless ages borne.”

12. Gold is *unchangeable*. It remains essentially what it is under all states and conditions. It will not rust nor consume; it is indestructible by fire or air; the strongest heat will not change its metallic qualities, nor will it lose a grain in weight. Such is our ever adorable Lord God, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Unchangeable in his Person, unchangeable in his mediatorial offices and characters, unchangeable in his love, unchangeable in his will and purposes towards his church, unchangeable in his power. He is ever the same, who wast, and art, and is the Almighty. With him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He is of one mind, who can turn him? Creatures change, circumstances change, our frames and feeling vary, we change our mind, alter our purposes; but our Jesus changes not: “I am God; I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” We glory in an unchanging God, an unchanging salvation; thus Jesus, the God-man is made more precious to us than fine gold, more precious to us than the golden wedge of Ophir. The Spirit of truth takes of the things of Christ, reveals them to us, applies them to us; by this we discover the worth and beauties of our ever precious and most glorious Christ:

“ His worth, if all the nations knew,  
 Sure the whole earth would love him too.”

And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of those negative points of comparison wherein gold, however precious we may deem it, fails altogether. Riches can procure food, raiment, every luxury, supply every convenience and comfort the body can require; but in the most important seasons of grief, trial, affliction, or necessity, they can afford no aid, no support, no consolation. Gold cannot give health of body nor peace of mind. Without these, gold yields no enjoyment. But here is the peculiar excellency of Jesus Christ, what gold cannot procure, he can bestow. In the seasons of trial, he can support the soul, bring it through, and make them blessings indeed. By him the soul has pardon of all its sins, and peace with God. By him the comforts of his

Spirit, the hope of everlasting glory, the assurance of an unalienable title to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away is imparted. These are true riches, which can never lose their value, can never fade, and never fail. They are all treasured up in Christ Jesus, and are secured for the enjoyment of true believers by the precious and never-failing promises of his own word. O, if we are united to Christ by a true and living faith, how poor and mean are all the things of this earth! How contemptible is gold! how vile in the comparison of Christ and his salvation! The earth, with all its treasures of gold and jewels, he has given to the children of men; but to his church, his beloved, his bride, he hath given himself; what can he do more? What can believers desire more? for with himself he hath given us all things; all things are ours—ours for ever—unsearchable riches—durable riches—everlasting glory. Remember, too, it is God the eternal Father who has made the Person of his Son so precious: “I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.” And what Jesus is in himself, he is all that to the soul renewed in his image. It is the work of the Holy Ghost to make him so to each believer living on him by precious faith. Let me ask you, dear hearer, “What think ye of Christ?” Can you lift up your heart to him and say, in the words of Newton,

“Yes, thou art precious to my soul,  
My transport and my trust,  
Jewels to thee are gaudy toys,  
And gold is sordid dust.”

Then if so, your title is clear to all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him; what a rich inheritance is yours. All is yours in title; all you need now is the earnest; this you will have the more you are led to live by faith on the Son of God, who loved you and gave himself for you. May the Spirit of all grace and truth lead you on to know more of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. In him there is everything to love, everything that can be desired. The soul once fixed on him, lives upon him, walks with him, looks to him. Oh, the blessedness of being brought to cease from man, to be brought out of self, and away from all human things. My friends, if we want to know Christ more, it must be by daily living

upon him, living by him, living in him. Not upon ourselves, not even upon what his Spirit has done in us, not his gifts in us, not his graces in us. It is himself, his Person, who is made precious to the believer, not what the believer is made to be. And until he is brought out of himself, to live quite away from himself, he knows but little of what it is to live upon Christ. This is all my salvation and all my desire. I, too, would fain walk with him, live upon him alway; but I find the world and Satan tempt me with a thousand baubles to keep me from looking to him. Too often I am sunk down within myself, and feel myself a miserable, wretched, crawling worm, as I am indeed in myself; but this is not the life of faith, it is the life of earth. I want to rise above it; I want to know more of Christ and the power of his resurrection; I am thankful to feel the desire, and I do often say:

“O could I know and love him more,  
And all his wondrous grace explore,  
Ne'er would I covet man's esteem,  
But part with all and follow him.”

Amen.

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# THE KINGDOM OF GOD ENTERED THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION.

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## A SERMON,

BY CHARLES GORDELIER,

PREACHED AT HEPHZIBAH CHAPEL, DARLING PLACE, MILE END GATE.

On Lord's Day Morning, October 17th, 1865.

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“And that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.”—Acts xiv. 22.

THERE have been many persons who have begun to make a profession of religion, but on meeting with some obstacle or difficulty in the way, perhaps a few taunts of ridicule from their friends or old companions, or perhaps threatened with the prospect of their employment being taken away, they were so discouraged as to feel something like Bunyan's Pliable, Christian's early companion in his pilgrimage; they've got into the slough of despond, and like Pliable, they get out of it as soon as they can; but then it is with their face towards their old course, and so we see no more of them. The fact was, as good old Gurnall says, “they had a false aim in their profession, and so they soon came to the end of it.” They would like to have the crown well enough, but meeting with a cross in the way, and having no will to take it up, they turn back, and so discover their true character and whose servants they are.

But with the true believer in Christ it is far otherwise. The fear of the Lord being planted within his heart by the Spirit of Truth, he is sincere in his first setting out in the divine life; he does not go very far when he begins to feel his weakness, for true religion has *feeling* in it; he soon begins to fear lest he should not hold out to the end; lest some of his old habits of sin should overthrow

him ; lest Satan should entrap him ; lest the world should allure him back : these things constrain him to cry out again and again, " Hold thou me up and I shall be safe," " Hold up my goings in thy paths." Now this is it, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, hence he is earnest as well as sincere ; his face is set Zionward because his heart is set Zionward—his aim is not centred in self, like the false professor ; his delight is in God and in his service ; to that all his desires are tending ; he feels he has no power to persevere, but he seeks strength from on high ; he seeks nothing from self, because Christ is his ALL. His judgment being established in the truth of God, his principles are well fixed ; in godly simplicity and sincerity he has his conduct in the world, and thus it is the righteous shall hold on his way.

Yet it is equally true, the pilgrim to the better land is often discouraged because of the way. We read, that in the wilderness, " the souls of the people were much discouraged because of the way ;" but still they went on, passing on from one station to another, from strength to strength, and at length they got through all their labour and toil and reached the promised land. So the believer in Christ, though he is often dismayed, often cast down, often perplexed, yet he has the assurance of final salvation ; he is assured of an entrance being administered unto him abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. i. 11.) And this assurance of entrance is coupled with the assurance of tribulation ; also, it is the pathway through the wilderness, and Mr. Hart very truly says—

" The souls that would to Jesus press,  
Must fix this firm and sure,  
That tribulations more or less,  
They must and shall endure."

And we find Jesus forewarned his disciples of the fact : " In the world ye shall have tribulation." (John xvi. 33.) Peter reminds us, " If need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptation ;" (1 Pet. i. 6 ;) and here in the text before us, the disciples are exhorted to continue in the faith, and " that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom."

This leads us to notice the connection of the text before we proceed further with our subject. Paul and Barnabas had been preaching the gospel in several cities among the

heathen, and with some degree of success; then followed persecution, stirred up by the malignant Jews who tracked the holy men in their journeys. Paul himself had been so stoned as to be left for dead, but he revived, and even returned to the very places where his persecutors had come. He did not go in a spirit of bravado, but for the sake of confirming the souls of the disciples of Antioch and Iconium, lest the good seed sown should have been injured, lest they should faint at his tribulations, and be turned out of the narrow path of life—not only confirming them in the verities of the gospel, but exhorting them, notwithstanding bitter persecutions, to continue in the faith, and adding “that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God.”

Let us then, with the help and blessing of the Lord, in the *first* place endeavour to say a few things respecting THE KINGDOM OF GOD here spoken of in the text; in the *second* place speak of THE WAY AND MANNER OF ENTERING this kingdom; and in the *third* place state some of THE REASONS why it must be entered through much tribulation.

I. *The Kingdom of God.* I presume you all know that a kingdom is a territory of land where the people live under certain regulations, and are subject to the dominion of a man, who is their ruling head, and is styled a king. By the kingdom of God *generally*, we may understand his universal dominion over all things; for he creates, preserves, protects, and gives laws to and regulates all his creatures, and dispenses judgments and favours as he pleaseth. (1 Chron. xxix. 11; Ps. cxlv. 12.) By the kingdom of God *specially*, we are to understand it consists of persons living under the reign of God in the Person of Christ, his co-eternal and co-equal Son, being subject to his laws as made known in his word, called also the visible church of Christ. This kingdom of God, as may be supposed, is not of this world. Our Lord declared this to the Roman governor: “My kingdom is not of this world.” It is a spiritual kingdom, the kingdom of God is within; it has to do with the hearts and lives of men before God. The kingdom of God is also called in the Scriptures the kingdom of heaven, the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of Christ. These refer to the gospel dispensation, and is so designated to distinguish it from the Jewish dispensation. The Jewish dispensation was

peculiar to the Jews as a nation; they were *nationally* God's people, and they worshipped God in a way and form, as prescribed by him, peculiar to themselves. The gospel dispensation is without respect to persons as a nation, and has regard to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; but more particularly it is intended to signify the ruling power of divine grace in the soul, and the future state of glory of the blessed in heaven.

Now, our text comprises all that is intended by the terms gospel dispensation, the reign of grace, and the future blessedness. In the 9th Luke ii. we read: "And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God." In John xviii. 36: Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world." The apostle Paul (Romans xiv. 17) says, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" and in Col. i. 13, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." These several passages, you perceive, refer to the work of grace in the soul. I pass by, for the present, such portions as refer to the heavenly state as being the kingdom of God, as my object, more particularly, is to lay before you that which refers to the kingdom within; this concerns us most; if we have the one, we shall have the other; for where the Lord gives grace he also gives glory. The connecting link is our own experience, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the conscience.

Observe, 1. The kingdom of God is one of *grace*. It originated in that heavenly compact between the Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, the triune Jehovah, before the foundation of the world. The Father's love is the source of all grace. The love of the Son is the source of all mercy, in that having become our Surety and Ransom, mercy can now be shown to every penitent believer in him. The love of the Spirit is displayed in becoming the administrator of the covenant in harmony with the general designs of God's providence on earth. 2. The kingdom of God is one of *power*. Once the soul was dead in sin, a captive to the law of sin and death, though it was alive in the world, in league with Satan, and in his slavery. But being redeemed from the strong one by the hand of him who is stronger than he, the liberated one is free from the old yoke of sin; a complete change has been wrought in him. Once he was in a state of death, but

now he is made alive and enlightened ; being pardoned, he has peace and joy ; he feels it to be a power of heaven over earth, Christ over Satan, grace over sin, the Spirit over the flesh and the world. 3. The kingdom of God is one of *glory*. It is a final and complete victory over sin, death, hell, and the grave. The ransomed of the Lord are everlastingly secured in the abodes of bliss and happiness. No sin or sorrow can ever find admision there. The heavenly state is one of eternal felicity, safety, joy, and peace. The blessed sing the song of providence and redemption, Moses and the Lamb. It is a place of indescribable glory, for the "eye hath not seen, nor hath the ear heard, nor hath it entered the heart to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.)

II. *The way and manner of entrance.* In taking up the second portion of our subject, we may observe that the way and manner of the believer's entrance into the kingdom is not the least important ; in fact, it is the part with which we have most to do ; it has to do with our own positive experience ; its realities come vividly before us, and they come within our own consciousness. The kingdom of God being partly without and partly within, it exercises all the powers of the new-born soul. Faith, hope, love, and desire are called forth ; these inspire it through all the mazes of the wilderness state to that which is without, while that which is within is being manifested and unfolded more and more in and through the exercises arising out of the toils, trials, temptations, and sorrows of the present state of existence.

The doctrine of our text is founded on the truth of our Lord's statement, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." (John xvi. 33.) The idiom of the phrase itself is evidently taken from the history of David. The apostle had well proved that "bonds and afflictions abided him." "Those that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The very first step in following the Lord is on the threshold of trial ; "he that will follow me let him first take up *his* cross, deny himself, and follow me." (John xvi. 24.) Thus we see there is no escaping the trials and persecutions incident to following the Lord Jesus Christ ; not that there is any blind fatal necessity in the fact, but it arises out of the divine appointment and constitution of things ; and this, be it remembered, is accord-



ing to the good pleasure of his will ; in other words, the sovereignty of God. As soon as you become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, immediately the world takes offence ; it is naturally opposed to the Gospel of Christ ; it is the way Satan works against Christ in the hearts of men. Satan has lost a slave, the world has lost a help-mate, the power of sin is checked ; they are all in league against the ransomed sinner : but vain are all their efforts to recover them ; as sure as they are not appointed to wrath but to obtain salvation, so sure shall they enter the kingdom of heaven, though it be through much tribulation.

You look at the history of David, see what tribulation he encountered before he entered the kingdom. He was divinely anointed, and in a larger measure than his predecessor Saul ; for it is a significant fact that whereas David was anointed with a *horn* of oil, while Saul was anointed with a *phial* only ; typical, doubtless, of the Lord Jesus having the Spirit poured out upon him without measure. We see also in the circumstances of David which intervened between the anointing and his coming to the throne, something which is also typical of all the Lord's people before they become possessed of the heavenly kingdom. As sure as David was divinely anointed to the kingdom, so the path to it, and every step in it, was also divinely appointed ; every trial, every cross, their length, sharpness, and number. The anointing and the appointing are divinely connected, forming a circle of goodness and mercy which surrounds every believer in Christ.

“ To his church, his joy, his treasure,  
Every sorrow works for good ;  
They are dealt in weight and measure,  
Yet how little understood :  
Not in anger,  
But from his dear covenant love.”

Believers have to struggle through much opposition in entering the kingdom. Many things seem to threaten their destruction, God's own promise often seems a delusion ; entering the kingdom of heaven with the world, sin, self, and Satan all combined against him, seems the greatest improbability. His progress is the greatest mystery ; yet there is certainly some progress, an onward progress ; at least, there is a divinely holding on, if there

is not a sensibly going on. But eventually, all believers shall find they are more than victorious through him that hath loved them over all sin, death, hell, and the grave. They must enter the kingdom, and there is nothing on earth, above or beneath, can hinder it. Their entrance is secured by almighty destination.

It is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom. Tribulations may be divided into two classes, those which are without and those which are within. Those without arise from the world, and those within from those exercises of soul known only to the believer in Jesus. We will speak of the first, *tribulations from without*.

1. *Opposition from the world.* Generally speaking, when the Lord's people are reclaimed from an ungodly life, their former companions will become their deadly enemies. Being haters of God, they will hate them. The world has ever hated the Lord Jesus Christ, and will continue to do so while Satan is its prince. The world will love its own, and will hate everything that savours of Christ and his gospel. And why so? Because its own works are evil; it loves darkness rather than light, and will not come to the light. The children of light are called to walk in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, and being perverse, no wonder there is a continual collision between them and the children of light. There is a counteraction against the child of God in all his ways, his goings, and his steps; he is withstood continually, here is his tribulation. In some cases the world employs its fascinating influence without making the soul feel it for a time. It is deceitful, enticing, and imploring; hiding itself, making itself to appear on the side of truth and righteousness, as if it were impressed with a love of truth, making itself engaged in the religion of the day. How often the believer finds his great struggle is with the world; so enticing in its methods of deceit, leading the soul astray imperceptibly, as Mr. Hart says, so as not to "see the snare before we feel the smart." The world is so flexible that it will become any and everything, so that it may lead the soul away from Christ.

2. Specially do we find opposition *from carnal professors*. These are a great annoyance to sincere believers. They are "pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides."

With fair speeches they catch the unwary, rob them of their comforts, bring them into bondage, and cause them much distress of soul. · How often have we thought that we had found a true sympathising friend, cherished them in our bosoms, communed with them, when to our dismay and sorrow they have proved deadly serpents; wolves in sheeps' clothing, warm in their apparent attachments and words, but showing their teeth, ready to bite and to devour one when we have resisted their encroachments. Too often it has been worse; grievous wolves have come into the fold of Christ, not sparing the flock, and all under the name of religion. Some come into it to promote their trade; some to make friends, borrow money, never returning it; going from one place of worship to another, from one town to another, making a living out of the kindness and generosity of the unsuspecting. Some cause great tribulation by spreading pernicious errors, sowing the seeds of discord in the churches; some, evidently, mix with the people of God, under the pretence of a higher tone of spirituality and more enlightened views of truth, merely to draw away disciples after them. Some professors cause great grief in the souls of sincere disciples by their laxity of principles, indulgence of pleasure and amusements; their worldly policies in business, their craft, cunning, over reaching, oppression, knavery; all these constitute a source of much tribulation, which the disciple of Christ must pass through before he can enter the kingdom.

3. And what opposition is found often amongst even *good and gracious men*. How often mistaken views of each other's motives and purposes have given rise to serious misconstructions of each other's conduct. Paul and Barnabas, for instance; what a sharp contention there was between them, yet both designing to serve the Lord Christ, but mistaking each other till they both became unyielding, and at last part unfriendly, and never more mention each other's names. It is a great and sore trial when brethren fall out by the way, "a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." Yet it does please the Lord, at times, to suffer bitter roots to spring up, causing much trouble and grief. To cease from man is a difficult lesson to learn; and when we find one's foes are of one's own household, to be wounded in the house of

our friends, even the church as well as the world becomes a path of tribulation to us ; but we must go through it ere we can enter the kingdom.

4. *Tribulations in the providence of God.* These are of a multiform character. Peter, who had a large experience of external things incident to the church of God, speaks of manifold temptations, of their producing heaviness of spirit, and of the necessity of its being so. The lives of Jacob, of David, and of Paul, were full of tribulation in the world. They stand out as waymarks for the tried believer in all ages. We refer to them as illustrations of the great truth: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all." David was confident his trials would never be suffered to be above what he was able to bear: "Thou which hast shewed me great and sore troubles shall quicken me again, and bring up again from the depths of the earth." (Ps. lxxi. 20.) His peculiar trials, and the number of them, was a matter of history associated with the memory of his name, "and the times that went over him." (1 Chron. xxix. 30.) David, though long ago fallen asleep, still serves his generation ; the record of his deep experience, both circumstantial and spiritual, has for ages comforted the church of the living God, and will continue to do so to the end of time. The experience of the apostle Paul is perhaps more of a ministerial character, yet contains the elements of much instruction and gracious encouragement to all the church of God ; (see 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, 10 ; ) while that of Jacob has ever and anon been referred to throughout the word of truth for the comfort and support of the saints in tribulation ; indeed, a large proportion of the promises to the tried and afflicted are addressed to his spiritual seed under his name Jacob. Troubles in early life, long servitude under oppression, providences dark, crooked, and mysterious ; disappointments, crosses, losses, failures, bereavements, painful deep cutting sorrows, wave upon wave, form the sum of troubles through which many a dear child of God has to pass ; long bodily affliction, fiery trials of persecutions, overwhelming floods of bitter distress from our own mistakes and errors in life, have marked the course of many a choice believing saint. The footsteps of the flock of slaughter, if inquired for, will be sure to be found in the path of tribulation ; it is the way to the kingdom ; there

is no exemption ; it is the royal road to it ; the Saviour himself has gone before us every step of the way. He is our forerunner. He has taken possession of the kingdom, his saints follow him, they are also appointed to a kingdom, and shall surely possess it ; they are made kings unto God, and shall rule and reign with him. Tried believer, faint not at your present tribulations ; they are all ordered for your good, your present good, your future good, your everlasting good : it is now, at this present moment, that you are entering the kingdom. Is not God now supporting you in the midst ? You cannot say that he has forsaken you ; you may perhaps have expected to have been borne *above* your trials, and I know many of the saints have been much blessed in them, but there is really no guarantee that it shall be so in every case. God has mercifully designed that every trial shall work its apparent end ; the end, both with the degree and the number, being all appointed by his infinite wisdom in love for your soul's eternal good. Faith's estimate of tribulation, as you know, is this : " Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." ( 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.)

We proceed to notice the second class of tribulations : *those from within* ; not that they are of a secondary nature in themselves, by no means. Spiritual troubles, indeed, concern the believer most, they weigh the heaviest ; but our text has reference chiefly to those of an outward kind. The first soul trouble arises from the sight of sin. The Spirit of Truth commences his gracious work by convincing the believer of the evil nature of sin. He works in the heart a godly sorrow for sin, a repentance that needeth not to be repented of. The weight of guilt, the sense of unpardoned sin is often such as to sink the spirit down into the lowest depths of misery. And until the believer has some apprehension of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, with some heart rendings by reason of those terrors which a spiritual sight of God's holy law reveals, there is no entering the kingdom of grace. Then it is the Spirit leads the soul to find that by Christ his sin is purged, that for him the law has been fulfilled, that

God is reconciled by the death of his Son, and peace is assured him by a sweet testimony in his conscience. This is a path which no carnal professor knoweth, and which the eye of the unregenerate hath not seen; the unclean shall not pass over it; it shall be for those who must enter the kingdom; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

But our text says it is through *much* tribulations; soul troubles are numerous indeed; the conflict between flesh and spirit occasions more troubles than all those the world can ever produce. What fear of falling back into the world, what fear of being left to fall into some sin, of being caught in some trap or snare of the fowler. What fierce and fiery temptations from the adversary, the devil. What sore trials arise from the hidings of God's countenance, when no light shines upon the sacred word, when no unction is experienced from the ministry, when the ordinances of God's house become barren seasons, time after time; no liberty at the throne of grace; when fellowship with the saints becomes insipid; when, instead of one's peace flowing like a river, one's heart is more like the troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt. What raging of unbelief, doubt, discontent, ingratitude, pride, self-will, hard thoughts of God, misapprehension of his dealings with us; such foolishness, such baseness, such vileness, emanating from the depraved nature, indicating rather the reign of sin and corruption than the reign of grace; all these feelings creating such a disturbed and unsettled state of the soul as to cause it to feel as if the Lord had quite forsaken it, or rather had never begun a good work at all, and that the latter end of one's profession would leave one's state and being worse than the first. Such has been the discomposed state of the believer under such exercises as these as to feel tempted to give up all profession of religion, go right into the world, and never mix more with the people of God. To the human reason there seems the certain destruction of all hope; for there seems no faith, no love, no light, no life, no power; such contradictions and disappointments instead of direct answers to fervent and importunate prayer for growth in grace as is truly amazing and confounding. We think God is turned against us, and that ere long he will make us an awful example of the veriest hypocrisy that ever existed; expose all our hollow pretensions and deceit, and

that we shall die at last in infamy and disgrace. O how my soul has been racked with these tortures ; how I have tortured myself with these instruments of torture, keeping it all to myself ; or if I brought my case before the Lord, it always seemed as though the heavens were brass and the earth iron ; no feeling, yet all feeling ; a feeling of hardness, no tenderness. I could have been eloquent with the language of Asaph, David, Jeremiah, and others who have poured forth long and bitter complaints. The poet Newton has well described such soul troubles as these ; he says :

“ I ask’d the Lord that I might grow,  
In faith, and love, and every grace ;  
Might more of his salvation know,  
And seek more earnestly his face.

“ I thought that in some favour’d hour,  
At once he’d answer my request,  
And by his love’s constraining power,  
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

“ Instead of this he made me feel  
The hidden evils of my heart,  
And let the angry powers of hell  
Assault my soul in every part.

“ Yea, more, with his own hand he seem’d  
Intent to aggravate my woe ;  
Cross’d all the fair designs I schemed,  
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.”

Thus it has been with me, and I know it has been with some of you. These exercises of soul are the tribulations which the Lord has appointed to be the way and the manner of entering the kingdom. The Lord does indeed answer prayer, but it is by crosses ; in order to strengthen faith, he tries it ; and this trial of our faith, as also of any other grace, is made the means of proving it, proving that it is faith, real faith, the fruit of his Spirit ; and when God reveals his purposes of love to us, showing that our tribulations have not been our destructions, as we anticipated, but have been working out the very object which we at first desired, then we can rejoice, though for a season there was a needs be for our being in heaviness, through manifold temptations ; the trial of our faith being much more precious than of gold, which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, it shall at last be found unto praise and honour and glory of Jesus Christ. Then it is

we can glory in tribulations, because it is the entering of the kingdom; knowing that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope that maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom. v. 4.) Brethren, this is how we enter in and possess the kingdom. There is nothing so well establishes the believer in the love and faithfulness of Jehovah as these exercises of soul about the work of God in us. Our comforts grow out of our crosses; our gains spring from our losses; our keenest sorrows yield the sweetest comforts; our sharpest griefs are made the occasion of our highest joy. And while on the one hand, in the brightest sky of our anticipations, we see the darkest clouds of reversion, disappointment, and dejection, we find, on the other, the windy storm and tempest hasten us towards the desired haven. Every trial has its appropriate connection with each other, they all work together for the soul's real welfare; and, as Mr. Horne truly says,

"Their end, triumphant, always lays  
The ground of peace for fervent praise."

III. But I must now, in the third place, state some of THE REASONS why it is that through *much* tribulation we *must* enter the kingdom.

1. That *God may draw us nearer to himself*. Ah, say you, that is just what I have been praying for this many a long year; but I see no answer yet, and am often tempted to doubt the reality of prayer, and to say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Now let me call your attention to a passage or two in God's word. In Ex. xix. 4, the Lord, by his servant Moses, speaks to his people: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself." He appeals to his own work, and to their own experience. How did the Lord bring his people to himself? Was it not through the way of the Red Sea, and the wilderness, with all its hardships, privations, and discouragements? Was it not in the midst of the Red Sea that they rejoiced in the Lord? (Ps. lxvi. 6.) Did not the Lord lead them about, and there was no strange god with them? They did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and did all drink of the same spiritual drink; for



they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. (1 Cor. x. 3, 4.) Here we see that Christ was with his church in the wilderness; he led his people about in the waste howling wilderness, instructed them, kept them as the apple of his eye. (Deut. xxxii. 10.) Beloved, has not this been God's method with you? is it not your own experience? Have you not been completely separated from your former Egyptian state? and though brought where you are, have you not known something about serving God in the wilderness? Have not your trials brought you nearer to him? You have had some experience of his loving-kindness in the midst of your wilderness toils and life; you have found the spiritual life maintained through all the exercises of his discipline, the changes about, the wanderings round and round; who has done it? Was it not that same hand which delivered you out of darkness which is even now with you to keep you and to uphold you? He has even now brought you to himself; the end and issue of all your tribulations is now being accomplished in you. You are at this very moment entering the kingdom. He has brought you nearer to himself in the wilderness state. In your former state you were quite a stranger to his grace or his mercy, being without God in the world.

2. *That we may have clearer views of his purposes of love and grace.* God's dispensations are often hidden by a cloud. His manifestations of himself are by a cloud. The glory of Jehovah cannot be seen by mortal man: "Verily thou art a God which hideth thyself." (Isa. xlv. 15.) "Why standest thou afar, O Lord, and why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble." (Ps. x. i.) This has been the experience of the saints in old time. God hides himself essentially, experimentally, and providentially, but it is to make a clearer manifestation of his goodness, his power, and his love. In our deepest straits and difficulties, he makes a way in the wilderness. He hid himself from Jacob when Joseph was sold into Egypt, but God revealed himself with greater power and glory when Jacob beheld Joseph in his exalted state, and with his two sons. God hid himself in the stripping providences which Job experienced, but the end was a clearer manifestation of his goodness by greater prosperity; seeing him with the spiritual eye, who had before but heard of him with the natural ear.

"When clouds appear to veil his face,  
And clouds surround his throne,  
He hides the purpose of his grace,  
To make it better known."

The church had a great loss in Elijah being suddenly called away, and at a time when, apparently, he could be least spared; but the Lord sent forth Elisha, in whom was poured forth a double portion of his spirit, and who did twice as great, and many more things for Israel. See how David was stripped of his wives and goods at Ziklag, which were afterwards recovered, and enjoyed more sweetly than before. God strips us of *all* earthly comforts, that he may himself be our *only* spiritual comfort. Times of imminent danger, though enveloped in clouds of mystery, have been made the occasion of God's revealing his gracious design more clearly, and sealing home with greater power the promises of grace. As in Abraham's case, how sorely was he tried when called to offer up his *only* son Isaac, and in that word "only" was the taking away of his hope of the promise; but we see in the critical moment, not only a deliverance, but the ratifying twice and by an oath the promise to him. Beloved, have you not found the mount of danger to be the place where you have seen surprising grace?

3. *That he may strengthen our faith by the trial of our patience.* I have already touched upon this subject under the previous head, and need only to illustrate the point. See how Joseph's faith was strengthened by his trials; his giving charge concerning his bones showed that his desire was that his flesh should rest in hope in the land of promise with his fathers; *nature* would have induced him to have been buried in a splendid Egyptian mausoleum, as a monument of his own greatness, but *grace* has no affection for Egypt, it loves to lie embalmed in Canaan. See David, now on the bed of death, declaring his unabated assurance of his interest in that everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure; "the times that went over him," he knew, were in God's hand, and that though it was through much tribulation, from the time he slew Goliath, his five years' exile from his own country, till Saul's death, the seven years in which he was opposed in being king over all Israel. And during his kingdom over all Israel, what domestic trials; yet he was brought safely through, he did enter the kingdom.

The trial of our faith is much more precious than of gold which perisheth.

4. *To discover the hidden evils of the heart.* Man by nature is as ignorant of himself as he is of God. He cannot know himself till he is brought into trial. The Israelites were brought into the wilderness to humble them, to prove them, and that they might know what was in their heart. These are fearful lessons to learn. Hezekiah, Job, and Peter, had to undergo fearful trials before they could learn what pride, self will, and other abominations were concealed in them. The use, therefore, of the furnace of trials and afflictions is to purge the child of God from all the dross and corruption of their native selves. It is in the furnace they lose that good opinion of themselves which they once cherished. To wean a man from himself is above nature, it is God's work, and he will do it too, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. And when God has disclosed the native depravity of the heart by fiery trials, then it is the child of God learns to know and feel the plague within, and to come out of himself; and he finds that every step in this direction is to enter the kingdom of God.

5. *To wean you from the world.* This can only be accomplished by tribulation. How can we enter the kingdom of heaven until we are weaned from the world.

"Our hearts are fastened to this world  
By strong and various ties;  
But every sorrow cuts a cord,  
That urges us to rise."

It is nature, of course, to love the world and the things of it; and the more we have of it, the more difficult the weaning. "Love not the world, nor the things of it," is the admonition of an apostle. The spirit, maxims, pursuits, and manners of the world are always hurtful to believers; they hinder their progress in the divine life; these things cannot be brought into the kingdom of heaven; yet there is something in the human nature of the child of God that cleaves to them; it is not to be wondered at, but he must "come out from among them and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing." So difficult is this self denial to exercise in nature's strength, that God himself burns the lesson into us by the fiery trial of affliction, bodily pains, or bereaving

strokes ; in them we learn the emptiness, the hollowness, the falsity of the world, and as we advance in this knowledge so we enter the kingdom.

6. *For the confusion of hypocrites.* Much tribulation, trials, afflictions, sorrows, discover who and what they are. "All his days he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness." (Eccles. v. 17.) Affliction is the fan wherewith God purges his floor. (Matt. iii. 12.) He will sift the house of Israel, like as corn is sifted in a sieve ; (Amos ix. 9 ;) but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. Woe, woe unto the hypocrites in Zion ; the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is ; and if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss. (1 Cor. iii. 15.)

7 *For the greater vengeance on their enemies.* The tribulation of the Lord's people is a certain forerunner of the destruction of their enemies. What a strait the Israelites were in at the Red Sea ; it seemed the moment of Egyptian triumph, but it was their terrible and final overthrow. Much of the tribulation which the children of Zion have to pass through is caused by their enemies, but a day of reckoning is at hand. It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble his church, but such will never enter the kingdom. Their eternal damnation will be heavy, and it is certain. (2 Thess. i. 6, 9.)

8. *For the glory of God.* Many of our tribulations seem destructive to our present comforts and to our hopes for the future. This is the view we at first generally take, but we are often mistaken ; the Saviour assured his disciples that the affliction of Lazarus was not unto death, but for the glory of God. The end of all afflictive dispensations is the glory of God ; they accomplish the good of his chosen, and in that is manifested his goodness, love, and power. "Just and true are all thy ways, thou king of saints," is the ascription of praise, and the song sung by the redeemed in heaven. (Rev. xv. 3.) They there see the end from the beginning, and can justify God in all the tribulations they have passed through. They praise him for being brought into them. They praise him for his support and presence they had under them. They praise him for the good they derived from them. They praise him for being brought through them. They praise him that in them has been accom-

plished "all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." You then who are in any tribulation rest with us; it is the Lord's will that we must tread this path to enter the kingdom. Our good is his object, the end is his glory.

Companions in tribulation: We enter the kingdom, though the way is not of our choosing; we must enter it, none can prevent it. Satan, the world, and our deceitful hearts have done the most they can; but "nothing, nothing" shall be written on all the attempts of the enemies of our peace. "We shall be conquerors all ere long, and more than conquerors too." Not one traveller in the rough and thorny road shall fail, the road is safe and well guarded, shoes of iron and brass for wear, strength for the day,—these are the helps by the way. If in the world we have tribulation, in Christ we have peace. We have, besides, exceeding great and precious promises; these applied to the heart by the Spirit, lift off many a load, and light up the path in a time of darkness. The kingdom of grace leads to the kingdom of glory; he that enters the kingdom of God in his gracious dealings here on earth shall possess it in heavenly glory hereafter. The cross comes first, but the crown is sure. As we must enter the kingdom, so we must be brought through all tribulations; "and so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." To him be all the glory. Amen.

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# FINDING THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

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A SERMON,  
BY CHARLES GORDELIER.

PREACHED AT HEPHIZIBAH CHAPEL, DARLING PLACE, MILE END GATE,

On Lord's Day Evening, 26th November, 1865.

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"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."—**MATT. xiii., 45, 46.**

THIS chapter displays the remarkable power of illustration which our Lord possessed in teaching. The chapter is a chapter of parables; all of them exhibit some peculiar points of the gospel dispensation. Images and figures are brought before the mind with astonishing rapidity, fulness, and fitness. The first, sowing seed, sets forth the preaching of truth; then in the others we perceive, the rise and progress of error, the collateral benefits of the truth, the permeating influence of the truth, the value of the truth, and in the last, the draw-net, the general resurrection of mankind and their final separation and destination. This variety of illustration which is here found in the chapter before us ought to lead us to investigate the particular point which is to be understood. At first sight, the parables of the "treasure hid in a field," and "the merchantman seeking goodly pearls," appear as if intended to convey one and the same truth, but they vary in one striking particular. You see, in the treasure hid in a field, a labouring man unexpectedly finds what he was not looking for. In this of the pearls, a man is looking for something good, but finds something better than all he had. The conduct of the finders, in each case, was precisely alike. Both "sold all" to make the thing found their

own property. In the next, on the fishing net, had as well as good were gathered and much was cast away.

There is no doubt, by the parable of the treasure hid in a field, is intended to show that a man, while engaged in his legitimate or ordinary calling, may have unexpectedly revealed to him the nature and importance of divine truth, and such is its power upon the heart and conscience as to lead him joyfully to part with all things that would hinder him from securing it for himself.

In the parable before us, we have a merchantman, a dealer, seeking goodly pearls; he is looking only for pearls; he is possessed of some already; it is evident he understands their quality, and is able to estimate their value; he is seeking goodly pearls, not common or ordinary ones, but such as are better than those he has, or else he would have been content. In his search he unexpectedly discovers one of great price, which he appreciates more than all he possessed or those he is looking for; he resolves to purchase it, and therefore readily sells off all he had in order to make this exceeding rare and precious pearl his own. Such was his estimation of this one pearl of great price in comparison with those he possessed and of those for which he was seeking.

In this parable, there seems to me a further advance in relation to the discovery of divine truth. A man may possess much that is valuable in itself of a mental kind, as a knowledge of general literature for instance; he may have a tolerable acquaintance with the various languages in ordinary use; he may be laudably occupied in the search for further acquisitions in those higher branches of the arts and sciences which give a polish to refined society; he may even be seeking a knowledge of Scripture truth, aiming to promote the knowledge of God and morality in a philanthropic spirit, all which things are good and commendable in themselves, and constitute ornaments to the character; but when the true knowledge of Jesus Christ by a divine revelation is made known to him, immediately he is convinced that its worth far surpasses all that he has ever known or is seeking to know; gladly he relinquishes all further search for human learning, and willingly sacrifices the result of present attainments and every other consideration, so that he may be truly possessed of this one supreme object of his delight and desire.

This parable will also apply to those who are seeking

pleasure or profit in those things which at some period of their life they would be glad to part with, if perchance, something else presented itself commanding their love and desire above all that now occupies their time and attention. It may be, some of you, like our merchantman seeking goodly pearls, are looking for wealth, or are seeking happiness in the things of this life; or going about to establish your own righteousness, seeking acceptance with God on account of it; or that you are looking for salvation itself through some other misdirected channel: or perhaps some of you may be seeking a preparation for death and for judgment, and, like Martha, you are cumbered about many things in the way of good works, but ignorant of the one thing needful; which ignorance leads you to seek everything else short of right saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if in the course of your self-constituted search there should be, in the good pleasure of God's will, presented to your view the great truth that in Christ alone there is such a fulness of any blessing you can possibly want, would you not be ready to abandon every method of your own devising, and everything you fondly cherish, for the sake of realizing in him and in his work, that which would make you really happy now and truly blessed hereafter? I feel persuaded you would. O may the Spirit of Truth lead you to Christ, and give you understanding to discover that he is the Pearl of great price.

And there are believing souls too, sincere souls, who, like the merchantman of our text, go about seeking goodly pearls, I mean spiritual pearls, such pearls as you and I cannot do without, if ever we have known any thing of God's truth; such souls have many evidences of a good work begun in them, but they cannot be said to be fully established in the truth as it is in Jesus; they are only seekers, they have tasted that the Lord is gracious, they have handled and felt of the good word of life, they have known what it is to have the comforts of God's Spirit imparted to them, to have been "dandled on the knee," and to cherish a hope for which they would not exchange worlds if they were offered; they have felt the sweetness of pardoning love and peace sealed home to the conscience, all this has been to them like life from the dead, their former misery and burden of sin and guilt they have remembered no more: in the sunshine of Jehovah's presence it has been their delight to live and walk all the day long, for



indeed in his presence is fulness of joy. But when the believer finds there is night, darkness instead of light, when his day-dreams subside and vanish, when he feels he is apt to stumble, when he finds he has to walk by faith and not by sight, when the ordinances of God's house prove barren opportunities, when the ministry of the word appears unsavoury, when the word of God itself seems a sealed book, when he no longer experiences those blessed frames of soul which lifted him along the road so blithe and lightly, when, as dear good Berridge says—

“ With cheerfullest praise, we tripp'd up steep ways,  
And hop'd to reach Canaan in six or eight days ;”

then it is the believer sinks down into something like sadness and sorrow, he misses the presence of Jesus, the shining of whose face was everything to him; now he feels his faith is low, his love is small, his joy is gone, his hope is like a flickering light on the point of extinction, and his peace, which once flowed so sweetly from a sense of divine assurance, seems to have been withdrawn or lost he can't tell how; and when temptations set in he finds he has no strength, he is tossed about and not comforted, and he is ready to imagine the Lord has forsaken him quite, and will be gracious to him no more. Poor soul, I see how it is, thou hast been living on thy frames and feelings; while they lasted thy happiness lasted, when they declined you declined, and now you go about seeking goodly pearls, you want to find some evidences of your faith, your hope, your love, and your joy; well, these are good in themselves and very proper to have, but none of these things are to be compared to the pearl of great price. Christ alone is that Pearl, and naught else can ever satisfy thy soul. To feel there is only life when we feel the graces of his Spirit in lively exercise is making a Christ of his work in us, instead of living on *what he is to us and what he has done for us*. I grant the believer has his frames and feelings, and there is no true religion without them, but they are not our life. Christ is our life; they are goodly pearls, but he is the Pearl of great price. The truths of the gospel, the means of grace, the ordinances of God's house, the fellowship of the saints, are all goodly pearls; and the spiritual merchant delights to trade in them; but Christ himself, his Person and his work, he alone is the Pearl of great price. He is *the object of our faith*, not ourselves, we are *the subjects of*

faith ; we must not live upon what we are, but upon what he is ; keep this distinction in view, heavenly trading requires heavenly understanding, and when Christ is revealed as the Pearl of price,

“ That merchant is divinely wise  
Who makes this Pearl his own.”

But it may be that there is before us another class of spiritual merchantmen seeking goodly pearls. He is seeking the way of salvation, he is seeking a knowledge of God's word, he is seeking goodly pearls, and he has come to the place where such pearls are likely to be found. Now, when the Spirit of truth leads a man to seek a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, he seldom shows him in one view all the precious things of the gospel, but leads him on step by step, here a little and there a little, line upon line, line upon line. Hence he is at first convinced of his sin, then his need of righteousness and his ignorance of God's method of justification ; he has a sense of his danger, he feels he needs a deliverance ; he wants pardon, but which he feels he cannot merit ; he wants faith, which he feels he cannot exert ; he wants to be justified by a righteousness which he cannot work out ; he wants a sanctification, of which he feels utterly destitute ; and he wants a heavenly wisdom in place of his ignorance how to come before God in a way by which he may be accepted of him, and live a life of eternal happiness in his presence. Now these are goodly pearls he is seeking ; he knows something of their value, and he is absorbed in the object of his search ; he goes on seeking, and he is at length led to discover one remarkable pearl, which for size, beauty, and value exceeds all he has ever beheld ; cost what it may, he feels he must have it on any consideration. In this pearl he has everything he can possibly want, whether for time or for eternity ; it is the Pearl of great price ; it is Christ himself, who is of God made unto this seeker of goodly pearls, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. In Christ it hath pleased the Father that all fulness of all blessing should dwell ; in him, as the Pearl of great price, every seeker of goodly pearls is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, according as they are chosen in him before the foundation of the world.

These few outlines will, perhaps, serve as hints as to

how the parable may be illustrated in other points of view. They are, I confess, imperfect, but it is difficult, indeed, needless, to attempt running a parallel in every particular; for instance, the buying and selling are not to be understood in the sense we generally do, value for value. What is meant is, a man will readily give up retaining any thing that prevents him possessing something else which he esteems better. Whatever may be given up for Christ cannot be an equivalent; learning, good works, the graces of the Spirit, &c., cannot be bought and sold; neither are they received as a *quid pro quo*, this for that, one thing for another; for if a man be blest in finding Christ for himself, he does not give up his human attainments, and he is still careful to maintain good works; or supposing a believer has been resting on his evidences of his being in Christ instead of Christ himself, even these, I mean, his hope, love, faith, &c., he still possesses; but all these things are estimated as inferior in worth to him who is the chiefest of ten thousand, the altogether lovely. Christ in the gospel is the Pearl of great price. Everything else, however good in itself and proper in its place, are but as goodly pearls in comparison with him, and are wholly passed by when he is discovered as the super-excellent of all excellences, for he is everything to the believer; Christ is his all, his all in all. He is the Pearl of great price.

And yet it is certainly true, that though Christ and his salvation cannot be bought, yet there must be a giving up for Christ, there must be a giving up for salvation of all such things which prevent a man realizing gospel grace for himself. A man must give up the world, he must give up himself, he must give up his self righteousness, he must give up all self seeking, he must give up all idea of creature merit, he must give up all hope of obtaining acceptance with God on the footing of his own doings; he cannot purchase eternal life by the sale, or the barter, or exchange of any of these things; none of them are the procuring causes of salvation, it is wholly of free sovereign grace; and when the seeking sinner is brought to accept it as mercy bestowed upon him in Jesus, who is the unspeakable gift of God, then he gladly parts with all creature dependences, and trusts the salvation of his soul alone to the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"His legal works and deeds the best,  
Are now in disesteem;  
For he must naked come to Christ,  
Or farewell heaven for him."

But while on the other hand the Pearl of great price cannot be purchased by any of those mistaken methods which are so often adopted by well meaning yet deluded persons, it is equally true that it cannot be had without some condition on the part of the believer himself; the Scriptures furnish us with full proof of this: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Isa. lv. 1.) "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." (Rev. iii. 18.) These persons who are thus addressed are in extreme destitution, having no money, and are faint and famishing, yet ignorant of their poverty, misery, and wretchedness. An equivalent is not asked for, *that* is not the condition required; they are appealed to, reasoned with, and counselled, and they are asked to buy. Why so? Because such persons, when brought to know and feel spiritually their poverty, misery, and utter destitution of everything spiritually good, they have the capacity, the condition of mind for appreciating the provisions of the gospel; the idea set forth by the purchase money is that of making the thing to be had one's own; thus gospel blessings are made our own by being appropriated to our individual use, comfort, and enjoyment. The purchase of the Pearl of great price is to be understood in the same sense, it is made our own by appropriation. How so? Through faith, "and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." At the same time, though no personal merits of our own, no performances that we can render, can ever secure even a single goodly pearl, yet it is certain that faith and repentance are conditions without which we cannot call the blessings we seek our own; sin must be forsaken, the flesh must be crucified, the world must be renounced, and everything else, however dearly cherished, if we are desirous of making the Pearl of great price our own. No good works have any value in the price of our redemption, and it is just as true that we can only be manifested to be the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; and yet our good works have their necessary uses, for they are a

proof, before now, of our belief in him who justifieth the ungodly. The pearl merchant sold all he had to possess this one pearl, and in so doing he gave himself. Oh, is there one in this assembly that can be likened to this merchant! Have you been seeking goodly pearls? have you found the Pearl of great price, and have you parted with everything else for the sake of this one Pearl? can you say with the poet,

“Here, Lord! I give myself away,  
’Tis all that I can do.”

But I must now draw your attention to another part of our subject. I am desirous, if the Lord shall be pleased to assist, of speaking more particularly of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Pearl of great price; and in doing so shall endeavour to point out several characteristics which he pre-eminently sustains in this beautiful and interesting similitude. I had intended to have said something about the nature of pearls in my introduction, but I think it will not be too late, even now, just to mention a few things. They are, as you may know, articles of value, and are used for ornament. A pearl is a small concretion formed within the shell of a fish of the oyster kind. It is hard, white, and shining, free from spot or stain. The largest are the most valuable. It is different from that beautiful substance called “mother of pearl,” such as is used for flat surfaces, buttons. &c. The best pearl oysters are found in the fisheries at the Persian Gulf, and near the Island of Ceylon, in the East Indies; they are procured by diving, but if taken before seven years old they are imperfectly developed. It is said, in fifty years they lose their beauty, and in one hundred they are scarcely of any value. We read that Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, had a pearl valued at £80,000 sterling. The Persian Emperor had one worth £110,000 sterling; and Philip II. of Spain, 1587, had one as big as a pigeon’s egg; it weighed 250 carats, and was valued at 144,000 ducats, about £70,000 sterling. There was also one purchased by Tavernier at Catifa, in Arabia; it was rather more than half an inch in diameter, and upwards of two inches in length; the price was £110,000. The value of pearls, however, has much fallen of late years, owing to the great improvement in making artificial pearls. Beads and necklaces are commonly of this description. “Pearls have at all times been esteemed one of the most valuable

commodities of the East. Their modest splendour and simple beauty appear to have captivated the Orientals even more than the dazzling brilliancy of the diamond, and have made them at all times the favourite ornament of despotic princes." A string of pearls of the largest size is an indispensable part of the decorations of an Eastern monarch. The present ruler of Persia is usually thus adorned with this elegant luxury.

Now it is not my intention to advance anything that may be regarded as curious or fanciful in the application of any of the points now stated, but shall proceed to notice,

1. *Christ is a most gracious Pearl.* This is most true of him who of old has said, "I am found of them that sought me not." Jesus is found unsought. I believe most believers can testify to this fact; some were seeking not goodly pearls, but death, and in the error of their way. I am sure it was so with me, and I can say,

"Grace led my roving feet  
To tread the heavenly road;  
And new supplies each hour I meet,  
While pressing on to God."

The finding of Christ is a work of grace begun in the heart unlooked for; how often the outward ear has been called to listen to the voice of the preacher telling of the beauties of Christ, but the carnal eye saw no beauty in him, the unregenerated heart did not desire him. Oh, what grace was there in the display of Jesus as the Saviour of lost sinners. The heart savingly touched by the quickening influences of his Spirit; the eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, so that they could see divine grace leading the believer to see and to feel his lost, ruined, and undone condition before God; grace leading him to find salvation alone in Christ, salvation arising out of rich, free, sovereign, unmerited grace. Oh, what grace in the realizing of grace, leading the soul in the contemplation to exclaim,

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,  
That could give the Creator delight;  
'Twas even so, Father, you ever must sing,  
Because it seemed good in his sight."

And, oh, what grace there is displayed in his holy word: "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." How gracious the promise, how

sure the performance, to those who are seeking him. How encouraging to the young seeker of good pearls, Christ the heavenly wisdom of his church inviting them with his gracious voice, and secretly drawing them with his gracious influences, calling them off from the sin, errors, and follies of this life, to find in him how gracious he is to them as the Pearl of great price.

2. *Christ is a most precious Pearl.* How poor are all the pearls of which we read. Not one of them is worth our admiration in comparison with him. "Unto you that believe he is precious." The knowledge of Jesus how precious, most precious; it is above all other knowledge. The apostle Paul, who had suffered the loss of all things for Christ, counted that what things were gain to him were loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Where shall we find such knowledge as the knowledge of Jesus Christ? The more we know of him the more we love him; the more we love him the more we desire to know of him.

" Oh could we know and love him more,  
And all his wondrous grace explore,  
Ne'er would we covet man's esteem,  
But part with all and follow him."

How precious is Christ to me above all the things of time and sense. Eastern monarchs pride themselves in being adorned with pearls; but how few are adorned with Christ as a most precious pearl; he will make himself precious to every believer saved by his blood; for there is no other name under heaven whereby men can be saved. How very precious is Christ as revealed in the various offices and characters he sustains to the church of God. How precious is his atoning blood. It was "impossible that the blood of bulls or of goats could take away sin," but the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. How precious he is to us as our High Priest, Intercessor, and Advocate before God; in all things pertaining to the conscience he is most precious to us; for who but the God-man Mediator Christ Jesus could have stood in our law-place and taken away our sin by bearing it in his own body on the tree, being made a curse for us. How precious he is to us as our Foundation-stone; our only hope of standing before God is in being built on him; he is the Rock of ages. How precious he is as our Divine Oracle, "to whom coming, as unto a living stone, a gem of light, chosen

of God and precious." In him we have life, light, and power ; from him we derive all our life, all our light, all our love. He is made more precious to us than fine gold, than the golden wedge of Ophir. He is our most precious Pearl.

3. *Christ is a soul-pleasing Pearl.* Other pearls please the eye, and there is no other pleasure, no other good to be derived from them than that of beholding them with the eye. But oh the infinite delight the soul finds in beholding the beauteous charms of our adorable Christ !

" Of him our soul delights to talk,  
With him we daily love to walk."

He is ever our delight ; the things in heaven, the things on earth all fall short of his excellences. He is our hope, our joy, and crown. This we cannot say of any created things, if they were all given to us and were at our disposal. Yet if we belong to Christ, all things are ours ; but what are earthly things without him ? what is heaven without him ? we covet it not if he be absent. Oh, when he shines into the soul, ere we are aware our souls are all on fire ; we run swiftly, we catch a glimpse of his sweet face ; no joy like that when his presence cheers the soul, when his love is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. He is our soul-pleasing Pearl, for he is our peace in the midst of tribulation ; he is our song and boast in the midst of conflict. He is our soul-pleasing Pearl, above all the goodly pearls of gospel ordinances, of gospel truths, of gospel fellowships ; these are precious things in themselves ; we delight in them, but sin can and does spoil many of our pleasures in the midst of our enjoyments. Man can deprive us of the comfort of them ; they might become barren and unfruitful seasons to us ; indeed how often have I found the Sabbath day to be so without my Sabbath's Lord ; how often have I found his word like a sealed book ; how often have brethren, dearly loved brethren, wounded and pierced me to the very quick, but Jesus is ever my soul-cheering Pearl ; he cheers me in the midst of my daily calling, he cheers me under disappointments, he cheers me when cast down by fears ; he cheers me when under the frowns of the world, and this makes amends for all. I am displeased with myself, in myself there is everything unsatisfactory ; but in him I am complete ; in him I am completely blessed. His righteousness screens me from all defilement ; I shall



be satisfied when I awake in his likeness. "In his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

4. *Christ is a most distinguishing Pearl.* His name is above every name, for he is the Pearl of great price super-excellently. There have been but few pearls which have obtained a world-wide notoriety; but Christ has a pre-eminence above all, more than even the seven wonders of the world; he is made higher than the kings of the earth. He is distinguished by the perfections of his Godhead and by the excellences of his manhood. He knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. "Thou art fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into thy lips." "His head is as the most fine gold; he is altogether lovely." Oh, if you want to be distinguished in this life, have Christ for your pearl; have Christ for your life; this is the most distinguished life you can live; to have his name is a most distinguishing name; hear his own words: "Since thou hast been precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable." (Isa. xliii. 4.) Oh what a distinguished people are the saints of God; they are distinguished above all nations in the world, for Jesus is their most distinguishing pearl; he is distinguished as the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father; distinguished as the only begotten Son of God. He is distinguished as the head of his body the church; distinguished as the Captain of their salvation; distinguished as the first-fruits of them that slept; distinguished above all others in that he hath conquered death, hell, and the grave. He is distinguished as the Creator and the Upholder of all things by the word of his power. He is distinguished by a name above every name, the only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality; dwelling in light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; the only wise God our Saviour. Thus "on his head are many crowns," his distinguishing crown being salvation. He is the praise of all his saints. You whom he has distinguished by his grace in calling you out of darkness into his marvellous light, let your life be so distinguished by Christ as your life, as to make him the prime, principal thing in all you enjoy, let him be your all in all, and more than all in everything you enjoy. The princes of royal blood live

away from the common herd of mankind; they are distinguished by their high station in life. So believers, they are called to be saints, the beloved of God, they are to live away from the world, they are thus distinguished from the world, because Christ is their ornament; they have his name on their foreheads as their most distinguishing pearl.

5. *Christ is a most enriching Pearl.* I have told you of the immense value men have put upon pearls of a large size; but how vainly fictitious is their price. Of what use are they, except it be to feed pride? Now here our dear Jesus infinitely excels the comparison; he is not only the Pearl of great price, but he really enriches its possessor: "I will cause them that love me to inherit substance." There is a reality in his wealth, nothing imaginary, nothing impoverishing. He is a Pearl upon which the soul can feed. He possesses all the fulness of the Godhead: "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." All fulness of grace, peace, love, joy, and glory dwell in Christ. In him there is a fulness of riches in glory which supplies all the needs of every believer. Supposing a man were to part with everything he possessed, in houses, land, and money, to procure the great Persian pearl, what a fool we should think him to be; what a poor, miserable, starved wretch he would be; how utterly destitute it would make him. Would it feed him? would it clothe him? would it house him? would it talk to him? would it sympathize with him in sorrow? would it take away pain? would it ease him when weary? No. And what are all the pearls of this world to this Pearl of great price? His riches are durable riches, unsearchable riches; strength for the day, grace for every need, a balm for every wound; our joy in sorrow, our peace in trouble. He is rest for the weary, he is our meat and our drink, our clothing, and our house. He is our wealth, in him we possess all things; every gift and grace, every comfort flows from him as streams from a fountain. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him. These are realities, nothing imaginary, nothing supposable, nothing speculative, nothing uncertain. Christ is our all-sufficient good. All things are ours, we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Life is ours; death is ours. In him is life; by him death is conquered. Christ is the heir of all things; his people

are joint-heirs with him; heaven and eternal glory is their inheritance for ever. O the blessedness of that soul who is seeking after Christ, whose affections are set on heavenly things! You have found the Pearl of great price; he enriches all the affections of the soul; he is so rich a Pearl that he enriches the understanding of all who possess him, both for time and eternity. There is no being impoverished with Christ as our Pearl, there is enough in him to satisfy the desires of every believer; everything they have in him they enjoy in him; and, having him, they possess all things. Christ is a most enriching Pearl.

6. *Christ is a most glorious Pearl.* You have heard of the nature of pearls, how they are formed, and how they are obtained. Now their excellency lies not in what they really are, but in what men think of them. What glory, what beauty, what value can there really be in a small lump of excrescence formed by disease existing in one of the lowest class of shell fish? Yet, because of its clearness and its glossiness, men think it a beauty, and set great store by it. O that men were wise, and would look upon Christ as a most glorious pearl! They would make no mistake here. The most glorious life you can live is by living on Christ: "He is the brightness of his Father's glory." O for the revelation of the knowledge of him, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened; that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. He is the most glorious Pearl. We see his glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth. If Christ be formed in our hearts the hope of glory, we have hope the most glorious that can be realised. He is the King of glory. He is God. We glory in his holy name. We glory in that everlasting covenant union which is ordered in all things and sure. Christ is the glorious Pearl of that union; his God is our God, his Father is our Father. It is a union that can never be dissolved; it is a union, the blessedness of which all his saints must participate in, and realise in the heavenly glory as well as by faith on earth beneath. His glory is unknown to saints on earth, it cannot be seen by mortal eyes; and to make the sum of his people's happiness complete, he has willed that they shall behold him in all the magnificence of his primeval glory, the glory which

he had before the world was: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The gloriousness of his Mediatorship, his glory as the God-man, his glory as the Son of God, his eternal glory, the glory of his eternal Sonship,—all this to be revealed to the glorified church of God, who shall behold him in his glorified and eternal manhood; they shall see him as he is, they shall be like him. O that you and I may realise what it is to have Christ as our most glorious Pearl by an experimental knowledge of his excellences in a life of faith on him, a life of communion with him. Such a life of grace on earth here will certainly lead to a life of glory in heaven hereafter.

7. *Christ is an everlasting Pearl.* This cannot be said of any of the finest pearls that have ever been known. It does not appear that any retain their splendour for two generations. Mutability, fading excellences belong to everything of earth. What are the sons of men about, to part with all they have for an evanescent beauty? Many who have splendid pearls, live long enough to see them fade; but our most glorious Christ is an everlasting Pearl; behold him as long as you will, he will ever retain his original splendour. He is ever the same, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He is the everlasting God, the everlasting Father. All his attributes, his excellences, his blessings are like himself, everlasting. He is an everlasting Pearl. He that believeth on him shall have everlasting life. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) Live as long as you may, live on him as much as you may, you will never diminish the amount of life he possesses, for it is everlasting: "Because I live, ye shall live also." He is the self-existent Jehovah. He is an everlasting Pearl; he will last for ever. Friends fail, brethren fail; but Jesus never fails; he cannot fail. His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. (Ps. ciii. 17.) His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness. (Ps. cxix. 142.) His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. (Ps. cxlv. 13.) His goings forth have been from everlasting. (Mic. v. 2.) Israel is saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. (Isa. xlv. 17.) They have been loved with

an everlasting love, therefore it is with loving-kindness they have been drawn to him ; and he hath given them everlasting consolation, and so they find, by precious faith, that he is their everlasting Pearl. And when the time shall come when he will descend from the heavens with a shout, and all his holy angels with him ; when he will sever the wicked from the just, and take his saints to their final rest, then they will find, to their everlasting joy, that he is still their everlasting Pearl. He will never cease to be what he has ever been, the eternal, self-existent I AM. Eternity will only add splendour to this Pearl of great price, this most gracious Pearl, this most precious Pearl, this soul-pleasing Pearl, this most distinguishing Pearl, this most enriching Pearl, this most glorious Pearl, this everlasting Pearl. The wonders of this Pearl can never be told ; we must die to know it, we must die to see it.

Now, dear hearers, what think you of this Pearl of great price ? Do you think you can submit to part with everything you possess for the sake of possessing such a treasure ? If you are seeking goodly pearls, as you may perhaps esteem them, could you be content to give up further search for the sake of obtaining this one-Pearl ? If you have not found this one Pearl of great price, I ask you, what kind of pearls must they be that you are now seeking ? Whatever they are, they fall infinitely below in excellence to this one which I have attempted to describe ; and if Jesus Christ possesses all these excellences, and the thousandth part has not been told you, why,

“ His worth, if all the nations knew,  
Sure the whole earth would love him too.”

But you who have found him, what untold beauties have you beheld in him ; what unspeakable joy have you felt in claiming him as your own, when by the Spirit of truth the great testimony has been borne to your conscience that he is yours, yours for ever ; and in the hymn of Mason's, written 200 years since, you can say :

“ I've found the pearl of greatest price,  
My heart doth sing for joy ;  
And sing I must, a Christ I have ;  
O what a Christ have I !”

# THE BELIEVER'S CONFLICT WITH INDWELLING SIN.

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A SERMON,

BY CHARLES GORDELIER.

PREACHED AT HEPHIZIBAH CHAPEL, DARLING PLACE, NEAR MILE END GATE,

On Lord's Day Morning, 21st May, 1866.

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“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.”  
—Rom. vii. 18, 19, 20, 21.

WE have here in the language of our text, the apostle's confession of the conflict he found within himself, between the principle of indwelling sin and the principle of inwrought grace.

This is a subject which, at first sight, seems to many persons obscure, paradoxical, and mysterious. I have thought so; and I have found many of the Lord's dear people much confused, perplexed, and distressed about it. Even several of our learned Doctors of Divinity have been unable to divest the subject of its difficulties, either to the satisfaction of themselves or of others. I once thought that a knowledge of the philosophy of human nature would assist me, and I thought this was to be gained by reading books; and so for nearly twenty years I pored over the metaphysical works of those who had written upon the philosophy of the mind and the moral feelings, for I verily thought they had the key to this dark and difficult subject, as it then appeared to me; but I found, with all my painstaking, they had not; nor is it to be

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wondered at. I was looking in the wrong place; I was looking for a spiritual light in the wisdom of this world,—a place above all others filled with nature's darkness; I was, in fact, seeking the living among the dead. At length, however, as I humbly believe, I found this key for which I had been so long searching; and where do you think I discovered it? In the garden of Gethsemane. In the garden of Gethsemane, you say; why, I never heard that you had visited the Holy Land! Perhaps not, nor indeed have I; yet many persons have travelled to this memorable place without leaving the land of their nativity. The spiritual mind, when under the leadings of the Holy Spirit, can retire to this sacred spot without the incumbrance of the body; indeed it may be said, the true disciples of the Lord Jesus love to pay frequent visits to this lovely, mournful, endearing garden of Gethsemane, both in thought and feeling; for as it was in the days of his flesh, that Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples, (John xviii. 2,) so even now, in the spirit, the disciples often resort thither with their Lord and Master, and by faith can view him agonizing in the garden, trembling under the load of guilt transferred to his sinless breast. Here it was, when meditating upon this scene of sorrow, was seen such a sight as no mortal eye could endure; for, as you know, the sight of the bleeding, suffering Lamb of God caused the companion disciples to sleep for sorrow: they beheld him drowned in sorrow. It was a fearful sight; it drowned them in sleep. "What," exclaimed the holy sufferer, "could ye not watch with me one hour! Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;" and then, with a ray of divinity beaming through his lips, he explained the secret of their failure: "THE SPIRIT INDEED IS WILLING, BUT THE FLESH IS WEAK." Here it is, that in this divine sentence I find more to unravel the mystery of the believer's conflict with indwelling sin than in all the philosophical writings I have ever read. "The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," is the master key of this entire seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. With this key, as helped by the Spirit of Truth, we hope to unlock some of the mysteries of the kingdom. The kingdom of God is within, but the "reign of grace and the power of sin," the one so contrary to the other, perplexes the believer; he can truly say with Newton:

"Strange and mysterious is my life,  
What opposites I feel within;  
A stable peace, a constant strife,  
The rule of grace, the power of sin;  
Too often I am captive led,  
But daily triumph in my Head."

Before we enter immediately into our subject, I must occupy your attention with one or two prefatory remarks respecting the chapter. The apostle, in the preceding chapter, has shown that the doctrines of grace do not, as some say, give license to sin, but, on the contrary, are productive of holiness. In this chapter, he illustrates the position he laid down in verse 14,—that we are not under the law, but under grace; and he proceeds to show the results of this change in our relation to God. You perceive, he remarks, as a general fact, that there is no perpetuity in the authority of laws; as, for example, the marriage law is binding on the wife only during her husband's life-time. When he is dead, she is free from the obligations which that law imposed. So believers in Christ, being free from the law, as a covenant of works, or rule of life, are now under law to Christ. We are freed from it by his death. The fruit of our first marriage with Adam was sin. The fruit of our marriage with Christ is holiness. It is true the apostle does not carry the figure of the law of marriage through the discourse, but he has said enough to show us his meaning. As a woman is entirely free from obligation to her husband by *his* death, so believers are free from the law by *its* death. He does not indeed say in so many words that the law is dead, but this is evidently his meaning, as in verse 6. Then from the 7th verse to the 13th the apostle goes on to show the operation of the law as derived from his own experience; it was unable to produce sanctification, just as much as he had before shown that it was unable to effect justification; he shows that it produces conviction of sin. Now from the 14th verse to the 25th he shows the cause of the inability of the law to effect his sanctification. It is not in the evil nature of the law, which is spiritual, but in the power of indwelling sin. He is carnal, sold under sin. A figure of slavery is here used. His own will is opposed to that of his master; as when a slave has to beat his own wife by his master's order. Now the believer, though he denies the sufficiency of the law either to justify him or to sanctify him, and



maintaining the necessity of deliverance from it, yet bears an inward testimony to its excellence. He approves it. He delights in the law after the inward man, nevertheless he finds the power of sin in his members is not destroyed; hence arises the inward conflict, which conflict the law itself cannot end. The law makes him sensible of his helpless and degraded condition; but he, who has taught him thus to know and to feel that his whole nature is fallen, corrupt, and enslaved by sin, leads him to seek deliverance and victory through the work of Jesus Christ, in whom alone he seeks salvation.

The leading doctrines of the apostle are, that believers are not under a legal system; that the consequence of their freedom is not the indulgence of sin, but of living in the service of God. And that this deliverance from the law is not effected by setting the law aside, or by disregarding its demands, but by those demands being amply satisfied in the person of Christ, namely, by his obedience and death.

Our text contains an expanding and a confirming of the preceding verses. The apostle again asserts the existence of the inward struggle, and explains the nature of it. He delights in God's law, but feels he cannot perform its conditions. Under the teachings of the Spirit of Truth, he says, *I know that in my flesh*, that indwelling, inherent sinfulness of which he is the subject, *dwelleth no good thing*; that is, there is no abiding good, no power of that kind that rules; that is to say, in his Old-Adam nature, considered apart from the divine influence which constitutes the new nature. By the term *flesh*, he does not mean his body corporeal, but his depraved original nature; as until a man is renewed, he is in the flesh; when renewed in the spirit of his mind, he is in the Spirit. This is how the language of the New Testament is to be understood; *a spiritual* man is one who is under the control of the Spirit of God; and *the natural* man is he who is under the control of his own nature.

*To will is present with me.* He has a desire to do God's will, but he finds he has no capacity, no ability, no power which he can exercise or put forth to execute the holy purposes of his heart. Here our Lord's key is of essential use; the apostle is showing us what is *the manner and nature* of the warfare, and the Lord has shown us *how* it is that the warfare is so unequal: "The spirit is willing,

but the flesh is weak. As the law was weak to procure the believer a title to heaven, namely, justification; so he finds it gives him no meetness for it, namely, sanctification, because his nature is sinful; consequently the law is of no use to him in securing heaven to him as his right; it can only convince him of sin, and then condemn him for it. Now so long as a believer is unsettled on this point, he will be sure to be disturbed and distressed about his present condition of soul, as well also about his hopes as to his future state of immortality; and, therefore, seeing that the righteousness of God, which is by faith, is without the works of the law, so the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost is also without the believer's strength. By virtue of his being regenerated, he is new born, a new creature; and consequently there is an implantation of holy desires in conformity with that new nature. He has become willing in the day of God's power, there is a readiness to do his will, a readiness to be the Lord's, body, soul, and spirit for ever. His heart is set against all sin, he hates it with a perfect hatred. This the believer should take notice of; for if he can discover certain marks or indications of desires, and a readiness of mind to those things which are spiritually good, he ought to consider they must have arisen out of that "good thing towards the Lord God of Israel," the work of God's Spirit in his heart. Let the exercised child of God examine how it is, and wherefore it is, that he has a will that is present with him, that his spirit is willing, that he has readiness of mind to all that is good; and let him, I say, be satisfied on this point. It is one thing to have these evidences of God's work, but it is another *to know that we have them*, and to perceive their actings, inefficient though they be through the flesh being weak.

*But how to perform that which is good I find not.* That is, he has no strength in his old nature, his fallen nature, to do that which is spiritually good. The flesh is flesh, the spirit is spirit, two distinct natures; that which is of the flesh is flesh, and that which is of the spirit is spirit, their actions or workings are essentially distinct; and until the mind is spiritually enlightened, there will be a predisposition to bring itself into bondage, because of the inequality of the conflict, and because of the inability to effect the godly desires of the heart. The old nature, from the matured habits of sin and the works of the

flesh, is strong in itself; it possesses a power which is able to resist, and does resist, every motion of God's Spirit; it is always in opposition to the nature of the new man of grace, they are so contrary the one to the other. As the apostle explains to the Galatians, there can be no hope of accomplishing any good thing without opposition, vexation, and disappointment: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Gal. v. 17.) The two natures in a believing child of God have each inclinations and desires so opposite, so different, they never can harmonise. While the Spirit of God would lead him one way, his carnal nature would lead him another; so that there is impossibility of ever hoping to find help or strength from the old fallen nature, to assist the new nature in any of those motions and influences of the Spirit of God, in which the believer desires ever to cherish to live under. The apostle states, both in our text and the words just quoted, *a fact*, which is this, he cannot do the thing that he would by reason of the opposition in nature of the two principles within him. The child of God, when in a state of nature, did the works of the flesh with all his heart, his soul, and his strength; now that he is in a state of grace, he would be completely the Lord's for ever, body, soul, and spirit, but finds he cannot, because of the opposition from the old man of sin, the matured habits of sin under which he formerly lived.

*For the good that I would I do not.* This is an explanation of what he says in the previous verse. He, personally, is inclined to do good, but cannot; that is, *as* he should like to do it, and *when* he wished to do it; the child of God feels in bondage to his old nature as to the free exercise of his new nature; he himself cannot accomplish the desires of his heart, he cannot soar to heaven when he would; he would fain fix his affections on things above, where Christ sitteth; he would fain be always in a spirit of prayer; he would be always in a spiritual frame of mind; he would be always looking to Jesus, living in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, but finds, alas, he is withheld by counter influences, influences from within himself. This disturbs his peace, and he is often perplexed; he humbly believes that divine grace has taken possession of his heart, and he has some sense of God's delivering power

from the dominion of the devil, sin, and the flesh ; but finds, when he would be wholly the Lord's in all *that he does* as well as in all that he is, he is checked, and is held back ; the will is present, but not the power ; his ability to do good is not equal to his inclination ; he feels and experiences, that there is within that which has the force of a law, but which is contrary to the law of God ; for although he would do good, he would be holy, there is this something within, drawing him quite another way ; he is unable to act up to his purposes and desires. How often have we come into the house of God, the prayer-meeting, and to a throne of grace, with the earnest desire that our souls might be filled with divine things, and the things of the world shut out, so as to have close communion with our God, but this flesh has crept in and marred our enjoyment. Even sainted Watts could say,

“ Up to the fields where angels lie,  
And living waters gently roll,  
Fain would my thoughts leap out and fly,  
But sin hangs heavy on my soul.”

*But the evil which I would not, that I do.* Here we have another view of the believer's conflict ; and by taking another stand-point, we perceive a further proof of his weakness. He is compelled, against his own inclination, to do that which he regards as an evil. This is the worst condition he can be found in ; for instance, he comes to the word of God with the intention of meditating thereon, and humbly looking up to him who teacheth to profit for his blessing, he desires, nay resolves to be divested of everything that would interfere with the calmness of mind so necessary for such an exercise ; but the world has rushed in, and ere he has been aware, he has occupied himself in busy thoughts about everything else save that for which he took up the sacred book ; he has indulged in thoughts not only irrelevant with his profitable reading, but altogether inimical to his progress in the divine life. Wandering thoughts, evil thoughts, malignant feelings, unholy desires, have possessed the soul of many who fully thought and intended to be absorbed in the things of God. And this wretchedness further consists in the fact that the believer feels he has no power to control these things, but that these things have a power to control him, and he is compelled to act against his will.

*Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it.* There is nothing contradictory in this statement, although it is paradoxical; here is no extenuation for sin, although many graceless professors have often pleaded an excuse for their ungodliness by quoting these words. Such a doctrine is utterly abhorrent to all right-minded persons. The apostle in this verse repeats what he had said in the 16th and 17th verses; the repetition shows how full his mind was of the subject, and how much inclined he was to dwell upon it, and to place it in a variety of aspects. He draws the same conclusion from the same premises. And it is as if he had said, "The things which I do, when contrary to the characteristic desires and purposes of my heart, are to be considered as the acts of a slave in obedience to the will of his master. They are indeed my own acts, so far as my hands and consciousness are concerned, but not being performed with the full consent and purpose of my heart, are not to be regarded as a fair criterion of character by which I am to be judged." The old Adam is sold under sin, it is not renewed; sin is sin, it cannot in its own nature be made otherwise; but in the person of the believer in Christ it is placed under restraint, being subdued by the power of grace. The believer often fails in his service to God, and does those things which grieve his heart, but his failures are not characteristic of his habitual inclination and purpose of mind; his intentions are to do right; he would never do wrong; but when he is compelled by counter influences stronger than his intentions, to act contrary to them, he is in a position like the slave whose master has bid him to flog his wife; he must do it, he cannot avoid it; but though he is the instrument of the act, the act is the master's, not the slave's. The slave's will was not in the act, though he did beat his wife. Wicked men, like graceless professors, will often plead drunkenness as an excuse for their crimes, intimating it was under the power of the drink that they acted against propriety; and we know that sometimes vicious magistrates and jurymen will listen to it, I suppose from sympathy, and so pass a lenient sentence. Nevertheless, it is right for honest and sincere believers to commune with their own hearts, and find out the root of the principles which act, and how they act against each other. This is a part of our spiritual wisdom. This is that knowledge of ourselves, which, under the Spirit's

teachings, leads a man never to trust his own heart, or his own strength, but to look to the strong for strength, and to the wise for wisdom. "Whoso is wise and will observe" the contrary principles of sin and grace acting one against the other within themselves, "even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

*But sin that dwelleth in me.* That is, its habitual presence with them; it resides in their flesh; it abides in the soul, it is never absent; there is its constant residence and habitation. It is in the flesh as the plague of leprosy is in the house, there it is, in it, about it, and will be in it until the house is taken down and the materials separated and dispersed. Indwelling sin is a great plague to the child of God; it abounds in contradictions, it is treacherous, inconstant, and deceitful above all things, yea, desperately wicked; the works of the flesh proceed from the heart, the seeds of which are in it, and is the great plague of the good man's heart; it is "his own grief sore." It is enmity against God. God abates its force in the regenerated heart, but does not change its nature. Grace changes the character of the believer's person, but not the nature of sin.

*I find then a law.* This the believer finds by his own experience and the light of God's truth. There is a law, a force, a power against his will, desire, purposes, and resolution to do good, to follow out God's will. Thus we see two forces, two laws, two powers, acting against each other, neither of which fully succeeds; the struggle at times bewilders and discomposes the believer.

Here then we have what may be called two laws acting in the believer; the one is the law of sin, which is in his members; the other is the law of the mind, the renewed mind, the law of the Spirit of life. The law of his original nature bringing the believer into captivity by resisting the law of his mind.

The apostle states, "I find then a law;" his finding it intimates, he discovered it; it was revealed to him; he had been looking for an explanation, but not until, like Asaph, he communed with his own heart, observed his own experience, and used the Saviour's key, then he finds two distinct facts, "the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." In the 23rd verse he adds, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the

law of sin, which is in my members." He does not mean the members of his body, for they cannot sin of themselves, but of sin in its principle and of its workings within him. Indwelling sin is here called a law, because of its force and power as a principle of action, which is equivalent to a law; and as Dr. Owen well observes, "thus it is in believers; it is a law even *in them*, but though not *to them*." No, blessed be God, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death." Wherever the soul has been brought to know and feel the bondage of the one, he also has been brought, or shall be brought, to know the sweetness, power, and efficacy of the other.

*That, when I would do good, evil is present with me.* Evil is ready to oppose, to obstruct, and to prevent me in striving and aiming to effect some good purpose or desire; as if it was determined to withstand me in the way, in my very path, at every step, fighting against me, resisting every attempt I make in my progress to the heavenly city. Thus the believer's pilgrimage to Zion is one of warfare; "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." "The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak." The constant presence of evil in the heart is his burden, and great grief; it is always near, nigh at hand; it comes unbidden and undesired; its antagonistic principle demonstrates the great fact of man's apostasy, the ruin of his moral nature, and the perpetual enmity of Satan against Christ. But painful as is the conflict, the victory is certain, and the triumph will be glorious. The saints of God shall be more than conquerors through him that hath loved them, because it will be for ever.

Thus I have gone through my text in an expository sort of way, taking it piece by piece as the words run. I had intended to have treated it under two distinct heads, the first to show the nature of the two laws which the believer finds within himself, and the second, the nature of the conflict arising from the opposite tendencies of the two laws. However, I have given you in substance the views I take of this important and interesting subject: they are, as I humbly believe, in accordance with the apostle's doctrine, and with my own experience. May I hope that what has been advanced has been the means of clearing away some of those mists which sometimes hang about

the minds of the dear children of God as to the working of sin within. I will now proceed to notice a few points by way of practical observations.

OBS. 1. *That when believers sin, it is not with their full and free consent at any time, or upon any occasion.* Once they did; in their unregenerate state they were the subjects of sin, sold unto it, sin was a law to them, as well as in them, and they obeyed it, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind," but now their condition is changed. Their relationship to God is made manifest, they are now under the power of divine grace; it is *no more they* that sin, but sin that dwelleth within; not that they never sin, but that when they do, it is through the prevalence of contrary principles of operation, so that they do not sin with the full and entire consent of their will as when they were enslaved by it. By reason of the principle of grace within, they are opposed to and hate all sin, and therefore cannot sin wilfully.

2. *That when believers sin, yet sin does not reign in them as it once did.* Sin acts against them and frustrates their good desires. Sin being opposed, causes it to fight against the new principle; nevertheless grace reigns, though sin rages; for it is always to be observed it is grace now that has become the habit of the mind, and is a law to the believer: "Sin shall not have the dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Rom. vi. 14.) Sin has now lost its power over the believer as his tyrant, but being ever present with him, it has thenceforward become a source of annoyance and grief; it is the plague of his heart, he is no longer its vassal.

3. *That when believers sin, they do it not from the force of habit and custom as they once did, for grace opposes it, and it has become the law of their minds.* Sin is contrary to the new nature of the child of God, and in itself it cannot sin, though the believer himself sins at times. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed (the principle of grace) remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. Whosoever is born of God sinneth not." (1 John iii. 9.) Believers find their hearts are fully set against sin—

"Born of God, they hate all sin,  
God's pure word remains within."

Sin has not an abiding place as a ruler; it is grace that reigns and has become the law of the mind. The proof by observers must be taken from the general course



of the conduct ; the character is not to be determined by an action which may be more the result of accident than of purpose, but from the habitual course of life which is followed, and which has ever marked the man.

4. *When believers sin, they do it not, as Satan does, from enmity to God.* "He that is born of God sinneth not;" "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Here are the two natures clearly defined. The believer is subject to the influence of both ; the one rules, the other opposes, but he can fully distinguish between the workings of each and the effects of each ; though he hates sin, he does sin ; though he loves God, he does sin. The weakest saint as well as the strongest, are fully conscious that when they sin it is not from enmity to God, not from the settled love of any known sin. When they sin it is against their own light and knowledge, but not out of malice against God. This distinction, when lost sight of, has sometimes occasioned great distress of soul from the fear of having committed the unpardonable sin ; but this is obviously a device of Satan himself to bring it into bondage and fear of eternal wrath.

5. *When believers sin they do not abide or continue in it and under it as they once did.* If they fall into sin it is rather from their being tripped up in their path ; for if they fall, they rise again and still go on their way. They do not continue in it, or delight in it ; they are ashamed of themselves, and are grieved with themselves. If there were a continuance in any particular sin, it would be a sad sign of a heart in which there was no true faith. I grant, the power of temptation in some instances may so prevail for a time as to make a man weary in opposing it ; his want of strength may be his infirmity, and this, perhaps, is the worst case a child of God can be brought into ; but he cannot go on in it, it is his distress, and not his delight. Sin is of a hardening nature, but grace brings tenderness of spirit. Grace reigns and brings the soul back to God, flies to the blood of Christ as the fountain for cleansing from all sin and iniquity.

6. *When believers sin, they sin not without the loss of their present peace and comfort, as others do, or as they themselves once did.* For if it were otherwise, what need would they have for taking heed to their steps, what necessity would there be for prayer that they might be held up in their goings, lest their safety should be endangered ? When David sinned the joy of salvation was

taken from him ; when Peter sinned he was soon brought into grief ; and I believe all sincere souls are exceedingly troubled whenever they have been led out of the way of truth and holiness. 'Tis true, graceless professors are sometimes in trouble about their sins, but it is because they have been found out in them and have got into disgrace ; their grief is not about their wickedness, but the exposure of their shame and the loss of their character ; if they had not been detected, they would have still continued in sin. No one, I am sure, in whose heart God has begun a good work, can ever find a temporary delight in the indulgence of their corrupt nature without their consciences being wounded and experiencing the loss of their peace. It is true, God never suffers his people to fall into any sin at any time, but for the accomplishment of some wise end, and which is found to result in his glory and their eternal good ; still, it is to be observed, it arises more out of their afflictions and trials which their sin has brought on them, and not by the sin itself. Every scholar in the school of Christ has to learn this painful lesson—sin and sorrow are inseparable companions.

7. *When believers sin, it is generally out of weakness, and not out of wickedness.* It is for want of strength to conquer ; or it may be through infirmity, as it was in the case of Asaph, who, during his fits of fainting and forgetfulness, said many things which he afterwards acknowledged to be his infirmity, his weakness. The three disciples already alluded to, had their weakness of body, though their spirits were willing to watch for their Lord. We must, however, bear in mind, that though a believer's failure is attributed to the weakness of his flesh, yet the principle of sin is matured, and is therefore called the "old man ;" the principle of grace is immature, it is the new nature, is not perfected yet in the believer ; but we must beware of making false conclusions upon such premises as these. Many mistakes are apt to be made ; some think their sins are infirmities, when, alas ! they are very wickedness. A sin of infirmity is not so much from the nature of it, as it is in the manner of falling into it. A man may be overtaken in a fault ; this is different from following after it. A man who is living in the flesh, walks after the flesh, follows his own inclinations, because that which is of the flesh is flesh. A man who is in the Spirit, lives in the Spirit, walks after the Spirit, minds the things of the Spirit, because that which is of the Spirit is Spirit ;

still he finds the things of the flesh walk after him and create him much annoyance; it is that which vexes him and breaks his peace; like as when a good man is seen followed by some wretched beggar, or may be, followed by a horde of thieves, but he is distinguished from his company for all that; there is no union, though there is on their part a cleaving to the good man, not because he is good, but to obtain his money for their riot and to impoverish him. We think none the less of the good man because he was followed and impoverished by the beggar or by the horde of thieves.

Dear brethren, the subject which has engaged our attention at this time is one of deep interest to every believer in Christ. He will have to learn that there is an evil principle always abiding in his heart, so that when he would do good, evil is present with him. He will have to learn that this abiding principle is not only present with him, but that it has the force and power of a law with him. The *power* which it once had over him is *weakened* indeed by the operation of the principle of grace, but *its nature is unchanged*. And the believer will find the further he proceeds in the divine life the more he will feel the force and power of the evil principle, and the more he will have to deplore it, the more spiritually minded he becomes the stronger he will feel the opposition and conflict. But though believers feel this evil principle, this law of sin is ever present with them, and they complain most when their aim is best, yet they rejoice that ere long the law of their minds, the law of God in their hearts, will ultimately triumph over the law of sin; their regenerated self, the new creature, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and the body of sin shall be totally destroyed. Oh what a glorious triumph this will be for the whole church of God; even now there is cause for rejoicing, for this triumph over all evil is already secured by the Lord Jesus Christ. We triumph by faith. We are feeble, it is true, but Christ is strong. In him is our strength. Believer, whenever you feel your weakness, look to the strong for strength; in him we shall conquer, and shall be more than conquerors too, for there will be a perpetuity of this triumph. It is recorded of one of the Roman emperors who, after gaining several decisive victories, was returning to his city in triumphant state, and was received with great acclamations and every demon-

stration of rejoicing, with which he was evidently delighted; and he asked a grave philosopher who was seated with him in his chariot what could be possibly wanting to make his triumph more glorious; the philosopher quietly answered — "*perpetuity!*" Yes, this is it, my friends, the saints of God are more than conquerors; they have a perpetuity of conquest, and they have a perpetuity of triumphant glory. It is otherwise with the men of this world; Time, writes "*Ichabod*" upon all their names and their conquests too; the glory is departed, for nothing seems to die out of memory so rapidly as martial achievements. Military glory is a thing of fits and starts, and in process of years becomes like a dream; the victories of Marlborough are forgotten, the victories of Bonaparte have vanished, the victories of Wellington are fast fading away, but the believer can exultingly exclaim, "Thanks be to God who *always* causeth us to triumph in Christ." He has triumphed over Death itself, that mighty conqueror of all conquerors. The saints of God will live for ever to enjoy their triumphs over sin; in the morning of the resurrection the upright shall have dominion over all the enemies of their peace; as sin shall not have dominion over them now because they are under grace, so even death shall not have dominion over them because he is conquered by Him who died and rose again; this is the saints' ground of rejoicing, as he rose again, so shall they, and their triumph shall be eternal; even now we triumph by faith, and our faith is more than victorious: it is through him that hath loved us; he has fought the battle with all the powers of sin; he has conquered and triumphed over the devil, death, and the grave; they are utterly vanquished; no sin shall finally triumph over the believer; the conflict within may be sharp, it may be long, but the victory is already secured by the triumphant work of Christ; through him we shall conquer and triumph over every sin. This is the saints' security, it is their strength and their encouragement; hence they stand their ground; falling is out of the question; the conflict is unequal, but the victory is certain. "Gad, a troop shall overcome him (for a time), but he shall overcome at last."

"For here's our point at rest;  
Though hard the battle seems,  
Our Saviour stood the fiery test,  
And we shall stand through him."

# THE PLEA OF ZELOPHEHAD'S FIVE DAUGHTERS, SPIRITUALLY CONSIDERED.

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A SERMON,  
BY CHARLES GORDELIER,

PREACHED AT HEPHZIBAH CHAPEL, DARLING PLACE, MILE END GATE,

On Lord's Day Evening, January 21st, 1866.

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"Then came the daughters of Zelophehad . . . And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons. Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father. And Moses brought their cause before the Lord. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them."—NUMBERS xxvii. 1-7.

It is said that when the children of Israel arrived on the borders of their inheritance "they did eat of the old corn of the land:" (Joshua v. ii:) it was a notable circumstance to them; and though they had been divinely fed for forty years with manna from heaven, yet it seems this new bread made of old corn of which they had heard so much was eaten with a peculiar relish and satisfaction. There can be no doubt wheaten bread was a novelty to all the people; for only two, Joshua and Caleb, remained, who had partaken of the like before their departure from Egypt. So sometimes even now, it may be said, God's spiritual Israel can feed with a keen appetite upon New  
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Testament bread made of Old Testament corn ; or in other words, Old Testament truth clothed and presented in a New Testament dress, may have the charm of novelty and excite a laudable interest and attention to certain facts which had been previously unobserved.

I have not taken this subject, which our text seems to suggest, for the sake of amusing you with any vain speculations. God forbid that we should ever be found trifling with the sacred word of truth. But it does strike my mind that our mutual edification may be promoted if, in a spirit of humble prayer and dependence upon divine teaching, we look at two or three points which seem suggested to us, in a spiritual light. May he whose province it is to open the understanding, open our eyes, that we may understand the Scriptures and behold wondrous things out of the book of God's law.

The word of God makes mention of Zelophehad's five daughters several times. It was a remarkable case, and we see a particular notice is taken of it. Evidently the Holy Ghost intended something beyond its literal history. It is true this incident shows the imperfection of the Mosaic Law in its provisions for every human contingency, and we see that this case was made the means of establishing a reasonable and righteous law in the Jewish civil code as to the heirship of estates ; and in which our own nation has very wisely followed.

By a reference to the chapter preceding our text, we observe that in the law for apportioning the Land of Canaan no provision had been made for females in case of there being no male issue. Consequently, this family of Zelophehad, consisting of five daughters, were unprovided for, and they at once saw and felt the hardship of their destitute condition, and that their case had been overlooked. This was a hard case, and you may perhaps remember that it was under Jehovah's sanction and guidance, that while common and ordinary cases occurring between man and man were adjudicated by subordinate judges, yet all hard cases were to be brought before Moses ; but that when cases proved too difficult even for Moses to decide upon, then the cause was to be brought into the solemn meeting of Moses and the priests and princes of the congregation at the door of the tabernacle, to inquire of the Lord at the holy oracle. Such was the case here ; these five daughters, conscious of their father's

good name and of their own destitute and unprovided for estate by his death, come before this august and chief assembly to represent their cause. They very properly refer to their father as not having died under any attainder or judicial law by which his estate would have become forfeited, and therefore no legal claim might be made by his family; but they appeal on the ground that it was unreasonable that his estate should revert to his brother, their uncle, merely on the fact of their father having no son; such an accidental circumstance as this they represented as acting most prejudicial to his family of females. They plead for a possession. On what ground? relationship—Zelophehad was their father. But why plead on the ground of relationship, for Zelophehad had never an inch of ground he could call his own? True, but the promise was made to him, the reversion belonged to him and to his heirs for ever. Their faith was in the promise made to their father, their plea is founded both on the promise made to him and on their relationship to him. This was too hard a case for Moses. The law had made no provision for it. He could not act without it. He brings the case in solemn conclave before Jehovah. Their plea was admitted and approved, and an inheritance is assigned to them amongst their father's brethren.

Perhaps it may be inquired, but what is all this to us? The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. We prefer the gospel to Moses' institutes. Well, be it so; yet, we think, under the anointing of God's Spirit, much New Testament truth may be brought out of Old Testament facts. I am persuaded good gospel grace is often to be had out of Mosaic law.

"Israel in ancient days  
Not only had a view  
Of Sinai in a blaze,  
But learned the gospel too;  
The types and shadows were a glass,  
In which they saw the Saviour's face."

And amongst other instances, very strikingly so, as I think, in the case of Zelophehad's daughters. This is it, my object is to point out to you precious gospel truths folded within this apparently singular incident of Jewish history. Here is then the subject embraced in our text—The law of inheritance is found defective. It is appealed against. The appeal is admitted, and the inheritance is

divinely secured to the appellants both by inheritance and special gift. Now I believe there is much spiritual truth underlying all this statement of literal fact, which, with the Lord's help and blessing, I trust may be of great comfort and edification to his loving family. I do not intend running a parallel on every part, but shall confine myself to a few primary points. The first we notice is,

1. *The sense these five daughters have that, by the death of their father, and they having no brother for his heir, the law has left them destitute; it has made no provision for their maintenance, for by law they are not entitled to their father's inheritance.*

Spiritually considered, this is the case of all mankind. Our first father, Adam, possessed an inheritance in himself, being created pure, holy, upright, and innocent; but for his disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit he died, forfeited his inheritance, died in his own sin, and in sinning involved his posterity in the ruin and misery of his apostasy. His inheritance passed away from them; for that by nature he left no son born before the apostasy that could inherit it; having, therefore, so to speak, no "elder brother born for adversity," the inheritance is lost to them; their father's death ruined them all, it completely beggared them, and has left them without hope in him. In the Adamic constitution the human posterity are all made sinners; the disobedience of Adam, as the head of mankind, has laid a sure foundation for the same sin and corruption to take place and spread through all the human race; just as by divine appointment, or a law of nature, as it is commonly termed, the sap of the root or original stock of a tree passes into the numerous limbs, twigs, and fruit of a tree, as they successively grow out of it. "If the sap or nature of the root or stock be bad, sour, or poisonous, the same is communicated to the whole; and every branch, and all the fruit and seed of the whole tree, is corrupt, sour, or poisonous, and of all the trees which spring from that, or are produced by the seed of it. Thus, if any tree was, when first created, of a poisonous nature, and produced such fruit, all that race of trees, or all that should spring from it, would of course be of the same nature. And if a tree or plant, which was created at first good and wholesome, did degenerate, and become corrupt and poisonous, all that should proceed from that would, of course, be equally corrupt." In this



sense, the first sin is the sin of all mankind, and is the source of all the misery and woe brought into this world.

Such is the teaching of God's word, and such is our belief when our minds are enlightened by the divine Spirit. We find, by painful and bitter experience, like Zelophehad's daughters, our father has died in his own sin, his sin of unbelief; by nature, we have no brother born for adversity, "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and therefore we have no inheritance in our first father; his innocency, happiness, and immortality were all forfeited by his death. By law, that is, the original constitution under which mankind were placed, there is no provision for our innocency, happiness, and immortality. We are left without hope. These five daughters felt they had no maintenance in themselves, their father's death had left them utterly destitute, and thus it was they came to make their case known. And so, brethren, when you and I are brought to feel our misery and destitution by our relation to our federal head, Adam, it will lead us to make our case known. But let me ask you in plain terms, have you ever been brought to feel that you are really a lost, ruined sinner in and of yourself? or are you so puffed up with pharisaic pride, and vainly fancy you are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, being ignorant of your wretchedness, misery, and poverty, your blindness and nakedness? O if it be so, may the Lord open your eyes, and lead you to know the truth as it is in Christ!

*2. They bring their case before Moses, but it is too hard for him, and he cannot help them.*

By consulting Deut. i. 17, we find that when matters of dispute or difficulty were brought for decision in the ordinary courts of arbitration, it was said by Moses, "The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it." There is no doubt that in the first instance, these five daughters mentioned their case to the judges in the lower courts; from thence they were sent to Moses. There is no statement of such a process, but it is implied in the result that followed, and that is, we see, Moses could not settle it; it was too hard a cause for him even; he could do nothing for them. Yet it was a very proper step for them to take; where else could they go? what else could they do? They were under Moses, and to Moses they must be sent, and then it is they learn that

Moses has no power in the present constitution of things to give them an inheritance among their brethren. Just so is the case with every poor sinner made sensible of his lost, ruined condition by the death of his forefather Adam; he comes at once to Moses for help; being born under the law, he looks to it for pardon, peace, and righteousness, but he finds no help there. He knows the law is holy, just, and good, but it brings him no pardon, it brings him no peace; and as for righteousness, the more he toils and tugs for it on the footing of his own performances, the farther he feels from it; it has only added to his condemnation. As there is imperfection in the best of all human institutions, so the daughters of Zelophehad found that the Mosaic constitution of things was imperfect. "The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of better hope did." (Heb. vii. 19.) They found the law could not do everything; it had not provided for every weakness and contingency in the flesh, it could only make them feel the more pungently their absolute doom to ruin and misery. Thus have we found it, proved it, and have said with the poet:

"In vain we ask God's righteous law,  
To justify us now;  
Since to convince and to condemn,  
Is all the law can do."

And every sinner, under a feeling sense of its condemnation, feels he is weak, and it is because he is weak that the law cannot do anything for him; had he been a just man, it would have justified him, but being a sinner, it condemns him; its inability is not chargeable upon the law, but on the sinner: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." (Rom. viii. 3.) Sin has made us weak, made us miserably poor, stripped every piece of righteousness from off our back. If righteousness could have come by the law, it would have given it; "for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law;" (Gal. iii. 21;) but being broken, it condemns us, demands our life; it kills instead of saves. Every sinner under the teaching of God's Spirit is made to feel that the law can do nothing for him, that it is weak through their own sinful flesh. The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; this they prove by an experimental acquaintance with the truth, and this leads

them to renounce Moses, and to seek a higher court for life and salvation. Such a soul, having the sentence of death in itself, will cease from looking to its own doings as the meritorious cause of receiving any good from the hand of God; they must look elsewhere for hope, and exclaim,

"My soul no more attempt to draw  
Thy life and comfort from the law;  
Fly to the hope the gospel gives,  
The man that trusts the promise lives."

3. *The daughters of Zelophehad appeal on the ground of relationship, and faith in the promise made to their father.*

They claim the benefit of that relationship. An inheritance had been promised to him, but he dying in the wilderness without male issue, left it unappropriated; and as he had done nothing of himself to alienate the property from his family, but simply died in the common course of nature, decay, the effect of sin. Nor had he entered the promised land any more than any of the others, save Joshua and Caleb, through unbelief. By the accidental circumstance of these daughters having no brother, they look upon themselves as deprived of the promise, and impoverished without any just cause; and they consider their father's name dishonoured and blotted out. They not only do honour to their father in desiring that his name should not be done away, but we see also their faith in God's promise, and the esteem they have for it on their father's account. So may true believers in Christ claim an inheritance among all the sanctified, on the ground of relationship and promise; and here we see a superiority in the gospel over the law in every point of view. Believers have faith in the promises of God. God is their father. They plead his name, they plead his promise. What though the law is against them as they stand in Adam, their federal head: "Is the law, then, against the promises? God forbid?" (Gal. iii. 21.) Is the promise to be disannulled because the law is weak through the flesh? Come, Moses, answer this knotty point. No, indeed, he cannot; it is too hard a case for him: "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise;" but God has given it to his chosen by promise. Moses has nothing to do with it; and though there is no inheritance by the law, there is by promise; and God's spiritually taught children make no attempt to claim it by

law, but by promise and untainted relationship : " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." (1 Peter i. 4, 5.) And what blessedness we see in gospel blessings. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ may claim God for their father and his only begotten Son for their brother. Whatever may be their condition by nature in and of themselves considered, his God is their God, his Father is their Father, therefore he is their elder brother, so that by no possibility can any contingency arise to deprive them of their inheritance. It comes to them by virtue of covenant union to him in whom are all the promises of God. (2 Cor. i. 29.) " The Lord knoweth the days of the upright; and their inheritance shall be for ever." (Ps. xxxvii. 18.)

4. *As their case is too hard for Moses, it is taken into a higher court ; it is brought before Jehovah in solemn council and state.*

Here we see is the precedent upon which the rule is enjoined by Moses. (Deut. xvii. 8, 9.) All grave and difficult matters of controversy were to be brought into solemn conclave of priests, Levites, and judge. In this instance the august assembly consisted of Moses, as supreme, Eleazar, the priest, and the princes, or elders, at the door of the tabernacle ; it was an open meeting, and it constituted the highest court of judicature. As there was no law upon which this assembly could act, Moses brings the case before Jehovah, the object being to know his will ; in this they doubtless consulted the divine oracle of the Urim and Thummim, in the holy place before the Shekinah, the cloudy symbol of the divine presence. This we gather from the 21st verse of the chapter. Joshua is to " stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord." Here we feel is a sweet spiritual truth. We are brought before God's most holy bar. Conscious of our destitution, conscious that the law can effect no help, yet we plead relationship, we plead the promise, and still sue for the inheritance. The law becomes, as it were, our school-master to bring us to Christ. It teaches us what we were before ignorant of. We must be made to feel that

God alone can help us. To whom can we go if Moses cannot help us. We must turn from Moses to Jesus. Truly blessed is that soul, who, having toiled at the law, hoping for acceptance on pleas of its own, and meeting with no success, finds itself brought before a mercy-seat to bow before the Lord. O this is a solemn meeting, a weighty matter, a critical moment, hoping against hope, resolving to "hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his saints." O Jesus! says the soul, I feel how miserably poor I am, blind and naked, I come to thee totally helpless, O help me in this my time of need; thy holy, righteous law has made me feel all this wretchedness; I have no help there, it has stripped me naked and bare, and now to whom can I go if I should turn from thee; thou art my only refuge, I look to thee for everything; be thou my advocate in heaven's high court; O take up my case, and save me from all I feel and fear; in thy grace alone is all my hope.

"The help of men and angels joined,  
 Could never reach my case;  
 Nor can I hope relief to find,  
 But in thy boundless grace."

*5. Their plea is heard, and Jehovah, in his rich mercy and grace, assigns an inheritance to them among their father's brethren.*

And what was the nature of their plea that it should be entertained before Jehovah? They had done nothing personally by which they could claim an inheritance; they were not numbered amongst the people; and it was only to such who were numbered that the inheritance could be divided; these five daughters knew that, and therefore they did not expect it, and so they ask for it as a gift; they could not claim it on the ground of merit, for had it been so, the law would have dealt with them as the case required; they could not claim it as a matter of right, for otherwise the law could not have denied them; but the nature of their plea is such, that it can be brought into the high court of heaven, and it can be heard and is received by Jehovah himself. What is it? **DESTITUTION and HELPLESSNESS!** Merit and right in the sinner's own name have no place either in the court of God's law or in the gospel plan. The plea of Zelophehad's daughters is approved; hear the judgment: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, The daughters of Zelophehad speak

right; thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their fathers to pass unto them." They speak right—their plea is according to God's word and will. Destitution and helplessness capacitates ruined, undone sinners for the grace of God, and when made sensible of it by the teachings of his Spirit he will surely lead them to seek it on that footing. "The Spirit maketh intercession within us according to the will of God." We are commended to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build us up and to *give* us an inheritance among all the sanctified. The inheritance which the saints of God possess is a deed of gift by an act of grace. It cannot be had by the law, because it has been forfeited; it cannot be had only by the gift of the Father: "It is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke xii. 32.) It is a promised inheritance, therefore a gift, not of merits, not of works, lest any man should boast. "Boasting is excluded. By what law? The law of faith." This family of daughters asked for an inheritance as a deed of gift; it was bestowed as a gift, and they received it as a gift. Now I would ask you, my hearers, have you ever been brought before the Lord with a sense of *your* destitution and *your* helplessness, and to sue for an inheritance in the heavenly Canaan as a deed of gift, as an act of Jehovah's grace? This is a solemn, momentous question. Do you really feel what ruined, bankrupt sinners you are, in and of yourselves? and are you sensible that you have no hope of eternal life except by the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord? These are weighty matters, and I appeal to your conscience as to how these matters stand in your estimation and your experience; think them over, and may the Lord grant you the blessedness of knowing how sure his salvation is to all who are taught to feel their own destitution and helplessness. "It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus iii. 5.)

6. *So now they possess their lot in Canaan by promised inheritance, and a divine gift; by which they inherit the promise more securely and more gloriously than if they had possessed it by a legal title under the law of Moses.*

In the answer which the Lord spake unto Moses, he

gives commandment that this family shall have an inheritance: "The promise made to their father in which their faith rested before his death shall be fulfilled towards them; the inheritance which would have fallen to their brother, if there had been one, they shall possess notwithstanding; and though under Moses, the first covenant, they had no legal right, they shall have it now by virtue of my own free sovereign gift of grace." O the blessedness of those whom Jehovah causeth to approach unto him, they shall be satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple; and this was indeed a gift worth coming for; how super-excellent the glory of such an inheritance, a divine gift, a glorious gift, a heavenly gift; for, figuratively, they claimed an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, and it was the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom; how everlastingly secure the gift; his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, his gifts are without repentance, he never changes his mind, for he is of one mind, and who can turn him; he will confirm the inheritance unto his chosen; it is confirmed in the Person of Christ, his only begotten and eternal Son. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Eph. i. 3, 9.) Here we see the basis of the inheritance—predestination and sovereignty, those two mountains of brass which so many professors are always kicking at; nevertheless there they are, they cannot be overthrown; here is the saints' security, here is their glory—the inheritance is a *most ancient* gift, for it was before time; it is a *most extensive* gift, for all things are their's; it is a *most beneficial* gift, for it has saved them from the curse of sin, the slavery of the devil, and the fascinations of the world; it is a *most dignifying and exalting* gift, for its being in the Person of Christ, who hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than all the archangels of heaven, the church of God partake with him in all its excellency, fulness, and glory; and it is an *eternal* inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them who are kept by

the power of God through faith unto salvation, and have been sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of the inheritance, the promise of eternal inheritance which they which are called shall receive. (Eph. i. 13, 14; Heb. ix. 15.) How super-excellent is the glory of the gospel over that of the law. The law was a ministration of condemnation, yet in itself it had a glory, for it is holy, just, and good. But grace reigns through righteousness; and "if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." (2 Cor. iii. 9-11.) Do we not see how far superior the "gift by grace" is over any legal title which might have been obtained. Our heavenly inheritance stands upon no legal footing, but on the security of a divine promise and eternal covenant union with Jesus Christ; our adoption in him as the children of God renders us "heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

*7. Being now possessed of an inheritance in their own right, they are thereby more eligible for marriage, and to have a better standing in society.*

These five daughters in all probability would have remained unmarried if their father's inheritance had not been bestowed upon them. The family and name would have naturally died out; and as the Jews were careful to preserve by marriage family names, distinctions, and inheritances, no possible advantage could arise by a marriage with any of these destitute and forlorn orphans. This they themselves felt, and they did honour to their father in urging their plea upon the argument, "why should the name of our father be done away from among his family because he had no son;" or in other words, to speak plainly, "why should we be debarred from being married." Well, we see "the Lord commanded to give the inheritance of Zelophehad to his daughters." (Numb. xxxvi. 2.) They did possess it, and thus they became heiresses in their own right; they were married, (see v. 11th,) and what is remarkable, they were married upon their own choice, "whom they thought best;" (v. 6;) they married their cousins. (Ver. 11.) They did not go out of their tribe, for it was the law that every one of the tribes should keep



themselves to their own inheritance. (Ver. 9.) Zelophehad's inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father; (v. 12;) and the sequel of this interesting circumstance was, that under the ministration of Joshua, who succeeded to Moses, these five daughters were put into actual possession of the inheritance. (Joshua xvii. 4.)

Here, then, we see these daughters who had, under the law of Moses, no dowry, are now, through the divine gift of inheritance, able to give one themselves. God having blessed his people with all spiritual blessings in Christ, they possess in him a rich dowry; they choose him for their heavenly husband. This is part of their heavenly wisdom, they marry whom they think best; they think best of him who is altogether lovely. She becomes the bride, the Lamb's wife; she is the king's daughter; she is "all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework. \* \* \* Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever." (Ps. xlv. 13, 17.) God's church is married to Christ; and by virtue of covenant union to him, God is their Father, so that she is now by her dowry honourable, and by marriage a king's daughter; God gave her to Christ, being precious to him: "for since thou hast been precious in my sight thou hast been honourable." (Isa. xliii. 4.) How delightful the thought, every believer in Christ, united to him by a true and living faith, is an "honourable"—the son or daughter of a lord, the Lord God Almighty. How glorious our standing in the gospel to that when under the law! destitute and helpless orphans and no prospect of an inheritance; but now delivered from that under which we were held, our standing, by grace divine, is eternally secure in that everlasting covenant which is ordered in all things and sure; raised to the highest pinnacle of glory and happiness; to be with Jesus enthroned in the heavenly state, to praise his name for ever and ever. We look back to our former estate, and can say with the poet:

"He raised me from the deeps of sin,  
The gates of gaping hell,  
And fix'd my standing more secure  
Than 'twas before I fell."

But I must now draw my remarks on the several features of this remarkable and interesting incident to a close; there is much mystical and spiritual truth yet to be eliminated, but time forbids; I shall only detain you a few minutes by making two or three more observations by way of improvement. I may perhaps be accused of repetition, but risking that, I would remark,

1. We see that as the faith of these females in God's promise was manifested by their appeal to Moses in the face of the law being against them, and the inheritance secured to them by a special gift, so believers in Christ have glory promised them by a gift of grace. It is claimed by faith on the plea of covenant union. God honours their faith, while at the same time he secures his church's everlasting welfare. God's promise was the ground of the faith of Zelophehad's daughters; their altered circumstances by the death of their father did not lessen it. The promise made to Abraham was the ground of his faith; there were certain things against it, nevertheless he staggered not through unbelief, for where God has promised there is always ground for hope. "Is the law against the promises? God forbid;" but it is against the impenitent and unawakened sinner, he is under its curse.

Awakened sinners though fleeing to the law for help, claim what it cannot give; they seek life and salvation by it; they know the law is against them, it has condemned them, and yet they vainly strive for pardon and peace, they sin and stumble but the more until they are led to Christ. Then it is they look to him, from him they receive the promise, they claim it by faith in him; by living on him by faith they rejoice in hope of the glory of God; Christ dwells in their heart by faith, which is Christ in them the hope of glory. "The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them who walk uprightly." (Ps. lxxxiv. 11.) The promise of the heavenly inheritance is secured by our Lord's own will, a security founded in everlasting love and covenant union with the eternal Jehovah in his Trinity of Persons, so that it is impossible ever to miss of it: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world." (John xvii. 24.) Thus it is that God, through

Christ, gives us grace, he gives us glory. We shall have a certain realization of our faith.

2. We see that though the Lord's people may at first be under a legal yoke while in the wilderness state, yet it is by faith they are raised far superior to it, and are delivered from all the beggary to which they were reduced.

It is sheer folly to suppose that because a soul may be exercised with what pertains to a legal work in the conscience, therefore no good work is begun in the heart; the reverse is true, the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, like as Moses brought Zelophehad's family before the Lord. It is through the faith of Christ that believers seek deliverance from the bondage under which they are held; their seeking it through the law is their mistake: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" that he is the only way to God. "Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed, but that after faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster," for then it is that we are manifested to be the "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii. 23-26.) "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Rom. vii. 6.) The life of faith is the work of grace, and is completed in eternal glory.

3. We see Jehovah's love and grace towards his people in bestowing the blessings they need, and for which they plead.

Salvation by grace is a theme which delights the redeemed sinner to contemplate; its blessings, like a mighty stream, flow down to them from a source which is to be traced to the fountain of God's everlasting love, whose goings forth have been of old. Our experience of his goodness commences in time; we have his promise of all needful good, grace here, glory hereafter, grace for every need, strength for the day, wisdom for every exigency; we seek these in faith, we plead his promise, we plead the name of Christ, "our elder brother," "our brother born for adversity;" we are blessed through him, blessed in him. Here on earth we are straitened in ourselves, but in the rest beyond, "there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams." There will be an ample sufficiency of every blessing to make our bliss eternally complete.

4. We see also that as it was under Joshua Zelophehad's daughters were put into actual possession of their inheritance, so it is by Jesus Christ we are made partakers of the heavenly inheritance.

Joshua, the servant of the Lord, was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus Christ; his name is the Hebrew word for Jesus, a Saviour. As he brought the people through the wilderness and the Jordan into the land of Canaan, and gave to each their inheritance, so Jesus brings us safely through the gospel wilderness state, supplying all our wants, protecting us from every danger, preserving to us unimpaired all our interests, and at last brings us through the Jordan of death to the heavenly state, and puts us in full possession of all the blessings promised. This is our rejoicing, we will speak it to his praise: "For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." (Ps. lxxxiv. 14.)

5. We see, too, the faithfulness of a covenant Jehovah to his promise and to his people.

God is faithful who has promised. As Abraham received a divine call to leave his own country and kindred to go into the land of Canaan, it is said, "and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came;" (Gen. xii. 5;) so the Lord will certainly perform his covenant to all his redeemed family, and not one good thing of all he has promised shall ever fail.

"His truth he inviolably keeps,  
The largest promise of his lips."

He is a promise making and a promise performing God. As sure as the good work of divine grace has been begun in your hearts, he will carry it on and perfectly perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ; and "so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. i. 2.)

Dear friends, I have thus aimed to put before you some of the corresponding gospel truths, which I think may be fairly traced in this portion of Old Testament history. I feel conscious there is much that is defective and imperfect, but nevertheless what has now been stated may serve as an outline for your further meditation and improvement. A spiritual insight into the meaning of God's word is the exclusive gift of him by whom it was inspired. The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit,

and, therefore, it is unlikely that he will approve those things having a spiritual significancy. Our Lord when on earth spoke "unto them that were without in parables." And when he was with his church in the wilderness under Moses, he displayed his gracious designs and his infinite wisdom to the spiritually enlightened in all the types and figures which were employed in that ceremonial dispensation. "They were all," says the apostle Paul, "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink of the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." (1 Cor. x. 2-4.) And the same apostle, in writing to the Colossians, takes up the facts of the circumcision, baptism, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus as an argument in matters of real spiritual importance; so that whenever the Lord's people are led to contemplate the truths of the Bible, whether they be in figures, persons, or historical facts, they will find delightful and profitable subjects leading them to further discoveries of the unsearchable riches of Christ. May the Lord lead your minds to search God's word for yourselves, and to examine yourselves as to whether you have right saving faith in God's promise of the heavenly inheritance which is given to all the sanctified. Do you feel your spiritual destitution and helplessness? and do you think you can claim a divine relationship, and plead the promise of God in the face of his law being against you? Oh, if you can, the inheritance is yours,—yours by promise, yours by gift, yours by inheritance.

"Brethren, by this your claim abide,  
This title to your bliss;  
Whatever loss you bear beside,  
Oh, never give up this."

# JEHOVAH'S POWER CONCEALED IN THE HORNS OF HIS HAND.

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## A SERMON, BY CHARLES GORDELIER.

PREACHED AT HEPHZIBAH CHAPEL, DARLING PLACE, MILE END GATE,

On Lord's Day Evening, 18th February, 1866.

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"He had horns coming out of his hand, and there was the hiding of his power."—HABAKKUK iii. 4.

WE have no certain information respecting the prophet Habakkuk; but it is evident that he prophesied in Judea before the captivity, and probably in the reign of Jehoiakim, and therefore co-temporary with Jeremiah. As a poet Habakkuk holds a high rank among the Hebrew prophets. There is a beautiful connection between the parts of his prophecy; its diction, imagery, spirit, and sublimity are remarkably striking, and well deserve our admiration. His prayer, in particular, from whence we have taken our text, is considered by competent judges to be a masterpiece of its kind, and one of the most perfect specimens of Hebrew poetry. His name signifies, "one that embraces, a wrestler;" a name that befits him well. Shigionoth, a word used in the title, appears to be either the name of the tune to which the prayer was set, or else the name of the musical instrument employed when the prayer was used, it being sung in the service of God; for you observe the word "selah" occurs three times, and at the conclusion it is addressed to the leader of the choir.

I would also remark, that this prayer of Habakkuk arises out of his prophecy. The prophet, foreseeing the judgments of God, the calamities which were to befall his country from the Chaldeans, and afterwards the punishments which awaited the Chaldeans themselves;

being partly struck with terror and partly inspired by his confidence in God's faithfulness and character, he prays that God would hasten the deliverance of his people: "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid; O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." He then alludes to the Egyptian deliverance in language so sublime as is totally beyond my power to describe: "God came from Teman." Teman is the name of the southern country, where Moses fled when he left Egypt, and was afterwards recalled to deliver the people of Israel; he represented God; he did God's work. "Paran" is the northern extremity of the wilderness Sinai, from whence the law was proclaimed. Then we have the word "selah." At this point the musical chorus breaks out, or rather, as I am inclined to think, a symphony is played, while the voices are silent, and meditation is promoted. The miraculous incidents in the wilderness history, the most noble and important are displayed in the most splendid colours, embellished with magnificent and sublimest imagery, figures, and diction. The singular elegance of the conclusion crowns the whole with a superior dignity. It is the language of faith, filled with divine energy, rejoicing in Jehovah Jesus, the fountain of all true joy when the streams of creature comforts have all failed.

With regard to the first part of this verse, "His brightness was as the light," it is probable there is an allusion to the exceeding glory which Moses saw on the mount at the giving of the law: "So terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." As to the second part of the verse: "He had horns coming out of his hand," I am aware that the marginal reading is, "beams coming out of his side;" and this rendering is generally received by expositors; but I confess I am not inclined to it, for having had my mind impressed with a different view in rather a remarkable way, yet not of sufficient importance to state here, I feel I must in this instance walk out of the common road and keep to the ordinary reading, which I certainly prefer.

The material point of difference in the view generally taken of this passage and in the one which I hold is in the term "horns." By "horn," strength is signified everywhere in Scripture; as, the horn of salvation, the

strength of salvation. (Ps. xviii. 2.) The exalting of the horn is the advancing of power. (1 Sam. ii. 1; Ps. lxxxix. 17.) Here, in our text, these are said to be in the hand, because the hands and arms are the powers of the body; and, indeed, as they are the instruments of power, they are well called "the strong men of the body." Then, again, horns are for use, not for display; beams are emanations of light, a display of the source of light; which, to my mind, as applied to the marginal rendering, is but a repetition or amplification of the first portion of the verse, "his brightness was as the light," which I imagine is not the intention of the prophet. That Jehovah reveals himself in the glories of his various attributes is strictly true:

"His glories shine with beams so bright,  
No mortal eye can bear the sight."

But in the passage before us we think we can discover more than that which simply confounds and dazzles us, though it be to admiration. The word of God reveals to us the glories of Jehovah in a way that is to be of essential advantage to the church of God; not for our admiration only, but for our positive salvation. The horns coming out of his hand is for the salvation of his people: "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people." "His brightness was as the light," shows us *what God is*: "God is light; in him is no darkness at all." The "horns coming out of his hand" shows us *what God does*—the goings forth of Jehovah in acts of mercy, love, and grace.

I said, horns are for use; they are used for defence, by reason of the power they possess. Zedekiah, the false prophet, forged horns of iron, and brought them to King Ahab, intimating thereby the power he possessed, the power of driving his foes from him. The timid kinds of cattle, you observe, are provided with horns for defence; thus, weak as they appear to be, they possess a source of strength which is hidden. The horn is but a small portion that is displayed; but its roots are spread over a wider surface than can be traced. Here, I think, is the true idea of the text, and which we are to keep in view as we go along with our subject. We see but a small portion of what God does for us, for there is much more concealed than we can trace.

Horns are for positive service. We see it in the ser-



vice of the sanctuary. The altar on which the sacrifices were to be placed were to be provided with horns at each corner. The primary use to which they were put was for fastening with cords, so as to keep secure, the sacrifices laid upon it. The accumulation of the people's sacrifices on the great days of the tabernacle service would necessitate it; hence we have the words, Ps. cxviii.: "God is Jehovah, who hath showed us light; bind the sacrifices with cords to the altar." (Ex. xxvii. 2; xxx. 10; Ps. cxviii. 27.) There was also another use to which the horns of the altar were put, and that was for the salvation of the manslayer. If the avenger of blood was close, even to his heels, yet if the manslayer could only grasp the horns of the altar, he was safe; it was his place of refuge, it was his salvation, for so had God appointed it. (See 1 Kings ii. 28; Ps. xxii. 21.) In the Book of the Revelation horns are explained to represent kings.

The horn, as you are aware, is an instrument that stands out prominently, presenting something to be laid hold of; in itself it appears small, but it is well adapted for the use intended—the defence of the body. It is large enough to be laid hold of; it is strong enough to be depended on, for the power of its roots are stronger and deeper than can be traced, for it is hidden and concealed from common inspection.

*By the hand of God* we are to consider is meant his providential government and the dispensations of his goodness; the horns coming out signifying the manifestation of his power, still having much that is hidden and concealed. An illustration of this is afforded us in the history of Elijah, when, after a long drought of rain for three years, he foretold Ahab of a sound of abundance of rain, yet successively the faith of the prophet was tried upon there being no appearance of it. His servant looked and looked again, but in vain. At length a sign of rain did appear, a cloud was visible; but it was a small cloud, a very small cloud, no larger, apparently, than a man's hand; yet that was the power of God, his hand was seen, the horn was displayed; what God had begun to do was as yet nothing compared to what he purposed doing. The promise and the fulfilment vary for a time; but the smallest indication of mercy is a token of his infinite mercy and goodness.

The hand of God is often seen in what is frequently

designated his purposes. The purposes of God are more commonly concealed by what he is doing than can possibly be judged of by mortal eye. The events in your life that may be transpiring at the present time, small as they appear, may have greater purposes to be revealed. Hope, for instance, is the laying hold of something small in itself, but behind is concealed the substance of that which is hoped for. A promise is the ground of hope, the performance is concealed; but the reality, how far superior! The promise made to Abraham was a small horn in the hand of Jehovah's purposes; but O what a hiding of his power as revealed in the performance to his seed! Faith lays hold of that which secures the hand of God to itself. God reveals but a part of himself at a time; his hand of supply has horns coming out of it; in this there is the hiding of his power. More is concealed than revealed.

Having laid before you the ideas which I consider are intended by the words "horns" and "hand," as employed in the text, I shall proceed now to set forth a few particulars, in which the meaning of the text may be illustrated.

*1. The hiding of Jehovah's power is concealed in the works of creation.*

By referring to the Epistle to the Romans, i. 19, 20, you will there perceive that the apostle proves that though God had discovered himself to mankind by the works of the creation, they did not serve him, but fell into inexcusable idolatry and every kind of disorder and enormous vices: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." From which we see that much of the nature and properties of God may be known by the light of nature; his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness are manifest in the minds and consciences of all men; *for God hath showed it unto them*, partly by imprinting these ideas of himself upon the hearts of all men, and partly by the works of creation; so that in the order, contrivance, and design displayed in the creation there is proved that in the works of nature there is more than what we really see. We perceive that

in the works of creation there must be a Being of stupendous power, infinite wisdom, and knowledge above what we see in man, and that he must stand in relation to us and all that we see as the maker does to the thing which he has made. The operations of God's hand are, indeed, displayed to man in much that they disregard; and this disregard of God in the works of nature is their wickedness, and will prove to be their destruction: "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up." (Ps. xxviii. 5.) But how much more is hidden than they can perceive, partly, it is true, from the blindness of their depraved hearts; (Rom. i. 21;) yet to the intelligent and contemplative mind there is much more deduced, for they have eyes to see; while to the spiritually taught disciple of Jesus still more is discerned. I say, the works of creation show much that indicate the hidden power of God; and that which we see is the horn, as it were, of our reliance on a power which is beyond our ken to discover. The very rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness, are witnesses of the goodness of God and of his power, though, by reason of our native ignorance, they lead not our souls in gratitude and praise to him as he deserves. The revolution of our earth round the sun; the moon, planets, and stars display infinite skill, wisdom, and power; but we cannot possibly conceive the amazing omnipotence that must be exerted in the centrifugal and centripetal forces by which these bodies are kept in their proper orbits, and that for thousands of years, without the slightest deviation of time, as is fully proved from the regularity of the daylight which "wakeneth morning by morning." So with regard to life and light in their essences, which it is impossible for man to explain; they are the horns of the hand of him who created both. We see much to admire; they witness the goodness of God. It is his hand of supply; but in those essences, the horns of his hand, there is the hiding of his power. We take hold of those horns, for on them, the life and light by which we are daily supplied, it is that we rely for our own existence as the creatures of his power and goodness.

That the omnipotence of Jehovah is concealed in his works is further evident by the vegetable substances

which we have all about us. The seeds, plants, and trees all witness his eternal power and Godhead. Every seed, plant, and tree has precisely the same body, as to its nature and form, as when first created; their colour, taste, and influence are what they ever were. What is this but the horns of his hand, and in which there is the hiding of his power? We sow and plant year after year, relying on the fact that every seed has its own body, and will produce its like. Grass seed produces grass, wheat produces wheat; the combination of light, heat, and moisture producing its like by a law of nature which the concealed power of Omnipotence unvaryingly displays. If we look at second causes, we can account for most things that we see or hear of; but first causes are commonly overlooked because they are concealed. Omnipotence is concealed within itself. God in his essence can be seen by no man; we see his hand, we take hold of his horns, his goodness; and we can say with Job, (xxvi. 14,) "Lo, these are part of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?"

"When thunders shake the ground,  
None wonder at the shock;  
A weighty cause is found,  
And we no further look;"  
But if a feather shake the earth,  
That feather sets Jehovah forth."

*2. The hiding of Jehovah's power is concealed in the ordering of his Providence.*

This we can best trace out in the word of God; the illustrations are so vivid that the eye is at once rivetted with the sight. We see the hand of God in the history of his saints; we take hold of the horns and feel there is more concealed than has been revealed. You see it in Job's case, his great reverses and deep poverty unshift him from his pinnacle of pharisaic pride before God; his friends attempted with Herculean strength to accomplish it, but they failed. Yet in those reverses of outward good, of family joys, and the estimation of his character, there was a secret working of divine power by which Job learned a truth he had not known before—that in himself, as a sinner before God, he was vile; he no longer persisted in maintaining his creature righteousness; he lets it go, and abhors himself in dust and ashes. "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back

his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." Many a man besides Job has learned a spiritual truth, and has taken hold on God, through the ordering of his providence; the hand of God was plainly seen, but the working it out was hidden; for in those very things by which he took hold on God, there was the hiding of his power.

See it in Abraham being called to offer up his son Israel; at first he saw not the power displayed which he after discovered. Unbelief, like distant thunder, was heard to rumble unutterable things, but his faith staggered not; what mighty words were they when he replied, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." Oh, that was a cloudy and dark day; how he took hold of God's promise as the horn of his hand; he was strong in faith; at the very last moment of hope's existence, his faith still kept its hold; it was the trial of love, hope, and faith; the source of his strength was in the power concealed, the deliverance displayed it. He discovered a deep spiritual truth in the strong exercises of his soul; he saw the day of Christ; he saw in the offering up his son, in the substitution of the ram caught in the thicket, the great doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Christ for his church; he rejoiced to know that truth, though it was by the sharp and bitter exercise of prospectively sacrificing his son, in whom all the promises were made. Believers often find that God burns his truth into them by the fierce furnace of their experience.

Good old Jacob had, too, a severe trial in the giving up of his Benjamin; but it was the means of bringing him to see his long long-lost Joseph and his children, as well as Benjamin being restored to him: "I had not thought to have seen thy face, and lo God hath showed me thy seed." There was a hiding of God's purpose to make it better known, and in this fact there was a hiding of his power, there was more concealed than revealed.

David, the man after God's own heart, passed through extraordinary vicissitudes—"the times that went over him"—what sad breakings down! and broken bones too! but he was saved out of all his troubles. How often he could lay hold on God's hand even when he could not see his face: "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Ps. x. 1, and xiii. 1-5.) You see no answer is given; the reason he asks for he has to find in his own experience; there was

a divine holding on God, though he was walking in darkness, and had no light. And what was the secret, think ye? was it not that the mercy he was trusting was the hiding of Jehovah's power? That which lay concealed in the purposes of his love, grace, and goodness, was the source of David's strength; this he ever found, and in the closing scene of his life, when reviewing what a ruler ought to be, he could say, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure;" for this is all my salvation and all my desire." You see, he took hold of God's covenant, it was the horn of his salvation. Who can trace the roots of God's faithfulness and power? they are in himself, it is the hiding of his power.

Joseph is another instance. The dreams of his youth apparently come to nothing, but his faith never seems to have been lost; young as he was, he took hold of God's horn; it was coming out of his hand, it was developing itself, though slowly, yet surely; for notwithstanding his slavery and bondage, his faith was stronger than ever, his "feet were hurt with fetters, he was laid in irons; until the time that his word came, the word of the Lord tried him;" he is still an interpreter of dreams, he had not lost confidence in his early dreams, they were horns to him in the hand of Jehovah, and certainly he could not be lower in adversity than when in the dungeon; yet all this was a part of the way in which God had sent him before his father and his brethren to find them food in a time of famine, and to bring them into Egypt. Oh, what power was here concealed, and yet how marvellously Joseph could see the truth which we have just sung in our hymn of praise:

" His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower."

Elijah, whose case we have referred to, took hold of God's word as to the rain; yet how he must have been exercised in prayer; all seemed dark as to the fulfilment; he continued in prayer; the promise was delayed; what a concealment, I say, of God's power; in that very promise, in the time of its performance, what a trial of Elijah's faith, yet it kept its hold. He took hold of God's strength—his faithfulness; nor did it fail him in the dark hour of trial; providence contradicting the prophecy.

Hezekiah was a man who took hold of God by the horns of his hand, and was strengthened in God. He was weak in some points of his character, and was humbled on account of his vanity, but he became thereby to know all that was in his heart; he had great bitterness for peace, when he was suddenly brought into the valley of the shadow of death, and was exercised with strong fits of unbelief; then the Lord sent Isaiah with good and comforting words. (See Isa. xxxviii. 5-7.) These were the horns coming out of his hand, but the power was hid. He was recovered in his health, he was delivered from the king of Assyria, and his life was prolonged fifteen years. And how many of the Lord's believing family have been exercised with sharp trials, reversion of circumstances, dark and mysterious; they have been amazed at the wonder-working providence of God; the causes have been entirely secret to them, though the hand was visible; yet in that very hand there were some things which kept their faith alive, these were the horns on which they had hold; they were his promises, his past dealings; they were their Ebenezers, confirming their faith, strengthening their hope and helping them along the rest of their way.

3. *The hiding of God's power is concealed in the incarnation of his eternal Son.*

Here we approach a profound mystery; God was manifested in the flesh. The infancy of the Lord Jesus was marked with all the helplessness and weakness of other infants; he was nursed and carried, yet he was at the same moment the mighty God, though a babe in Bethlehem.

“No less Almighty at his birth,  
Than on his throne supreme;  
His shoulders held up heaven and earth,  
When Mary held up him.”

And how marvellously was his omnipotence concealed during the days of his boyhood and his manhood, until the days of his showing unto Israel; but the days of his humanity are the horns coming out of his hand, his people take hold of them; their faith, hope, and love are strengthened and increased; his human experience becomes the hidden source of his divine sympathy and tenderness for all his suffering saints from his glorious high throne in heaven. What omnipotence was concealed in all his public life; yet occasionally there were glimpses,

as in his wilderness state, fasting forty days, *then* hungering, contrary to ordinary cases of the kind, for loss of appetite and exhaustion commonly supervenes long fasting. 'Tis true we know not how long a sinless mortal could have gone without food, but this we know from the Saviour's own lips, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." Here is the unseen power of Jehovah exerted in the visible life of our Lord's humanity; you see it in his miracles, three shall suffice. Hushing the storm with the word of peace. Believer in Jesus, cannot you set your seal to this. One word from Jesus has hushed the storm in the soul, his word has been the horn, his hand you see, his power you feel; it is hid, but you have been strengthened and comforted. The demoniac on the cliff of the sea affords us an interesting proof. Jesus saw him afar off while sailing on the billowy deep, and he spoke to the demon, who evidently heard his voice and knew his Person. The disciples heard not the voice though they were with him in the ship, but the unclean spirit did; and hence, believer, take comfort from this, he hides his great power but displays his loving heart. Take hold of that fact. Possibly you may have some great fears distressing you, and though Jesus speaks not to you personally, he may secretly remove the cause by a power you little think.

Then there is the palsied man, who was borne of four and let down through the awning into the court yard where the assembly had met to hear Jesus preach. At first it seemed an untimely and unwise interruption, but Jesus knew it was an urgent pressing case, and he divinely spoke to the distressed heart while he declared with his human voice that his sins were all forgiven him. The burden of his sins and his exercises of his soul as to his sonship had brought on extreme palsy; but when Jesus gave him an assurance of his sonship and an assurance of forgiveness, it gave him peace of soul, and restored his nervous system. Here was much of his power displayed, but much more concealed. What was seen gave umbrage to the scribes; but, said Jesus, "*that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith to the sick of the palsy, arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house.*" (Matt. ix. 2, 6.)

So through all the mediatorial life on earth. The Son of God displayed his eternal power through his manhood:



"He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. i. 3, 4.) His obedience to the law of God was a personal obedience rendered in human nature untainted by sin, according to the Spirit of holiness which he possessed as the Son of God and his manhood being underived from sinful flesh; thus it was his obedience was perfect, for it was the righteousness of God; much was displayed but more was concealed. Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh. That which was displayed is the horn which his people take hold of, they trust his righteousness founded on his obedience for their complete justification; his obedience, to keep to the figure of our text, having its roots in the concealed divinity of his Person; here is the hiding of his power, he is God as well as man.

In his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane there was everything that indicated his true manhood, sorrow of soul, bodily suffering. O what a concealment of his omnipotence was here! bowed down with weakness, prostrate with suffering:

"Bore all incarnate God could bear,  
With strength enough, and none to spare."

Yet these sufferings, his very weakness, are the horns of his Almighty hand of love; they were substitutionary sufferings, yet real personal sufferings; these are as horns for the believer's faith, something for the believer to lay hold of; here is salvation for the lost, strength for the weak, and hope for the wretched. This blessed truth is also seen in his sufferings and weakness when on the cross. What a concealment of omnipotence was there when by rude and violent hands he was laid prostrate on the cross and fastened thereto with iron nails torn through his flesh, and then suspended with the whole weight of his frame upon his wounded hands. He suffered from the exhaustion it caused, and yet he was perfectly conscious of his divine Personality, and exercised his power in the salvation of the thief. Here was something of it displayed, but how much more was hidden; this that was seen has become the horn of salvation to many thousands saved in the eleventh hour. We see his power concealed while lying in the grave; his human nature did die, it was the Son of God that was crucified, it was the Son of God

that was buried; for he rose again by his own power. "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation for thine anointed; thou woundest the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck." (Hab. iii. 13.) His life, from the period of his resurrection to his ascension, was a concealment of his Godhead, hidden from the world entirely, but was particularly declared to his church. In his ascension he led captivity captive, he received gifts for men, and thus by the mysterious union of his two natures we have the horn of our salvation; it is in the hand of a Mediator, we take hold of it, and feel security and comfort; for unto us who believe he is the power of God unto salvation. The incarnation of Jehovah is a display of goodness, mercy, and power; but much more is concealed than is revealed.

4. *The hiding of Jehovah's power is concealed in the various operations of his grace in the heart of every believer.*

(1.) Let us begin where God begins—*In the regeneration of the soul.* Here is the unseen power of the divine hand in giving spiritual life to the soul dead in trespasses and in sins, he only who has life in himself can impart it. Where it is imparted its power is soon manifested. The life of God in the soul can no more be hidden than can the light of the sun when once it appears above the horizon. The divine calling from a state of sin is an act of divine sovereignty; it is a power exerted upon every faculty of the soul, renewing the person of the believer in the spirit of his mind, manifesting a power truly almighty in its nature, but concealing much more than it reveals. The beginnings of divine grace appear at first very tender and feeble, but the hiding of his power is found in the fact that nothing can quench the living spark; its power is felt, seen, and known both in the believer and by the observer; it becomes, as it were, the horn of hopefulness, it produces a change in the heart, life, and character; there is something so remarkable in the turning of a sinner from the error of his ways and bringing him under the power of divine truth, that causes one to own the hand of God, and from what we have seen to expect still more. It is the horn growing out of his hand, an almighty fact, something to take hold of, though conscious that there is still more concealed.

(2.) *As to the revelation of truth.* Wherever there is a true and a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, there is an evidence of the teachings of God's Spirit, it is a divine revelation, a revelation of God the Father. This is a horn coming out of his hand; it is a display of his love to the sinner, a display of his heart as well as of his hand; this the believer takes hold of; he has the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; every truth by which the eyes of his understanding are enlightened, is a further display of God the Father's goodness and power, but still concealing much more than it reveals. The more we advance in divine knowledge the more we perceive its incomprehensibleness; our apprehension of divine truth is a power by which we lay hold on God, a taking of the horns coming out of his hands, and conscious that there is the hiding of his power; by this it is we "know what is the hope of our calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." This knowledge, if I may so say, is incorporated with our experience. Divine teaching follows divine calling. It is the light of life. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Faith lays hold of the hope set before it; it brings the soul into contact with the divine hand, and partakes of every blessing which a good and gracious God can give.

(3.) *In the soul's conflict with sin.* The mystery of grace is more perceived in the opposition which the believer feels from the workings of in-bred sin than in anything else. What an unequal conflict! The old man of sin against the new man of grace, the matured root of sin opposing the tender buddings of grace; yet grace reigns through righteousness. What is the power by which it maintains the contest? It is divine power. How is it supplied? That is concealed. What is it that the soul takes hold of? The promise, "sin shall not have dominion over you; ye are not under the law but under grace." The conflict is the fight of faith, faith against unbelief, hope against doubt, love against enmity; it is the works of the flesh against the fruits of the Spirit; it is the carnal mind against God; it is Satan against Christ. Still the victory is certain. This assurance of hope unto the end is the horn which the believer takes hold of; the

power by which he fights and maintains his standing is from the hand of God; there is the hiding of his power; from thence he derives all his strength; he looks to the Lord with steadfast eye; he fights with hell by faith, and through the blood of the Lamb is at length more than victorious.

(4.) *In the life of grace sustained.* This is no less true than *in the commencement* of the divine life. The hiding of Jehovah's power is manifest by the continual supply of spiritual life to the renewed soul; much is manifested, but more is concealed. The horn which the believer takes hold of is, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish." This is Christ's own word; it is faith's warrant; it is the believer's experience; every day his strength is as his day; often he feels like as Bunyan has represented, a fire upon which water is continually poured to quench it, but still it burns higher and hotter; we go to the back of the screen, and there the secret is explained, there is one continually feeding the fire with oil; "it shall," says Jehovah, (Lev. vi. 13,) "never go out;" the influences of the world, the carnality of the human heart, the enmity of the devil, are all in league against the life of God in the soul, but it is maintained and shall be maintained: "Being confident of this very thing, he that hath begun the good work will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." "The righteous shall hold on his way." "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." "Your life is hid with Christ in God," guarded and preserved by the power and providence of God as in an impregnable garrison, no violence or stratagem of the enemy shall ever surprise or overcome those who are in Jehovah's hand; none shall pluck them out of his hand. This assurance is the horn of his power; it is the believer's security; it is the horn of his salvation; much is displayed for his present comfort, but more is concealed for his everlasting security and consolation. The work of salvation is a divine work; the work of God's hand; the production of his power; it was begun in grace, it is carried on with power, and will be completed in glory. The final perseverance of the saints is by the unseen power of God the Holy Ghost. They take hold of his word, and are strong in the consolations of his

grace. The psalmist says, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," being confident that it is nothing but Almighty power that can carry on the work of grace in the soul. "He will rest in his love." The supply of the Spirit of Christ feeds, nourishes, and cheers the soul continually, restores him when fainting, strengthens him in his weakness, and lightens up his path when walking in darkness.

" His grace shall to the end  
Stronger and brighter shine,  
Nor present things, nor things to come,  
Shall quench the spark divine."

(5.) *In the spirit of prayer.* What a secret power there is in prayer. It is the taking hold of God's strength—the horns of his hand, the promises of his grace. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Oh what blessed horns are these for the believer to take hold of; he takes hold of God. "Will he plead against me," says Job, "with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me." "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul." How secret is the supply of the believer's strength in prayer, yet how sure; the rock of his strength is in God; there is the hiding of his power, like the strength of a rock, more is concealed than displayed. The invitations and promises of the gospels are as horns coming out of his hand; there is more blessedness concealed than the soul has ever experienced. Believer, take hold of these horns, they are expressly for your faith, your hope, your comfort, your strength, and your encouragement.

(6.) *In backsliders restored to his favour.* I must just say a word to the wanderer from the fold of Jesus. Poor soul, where are you now? Where has your light and comfort fled? You come to the house of God, you listen

to the voice of praise, but your voice is silent ; you listen to the voice of supplication, but a sigh is all that escapes you ; you hear the preacher, but his word fails to touch any of those chords which once produced the music of your soul. Your harp is unstrung, hanging on the willows, and you cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land. Now listen once more to God's word : " O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God ; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn unto the Lord ; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." And hear, too, what the gracious words of the Lord are : " I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely ; for mine anger is turned away from him." Now what are these words but the horns coming out of his hand ? they are for you to take hold of ; the hiding of his power you will find in the restoration of your peace and joy ; it is at present concealed from you, but he reveals his love and grace. O may the Lord bring you to his feet with weeping and with supplications, and cause you to find rest in coming to his mercy-seat. " Who is wise, and he shall understand these things ? prudent, and he shall know them ? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them ; but the transgressors shall fall therein." (Hos. xiv. 9.)

5. There is also another point which may be illustrated by the words of our text—" He had horns coming out of his hand, and there was the hiding of his power." This will be seen *in the preservation of the saints' bodies whilst in the grave.* The doctrine of the resurrection is plainly revealed in the word of God. The resurrection of Christ is an indubitable truth ; it is the pledge of ours ; what a longing there is in the renewed soul for it. Why is this ? is it for the sake of immortality ? is it for the sake of incorruption ? Not simply for these things, for these are but means to an end. We have no desire for immortality unless we have strong hopes that our life, divested of its corruption and all its sins, shall rise into the likeness of the image and into the enjoyment of our ever-adorable Redeemer God. The resurrection of Christ is the pledge of a truth which has an influence in us desiring to realise it. The Saviour we love is the risen Saviour ; the Saviour we have fellowship with is the living Jesus, he is our ever-living friend ; in this present life we are planted spiritually in the likeness of his resurrection ; in the influences

of his resurrection we are desirous "if by any means we may attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (Phil. iii. 11.) Now there are two things which set the longing soul to realise this great truth; the first is, a complete and final separation from the world; the other is, to be for ever with the Lord: "With him is the fountain of life, in his presence is fulness of joy; at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore." In the first he is striving now to attain unto this resurrection of our Lord; when he rose from the dead, it is to be observed, he never more mixed with the world; the unregenerate never more saw his face or heard his voice; his resurrection glories were confined exclusively to his church. This is what believers would like to attain unto if it were possible, a complete and total separation from the spirit and tendencies of this world in this time state, for now it is we are the sons of God; there is displayed to them in the hand of God, his truth and power, such glories of the resurrection life as fills the soul of the believer with holy longings to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better; these glories which they view by faith are as horns coming out of his hand, and there is the hiding of his power, truths for them to take hold of. As the identity of the risen Saviour's Person was fully proved to the disciples, so we believe that the bodies of the saints will be preserved to and restored at the day of the resurrection in all the identity and personal consciousness of each individual. Our present hope is that we shall be like him, and see him as he is, and shall be satisfied when we awake in his likeness. O what a hiding of his power is here, the truth we take hold of, as he rose so will all his followers; he is our forerunner, and where he has entered we shall enter too. He will preserve every atom of our sleeping dust during our incarceration in the tomb; those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. Marvellous power, inconceivably great and glorious, it is hidden until the morn of the resurrection; he reveals the truth that it shall be so, and by faith we take hold of it as the horn coming out of his hand; for Jesus has willed that all his saints shall be where he is, to behold his glory. (John xvii. 24.) Here is our hope, our horn, something for us to take hold of, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, which entereth into that within the veil. Happy souls, who with a well grounded hope can say—

"My flesh shall slumber in the ground,  
 'Till the last trumpet's joyful sound ;  
 Then burst the chains with sweet surprise,  
 And in my Saviour's image rise."

6. But before I conclude I must advert to one more illustration of our text ; it contains a gospel truth which has not been sufficiently and distinctly set forth in the preceding particulars—the *Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ is the believer's horn of salvation, in which there is the hiding of Almighty power.*

The hand of redemption which is displayed in the Scriptures of truth, is the hand of God ; the horns coming out of it are the blessings of the atonement by the sacrifice of his only begotten Son, the taking hold of which is the salvation of all who come unto God by him. This is the seeking sinner's great mercy : he has been wounded, but it was in the house of his friends ; his conscience bears him witness of aggravated sins, of an accumulated load of guilt too heavy for him to bear ; he goes about seeking deliverance but finds none. The arrow of truth which has pierced his soul "was quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart," and only he who gave the wound can heal it and make the spirit whole. This is the work of God's Spirit in the heart ; the entrance of his words giveth life. Here is repentance towards God ; faith in Jesus Christ leading the believer to find that there is forgiveness with him that he may feared. He finds in Christ the only way of salvation, his atoning blood is the price of his redemption from the curse of a broken law ; it is the propitiation for his sins ; he has no hope in himself, merits he has none ; he looks for all in Christ, he is the sinner's only hope ; his blood and righteousness stand out as horns in the hand of Jehovah, whose covenant of redemption is everlasting, ordered in all things and sure. The believing sinner, whose conscience has followed him close, as the avenger of blood pursued the manslayer, lays hold of these horns ; here is his certain salvation ; justice cannot strike him here, mercy holds him fast, he is made nigh by the blood of Christ, he is saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. But O what a glorious and divine power is concealed in the horns of the sinner's salvation !



Redemption is the work of Almighty power "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;" "so that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." Here is still more concealed than is revealed. He saves to the uttermost all who come unto God by him; and him that cometh he will in no wise cast out. The strength of Israel will not lie. Here is power to save from a host of sins, from the worst of sins. O if there is here a trembling sinner seeking mercy, here is room, here is hope; take hold of these horns, "trust ye in the Lord Jehovah, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

And this is the believer's mercy,—that through all his journey in the wilderness state, the blood of the atonement is available for his hope and comfort. Not only is the truth that "Christ died for him" a horn of salvation to him, and on which he holds for eternal life, but it is a source of everlasting consolation to him; though saved from the curse of sin, and saved from the power of inbred sin, he still sins and will be liable to sin as long as he is in the flesh; this is his grief and sore wounding, but the precious blood of atonement is the healing balm of all his sorrows and the cordial of his cares; he seeks no healing but in and through atoning blood. Oh what a hiding of Jehovah's power is here; again and again, through all life, to its latest moment, the blood of Jesus Christ is all-sufficient to cleanse from all sin; it is infinite in value, infinite in strength, infinite in its efficacy. Atoning blood is the glory of the gospel. It is the mercy of God to fallen man, the horn of salvation in his hand of redeeming love, and there is the hiding of his power.

Now may the Lord command his blessing on such remarks as may be in harmony with his own word of truth for his great name's sake. Amen.

# THE DIVINE ENGRAVING OF SEVEN EYES ON ONE STONE.

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## A SERMON,

BY CHARLES GORDELIER,

PREACHED AT HEPHZIBAH CHAPEL, DARLING PLACE, MILE END GATE,

On Lord's Day Evening, March 11th, 1866.

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"For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts."—ZECH. III. 9.

It may be said of Zechariah's prophecies, as Peter said of Paul's epistles, "in which are some things hard to be understood." This seems to have been felt by our laborious and painstaking Puritan commentators, for scarcely any, as I am aware, have left us any distinct or elaborate exposition of this choice and remarkable book. Perhaps the reason may be that within the transparent outer covering of prophecy and vision is perceived deep spiritual truth which is difficult to unfold. That there are evidently many precious truths displayed to us in these prophecies there can be no question, but they are like choice fruit on the topmost branches of trees, which way-side travellers can see as they pass, but being out of their reach they can do no more than look at it.

This prophecy is designated *SEPHER ZECHARIAH*, or the book of Zechariah, from its being written by him. His name signifies *the memory of the Lord*, or *the Lord remembers*. His prophecies singularly accord with his name, for there is indeed a wonderful remembrance of God's covenant love and promises of the Messiah's coming and of salvation by him. While there are many dark and obscure prophecies, yet we find a cluster of prophets almost contemporary in their prophetic work, confirming the authority of each other's prophecy, and thereby

the more effectually to comfort and encourage the Jews against the present opposition and future difficulties in rebuilding their temple. For on their return from captivity to their own land, they had to encounter the jealousies and annoyances of the strangers who had become settlers and occupants of Jerusalem; consequently the wall of the city and the temple were built in troublous times. Of the hindrances in their work we have an interesting record in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, as also of the debased state and condition the people had fallen into in consequence of being "many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an ephod." Zechariah was cotemporary with Haggai the prophet, Joshua the high priest, and Zerubabel the leader. The two prophets were evidently sent forth to stir up the people to repentance and to build the temple; it seems they were both required for the same work, so that the one might help the other in his arduous work. God ever watches over his people's needs and adapts his aid as they require it. There is this difference in the prophecies of these two men. Haggai speaks more briefly and plainly, and Zechariah more largely and mysteriously, and in a way of vision, yet with many precious promises of the Messiah's coming. Herein is set forth the Lord Jesus Christ in his glory and kingdom, in his death, offices, and priesthood; the price for which he should be betrayed, the effusion of his Spirit, the calling of the Gentiles, the many spiritual privileges of God's people, and the final and effectual expulsion of all sin and iniquity, showing with what confidence we may expect the certainty of the promised purity, victory, and happiness of the church of Christ in the latter day.

In the chapter from whence our text is taken, we have a fourth vision which the prophet had; it is concerning Joshua the high priest, the object being to encourage the priests in respect of their office and their work in the service of the temple, the building of which being then in progress but obstructed by their enemies. The vision represents Joshua the high priest in the execution of his vocation in the tabernacle service. He is accused by Satan on the ground that he is ceremonially unclean; but Satan is rebuked by Jehovah in the Person of God the Father, and Joshua is vindicated, "Though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary."

Then we perceive there is a restoration of the priestly purity and a renewal of the covenant as to the office of the priesthood itself. Here is, then, Satan not only non-suited but rebuked, for it was not his place to bring an accusation into that court. Joshua has his priesthood confirmed to him both in its dignity and perpetuity by a divine and heavenly commission.

Besides this, we perceive in the 8th verse, something like precious balm for the healing and comforting Joshua's wounded spirit. What a sweet promise is made to him of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Thou and thy companions in the priesthood are men wondered at for their zeal and steadfastness in my service. The men of this world cannot understand how it is or why it is that they engage and persist in a work apparently so unprofitable, so unwise, so contemptible, but I will reveal my covenant designs towards my chosen. I will bring forth my servant **THE BRANCH**. My Mediator, of which thou art a type, he shall take a nature having its roots in the earth of humanity, and he shall be the Mediatorial Priest, Prophet, the **BRANCH**, the stem that shall come out of Jesse's roots, whose superiority and peculiarity shall be that Satan hath nothing in him, he shall not find in him any cause for resisting him in his mediatorial work." Now, Joshua and thy fellows, behold him, look to him; he is the substance of all the ceremonial law and dispensation. Thou art but an imperfect representative of the people, but "his work shall be honourable and glorious." And have I not spoken by my servant the prophet Haggai, "I will fill this house with glory? The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." (Haggai ii. 7, 9.)

Now come the words of our text: "For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts." These are certainly very remarkable words, and I am fully aware of the various interpretations given by commentators and preachers generally. But I confess none of them has ever satisfied me, and I feel I must eschew the fanciful, and indeed the whimsical notions, which have been uttered by good-meaning men; though there is one thing in which I agree with them all, and that is, Christ is evidently set forth in

the passage before us. The points of difference in my view and those generally held are as to *the kind* of stone, and *the use* made of it. I have no desire to set up my judgment in opposition to men of learning, especially of those whose writings are well received by the church of God; but if it be so, that the light which I have upon this portion of God's word harmonises more with the general features of the vision, and displays more of the character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ than is generally given of it, why should I shrink from showing my opinion? Favour me then, dear friends, with your attention, and I trust that, with the Lord's help and blessing, we shall be able to see something of the meaning of these precious words proposed for our consideration.

FIRST. As to the Stone itself: "Behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua." I do not regard the stone here spoken of as referring to a *foundation* stone. That the Scriptures set forth Christ as a foundation stone is an indubitable and a most glorious truth; but I think that is not the mind of the Spirit in this instance. Indeed the foundation stone of the temple was already laid, as stated in the 9th verse of the 4th chapter, and this 3rd chapter has reference to the priesthood, and not to the building of the temple at all. Bear in mind, Joshua is in the exercise of his priestly office, before the Lord, that is, within the veil, in the holy of holies; not in a council for building the temple, and therefore let us not be misled by departing from the unity of the subject as revealed, though every item be not fully declared. And we must also bear in mind, that Joshua the high priest, and his fellows, the priesthood, were lamentably deficient and imperfect in several important things pertaining to the service of the sanctuary, and it was, doubtless, the absence of these things being keenly felt, occasioned the grief and weeping when the foundation was laid. (Ezra iii. 12.) We are told these five things were wanting in the second temple, namely, 1. *The ark*, with the mercy-seat and cherubims. 2. *The holy fire* from heaven for consuming the sacrifice. 3. *The Shekinah*, or the divine presence, indicated by the cloud over the mercy-seat. 4. *The Holy Ghost*, or spirit of prophecy. 5. *The Urim and Thummim*. Then we perceive the habiliments of the high priest were such as furnished Satan with a pretext for resisting Joshua in the exercise of his sacred functions, for he will catch at any-

thing, be it ever so trifling. Ah, he is a staunch Puseyite, exceedingly tenacious where religious vestments and ceremonies are concerned. These garments, in which Joshua officiated, are said to be filthy, that is, unconsecrated with the peculiar holy anointing oil. (Ex. xxx. 30.) Probably he was without the purple robe, as he was without the proper mitre. A golden censer he might have had, and he had, no doubt, with all fidelity, the blood of the offerings with him to present before the Lord. But there was one article of dress he was without, most essential, and that was the Ephod containing the Urim and Thummim, the breastplate of twelve precious stones, on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes, and when worn before the Lord represented the people. This breastplate, at the time of the destruction of the temple and the dispersion of the people, was lost, and the stones destroyed or scattered, a true emblem of their national condition. The absence of the Ephod with the Urim and Thummim, must indeed have been felt a sore grief to the devout Jew; it was the holy oracle by which Jehovah revealed his mind and will on all important occasions whenever it was sought. In what peculiar manner Jehovah answered by Urim and Thummim it is impossible to say. Scripture is silent as to how it was done, and therefore it is useless to discuss the question. This we believe, God spake by his holy oracle from off the mercy-seat. There was a divine authority in it, and there was safety in obeying its voice. Now, the loss of these precious stones, both as a breastplate representing the people and as a divine oracle, must have been felt to be an incalculable grief and an irreparable loss; its very name signifying light and perfection. See Ezra ii. 63.

We must take it for granted that, from the nature of the encouraging words and the wonderful displays which God made to Joshua, he had come before the Lord in a dejected state of mind, and that the nature of his prayer and intercession is to be inferred from the communication made to him by Jehovah. We have no record, it is true, of such a process, but this is immaterial, we have the results. This is quite in harmony with a large part of the word of God, the process of a thing is often omitted, and only the result is given. Joshua's person and office are accepted, as is seen by the change of raiment bestowed, and the renewal of the covenant. Then

there is the promise of the Messiah. This is in lieu of the mercy-seat; the shadow has been lost, but in place thereof shall be the living BRANCH. Then as to the breastplate being lost, it cannot now represent the twelve tribes on the great day of atonement, or for the special purposes of the Urim and Thummim; but see how God wondrously displays his grace, and calls him to notice *a stone* which is laid before him in place of those which are lost. Though the high priest can no longer bear upon his breast the names of the twelve tribes before the Ark of the covenant, yet now there is something far superior, a glory that excelleth. This ONE STONE shall far exceed the twelve, both in lustre and in dignity, and also in the divine uses to which it shall be put.

There is, therefore, now before Joshua this ONE STONE for his beholding; he is to look upon it. It is not to be worn, but is laid before him. This stone is to be understood as being laid upon the golden table in the holy of holies, supplying the place of the Ark, the Mercy-Seat, and in lieu of the Breastplate. This ONE STONE is to set forth the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in his mediatorial character and work. He is ever in the holy of holies. He, in himself, represents his people. Whether the high priest enters in once a year, or oftener if needs be, God's people are ever represented in the Person of Christ. He is their Oracle also; they are represented in him, in that place. When the high priest enters the holy place, he sees this Stone; there it is laid before him for his beholding. It indicates the constant union and representation of the church of God existing in the Person of Christ. Not as before, which was but partial, occasional, and official, but a superior standing altogether. Before, their representation before the Lord was by virtue of the high priest coming there in his official costume and capacity; but now this STONE has a position assigned for it by Jehovah himself: "The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did." O what deep spiritual truth is figured forth in this symbolical stone! The glorious Person of the Mediator, the God-man Christ Jesus; the Urim and Thummin of ancient Israel are now found in Christ.

But now let us notice *the kind* of stone that is to be understood, which Jehovah has laid before Joshua. It cannot mean an immense block of marble, granite, or of

any other stone, cut from a quarry and designed for a building. This notion is totally incongruous with the general sense of the text and its connection. It means, as I consider, what we commonly call a jewel,—a small, sparkling stone, having light and beauty in itself without cutting or polishing. As the breastplate consisted of twelve jewels, so this STONE is a jewel, a precious jewel, a splendid jewel, a divine and glorious jewel; and it is designed to set forth the Person of our most glorious Christ, who, in his Person as their Mediator, is also their representative, and the way of access to God the Father, and he *ever abides* in the holy of holies.

That this view of the Stone laid before Joshua is more in harmony with the doctrine of Christ's Person and character than a block of stone cut out of a quarry, I would just observe one or two points: First, jewels are found by themselves as an entire whole, not in pieces broken from a mass, but perfect, without flaw; not chipped or cracked, for if so, they would be comparatively worthless. Large sizes are very rare, and are exceedingly valuable. So the Lord Jesus Christ, in his human nature and his mediatorial character, is a jewel, a gem, a precious stone, found entire, perfect in himself, sinless, without a stain. No one could convince him of sin.

“ His life was pure, without a stain,  
And all his nature clean.”

Again. Jewels, or precious stones, are found in caves, mines, pits, tops of mountains, often encrusted with sub-soil, as clay, gravel, and the like, but without detriment to their intrinsic value. To the common observer they have no appearance as gems, but the practised eye discovers them by the spark, the living light which they possess, notwithstanding the incrustation. So it may be said of Jesus, who, though he was found in the fashion of a man, in the form of a servant, in the likeness of sinful flesh, mean and abject as to his position in this world, yet without sin in himself. In his Person he is eternally divine, being God's only-begotten Son in whom he is well pleased; while to his church he is ever precious, their most precious stone; and they come to him as their choice precious gem or living stone. Every view they have of him creates intense delight. He is called a living stone because he has life and light in himself: “ In him was



life, and the life was the light of men." (John i. 4.) The peculiarity of precious stones, as diamonds, sapphires, rubies, &c., is this,—they possess sparkling light in themselves, not by reflection. A diamond, for instance, is a stone with light in itself, hence its name, "a heap of daylight;" hence also the celebrated Indian stone, Koh-i-nor, from its large size, is named "Mountain of light." Now Jesus, as his people's Head and Mediator, is their mountain of light; he is their daylight; he is their Koh-i-nor: "The Lord is my light and my salvation;" (Ps. xxvii. 1;) "The Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light;" (Isa. lx. 19;) "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." (1 John i. v.) From Jesus, God's elect precious stone, his people derive all their light. Hence, when called by divine grace from the horrible pit of their unregeneracy, the pit of nature, the miry clay of sin that sticks fast to them, they are made "light in the Lord;" being united to him by faith, they also become "lively stones." God calls them his jewels; and though like the Jewish priests' breastplate of old, they are scattered and lost in the captivity and ruin by Satan, yet God knows where they are; he knows their number, not one shall be lost, for in his own good time he will make up his jewels and manifest them to be his. Jesus, however, is called emphatically *the stone*, both for its beauty and its size. With the Jews sapphires were in great esteem; with us they rank next the diamond. It is probable that the stone which Jehovah laid before Joshua was a sapphire of unequalled size and lustre. Brilliancy, colour, and glory in respect of the celestial state are likened to sapphire stone. The oriental sapphire is of a sky-blue colour, or a fine azure; whence it is the prophets describe the throne of God, as it were of the colour of a sapphire; that is, a celestial blue or azure. (Ex. xxiv. 10; Ezek. i. 26; x. i.) Now Jesus is a sapphire stone of divine rarity; none like him for beauty, none like him for light; none like him in value. He is a non-such, "yea, he is altogether lovely." He is altogether unique, unequalled, having none to be compared with him; he is beyond comparison. For in his Person as Mediator he is holy, harmless, separate from sinners. How heavenly in his origin, his dwelling, his dominion; how immaculate, how beautiful is he in respect of his human nature; and how wonderfully glorious is he in his complex Person as the God-man. The

highest estimation we can have of the choicest stones admired amongst men fail to set forth the glories and perfections of Immanuel.

So far, then, our idea of Christ as a precious stone, a gem, a jewel, will not comport with the commonly received notion of a block of stone dislocated from a mass of rock in a quarry. Jesus is not a derived being, for though "born of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem those who were under the law," yet that holy thing which was conceived in Mary was a distinct creation of the Holy Ghost. "A body hast thou prepared me." And observe, our Lord does not speak of himself as the foundation of his church, as a disintegrated portion of stone, but *a rock*, an integral part of the immovable earth itself, and mineralogically speaking, "a living stone." (Matt. xvi. 18.) Even the gospel is spoken of as "a stone cut out of the mountains without hands." (Dan. ii. 34.)

SECOND. We will proceed a little further. Our text says, "Upon one stone shall be seven eyes." Here again, we find in this fact a most glorious substitute for the lost twelve stones on which were engraved the twelve names of the twelve tribes of Israel, the Urim and Thummim, which names signified "*light and perfection*." The most sensible opinion given on this subject is that these stones were called *Urim*, because they were *clear, lucid, and transparent*; and *Thummim*, because they were *perfect and complete*, having no blemish or defect in them. Now on this precious stone laid before Joshua, there was engraved, not the twelve names of the twelve tribes, but seven eyes; an engraved gem in which we have in a far superior and exalted manner all these ideas embodied more than in the original breastplate—the Urim and Thummim. The stone is light and beauty in itself, the eyes give a human life-giving light, such as a human eye only can give; the number seven denotes perfection, the perfection of light and whatever is represented by it. Here, then, we have light and perfection restored to the church of God in **THE ONE STONE** laid before Joshua. Here is, then, found in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, both the representative of his people and their living oracle. In the divinely engraved eyes we see what could not be seen in the Urim and Thummim—*Expression*. In the eye we see the expression of the soul; it is the window of the soul through which it looks. The hands have language; the lips have

language; but oh the language of the human eye, the beaming eye of intelligence, of love, compassion, watchfulness, of power! How divinely superhuman are all those seven eyes intended to set forth him who is in himself light and perfection—the Urim and the Thummim of the church of God; the language of which is their oracle of life: “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye.” (Ps. xxxii. 8.)

Sometimes we hear of this our text as if it read “upon one stone there shall be seven eyes,” or seven persons, *looking at it*. And some good men have racked their inventive powers to find seven sorts of representative men, as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, &c., or the eyes of God the Father, God the Holy Ghost, the eyes of angels, devils, &c., but these strange fancies must be passed by; they are void of idea, and contrary to the literal reading of the text. What we have before us is a vision, intending to convey much spiritual truth, having certain correspondencies as set forth in the stone itself, the eyes, the engraver, and the engraving.

By the seven eyes engraved on the one stone we may understand a seven-sided prism; *a sapphire stone with seven sides*, and in this stone we see the excellency and the glory of it, for no sapphires are found with more than *six* sides. On each side of this stone is engraved a human eye by Jehovah. Such a stone being transparent, and with seven eyes engraved would present to the view when looking through direct but one eye. Whichever side might be looked at, there would be but the one eye direct through, as if solid: “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light,” perfectly so. O, this is a wonderful stone, and a wonderful engraving, and what wonderful workmanship! The Person of Christ is truly wonderful. His name shall be called Wonderful. Do not suppose this is a visionary imagination as to the one solid appearance of the eye; we have photographs taken on this very principle in “crystal cubes” as they are called, in which the bust of the person appears solid.

The workmanship of this engraved stone is divine. The seven eyes engraved on this one stone are the work of God the Father. He is the heavenly engraver. It is a divine engraving on the most precious unique stone. Not sculptured, for that is not the word used, though our com-

mentators do, but it is most inappropriate. Engraving and sculpture are two distinct arts for very different purposes. Chisels and mallets are used for the latter; but small pin-like tools, called gravers, for the former. An engraving is an embodiment of much idea in a little compass upon some fine substance, as a gem, or piece of metal. A sculpture is invariably an enlarged view of the thing represented, and generally on a material of sufficient size and strength as to require heavy tools for working it. In this divine engraving we see more than can be uttered. The more this stone is studied the greater the wonder becomes; turn it which side you will, you see fresh beauties; lights and perfection every way; a living, loving, speaking, sympathetic eye. The eyes of the Lord, when we are seeking to know his will, become our oracle. One look, one word, makes darkness light before us, makes crooked things straight, for in his light we see light. The eye of love, the eye of sympathy, how beaming from the Saviour to the poor cast-down soul.

“One look from that dear Lord,  
Whose brow compassion wears,  
Will much of heavenly bliss afford,  
E'en in this vale of tears.”

In the Person of Christ the Mediator is seen the work of God the Father. It is his choicest piece of workmanship. *The stone* in itself symbolises the divinity and eternity of the Person of his only begotten son, full of grace and truth. In *the engraving* the qualification of the Redeemer is set forth as to his mediatorial character, he is of God made unto the church “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;” and, in *the graving thereof*, is set forth the sufferings he endured as the God-man from the divine hand: “for it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” Here, in this stone setting forth the eternal Son of God, is seen the divine workmanship of God the Father. “He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father.” The number seven while they set forth perfection, as the eyes set forth lights, may also set forth his attributes as the God-man Mediator, and are displayed in that character to the view of the church of God by the engraving of God the Father on this one stone having seven eyes. Here is, 1st, *He is Self-existent*. Here is his

divine Personality as the Son of God. "In him was life and the life was the light of men;" (John i. 4;) "Because I live ye shall live also;" (John xiv. 19;) "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given the Son to have life in himself." (John v. 26.) 2nd. *He is Light*. "I am the light of the world;" (John ix. 5;) "God is light;" (1 John i. 5;) "The Lamb is the light thereof," (of heaven.) (Rev. xxi. 23.) 3rd. *He is Power*, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;" (Matt. xxviii. 18;) "Power belongeth unto God;" (Ps. lxii. 2;) "Christ the power of God." (1 Cor. i. 24.) 4th. *He is Love*. "God is love;" (1 John iv. 8;) "He is the God of love;" (2 Cor. xiii. 11;) "The love of Christ passeth knowledge;" (Eph. iii. 19.) 5th. *He is Goodness*. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty might be made rich;" (2 Cor. viii. 9;) "The Lord God abundant in goodness and truth." (Ex. xxxiv. 6.) 6th. *He is Wisdom*. "He is of God, made unto us wisdom;" (1 Cor. i. 30;) "Jesus was filled with wisdom;" (Luke ii. 40;) "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom." (Col. ii. 3.) 7th. *He is Holiness*. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" (1 Pet. ii. 22;) "Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness;" (Ex. xv. ii;) "I am the Lord, the holy one of Israel, the Saviour;" (Isa. lx. 3;) "Be ye holy, for I am holy." (1 Pet. i. 16.)

In these seven attributes thus briefly sketched, you will perceive the first three belong essentially to his Godhead. The other four are displayed in his mediatorial work through his manhood. All these perfections, indeed, are conjoined in his complex Person as the God-man Christ Jesus, by which he is a most able and willing Saviour of all who come unto God the Father by him. Other perfections are also embodied in the Person of Christ, besides these now named, for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; in him dwelleth all the fulness of Godhead bodily. He is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Every need being supplied by God the Father from his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Christ is the channel of every blessing to the church of God.

The human eye expresses the kind of spirit we are of, whether of love, compassion, watchfulness, delight, goodness, anger, or malice. So the expression, "the eyes of

the Lord," are sometimes used to set forth the seven Spirits of God, as well also his plenitude of qualifications or perfections. In the 4th chap. of this prophecy, 10th verse the seven eyes are explained to be "the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro the whole earth." Also, in 2 Chron. xvi. 9, "to show himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him." "The eyes of the Lord are in every place." (Prov. xv. 3.) "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous." (Ps. xxxiv. 15.) These passages set forth his providential care, supply, and government. In Rev. v. 6, we read: "In the midst of the throne stood a Lamb, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." Here is the same Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, in one place described as a divinely engraved Stone with seven eyes, and in another place as a Lamb with seven eyes. In both similitudes, the Stone and the Lamb, the mediatorial work and character of Jesus Christ is designed to be set forth. The seven eyes of the Lamb of God, and the seven eyes upon the One Stone of Israel, represent the seven Spirits of God. And these seven Spirits of God are the same with the seven Spirits which are before the throne of God, spoken of in Rev. i. 4, iv. 5. Hence, therefore, Christ is, by this figure of seven eyes represented to us as possessing all the fulness of the Spirit. The fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him, and, therefore, to show the church of God this great treasury that there is in Christ, God the Father hath used similitudes which, under the teachings of his Spirit, convey to our understandings deep spiritual truths. In one place as the Son of man, in another place as a Stone, and in another as a Lamb. Thus Jesus is represented as having in himself the fulness of all divine perfections, as possessing the Spirit without measure. In Isa. xi. 1, 3, the sevenfold gifts are prominently pointed out by the prophet speaking of Christ's anointing with the Spirit, and his consequent authority as the Mediator. I will read the passage as it stands: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; and he shall not

judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears."

THIRD. We will now pass on to notice *the graving* of these seven eyes. "*Behold, I will engrave the graving thereof.*" Now, as these words are prefixed with a call to our admiration, we must not pass them by lightly, for when God calls us to behold, and this word in our text, you must observe, is repeated, we ought, therefore, to give the more earnest heed lest at any time we let them slip.

Here is an allusion to the engraver's art, which by means of skilfully chasing out particles of the substance from itself, leaves a figure in the substance itself representing the idea or mind of the engraver. It is an art, as you may suppose, which is very difficult, and requires great skill and care, or a precious stone might soon be spoiled and rendered worthless. To engrave a jewel is to pierce and cut it with an instrument called a graver. The intelligence of the engraver, and his whole attention, must be absorbed in directing the point of the graver, in regulating the motion of the fingers, and the momentum of the arm in using the instrument. For the time being, until the graving is finished, and the stone is polished by the lapidary, the stone, to all common observers, appears marred and out of condition, but under a skilful workman, when completed, its beauty and its value are greatly enhanced.

Now, in applying the language of our text to the Lord Jesus Christ, it may be truly said how he was pierced and cut: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." But not only did God the Father bruise him and pound him as in a mortar, how he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself! What cruel mockings and opposition from the malicious Jews! What subtle and sore temptations from Satan, all combined to make his visage more marred than any man. We have seen faces marked with grief and sorrow. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

But O ! what piercing and cutting was there in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the holy, suffering Lamb of God lay prostrate, weltering in his bloody sweat. It was the graving of a divine hand; it was an engraving which was to set forth the loving eye of God the Father, the loving eye of God the Son, and the loving eye of God the Holy Ghost, all engaged in equal acts of love, grace, goodness, and mercy to every chosen vessel of mercy. If we want to trace the deep lines cut in the Saviour's soul we must look back to the Psalms and to the prophets for the things which were written concerning him. Read the 22nd Psalm, and see how, under the title, the Hind of the Morning, the persecuted, the hunted hind, the soul of the stricken Redeemer is set forth. Here you see the bursting of his heart: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" It was the withdrawal of his Father's countenance, though not his heart. It was the Father's displeasure against sin, and sin being embodied in the Person of his Son, though personally innocent, yet substitutionally it was necessary he should endure the whole of wrath divine. His soul was made an offering for sin. It was necessary that he should suffer before he entered into his glory. He suffered as the Head of his body, the church. All this was the divine engraving of his heavenly Father. It was the graving of his righteous displeasure against sin in the holy, immaculate human nature of his dear Son. While it was the chasing out of sin's demerit, we see, at the same time, the deeply engraved lines,—the law is honoured, justice is satisfied, sinners are pardoned and righteously saved with an everlasting salvation.

Now an engraving when finished is an embellishment of the thing engraved, as in seals, plate, &c.; it intensifies the thing engraved, it increases its value; it is for use, ornament, admiration, and enjoyment; it is the means of its identification, the engraving bespeaks its own individuality. So the work of Christ, it is honourable and glorious. The piercing and cutting, the graving of the divine hand has produced an engraving which will command the admiration and praise of angels and millions of the lost race of Adam through all eternity. His glory is great in our salvation. The captain of our salvation is made perfect through suffering. It was his own saying: "And I,



if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The richest display of his graces, those seven spirits proceeding from the throne, the dominion he exercises in the world over all flesh, the prerogative of judging the world in righteousness, and the praises he will inhabit through eternal ages, all result from his sufferings: "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of his death," the graving of his Father, "crowned with glory and honour." We see in the seven eyes engraved in this ONE STONE the heart of God the Father beaming in the gift of the Person of his well-beloved, his only begotten and eternal Son. In his sufferings we see the accomplishment of the Father's eternal purpose and the display of his own glory. Did not our Lord when communing with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus seem to look back with complacency and approbation upon his recent sufferings, and he puts the question: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory." He justifies the conduct of his Father in their appointment as worthy of the divine character. His words imply that his sufferings were the effect of design, a part of the whole counsel of God, or, to speak in unison with the similitude employed in our text, the sufferings of Christ were the engravings of the Father in the Person of his Son. He had a baptism to be baptized with, and he was straitened until it was accomplished. It was accomplished. It began at his birth, when no human accommodations could be afforded him, and though he grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man, yet for thirty years his character was concealed in a life of privacy and manual labour. At the moment of his entrance into the public ministration of his Father's business, the Spirit drove him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Throughout the period that he was with his disciples, what contradictions of sinners he endured against himself. He hungered, he was athirst, he was weary. He was grieved; he sighed, he wept. His soul was filled with sorrow in Gethsemane. He agonised on the cross; his Father hid his face from him. He died broken-hearted. All these sufferings, toils, pains, sorrows, and death, were the divine gravings of his Father's hand.

The engraving of the seven eyes on this one Stone is now complete, it is perfect. Here we see the beauty of the

engraving now it is finished. The Stone itself is precious, but now with the engraved eyes, the result of the divine workmanship, we see reflected in the perfect manhood of Christ every attribute of the Godhead. In each and every eye is seen the glory of God the Father in the Person of Jesus Christ his Son. It is laid before the whole church of God. It has become the wonder of angels, and is the everlasting praise of all his saints. Because he hath poured out his soul unto death, therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name. In Jesus is the representation of every member of his militant church. In Jesus they possess Urim and Thummim; light and perfection they ever possess in him. He is their oracle in every age, and in every clime. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through all the earth to show himself strong in behalf of all them whose heart is perfect towards him." We come before the Lord in secret at the throne of grace; it may be, we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed; and why is it? Because we see in this glorious Stone is divinely engraved this heavenly truth, "In all our affliction he was afflicted." We see in that wondrous Stone, eyes of mercy, grace, love, sympathy, compassion, Jesus the Son of God who is passed into the heavens, is touched with the feelings of our infirmities: "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." These are the truths which are seen embodied in the life and experience of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the result of his sufferings on this earth: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he was a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all who obey him." (Heb. v. 7, 8, 9.) He is the precious Stone in which are engraved the seven eyes by the graving of Jehovah, the Lord of hosts.

Believer in the Lord Jesus. Here is, in this beautiful similitude, something adapted for your comfort as you pass through the toils of the wilderness. Have you never found something analagous in your own experience, as is here set forth by the divine engraving? How often God

has pierced you, and cut you to the very quick! How have you been perplexed and discouraged because of the way. What deep lines God seems to have been engraving in you; what chasing out of your very substance. What losses, what crosses, what defacings, what spoiling of all "pleasant pictures!" Yes, truly, it has been so indeed. Yet all the crushings, destructions, humblings, crumbings, and heartrending sorrows, by the heavenly engraver, what have they done? Have they not produced an engraving in your soul that represents the loving eye, and evinces the skilful hand of God your heavenly Father? I think you must admit it. So in the work of divine grace in the heart. It is God the Father that engraves every grace of his Spirit there; every truth we know, we learn by his engraving it in our own experience. He engraves on the heart the image of Christ. He commences his divine engraving in us by creating godly sorrow for sin; a godly sorrow for sin that shows the heavenly workman's hand, that needeth not to be repented of; the love of sin is chased out, and the love of God engraved by this heavenly engraver. This heavenly engraving is carried on until the image of Christ is completely formed "in you the hope of glory." But oh, what pungent grief of mind, what woundings of soul, what a chasing out of self; cut, cut, cut, the cutting process goes on. Self-love lies deep. All love of self must be chased out, so that Christ may be engraved our **ALL IN ALL**. Pride must be chased out. Secret pride requires deep cutting, and till it is completely hollowed out by the heavenly engraver, the graving of humbleness of soul cannot appear. Again, oh, what sad woundings of soul from our brethren, so that God may engrave "cease ye from man." You who have prayed that you might bear more of his gracious image, you little thought how much of your very substance had to be chased out—the hidings of his face, his reproofs, smitings of conscience—all these are strokes of the divine engraver; and whether your conflicts and trials be sharp or long, they are the work of his divine art. "Our light afflictions which are but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "No affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous; but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby." My hearers, do you think you can trace the engraving of a divine hand in your own experience?

Dear brethren, we are his workmanship. His work in us may be sharp and cutting, but it will not suffer loss. Our present loss will be our eternal gain. "All things work together for good to them who love God, and are the called according to his purpose." The piercing and cutting, be it ever so deep, is to make an impression that will last for ever. His work will stand the fiercest fire of trial; he will prove it to yourself of what sort it is, and it shall eternally command your adoring wonder, gratitude, and praise. It may be that God is cutting you deep—hollowing out your very substance by sharp, bitter, long affliction; but it is to produce in you the likeness of himself. Your earthly cares are his heavenly engravings. Remember, God engraves only precious stones. Believers are his jewels; they are the jewels of his crown; and it is to make them resplendent with his glory. But suppose we are reckoning his engravings as chastisements? Be it so. Even then they furnish us with an evidence of our divine sonship. Perhaps you are being cut so deep, and so long, that you imagine that your sufferings are the only evidence of your sonship. Well, ye have need of patience, your God will come with a recompense.

"From all your afflictions his glory shall spring,  
The deeper your sorrow the louder you'll sing."

AMEN.

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# THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS.

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## A SERMON,

BY CHARLES GORDELIER.

PREACHED AT THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF HIS MINISTRY AT HEPH-ZIBAH CHAPEL, DARLING PLACE, NEAR MILE END GATE,

On Lord's Day Evening, 25th March, 1866.

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"As the truth is in Jesus."—EPHESIANS iv. 21.

THE words which I have read as a text, though dismembered from its connection, may with propriety be considered as a complete sentence in itself. I call it "a divine sentence in the lips of a king," (Prov. xvi. 10,) commanding both our attention and admiration; for it possesses a glory, excellency, and fulness which is singularly beautiful. It is an expression nowhere else found in Scripture. It conveys to the mind of the spiritual believer in Christ that which is understood of Truth in its life, light, power, and unction; and it embraces all that can be known as God's revealed truth, doctrinal, experimental, and practical. It is, as you know, a favourite expression with me, and hence I have adopted it as a title to the little volume of Sermons now in course of publication.

I shall look upon the words of our text by way of a rallying point, desiring, if possible, to bring around it some of the main features of gospel truth by which true religion is distinguished from the false, and which, by the Lord's help and blessing, I have been enabled to set before you during the three years of my ministry in this place.

Under the teachings of the Spirit of Truth I shall endeavour to consider, in the *first* place, that the knowledge of the truth is two-fold; for our text evidently implies as much, there being a condition expressed, "if so be," &c.;

so that there is a knowledge of the truth, but not as it is in Jesus. In the *second* place, consider some of the experimental and practical effects which the knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus has upon the believer in his life before God and man. Then, in the *third* place, make some brief observations upon the development, progress, characteristics, and the ultimate triumph of the Truth as it is in Jesus; concluding, by glancing at the state of being into which the righteous shall enter on the death of the body, and also, at the grand consummation of all things.

FIRST. I am to consider, that the knowledge of the Truth is *two-fold*.

Our text expresses a condition supposed; and it is not to be understood as if it were put for argument sake, but it is designed to awaken a serious inquiry in the mind. In the 3rd ch. 2nd verse, the apostle uses the particle *if* by way of affirming, not of doubting; and so here, it would signify *inasmuch* as ye have heard the Truth as it is in Jesus; for he had just affirmed his opinion of the Ephesian believers in relation to the immoral courses of other Gentiles, "that *they* had not so learned Christ." Now, in so grave a subject as the right knowledge of divine truth, it is better not to take for granted what the best of men may think of us, and so deceive ourselves, but to examine ourselves and know whether we be in the faith. It is essential in a matter so intimately associated with our peace and happiness in this life, that our hopes for eternal life should be rightly placed and firmly fixed. It is not sufficient that we possess a general acquaintance with the doctrinal truths of the Bible, it is not sufficient that our deportment in life be that which is unreprouable, but there must be a knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus. But I say again, there is a two-fold, or two kinds of knowing the truth. There is an outer circle, and there is an inner circle in which the truth is known. Jesus is the centre in whom all the lines of the entire circle of divine truth meet; from him they all radiate. He is the Truth. To know the Truth is to know Him, whom to know is life eternal.

The outer circle of divine truth is that which may be known by *the outward ear*—the outward ear through which faith comes. It is a hearing about Jesus. It is an outward knowledge, a verbal knowledge of the truth, a

knowledge of the letter of Scripture. In itself it may be quite sound and correct, and so far it is so good, for it has its uses; but mark you, a mere verbal knowledge, a bare understanding of the truth is insufficient to indicate that we have been taught by him as the truth is *in* Jesus.

The inner circle of divine truth is that which is revealed to the soul by Jesus Christ himself; it is that which is known by the *inner man* of the heart; it is that which is received by a faith which has been wrought by the operation of God the Holy Ghost.

The one is a natural knowledge, the other is a spiritual knowledge. *Natural knowledge* is that which may be known by men in their natural state by their natural understanding, and yet may not be made wise unto salvation. To hear of Jesus, to hear about Jesus, is good in itself; but natural knowledge of itself will leave the soul as it found it, dead, destitute of spiritual life. *Spiritual knowledge* is that which is derived by the teachings of Christ himself; to be "taught by him;" it is knowing the truth as it is *in* him. Being an inner knowledge, it is an inward work altogether; it is the work of God's Spirit upon the spiritual mind; for he is the Spirit of Truth, and takes of the things of Christ that he may reveal them to the believer; hence, the believer possesses a knowledge of Christ after *the inward man*, for he is taught the Truth as it is *in* Jesus. The difference between the Truth as it is *in* Jesus, and the truth as it is *out* of Jesus, is this,—the one is eternal life to all who know it, the other is eternal damnation to all who do not know it. There is no middle way. These are solemn facts. O may God fasten his truth upon your consciences.

Let us look at this matter a little closer. Truth so momentous as this must be looked at full in the face. What is this knowledge of the truth *out* of Jesus? Whatever it is, it comes *short* of being the truth *in* Jesus. The apostle in his first epistle to the Corinthians, 13th ch. 2nd verse, speaks of the possibility of having *all* knowledge, understanding *all* mysteries, or having *all* faith so that one could remove mountains, yet without the principle of the love of God in the heart, a faith that worketh by love, it avails nothing; it comes short of the gospel standard—the Truth as it is in Jesus. However much there may be understood of the doctrines of divine grace, the doc-

trine of the sacred Trinity, the true doctrine of the Person, work, and character of the Redeemer himself, yea, even to admiration, yet if it be only a bare, naked, speculative notion, such an one is only deceiving himself and deceiving others. What does their knowledge amount to? Nothing at all; it has no influence on their hearts before God, nor yet in their lives before men, for they remain as worldly minded as ever, and their ungodly practices show their true character.

But supposing *all* the form of truth to be perfectly understood, and the exterior life conformable to it, yet it is still not the Truth as it is in Jesus if the heart is unrenewed and the judgment unconvinced that something more is wanting. How can there be any spiritual living on the truth if there be no life derived from Christ? The soul is dead to God. There is no spiritual or quickened mind. There is no communion with Christ; no realising its union with him. There are thousands of religious professors of this description to be found everywhere. They know the truth by the outward ear only; *in* their hearts it never had any place. What they know of the Scriptures may be the truth so far as the letter of it is concerned; but it is a form of godliness without the power, not the Truth as it is in Jesus.

Perhaps we have said enough for the present upon the negative part of our subject. I have tried to put it in a variety of forms, hoping to make an impression upon some who may be contenting themselves with a name to live while they are dead. It is an awful fact that though there is so much profession of religion, there is so little that is genuine, of the right kind. I feel very strongly upon this matter; having been for many years unavoidably thrown in amongst the superficial and nominal Christians of the day, I have had ample opportunities of witnessing that which I am protesting against. Nearly twenty years since, the Lord suffered me, in the pride and folly of my heart, to leave my spiritual home and beloved friends in the gospel, for the sake of finding, as I then thought, in an intellectual ministry more food for the soul; but it was the greatest mistake I ever made, for in doing so I wandered out of my place and out of the way of understanding; and the Lord punished me by permitting me to remain in the congregation of the dead for sixteen years; my soul was there as in a prison-house,



starved and famished; and until the Lord thrust me into his service, I had no means of getting out any more than I could get out of my own skin. But this I can testify, "He brought me up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings." Praise to his great and ever blessed name for his delivering hand. I am now convinced that the true knowledge of Jesus Christ is a divine revelation, and not a human acquisition.

But passing this by, let us consider *affirmatively* what it is to know the Truth as it is in Jesus; and in order to show the distinction and difference of the points referred to, I will recite a few passages from God's own word. In the beginning of the gospel being preached we find a believing *on*; afterwards a believing *in*. I take the believing *on*, to be that which is believed by the outward ear; the believing *in*, to be that which is received by the inward ear. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The first passage I shall quote you will find in John i. 12: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe *on* his name." John vi. 29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe *on* him whom he hath sent." John ix. 35: "Dost thou believe *on* the Son of God." Here is the line of the outer circle defined; that of the inner circle thus, "If thou believest with *all thy heart* thou mayest," Acts viii. 37. Romans x. 10: "For *with the heart* man believeth unto righteousness;" 9th v.: "If thou shalt believe *in thine heart* thou shalt be saved." "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them who believe to the saving of the soul," Hebrews x. 39. Gal. i. 16: "And called me by his grace to reveal his Son *in* me." 2 Cor. iv. 6: "God who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness hath shined *in* our hearts." 1 Cor. ii. 14: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." James i. 21: "Receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls." 2 Tim. iii. 15: "Thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation, *through faith*, which is in Christ Jesus." Nor must we pass by that important declaration of our Lord to Peter, when he confessed his divine Sonship, Matt. xvi. 17: "Blessed

art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." There are also other passages to the same purpose, but these may suffice; you see, at least I hope you do, there is a two-fold knowledge of the truth; one is known by the ear only, and the other is received in the heart by faith.

To know the Truth as it is in Jesus, is to know it by a sweet experimental proof of the indwelling of Christ in the believer and the believer in Christ; for he dwells in the heart by faith. It is to know and to feel that in Christ is *all* truth; that he is *the* truth; that there is no truth apart from him. It is to have it demonstrated to the heart and conscience by the testimony of the Spirit of Truth. It is to know Christ really and truly. It is to have an inward sense of his love. To know him inwardly is to know him by his own teaching, to know him by his Spirit's quickening and influencing the entire person. His words are spirit and life: "The entrance of thy words giveth life." The love of Christ is the constraining power; for faith worketh by love. It is the realising of the mutual union existing between Christ and his church. It is to prove that he dwells in the affections; that his graces are planted there, that he dwells in the heart by faith, that it is Christ in us the hope of glory. "All his people shall be taught of God, and great shall be their peace." (Isa. liv. 13.) "The knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus," says Mr. Eyles Pierce, "is a real spiritual idea of Christ begotten in the soul by the Holy Ghost." He teaches the soul to know Christ, and as Christ reveals himself so he is known, believed, and loved. The believer in Jesus knows his voice as his teacher, and he knows nothing effectually but as he is taught by him.

To know the Truth as it is in Jesus, is to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, it is to know its height, its depth, its length and breadth, yet not to comprehend it. It is to feel his love, to love him supremely, to know him in his word, to know something of his work, his grace, both in its fulness and in its power. It is to feel the vitalizing power of his truth through every faculty of the soul; it is to know it as it is in him, communicated from him, communicated by him; the knowledge that Christ imparts to his people is of the same kind as is in himself. He has many things to say unto them and it is revealed unto them as they are able to bear it; there is nothing

that Christ keeps back from them, either for their wisdom, knowledge, understanding, joy, or comfort.

The knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus consists in knowing, or receiving, the doctrines of the gospel, the truth as contained in the whole book of divine revelation; to have a sweet experimental proof in the heart and conscience of their life, light, and power by the teaching of the Spirit; it is to prove that Christ and the soul are one in the covenant bond of union ordered in all things and sure; to feel that he is united to him by a true and living faith; to feel that he knows and is sure that Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God; to feel that he died for him, that he is his Mediator, his Surety and Substitute, his Prophet, Priest, and King, a Friend that loveth at all times, and a Brother born for adversity.

Thus, my dear friends, I have attempted in various forms of expression to give you some idea what it is to know the Truth as it is in Jesus. It is a spiritual perception of God's Truth revealed to the heart and conscience of the renewed soul by the Holy Ghost. It is a spiritual receiving the truth; it is a spiritual understanding the truth; it is a spiritual growth in the truth, a growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; such a knowledge of his Person, his work, and the offices he sustains to the church of God which each believer feels, more or less, is adapted to his own condition and experience. And before I close this part of the subject, let me ask you, what know you of these things? Of what kind is your knowledge of Jesus? the outer circle, or the inner circle? is it the letter of truth merely, or is it the grace of God in truth? Head knowledge without it in the heart will leave all your hopes and your profession in a mass of ruins.

“ No big words of ready talkers,  
No dry doctrine will suffice;  
Broken hearts and humble walkers,  
These are dear in Jesus' eyes.

“ Tinkling sounds of disputation,  
Naked knowledge all are vain;  
Every soul that gains salvation  
Must and shall be born again.”

SECOND. I pass on now to consider *some of the experimental and practical effects* which the knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus, has upon the believer in his life before God and man. This is a very important branch of

our subject. True religion consists of doctrine, experience, and practice. In doctrine, however, we may be deceived, for knowledge in itself, as we have already shown, though sound in itself, may fall *short* of the Truth as it is in Jesus. Nor is a correct deportment in life to be always taken as evidence of God's work in the heart; habitual respect for religion and morality may be fixed as the result of early religious training, a good education, or a superior position in life; but in having an experimental acquaintance with the Truth as it is in Jesus there can be no mistake here. As the hearts of all men are fashioned alike, so it is found the work of divine grace is in all cases the same, in rich or poor, learned or illiterate. The test of real religion is experience. Not what we know in the head, not the purity of the life, but what is felt in the heart! a feeling religion, arising out of the life of God in the soul, for a religion without feeling is a false religion. Now if the root of the matter is in us, if we are trees of the Lord's right hand planting, the life will be manifested through the trunk, the branches, the leaves, and the fruit; and this, let me tell you, will be found in some such evidences as the following: "If so be that ye have heard of him, have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus."

1. *It has taught us to know, that we who were by nature born in sin, dead to God, have been quickened into a new life by the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost.*

The work of divine grace in the heart produces a great change in the person and character of the believer in Christ. He has become a new creature. He is henceforth not of the world. Old things have passed away, and all things have become new. His affections are set upon things above, and not on things of the earth. The fear of God is planted in his heart; sin is hated and forsaken. The word of God, the house of God, the people of God, and the ordinances of the gospel have become the subjects of his happy choice; and he deems it his privilege, his duty, and his interest to be found in the exercise and in the enjoyment of those gifts and graces of the Spirit with which he has been blessed:

" Our quicken'd souls awake and rise,  
From the long sleep of death;  
On heavenly things we fix our eyes,  
And praise employs our breath."

2. *It has taught us to throw up all dependence on any*

*works of our own, and to trust alone to the righteousness and atonement of Christ for our only acceptance with God the Father.*

Almost in every case, as soon as a sinner is convinced of his estate before God, his inquiry is what he is to do that he may be saved: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" (Micah vi. 6.) Being ignorant of Christ's righteousness, we have attempted to bring something of our own; but after vainly striving, on the footing of our own performances, to obtain peace and pardon, and made fully sensible how utterly worthless are all human efforts to obtain merit and acceptance with God, and reduced almost to despair, the good Spirit of all truth leads us to Christ, and teaches us to see that by his perfect righteousness being imputed to all, and which is upon all who believe in Jesus, they are brought to acknowledge the worthlessness of all creature merits and doings:

"Stripped of all our fancied meetness  
To approach the dread I AM,  
We are led to see all fitness  
Centring in the worthy Lamb."

Thus it is we are taught to know, by the obedience, sufferings, death, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are freely justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses.

3. *It has taught us to know the blessedness of being made poor in spirit, and to sit an humble scholar on the lowest form in the school of Christ.*

Here it is we learn to know ourselves,—one of the lessons of the utmost importance; for until we know ourselves as *sinful creatures*, and that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing, we are apt to be vainly puffed up in our fleshly mind. We are also taught to know our own *helplessness*; made to feel that without Christ we can do nothing. Here it is, too, we are made sensible of our *ignorance*. Oh this knowledge of our sinfulness, helplessness, and ignorance will make us humbled in our own sight; and we shall take the language of Elihu, "That which I see not, do thou teach me." (Job xxxiv. 32.) And this is the blessedness, God's people shall all be taught of the Lord; and "who teacheth like him?" He is our Teacher in all good things, he is a most pains-taking Teacher, for we are dull scholars; our hearts are hard, our ears heavy,

and often unwilling to receive his lessons; but if once admitted into the school of Christ, we shall continue in it until his work is finished; the blessedness will be that "we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free." Every truth shall be indelibly impressed in the heart, and nothing shall ever efface it, either in time or in eternity.

*4. It has taught us to know that in Christ alone is the source, the fountain of all real joy and happiness.*

We are taught to know Christ as the way of life and salvation, to trace the streams of our seeking him to the source of God's eternal choice of our persons in him before the foundation of the world. We are taught to know the suitableness of his righteousness as being adapted to our wants; the completeness of his atonement, its all-sufficiency to remove all our sins; for he is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Whatever may be the soul's need it is supplied from his fulness and grace to help in every time of need. Having been taught our own nothingness, we see in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ every blessing we can possibly need or desire, for they are all treasured up in him; he is our all, our all in all. From him we derive all our peace now and all our hopes of glory. In this time state his presence cheers the darkest scene, helps us along the rugged and steep ways in the wilderness; for he is "our God and will be our guide even unto death."

*5. It has taught us to know that the believer whilst in the world is saved from its pollution.*

The believer is passing through this world; though conscious he is not of it, yet often feels he is defiled with it. The manners and customs of the world are always hurtful to believers. It is this that constrains us to fear and say in the language of David, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul;" this or that evil influence seems too much for us; and were it not that we are taught to look to the strong for strength, it would be so. Fear and doubt rush upon the spiritual traveller in the wilderness and cause him to stumble; but under the teachings of the Spirit, his prayer is, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe." Every spiritual traveller is assured of his present well-being and of his ultimate safety. As David was assured of the kingdom, though often harassed in the wilderness, so are believers now: "Sin shall not have

dominion over them." Our Lord makes his people conquerors over all their sins, corruptions, and lusts. Being redeemed from the slavery of the world, redeemed from the hand of him who is stronger than them, they are taught to know and to feel that grace reigns through righteousness. And whether it be sin in the world, or the raging of indwelling sin, they shall overcome in the Redeemer's strength, and shall come off more than conquerors through him that loved them.

*6. It has taught us to know that we are not our own, we are bought with a price; and therefore we aim to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are the Lord's.*

We make no pretensions to sinless perfection in the flesh; but our desire is this, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, to have our conversation in the world as becometh the gospel of Christ: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." We are not to be scared from the Truth as it is in Jesus because the hollow professors of religion stigmatise us as Antinomians. Our answer is, a tree is known by its fruit.

*7. It has taught us to know that nothing in time, nothing in nature, above or beneath, can ever separate the soul from the eternal and everlasting love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Nothing can be more incompatible with the glorious liberty of the sons of God than for a believer to be in continual doubt and despondency as to his standing in Christ; for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God; and because we are sons, we may call God our Father, and that too in the most endearing sense. As, therefore, the kingdom of God in the heart of the believer is righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost, this is what he is to aim at and pray for until he shall have come to the full assurance of faith. Now if the

believer is under the teaching of the Spirit, to this measure of understanding, he will, sooner or later, be ultimately brought. This assurance of the soul's final perseverance, the everlasting love of God, the eternal security and safety of God's chosen is the result of being taught the Truth as it is in Jesus. Mark ye, I do not mean that the soul has *always a joyous, a rapturous sense of it*; there is no real need for that, and God does not often give it, but he does in every variety of form and expression assure us of his unchanging, eternal, immutable love. The high tone of assurance of God's unalterable love which the apostle Paul was favoured with is certainly not the lot of all the Lord's people to possess; but nevertheless it is certainly their privilege, and all may covet it, and pray for it. It is the sun of our day, it is the lamp of our night; and when it is otherwise, we may say with the poet,

"Assure my conscience of her part,  
In the Redeemer's blood,  
And bear thy witness in my heart,  
That I am born of God."

Believer in Jesus, keep this prayer in constant use until the Lord shall be pleased to lead you on so that you can adopt the apostle's exulting language: "For 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."

Such are some of the experimental and practical effects of the knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus. Time forbids enlarging upon this point of our subject as I had intended. As a general remark it may be said, that if the believer has been *taught* the Truth as it is in Jesus, he has also been taught to *hold* the Truth as it is in Jesus. These are times when truth must be outspoken and contended for. The faith of God's elect in respect of the true and proper Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ is a foundation truth which must be held *firmly* and contended for *earnestly*. The sword of the Spirit must be grasped with a tight hand, and decided strokes must be dealt wheresoever needs be. The contention is not so much with the avowed enemies of truth as it is with its professed friends. Consequently, we must on principle,



and for the sake of consistency, refrain from associating or co-operating with those who *oppose* the doctrine of Christ's eternal Sonship. The professed friends of truth seem to say to us, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as ye do;" but our answer must be, "Ye have nothing to do *with us* to build a house unto our God."

Where there is an essential difference on so vital a point as the eternity of our Lord's Sonship, it is manifest believers cannot worship together in the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Where there is no unity of belief there can be no community of feeling. On the points of difference I shall not now speak, as my views are before the public and are well known. Far be it from me to unchristianise any who differ from me in this matter; but this I say, we, who hold the true and proper Sonship of Christ, must say to our opposers, "*we ourselves together* will build unto the Lord God of Israel." We have no party interest to serve; but I would ask, how can those who believe that Jesus Christ the Son of God is co-essential and co-eternal with God the Father, have fellowship with those who believe his Sonship to be coeval only with his manhood? Neither can we have fellowship with those who believe that the human soul of Christ was pre-existent before time. We may by some be charged with bigotry in all this; but no, we disclaim any such spirit. If we hold a principle, let us act on principle. Truth must be, and is, consistent with itself. To have fellowship with those who hold views essentially different from our own on the Person of the Son of God, would subject us to the imputation that we attached no value to the truths we assert, while in others it would only tend to confirm wavering minds in their unsettledness.

**THIRD.** I proceed now to the third subject proposed—the development, progress, characteristics, and triumphs of the Truth as it is in Jesus. My remarks must necessarily be very brief and of a very general character, when we consider that the period of time which we intend glancing at extends over, at least, seven thousand years.

My first observation is, that *the progress* of the Truth as it is in Jesus, from its first dawn upon this dark world of sin and error to the position and influence it now occupies in the present dispensation, has been marked with a *divine certainty* too plain to be ever gainsayed or resisted by its adversaries. And, let me say too, that its glorious

triumph in the millennium state until the grand and final consummation of all things in this earthly state will be no less certain ; for not one jot or tittle of God's revealed will shall fail until all has been faithfully fulfilled. From the inspired record we perceive the light of divine truth in respect of the great doctrine of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ for sin was a gradual development, by different methods, perfectly distinct and intelligible in each, yet shining more and more as each dispensation advanced. First, it was intimated to man immediately after the fall, the provision of mercy being made known under the promise that the seed of the woman should defeat the designs of the serpent, and that thenceforth God would deal with man, not according to the rigour of a broken law, but on terms of mercy. Then this grace, after it had been made known to Adam and his successors who lived before the flood, was again further disclosed to Abraham as to the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, and also the precise spot of ground on which the great atonement should be accomplished. To Abraham, God made a promise that from his descendants should arise the Redeemer of mankind ; and he also set apart Abraham and his posterity as a race specially favoured and separated to his service. Then, in the time of Moses, there was still a further display of the truth, and the Jewish nation became its depository throughout that dispensation, and devout Jews and others were led by the sacrifices and other types in their ritual service under the teachings of the divine Spirit into a fuller view of the mediatorial and priestly work of Christ and the mysteries of redemption. In the prophetic age, the prophets taught the worthlessness of mere ceremonial worship which had then grown up, and they also foretold the spiritual nature of Christ's work and character. Then, when Christ became incarnate, John the Baptist prepared the Jewish mind and others for receiving a more expansive view of the atonement ; and in pointing out to them the Person of Jesus as the Lamb of God, he showed them the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. To the Jews our Lord taught more fully the spiritual nature of religion and also the freeness of the gospel. To the Gentiles he taught the spiritual nature of God the Creator of all things. To his disciples he taught the germs of all truth belonging to his Person, work, and

character, and also their mission as his disciples. After his resurrection, his teaching was exclusively to them; he then further opened their minds, so that they not only understood the Scriptures respecting himself, but were led into deeper, brighter, and richer views of divine truth, as most plainly appears in the several epistles of the apostles.

*The present dispensation*, the age in which we live, commencing from the time of the apostles, I regard as the last and closing dispensation of Christianity. It is peculiarly the ministration of the Spirit in the revelation of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and also in the manifestation of his spiritual presence to believers. I believe that gospel truth and grace are to be more and more unfolded to the view of a fallen world; that this is to be effected by all Scriptural means within the compass of sincere, devout, and holy men, both by personal and combined efforts, until the whole earth shall be full of the knowledge and glory of the Lord, when all shall know him, from the least unto the greatest; that is to say, all men shall be, more or less, under the influence of religious principles, though it may be, not all, universally, possessing a saving knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus. Reason and Scripture favour such a supposition; besides, the nature of Christian truth is such as would lead us to suppose that all men must bow to the sceptre of King Jesus and crown him Lord of all; to say nothing of the unconquerableness of the law of progress and the purpose of God as revealed in the prophecies of holy writ. Look at *the grand comprehensive principle* of Christianity! it is not to be found in any of the multiform religions of ancient or modern times. Other religions, in which is classed every form of idolatry and superstition, possess peculiarities adapted only either to the age, people, or clime where they were instituted, and are mostly perpetuated, not by the power of its own elements, but by the policies of those whose interest it was to sustain and protect it. Nations have perished and with them their religion; but Christianity has an element possessing the character of universal applicability and perpetuity, as well as of its capability of imparting the knowledge of the one true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, conditions which none other ever yet possessed, not excepting even the Jewish; for Judaism, though established under the divine appointment, was nevertheless unfitted to become the

religion of the entire human family: it is one so exclusively national as to repel all attempts to its diffusion; and though it has long ceased to be local, yet its exclusiveness remains. Neither do Brahminism, Bhudhism, or Mahommedanism possess features in entire harmony with man's nature and circumstances; for each of those systems, extensively as they prevail, are encumbered with special observances, and embrace tenets attached only to certain places, and consequently fitted only for peculiar nations. But the gospel of Jesus Christ, with a marked contrast, is supremely adapted for every part of the habitable globe, for it corresponds to the universal and spiritual wants of fallen humanity; it is confined to no places, is restricted by no circumstances, but is to be preached to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Thus the purpose of God in accomplishing the salvation of his elect from every people is made manifest through all time.

And let me observe, too, that the religion of Jesus Christ is characterised by the integrity of its nature. That which is of the flesh is flesh, and that which is of the Spirit is spirit. This is plainly to be seen in the fact that, though under whatever denomination, with whatever form, and however long, the Christian religion may have been identified with human creeds, ceremonies, customs, and corruptions, it has nevertheless maintained an uncompromising inflexibility. God's truth is like himself, eternally the same. Whatever ceremonies or particular creeds have been associated with it, belong not to its nature, but to those accidental circumstances which have happened to it in the history of man; these are those outer things by which its spiritual nature has been too often concealed and lost sight of. The externals of religious profession are not to be confounded with spiritual truth. The principles of Christianity and the pretensions of its professors have ever been dissimilar; for while the latter have been moulded and formed according to the common usages, absurdities, or superstition of the times, the former have ever preserved their own distinctive individuality-spirituality. Truth is eternally consistent with itself. As it did not spring from man, neither will it own for its offspring the product of man. It was never a deposit committed to the care of either a Greek, a Romish, or an

Anglican hierarchy. National establishments, denominational distinctions, sectarian theology, form no part of true religion ; they are rather its antagonists ; for as soon as the exterior of religion obtains the predominance over the interior, its spirituality, its vitality departs ; this is abundantly proved by history, observation, and experience. But nevertheless, despite all these things, it shall be found that God's truth is an everlasting kingdom, it shall never be destroyed. God has evidently destined that his truth alone shall be the great panacea for all the evils which afflict the soul of man ; and though it has long been despised and restricted by those who plead for human inventions, it has hitherto maintained its integrity and its individuality throughout the fiercest opposition, has survived the ruin of empires, and will eventually overturn and annihilate every system that leads man to seek salvation upon a false basis.

As to *the millennium state*, the thousand years personal reign of Christ upon this earth, now the popular theme of the day, I confess, I am not inclined to the common opinion that it will be effected by his corporeal presence. I admit there are parts of Scripture which seem to look that way, but I feel I must hesitate in adopting a particular theory which apparently lacks a consistency with the general tenor of truth. It appears to me that the personal presence of Christ is unnecessary for the accomplishment of this great event. If the reign of Christ on this earth be personal, it must be local, which I regard as contradictory to his own word. My belief is, that the millennium state will be brought about by his spiritual presence only ; that is to say, there will be, whenever this happy change shall take place, a greater demonstration of the spirit and power of the Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts of his people than has ever yet been known. Then God's ancient people, the Jews, and all the Gentile nations will be under the influence of the Truth as it is in Jesus. There is good reason to believe, that this universal sway of Christian truth and principles will continue uninterrupted for a thousand years, there being during that time a complete subjugation of all evil and error. Trade and commerce, the arts and sciences, will still be carried on, but all in the Spirit of Christ ; selfishness and jealousy will be unknown. War, slavery, Popery, and every other form of priestcraft will be held in chains.

After the period of a thousand years, the powers of Satan will be again permitted for a little season, probably, as I think, at first through a gradual decay of spiritual religion and a relapse into ecclesiastical formalism and mere ceremony, when superstition, error, and bigotry will revive, and the saints of the most high God will be persecuted by the enemies of truth and vital godliness. Then God will again marvellously vindicate his truth and the cause of his people once more and for ever, and will triumph most gloriously over all the powers of Satan. Every superstition, every error, and all evil shall be effectually destroyed from off the face of the earth, and for EVER. All this will be accomplished in the hearts and minds of men by and through the Word of God alone, the Sword of the Spirit, which, while it will enter the hearts of the King's enemies, will, nevertheless, be received with increased clearness and power to the fullest extent by those who obey the gospel, the grandeur and magnificence of which will be in its universality and the consummate completeness of the triumph of the Truth as it is in Jesus. Then will be the glorious period of the new Jerusalem and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, the holy city, whose inhabitants will be holy, those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. And when the appointed time shall come that God will judge the world, then there will be an assembly of all mankind before his bar. To this end there will be a general resurrection of the body and a reunion of the spirit, each individual possessing its original consciousness and identity; the mortal part will become immortal; the Son of God will descend with great power and glory, and every eye shall see him. He will separate the righteous from the wicked; these will be condemned and sent into *everlasting punishment*, but the righteous will be called into life eternal. Immediately after the judgment, the final consummation and end of all earthly things will then take place; this world and the works therein will be destroyed and burnt up.

As to the state of being into which the righteous are called on the death of the body, I can only say, that it is described as one of eternal blessedness, felicity, and security. It consists in dwelling for ever in the presence of the great and glorious God, as seen embodied in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose presence there is

fulness of joy, and from whom flows perpetual and uninterrupted bliss. In heaven, the employment of the blessed will consist in praising the wonders of the Incarnate Jehovah's redeeming love, praising his matchless and adorable perfections, celebrating his glorious triumphs over Satan, sin, death, hell, and the grave. The ransomed of the Lord will be in the enjoyment of full communion with the society of the blessed, especially of those who were known to each other in Christ on earth. In heaven they will be able to trace the lines of wisdom, love, and mercy drawn straight through all the crooked, the dark, uneven, painfully mysterious, and shifting scenes of human life on earth; and in adoring wonder, gratitude, and praise, their song will be, "Just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints." They will enjoy perfect life, holiness, glory, and happiness, both in body and soul; their bodies being immortal, possessing a brightness inconceivable, like unto the glorious body of Christ, they will see him with their bodily eyes; they will enjoy perfect communion with him to the uttermost perfection of all their desires and capabilities. The perpetuity of this bliss is eternally secured to all the saints by Christ's own will and gift, over and above and beyond and apart from his mediatorial work or his atonement; the design of the Lord Jesus being, that they should behold the glory he possessed with his Father before the creation of the world, and that they should be with him in that primeval state, and be in possession of the same felicity as himself: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me;" "the glory which I had with thee before the world was." O the love of Christ! it passeth knowledge. Having taken his church into union with himself, the bride, the Lamb's wife, she is to be made a participator of the glory of God's eternal Son! We are lost in the contemplation of so delightful a theme! We must die to know it.

Yet one thought more, and that is, as to *the grand consummation of all things*. If I know anything of the Truth as it is in Jesus by the teaching of his Spirit and his word, I would say, that I believe that after the resurrection and the final judgment, and the earth that now is being burnt up, then the grand consummation of all things *in heaven* will take place. All the ends of Christ's

mediatorial work, for which it was designed, being accomplished ; the ransomed church of God being all brought home to their heavenly inheritance, and their everlasting felicity secured according to the covenant of grace made in eternity ; Satan's power and of every enemy to God and his church being completely and for ever destroyed, the Son of God will then surrender to his Father his mediatorial kingdom, and all judicial authority and power, that God may be ALL in ALL. The glory of Jehovah, in his trinity of Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, will then be displayed in all its inconceivable magnificence, shining forth in all its fulness of majesty, grandeur, and brightness throughout the countless ages of eternity. God the Father will then be seen, known, loved, and enjoyed by each and every individual member of the church of God, without the intervention of the mediatorial office. God the Son, in his glorified and eternal manhood, will be seen in his primeval glory, the glory which he had before the world was. His Person, work, and character will then be seen and known in its fullest perfection, and will be the subject of everlasting adoration, gratitude, and praise of all the redeemed family of God ; while the whole universe of heavenly intelligences, angels, and spirits of just men made perfect will be everlastingly kept in their purity, uprightness, and bliss by the supercreative power of God the Holy Ghost. Even so ; come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our heavenly Father, and the witness of the Holy Spirit that we are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus rest upon our hearts and consciences from this time and evermore. Amen.

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# GRACE TRIUMPHANT.

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## A NARRATIVE

OF A

## REMARKABLE AND TIMELY VISIT BY CHARLES GORDELIER

TO AN

ELDERLY FEMALE

IN A STATE OF DEEP DESPAIR AND NEAR DEATH.

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SOME years ago, while walking near the London Hospital, I was met by a dear Christian brother, now deceased, who asked me to visit a poor woman for him, who was on Little Alie Street Sick Fund, as she lived near to me, and he was suffering from sciatica,—urging principally that she was in that state of mind approaching madness, or, at least, fixed melancholy, or despair; and that she obstinately refused to hear a religious word from any one—would not allow the Bible to be read, but set up yelling and screaming; and, therefore, not being permitted to speak to her, or to read the word of God, he did not wish merely to carry the money. I consented, and went, not without earnest prayer for help; for indeed I felt deeply my insufficiency, and had not long, myself, been brought out of deep exercise of soul before God.

Her name was Munro; she was a widow, and lived in the Globe Road, Mile End, close by the railway arch. Passing through a passage under the house, and proceeding up the stairs, outside at the back, I knocked at the door, when two women came, and, ascertaining the nature of my call, forbade my seeing her; but they offered to take the money, which I declined to give, unless I could see the woman myself, personally. Their objection was, that if any one spoke to her on religion, it would send her raving mad. After some entreaty, I promised, that *unless she spoke to me I would say nothing*. On that condition, they opened the door, and I entered.

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The room merely contained two old chairs, a table, a chest of drawers, and a stump bedstead, on which lay a tall, large-framed Scotch woman, her feet overhanging the bedstead; she was lying on her right side, with her left arm on her side outside the bed, with her face towards the door; her eyes seemed to dart red flaming glances at me, her countenance was the expression of malice, the horrid glare of which induced me to take my seat on the other side, at her back. I took hold of her cold hand, held it for some time in mine. I did not speak, nor did she, but she groaned heavily and frequently; the language of which, however, was perfectly intelligible to me, and I could not refrain myself from echoing her groans by deep-fetched sighs. At length she broke silence; she turned her face, and fixing a piercing look at me, said in a slow, demanding, unearthly, and surly tone of voice, "What have you to say to me?"

Gently pressing her hand, and looking kindly at her, I replied, "Hope in God."

Instantly she snatched away her hand, sprang up, and became shockingly frantic, exclaiming most furiously, "THERE'S NO HOPE FOR ME! THERE'S NO HOPE FOR ME!"

She continued this for a long while, alternately shrieking, screaming, raving, and shouting, "There's no hope for me!" gnashing her teeth, and making a harsh, guttural noise, expressive of rage; she flung her arms about with such force that neither myself nor the two women were able to keep her in the bed. This dreadful scene lasted nearly half an hour, till at length she became exhausted. We then succeeded in placing her down in the bed, and put the clothes straight. The women begged me to leave her, for, said they, "You have done more harm than good. We told you what it would come to." I replied, I could by no means leave her yet, and so I resumed my seat.

There I sat, and there she lay, on her right side as before, her face away from me; she groaned most hideously, now and then giving me furtive glances. At length, finding I was immovable, she turned her face, and in the same gruff, surly voice, said, "You cruel man to come here and disturb me like this; my soul is in hell."

I answered, "Poor soul! I have been where you are!"

Raising her head, and looking at me with scornful steadfastness, she said, in the same surly tone as before,

"You have been where I am? How dare you say that?"

"Ah!" I said, "I have indeed! and so has David, and so has Peter, and so has the Lord Jesus Christ!"

On hearing this, she seemed to be going off into another paroxysm as before, but in the tone of grief and distress, crying, "Oh! oh! what blasphemy! Oh! what blasphemy! do pray go away; oh! what blasphemy, to say that Jesus Christ has been where I am! Jesus Christ never sinned, he never was where I am. Oh do pray go away; I cannot bear this!"

I succeeded in pacifying her a little, and assured her if she would listen to me I would explain what I meant. She replied, it was no use my talking to her, her soul was in hell, though her body was on the bed, and that she was at that moment suffering all the torment that could be felt by damned spirits.

"Soon," she continued, "my body will die, my breath will return to God who gave it, and my body be laid in the earth."

I said, "I know all you feel; I know where you are."

"Ah!" she replied, "you may know where I am, but you cannot know what I feel."

"Yes," said I, "I do."

"What!" she exclaimed, with an indignant and scornful look, "You know what I feel?—impossible! My soul, I tell you, is in hell; I have trampled under foot the blood of Christ,"—"and," said I "counted it an unholy thing?"

This was too much for her; she responded by an involuntary roar of grief and a flood of tears; again she urged me to leave her, saying "Go away, go away. It is no use you talking to me; my soul is in hell. You have never been there; you are here; your soul is in your body, mine is not, that is in hell, though I am talking to you. It is no more use you trying to comfort any one in a place of torment, than the tip of one's finger dipped in water would quench the fire of hell. I have committed the unpardonable sin; I have trampled upon the blood of Christ; and then with a wild shriek she kept repeating, "THERE'S NO HOPE FOR ME,—THERE'S NO HOPE FOR ME."

I endeavoured to assure her there was hope for her; she had not trampled upon the blood of Christ as she supposed; for, that I could see her feeling was still tender on that point.

"Sir," said she, "I have sinned, and sinned, and sinned again."

I said, "So did David, Peter, and so have others; they did not lose their hope."

"No," she replied, "they never lost their hope; they sinned, they repented, and were saved. But I have sinned; I have never repented; I cannot repent; I wish I could repent; it is too late," and, shrieking out in wild agony, "I have trampled upon the blood of Christ. I tell you again there is no hope for me; my soul is in hell, and I am there for a never-ending eternity;" and with a piercing yell, again she uttered, "There's no hope for me—there's no hope for me!"

At this sad and hopeless speech, I felt on the point of yielding the contest; but, raising myself, looking firmly at her, lifting up my hand, and, in an emphatic tone, I said, "My good woman; I know you feel as if you were in hell; I know you feel all the agonies of remorse; I know you feel that self-reproach has broken your heart, but it IS NOT YOUR SOUL THAT IS IN HELL—IT IS HELL THAT IS IN YOUR SOUL!" At that moment it was as if a veil had fallen from her face; light had broken in, the cloud was gone; her countenance immediately changed; its blackness went off, and her face radiated with surprise and attention. I saw what was done, and what was going on; HOPE had sprung in and brought relief to her fainting soul. I then began to talk to her of Christ's sufferings and griefs as borne for us. I recited several passages out of the Messianic Psalms, especially the 22nd and 69th; and also attempted to show how his sufferings qualified him for sympathising with the believer when under grief and self-reproach for sin; and that the believer did really find that it was Christ's sympathy which restored the fainting soul, and brought it back to God; that it was under such extreme distress of soul and sorrow for sin that Christ's sympathy was so especially needed and imparted. No human sympathy alone was sufficient; it must be divinely communicated, it must be by the Holy Spirit. Pointed to the experience of David, Peter, herself, and referred to my own; that it was all of the same kind, though different in degree, according to circumstances. To all this discourse she patiently listened with interest, and calmly argued the question of there being "no hope for her;" spoke of her long-continued course of backsliding and neglect of the worship

of God, and which had originated in neglect of secret prayer, and in breaking the Sabbath day, by keeping open her shop on that day, and seeking out-door pleasure. She had been a member of an Independent congregation in the East of London. I exhorted and encouraged her to hope, appealing to David's own case; as in the 42nd Psalm; after which, I prayed with her, and bade her adieu. She entreated me to come again, which I promised to do. The two women who were there, expressed their astonishment, and thought the change most wonderful. Truly it was, but it was the most dreadful sight I ever saw; such a sight as I would rather not see again.

The following week I renewed my visit, and found her evidently in her right mind. She had been peaceful ever since; but she was weaker in body and evidently fast sinking. How differently was I received this time! Her eyes gleamed with delight on seeing me enter. I took my former seat; she turned herself towards me. She could scarcely speak, but pointed to the place where the Bible was laid. I understood her meaning, and read a portion of the 40th Psalm. I found her resting on Jesus, trusting to his blood as her only hope; and again in prayer I commended her to God and to the word of his grace. She pressed my hand very fervently, and blessed God for sending me as the means of bringing her out of the horrible pit, and setting her feet on a Rock.

I went again, but I found my work was done; for I was informed she had died, and died happily; and that even in her coffin she seemed to have a smile; so that it appeared while she was crossing the Jordan, "the enemy was still as a stone," and she, literally, as Dr. Watts expresses it,

" — with a smile upon her cheek,  
Passed the important hour of death!"

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This incident in my visits among the sick is related without comment, dress, or finish; let the fact speak for itself. First, to the praise and glory of Jehovah Jesus, who never forsakes his people, though they forsake him. He will search and seek them out in the cloudy and dark day of unbelief, guilt, and despair; he will bring them back with weeping and supplication; and, it may be, with broken bones. The covenant of grace shall not be dishonoured and broken by the wilfulness and departure of any of the members of Christ's mystical body.

Again, how this fact speaks to *the wanderer*. You who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, look at this poor woman's case; look at it as a looking-glass in which you may see your own. You have left your first love, you have left your Father's house; where are you now? You know not to what a dread precipice you are hastening. When you leave the closet of communion with God, you enter upon a down-hill path; the further you proceed the faster will be your steps, and nothing but mercy can stop you! You may soon reach the place where this poor woman was found! O beware of neglecting the throne of grace in secret, and of grieving the Holy Spirit by the commission or indulgence of any wrong habits of thought, feeling, or action.

Finally, let this fact encourage *visitors of the sick*, and all who are desirous of serving God in his people. It may be that you have been brought into circumstances of deep trial and bitter experience. Many of the Lord's people are called to endure a hard fight of affliction of every shape and name, for the sake of others, as was the prophet Ezekiel; (xxiv. 15, 18;) or the apostle Paul; (2 Cor. i. 6;) but out of them all the Lord will not only deliver his tried ones, but he will make use of them as instruments to be of great use to others who may be brought into the like. These trials of your faith, your hope, and your patience, may be hard to bear, but they are good to bear, notwithstanding; this you will eventually prove, and you will find that this is the method the Lord is taking to answer your prayer for usefulness.

I trust that as the reading of this narrative has been made, under the Lord's blessing, exceedingly useful to several other persons who were in a similar state of mind as this poor woman, that this reprint may also, in the leadings of Providence, find its way to some others who are broken-hearted—God's broken-hearted ones, such whom God alone knows where to find and how to touch. For myself, I can say, if I were never to hear of any other case of God's blessing my feeble efforts in his cause, this testimony to the power of his grace will be a crown of abundant honour to the latest hour I live. May we not say, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

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