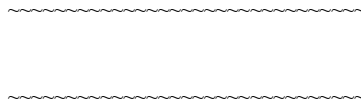


THE  
FRUITS AND EFFECTS  
OF  
GOD'S LOVE.

BEING THE  
SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON

PREACHED AT  
The COUNTESS of HUNTINGDON'S CHAPEL,  
TUNBRIDGE-WELLS,  
OCTOBER 21, 1787.



BY S. BARNARD, MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

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*L E W E S:*

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PSALM xlv. 4.

*There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God.—*

THIS psalm begins with an expression of the church's confidence in her God, saying, *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* From whence we may learn, that the Church in David's time was not without her troubles, but in the midst thereof, she had a refuge to flee unto, namely God who was also her strength to support her, and a very present help to deliver her. A sight and sense of which caused her to say, *Therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof*—is much as though she had said; whatever troubles or perplexities may befall us; however alarming and distressing in their nature; we will not be afraid.

For do we want shelter? GOD is our refuge. Are we weak? GOD is our strength. Are we in trouble? GOD is a very present help. Do we want comfort? *there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.*

For the opening of which words let us enquire,

I. What we may understand by this *River*,

II. Take notice of the *Streams*. And

III. Of what is said of *them*.

FIRST. By the *River* spoken of in our text, some have thought that we may understand *the Covenant of Grace*; and if so, the blessings with which it is replete must be considered as the *streams* thereof.

Others have thought that by the *River* we may understand the *Spirit of God*, and if that be admitted, the *streams* thereof are the gifts and graces which the sinner partakes of when he is quickened by grace.

Others again have thought that it is better to understand *Christ* by this *River*, and if so, the blessings which flow from him, must be considered as the *streams*.

But it seems best to me to interpret it of *God's everlasting love*, which may be compared to a *river*, as follows:

1. All *rivers* have a certain *channel of conveyance*. So has the love of God one certain channel (namely Christ) through whom it is conveyed to the hearts of his people. And whoever looks for it through any other *channel* can never fail of being disappointed. For this is the *channel* through which the prophets and apostles of old enjoyed it; this is the *channel* through which it flows to the hearts of poor sinners in this our day; and this is the *only channel* through which it will continue to flow to the hearts of his chosen, even to the latest moment of time.

2. Another thing remarkable in a *river* is, that it flows

*freely*. So does the love of God to the hearts of his people. And it is well for them that it does so flow; for were it not so, none of the fallen sons of could partake thereof, because such is their poverty by nature, that they have nothing in them which is good or valuable to purchase it therewith, since *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*; Jer. xvii. 9. Nay, *every imagination of the thoughts of the heart, is only evil continually*. Gen. vi. 5. And to use the words of the apostle, *In me, that is in my flesh* (or corrupt nature) *dwells no good thing*. Rom. vii. 18. Therefore we must conclude that God's love, like a *river*, flows *freely* to those who are partakers. And that even the *graces* of God's Spirit, which the Christian himself is possessed of, are not the *cause*, but the *fruits* and *effects* of God's love to his soul.

3. Another thing remarkable in a *river* is, that it flows *constantly*. And sure I am, that no *river* flows more *constantly* than the love of God does to those who are the objects thereof. For as it began before time, so likewise there is not a moment in time in which does not flow to the persons of his people. He is said to love them *when they were dead in sins*; Eph. ii. 4, 5. and their being quickened by grace, is a manifestation thereof. And as he loved them before conversion, so also he continues to love them after they are converted, for we are told that *he will rest in his love*, Zeph. iii. 17. and because *with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*, Jam. i. 17. therefore it is, that he not only loves them before and while

they are passing through time, but will continue to love them when time shall be no more; agreeable to which it is said, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.* Jer. xxxi. 3. And sure I am, that no doctrine can be more comfortable to the soul of the Christian than that of which I am now speaking, for when *Satan* tempts, or the *world* frowns; when *corruptions* rise, or *darkness* besets his mind; even then he has this to rest upon, namely, *the unchangeable love of God.*

This leads me SECONDLY, to take notice of the *streams*.

1. The first stream of which I shall take notice is the *Covenant of Grace*, which took place among the sacred THREE, even, before all worlds, for the Salvation of the Elect. In which the FATHER maintaining the honour of his justice, demanded for the transgression of his holy law, having said, *the soul that sins shall die.*

The SON being *set up from .everlasting* Prov. viii. 23. as the surety of his people engaged to pay that *debt* which they owed to divine justice. And to show his willingness for such an undertaking said, *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.* Psal. xl. 7. And when the *creditor* had received the bond at the *surety's* hand, justice had no more demand upon the *prisoners*, but looked to the *surety* for the full payment of their *debt*; and thus was *Jesus made the surety of a better testament* or covenant. Heb. vii. 22.

The SPIRIT'S office in this Covenant engagement, is to

make known this matter to the hearts of his people; to make them meet for, and lead them into the possession of that *inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them*, 1 Pet. i. 4.

Therefore, says the psalmist, *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his COVENANT*. Psal. xxv. 14. *He* (says Christ) *shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you*. John xvi. 14. And *thou* (says David) *shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory*, Psal. lxxiii. 24. Now this *covenant* is so well ordered, and the blessings with which it is replete so sure, that the people of God can never fail of the enjoyment of them.

2. The next stream which I shall take notice of is *Election*, or the choice of God's people, without which there could have been no certainty of the salvation of a single soul. But blessed be our God that as he has appointed the end (namely, the salvation of his people,) so also has he taken every step which was necessary to bring that matter about. *I* (says the Lord) *will work, and who shall let it*. Isai. xliii. 13. And although this is a doctrine which is much opposed by many, yet that there are such a people is very evident from the word of God, *Christ* and his *Apostles* being judges. If we read Matt. xxiv. 24. we are told *there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very ELECT*, from whence it is evident that there are such a people, as it is also from verse 31. of the

same chapter, where we are told that *Christ shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they shall gather together his ELECT*, which they could not do if there were none.

Another passage which clearly proves this doctrine, is Luke xviii. 7. where we are told that *God will avenge his own ELECT which cry day and night unto him*; from whence we may learn, 1. That God has an *elect* or chosen people. 2. How they are known, namely, *by crying unto him*. And 3. We are told that *he will avenge them*, or take vengeance on their adversaries.

If these passages be not sufficient, read Rom. viii. 33. where you will find the apostle asking this question, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of GOD'S ELECT?* from which words he not only informs us that God has an *elect* or chosen people, but tells us also, that nothing can be laid to their charge to condemn them before him, being clothed in the righteousness of the Redeemer. Beside the apostle speaks of *knowing our election of God*, 1 Thess. i. 4. but if there were no *election* it is impossible that it should be known either by ourselves or by any other person.

(See also Col. iii. 12. and 1 Pet. i. 2.)

And lest any should think that their choosing Christ in effectual calling was the cause of their *election*, our Lord informs such, John xv. 16. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*; as much as though he had said your choosing me was not the *cause*, but the *effect* of my

choosing you.

And that we might not be at a loss about the *time* when this choice was made, the apostle tells us that it was *from the beginning*. 2. Thess. ii. 13. which beginning he explains Eph. i. 4. by informing us, that we *were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world*. Thus hath God secured the eternal salvation of all his people, and Paul being fully persuaded of this doctrine, says, *I endure all things for the ELECT'S sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory*. 2 Tim. ii. 10.

3. Another *stream* which presents itself to our view, as coming from the above-mentioned river, is *Adoption*; which is a taking those into the relation of *sons*, and treating them as such, who are not so by *nature* or birth. And thus it was with all God's people. They were by nature aliens, but by adopting grace, were by him considered as his children and treated as such. But how few there are who have proper conceptions of this act: most people imagining, that they are adopted into God's family, upon their *believing*. Whereas the truth is, *faith* has no more hand in the act of *adoption* than it has in the act of *creation*, for *adoption* is an act of God's sovereign grace, as appears from Ep. i. 5. *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*.

Beside, no man can believe in Christ with the heart unto righteousness, without being born of God; and to talk of



adopting such an one into God's family, is equally as absurd as it would be for a man to talk of adopting his own natural son: since it is a *stranger* and not *one's own* by birth upon whom this act of adoption must take place, so that we are not *adopted* because we *believe*, but we *believe* because we are *adopted*. It is true indeed that the SAINTS *are all the children of God* (manifestly) *by faith in Christ Jesus*. Gal. iii. 26. but then it is not their *faith* which makes them children, but what makes them appear to be so. Therefore we are told, that *it was expedient that Christ should die for the people, and that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad*. John xi. 50. 52. Here we may observe, that although they were *scattered abroad* and in a state of nature, yet they were the *children of God* (by adoption,) of which their being gathered together in effectual calling was a manifest proof, agreeable to which idea the apostle says, *Because ye are sons* (by adoption) *God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying Abba Father*. Gal. iv. 6. Therefore my having the spirit of Christ in my heart does not make me an *adopted son*, it only makes me appear to be so, and enables me to claim my privilege in calling GOD MY FATHER.

Beside, in the preceding verse the apostle speaks of *receiving the adoption*; which clearly proves that *adoption*, as a blessing of grace, must have an existence before it can be *received* or laid hold on by faith.

4. The next *stream* of which we are led to speak, is *pardon of sin*, and that this proceeds from the same river

appears from the apostle's own words. *Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.* 1 John iv. 10. For which purpose it was that Christ took our nature into union with his divine nature. For *when the fulness of time was come, he was made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law.* Gal. iv. 4. 5. Then it was that he undertook to discharge that bond which he had given to his Father for the satisfaction of his justice and the discharge of his people, by fulfilling that promise, *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.* Ps. xl. 7. 8.

In his life therefore, he perfectly fulfilled the law, for *he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* 1 Pet. ii. 22. by which mean he wrought out, and brought in EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS for all his people, Dan. ix. 24.

This righteousness the FATHER *imputes to them without works*, (of their own as the cause thereof) Rom. iv. 6. and this righteousness it is that the SPIRIT in the work of regeneration applies to their hearts. (*He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you.* John xvi. 14.) by which they are enabled to say with the prophet, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* Isai. xlv. 24. But as sin must not go unpunished, and as he had engaged as a surety to pay his people's debt, the Father therefore *laid upon him the iniquity of us all*; Isai. liii. 6. even all the original and all the actual transgressions of all his people which had been or would be committed by them, even to the end of time;

and as the *Father* laid them upon Christ so also he punished him for them, for he hath *once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. He suffered in his character: *He hath a devil and is mad, why hear ye him.* John x. 20. He suffered in his soul: *my soul is exceeding sorrowful.* Matt, xxvi. 38. He suffered in his body: *he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities.* Isai. liii. 5. And because *the wages of sin is death,* Rom. vi. 23. he suffered that also, for he *became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.* Phi. ii. 8. Then and there it was that *the word of justice* was drawn against Christ. Zech. xiii. 7. Then and there it was that the *Father* demanded the whole *debt.* Then and there it was that the surety paid it. Matt. xx. 28. Then and there it was that he cried *it is finished, and gave up the ghost.* John xix. 30. Hence we find that *pardon of sin* also as a blessing of grace, has its existence, even before we believe; and faith is given us as a hand with which we lay hold of it. So that we are not pardoned because we believe, but *we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;* Col. i. 14. and faith is that which brings the knowledge of it to our souls.

5. Another *stream* of which I shall take notice, is *justification;* though some perhaps may think it almost needless for me to speak upon this subject, seeing that all those who are pardoned, are justified.

But as they are two distinct acts of grace, it cannot be amiss (I think) to speak of them as such. For though *pardon*

takes away sin from a sinner and frees him from punishment, it neither gives him a righteousness nor a legal title to everlasting life; but *justification* does both.

*Pardon* lies in the non-imputation of sin; but *justification*, in the imputation of Christ's righteousness; *pardon* takes away a man's filthy garments; *justification* clothes him with change of raiment. Zech. iii. 4. So that the act of *justification* is a pronouncing a person righteous (in the righteousness of Christ imputed to him) as though he never had sinned.

The persons who are thus justified, are all the *elect* of God. Therefore, says the apostle, *who shall lay, any thing to the charge of God's elect*. Rom. viii. 33. And if nothing can be laid to the charge of *God's elect* to condemn them before him, then it is evident that *God's elect* as such, must be justified in his sight.—Besides, we are told that there is *no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus*. Rom. viii. 1. And if there be no condemnation to such, then all that are in Christ Jesus must be justified in the sight of God. It is true that the apostle in describing those who are (manifestly) in Christ, informs us, that they *walk not after the flesh but after the spirit*. Rom. viii. 1. but then, walking after the spirit was not that which *put them into Christ*, but what made them appear to be in him.

I know indeed that there are some who think that the justification of God's people was not complete till Christ *arose from the dead*; but if that were true, then all the

prophets and good men who died before that time must be gone to Hell, or otherwise they are taken to Heaven with an *incomplete justification*, neither of which can be admitted. It is said indeed that *he was raised for our justification*, Rom. iv. 25. but then the resurrection of Christ did not procure the justification of his people; *for* that was done by his perfect obedience, but it was for the *justification* of it, that it might fully appear that sin was atoned for, and an *everlasting righteousness* brought in.

But perhaps some will say, is it not said that *we are justified by faith*? Rom. v. 1.—It is.—But then we should always remember, that *faith* does not bring our blessings into existence any more than our *hands* do the things they lay hold on, or our *eyes* the objects which they take in; for were it so, faith would be no longer a *creature*, but would become a *creator*. Besides, faith as an *act* performed by the creature, cannot justify, for as such it is a work. Ep. ii. 9. Nor can faith as a *grace* of the spirit; for as such, it is a part of our sanctification.—But what then say you does the apostle mean?—I answer, after he had been treating at large in the two foregoing chapters upon the doctrine of justification; he begins this with saying, *therefore being justified*, (in the righteousness of Christ) *by faith we have peace with God; through our Lord Jesus Christ*. Therefore, although it is a truth, that all God's people are justified before him in the righteousness of Christ, yet they do not enjoy the peace and comfort of it in their own souls till they receive it by faith.

Should any say that Abraham's *faith was accounted unto him for righteousness*? Rom. iv. 3. The reply is, It was not Abraham's faith as an *act performed by him*, nor was it Abraham's faith as a *grace wrought in him*, that was his righteousness before God, but it was what his faith as a hand laid hold on, namely, the perfect and complete righteousness of a dear Redeemer. Thus therefore it is that *we are complete in him*. Col. ii. 10.

6. Another *stream* which presents itself to our view, is *Regeneration*, the necessity of which appears from the Apostle's words. *The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so then they that are in the flesh (or in a state of nature) cannot please God*. Rom. viii. 7. 8. Therefore, says our Lord, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. John iii. 3.

Now the *subjects of regeneration* we find are all the *elect* of God. For those that the apostle speaks of as *begotten again to a lively hope*, are first described as ELECT, *according to the foreknowledge of God*. 1 Pet. i. 1. 2. 3. So that they were not *elected*, because they were *regenerated*, but they were *regenerated* because they were *elected*. And because *God had from the beginning chosen his people to salvation through sanctification of the spirit*; 2 Thess. ii. 13. therefore it was that they had *grace given them in Christ before the world began*. 2 Tim. i. 9. Now in regeneration God does not *mend* the old corrupt nature, neither does he *change* it, but *implants a new one*. 2 Pet. i. 4. and then it is

that the Christian's warfare begins; *for the flesh* (or corrupt nature) *lusteth against the spirit*, (or new nature,) *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.

And that it might appear an act in which men are entirely *passive*, it is expressed by being *quicken*ed; Ep. ii. 1. for men by nature are *dead in trespasses and sins*; but in *regeneration* (which is an instantaneous act) a principle of spiritual life is implanted, consisting of *all the graces of the spirit*; in which sense the christian may be said to be *perfect*, as a child may that comes into the world with all his members. From hence it is that he begins to see his lost state and condition, by nature—the exceeding sinfulness of sin—his own inability to make satisfaction for it—the insufficiency of his own righteousness, and the need of the blood and-righteousness of Christ, and of salvation by him. From hence it is that he is brought to hate sin, to love God, and to *worship him in Spirit and in truth.* John iv. 24. And as God hath ordained that his people should walk in *good works*, he creates them anew in Christ Jesus, thereunto *we are his workmanship created anew in Christ Jesus unto works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* Ep. ii. 10. And all those who are regenerated, have this one reason to give for all that they say and do for God, namely, *the love of Christ constraineth us.* 2 Cor. v. 14. And without this principle,, all the afflictions and judgments that can befall us, will never lead us to

obedience, but leave us *rebels against God*. Thus it was with *Pharaoh*, who when the judgments of God were upon him, called for *Moses and Aaron*, and said, *Intreat the Lord that he may take away this plague from me*; promising at the same time that he would be obedient and *let the people go*. Exod. viii. 8. And here we have a lively picture of a natural man, who wishes more to be delivered from his *punishment* than he does from that *sin* which brought it upon him. *The plague* however was removed; and did he become obedient and perform his promise? No; but on the contrary we are told, that *he hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go*. Exod. viii. 32.

And thus it is with many in time of affliction; they will call then for God's servants and ministers to pray for them, promising that they will be more obedient for the time to come. But as soon as the affliction is removed, they, like *Pharaoh* of old, forget their promises, and return again to their former course of living. From whence we may learn, that nothing but a principle of *grace* in the *heart* can produce real *obedience* in the *life*, from which principle it is that *we become servants to God, have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life*. Rom. vi. 22.

Thus then have we considered the *Covenant of Grace, Election, Adoption, Pardon, Justification, and Regeneration*, as so many *streams* flowing from the river of *God's everlasting love*.

Proceed we now, **THIRDLY**, to take notice of what is said



of *them*. We are told they *make glad the city of God*; now by this *city* we are to understand the *church of God*, which is so called in Song iii. 2. 3.

And *First* we have to remark, that every *city* has a *foundation* for its support, and so has the church of God. *therefore thus saith the 'Lord God; behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation:* Isai. xxviii. 16. And that this stone is *Christ*, appears from what the apostle says, *Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* 1 Cor. iii. 11. And that he might appear to his people a *fit and proper* foundation, he is called, by the apostle, a *Rock*. For *they all drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.* 1 Cor. x. 4. And he, when speaking to Peter, said, *upon this rock will I build my church*; that is, not upon Peter's *person*, nor upon Peter's *faith*, but upon HIMSELF, whom Peter's faith laid hold on. And the church being thus built upon Christ, *the gates of Hell shall never prevail against it.* Matt. xvi. 18. From hence we may learn that Christ is a *sure foundation*; a foundation sure to endure, and sure to support and uphold his church.

We may remark, *Secondly*, that a *city* is commonly *walled round* for the defense of its inhabitants: So is the church of God. For *salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.* Isai. xxvi. 1. And *I* (says God) *will be unto her* (his church) *a wall of fire round about.* Zech. ii. 5. It appears therefore that God's people are safe in the midst of

all their enemies; for who can come against them with success, when God himself is *a wall of fire round about them*: Therefore we are told, that *no weapon that is formed against them shall prosper*. Isai. liv. 17.

We may observe, *thirdly*, that in a *city* there are *watchmen* appointed to go about it: So there are in the church of God. *The watchmen that go about the city found me*. Song iii. 3. Now one part of a watchman's business is to give the alarm in case of danger, *I says the Lord have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me*, Eze. iii. 17. So that if the church be exposed to danger from errors of any kind, it is the minister's business to give the alarm.

Is

Is *Christ's divinity* denied? We have to hear the word at God's mouth and inform you that he is THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, Isai. ix. 6. *the only* POTENTATE, *the* KING of Kings, and LORD of Lords, 1 Tim. vi. 15. *who is over all*, GOD *blessed for ever*, Amen. Rom. ix. 5.

Are you told, that "*Faith grafts you into Christ*," and is part of the xi. of Romans brought to prove it? We have to hear the word at God's mouth, and inform you, *he hath chosen his people in Christ before the foundation of the world*, Ep. i. 4. that *they are preserved in him and called*, Jude i. and that such *die in the Lord and are blessed*; Rev. xiv. 13. and also that the apostle in the *eleventh* of Romans

is not speaking of grafting into *Christ*, but into the *church of God*, which he there compares to an *olive-tree*. Are you told that *salvation* (in whole or in part) is of *works*? We are to inform you from the mouth of God, that *by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, least any man should boast*. Ep. ii. 8. 9.

Are you told that Christ's sheep may perish after all that he hath done for them? We are to inform you from his own mouth, *they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand*. John x. 28.

We may observe, *Fourthly*, that in all *cities* there is a *chief governor*: So there is in the church of God. *The government shall be upon Christ's shoulder*, Isai. ix. 6. *who is the only Potentate*, or Governor, 1 Tim. vi. 15. of the *world* in general, and of his *church* in particular. And *lastly*, as a *city* is well stored with provision; so also is the church of God. There is no want of food, *for Christ is the bread of life*. John vi. 35. There is no want of *grace* in him, *let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*. Heb. iv. 16. There is no want of *promises* in his word, *for there are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises*. 2 Pet. i. 4. Nor is there any want of his *spirit*, to apply them, *for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you*. John xvi. 14. Nay, the apostle sums up the whole, and says, *My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in*

*glory, by Christ Jesus.* Phil. iv. 19.

Now this *city* or the church of God, is made glad by these *streams*, under the various trials which she meets with. *First*, from a *corrupt nature*, for though the christian is the subject of the grace of God he is nevertheless the subject of a corrupt nature, the workings of which will often constrain him to say with the apostle, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.* Rom. vii. 24. But when he is enabled to look out of himself to the righteousness of a dear Redeemer, in which he stands *justified before God*, this stream will gladden his heart and make him rejoice, more than the men of the world do, when *their corn and their wine increase.* Psal. iv. 7.

*Secondly*, these *streams* become useful to God's people in time of *temptation*; and sure I am, that no christian is free from the assaults of Satan, the adversary of mankind. The prophet speaks of *his coming in like a flood.* Isai. lix. 19. And the apostle was well acquainted with his *buffetings*, 2 Cor. xii. 7. and informs us for our encouragement, that *God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.* 1 Cor. x. 13. He informs us likewise, that it is no sin to be tempted; for Christ (says he) *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet WITHOUT SIN.* Heb. iv. 15. Blessed be God for that. For it is in this spotless robe of *Christ's righteousness*, in which the believer stands as clear *in the sight of God*, as though

he had never sinned. And such may use the language of the apostle, and say, *who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?* Rom. viii. 33. 34. So that all the temptations with which the christian is beset can make no alteration in his state before God, nor in that *river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.*

*Thirdly*, these *streams* will prove refreshing to God's people, in a time of *darkness* and dejection of mind. And that the christian may be in such a state is very evident from Song iii. 1. *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth;* as it is also from the words of Job. *O that I knew where I might find him, Behold, (says he) I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him, he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him.* Job xxiii. 3, 8, 9. But it is the Christian's mercy, that though darkness be uncomfortable, it does not alter the *relation* which subsists between him and his God. Therefore, says the prophet, *who is among you that feareth the Lord; that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon HIS GOD.* Isai. l. 10. Remember then, you that *fear the Lord*, that God is as much *your God* when you are in darkness, as he is when you have a clear sense of your acceptance: For darkness of mind makes no alteration in the *covenant of grace*; for that is

ordered in all things, and sure;—it makes no alteration in your *election*, for that is *according to the good pleasure of God's will*. Ep. i. 5. Nor in your *justification*, for that centres in the *righteousness of Christ*. Rom. v. 19. Nor in your *pardon*, for that centres in the *blood of Christ*, 1 John. i. 7. Nor yet in that *good work* which is begun in you, *for he that hath begun it will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*. Phil. i. 6. And a consideration of this nature will sometimes refresh the Christian's mind, even in his darkest moments.

And, *Lastly*, These *streams* will support the Christian's mind in a time of *sickness*, and in an *hour of death*, when friends fail, and all outward comforts are withdrawn; then having a view of his interest in Christ, and possessing the blessings which he has procured, he will be enabled to appropriate the apostle's words, and say, *I know that if my earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, I have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. 2 Cor. v. 1. or to say with David, of old, *My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever*. Psal. lxxiii. 26.

But what is it that we know of the love of God, of which we have been now speaking? has it been ever manifested to our souls by his blessed spirit? Why, (say you,) how shall I know that?—I answer, by the work which he performs. For, *when he is come, he will reprove* (or convince) *of sin*, the sin of our *life*, and the sin of our *nature*, by which we are

led to confess, with the prodigal of old, *father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* Luke xv. 18, 19. and to pray with the publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* Luke xviii. 13.

But as he convinces of *sin*, so also he convinces of *righteousness*, and brings the sinner to acknowledge, that *all his righteousness is as filthy rags*; Isai. lxiv. 6. leads him to see the necessity of *Christ's righteousness* for his justification; and causes him to cry unto God for a manifestation of his *forgiving love*; and if this be your experience, it is evident that the *Father* hath loved you; that the *Son* hath redeemed you, and that these *convictions* are the fruits and effects thereof.

And as the Spirit is engaged to carry on the work which he begins, and restore comfort to the awakened sinner, he leads him to see that the *law* is fulfilled, that *justice* is satisfied, and that *he has redemption through Christ's blood; even the forgiveness of sin*; Eph. i. 7. at which time the love of God is shed abroad in his heart—the guilt of sin is removed from his conscience—the fear of death is taken away, and he is enabled to say with the apostle of old, *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* Phil. i. 21.

May the Lord grant that *the life which we now live in the flesh, we may live by the faith of the Son of God.* So shall we constantly enjoy the comfort of this truth; *there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.*

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**Ole Enon Primitive Baptist Church**  
835 OLD ENON ROAD  
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