

HELPS FOR ENQUIRERS ON THE SUBJECT OF FAITH.

BY GEO. C.,

Adapted from "Have You a Difficulty?"

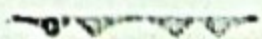


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HELPS FOR ENQUIRERS

ON

THE SUBJECT OF FAITH.



SOUL-TROUBLE.

THERE is no trouble in the world like *soul-trouble*. The torments of a guilty conscience, who can endure? "A wounded spirit, who can bear?"

Next to the anguish of waking up *in eternity* to find the soul is "lost," is the bitterness of making that discovery *in time*, though the great gulf be not yet finally "fixed," nor the soul's doom eternally sealed.

Let a man be made alive to the truth that *the end of a sinful life is hell*, and that such is the very life he has led: let the Spirit of God remind him that the next pulse-beat, the next

heart-throb, may be his last, and that the God against whom he has so long and so wilfully rebelled holds his breath in His mighty hand, and there will be little wonder if he go supperless to bed to spend the silent night-watches, not in peaceful slumber, but in fear and trembling, in tossing and groaning, in prayer and weeping.

The eternal damnation or the eternal salvation of the soul is no light issue, and how can he rest till it is settled? He richly deserves the one, yet he ardently hopes for the other. He seems to hope against hope, yet he does hope, and cannot help it. On one side stands "truth," shedding the light of her "lamp" upon the inevitable future and the undeniable past, and fully exposing both: on the other, so to speak, stands "grace," witnessing to him that in spite of his wickedness, and entirely on the ground of *Another's* merits, eternal blessing may yet be his.

Oh, the intensity of such an inward

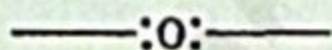
struggle until pardon is known and peace possessed ; until the soul's portion for eternity is beyond the possibility of doubt or question !

Then there is another important factor in this fierce struggle. *Satan*, with his suggestions and lies, is now all astir. He has long been able to "keep his goods in peace," but now he must use every effort that satanic craft can devise in order to thwart, if possible, the purposes of grace ; or else his once willing slave will be another witness of the value of the Redeemer's blood to cleanse, of His power to save.

At one time he whispers, "You are too good to be lost at last ;" at another, "You are too bad to be saved ; at least too bad to be saved just as you are ; wait till you are better first." It has been well said that "Satan's clock is always either too fast or too slow." There is, according to his dangerous counsel, either "*plenty of time* to think of

these things," or he whispers, "God is too hard and too exacting to show mercy to such a sinner as you are; you are *too late now*."

It is with the earnest desire of helping souls in anxiety about this great matter, that we propose, in the light of Scripture, to look at a few of the mistakes that dishearten such anxious seekers.



1. If I had not been so bad, I could believe that God would save me.

Listen! It is to be feared that there are thousands in hell who thought themselves too good to be "*lost*," until they tasted the bitter reality of that awful word beyond the sunset of their day of grace. But it is certain that out of the countless myriads of the redeemed in glory not one could be found to say, "I am here enjoying heaven because, on earth, I was good enough to be saved."

The apostle Peter is there, and he owned himself "a sinful man," unfit for his Master's presence. Paul confessed to being the "chief of sinners;" and so for all the rest. "By grace," and by grace alone, they have been saved, every one.

The fact is, the thought of *meriting* salvation is as natural to man's heart as the ugly weeds are to his garden; and Satan knows well how to take advantage of this, and to hide from his eye the lovely character of the "manifold grace of God," whereby alone he can be saved. Satan hates the story of God's grace; for it cannot be told without recording the redemption-glories of Christ. It is "grace" that reigns through righteousness—a righteousness declared at the cross, where the judgment due to the sinner fell upon the voluntary Substitute. It is only because of that precious shed blood, that free, unmerited pardon can be preached to guilty sinners.

Thus *the merit is all on His side, the guilt on ours.* We, bad enough to deserve the judgment; He, good enough to come and take our death; good enough to drink the cup of judgment for us. And He drank it to its deepest dregs and said, "It is finished." God has only two ways of dealing with guilty men. He will either give them (standing on their own merits) all they deserve, and that to the very last mite; or, coming to Christ as guilty and lost, He will give them, in full, what Christ deserves. Happy, therefore, are they who can sing,

"I stand upon His merits, I know no
other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth in Im-
mauel's land."

If the reader only got a glimpse of what *grace* is, he would never again talk of being too bad to be saved; which simply means—too bad to believe the goodness of Another!

There are many who seem to think that because all are sinners, and because they hear that God is going to take some of them to heaven, it must therefore be the *best* of them; and from this they reason, "If such and such get there, I shall *surely* stand a good chance of being admitted." But mark this well, dear reader, *Your being a sinner gives you no title to glory*, even if you could claim to be the best of Adam's ruined race. Your being a sinner gives you the best possible recommendation to the Saviour, but it is the Saviour that gives you a title for glory.

"*This Man receiveth sinners*" (Luke xv. 2) is the inscription over salvation's doorway, and none can be *too bad*. Read again, "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me." "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John xiv. 6; vi. 37). And again, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28).

“ By Me if *any man* enter in, he shall be saved ” (John x. 9).

“ Look unto Me, and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth* ” (Isa. xlv. 22).

“ *Whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved ” (Rom. x. 13).

It is only because of what Christ is, and what He has done, that we can be saved. If you had as many good deeds to boast of as there are grains of sand upon the ocean shore, and your sins as few and far between as the mighty ironclads that plough her bosom, or as hidden as the deadly torpedoes that lie covered in her bed, without Christ you have no title, save to the lake of fire. *One sin* would be your ruin—an idle word, a wicked thought, a single act of self-will, would as surely be enough to shut you out of heaven, as one act of disobedience shut Adam out of paradise.

Waste not your precious time in “ trying to do better ” before you

come to Christ. The very fact that you need such reformation proves the *past* is bad; and if, therefore, you presume to stand upon your own merit, it is all over with you; for it is written, "GOD REQUIRETH THAT WHICH IS PAST" (Eccles. iii. 15).

To say that you are "too bad" is to diminish the glory of the all-abounding grace of God, to limit the power of the all-cleansing blood of Jesus. It is as easy for the ocean to bear the 5000-ton merchantman upon her bosom as the downy feather from a sea-gull's wing. And since it is our *hearts* He seeks for, and since those to whom much is forgiven love much, be assured He is willing to welcome the worst; He is able to save the most sinful.

A few years since the writer called at the house of a well-to-do business man to see, if possible, his only daughter upon her dying bed. She was sinking without hope, and she

knew it. The poor mother had tried in vain to soothe her daughter's fears, by telling her that there was no real cause for alarm as to the future; that though she had spent her last summer on earth amid all the gaiety of "the London season," yet that she had been "such a pure-minded girl in it all."

After considerable reluctance on the part of the parents, the writer was at last permitted to go upstairs to the sick-room.

The hired nurse being dismissed by the fond father, the visitor knelt down at the bedside and cried from his soul's depths for the eternal blessing of this dying lady. Rising from his knees, he read a few verses from Romans v., dwelling a little on verse 8, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

At this point the poor troubled one exclaimed, "Ah! you don't know

what *I've* been, or you would not talk to *me* about God's love. There can be no mercy for me!"

To this the writer replied: "Miss ——, I believe that if you saw yourself as God sees you, you would think yourself ten thousand times worse than you do. But you have, I think, made a great mistake to-day." The aged father looked enquiringly through his tears from the other side of the bed, as much as to say, What mistake has she made? "Well," continued the writer, "I have not come these eleven miles to enquire whether you think yourself sufficiently worthy for God to trust *you*; but to bring you the blessed news, that God thinks His Son sufficiently worthy for you to trust *Him*. And upon this your blessing for eternity depends."

In a moment her countenance changed, as though a ray of heavenly light had just entered. Nor can there be a doubt that it was so; for her father wrote shortly afterwards to

speak of his daughter's blessing; and said that she soon would be

“Where no cloud can arise [to darken
her skies,
Or to hide for one moment her Lord
from her eyes.”

The Lord give the rays of the glory of His grace to enter your troubled heart too, dear reader; and give you to see that God is not looking for worthiness in you as to the past; nor for any resolve that you will be worthy for the future; but that He has much to say to you about the worthiness of Jesus, His beloved Son.

He is the “Nail” fastened in “a sure place;” and upon Him you may safely hang in calmest confidence. If the “Nail” come down all must fall that was hung upon it, whether vessels of burnished gold, or the coarsest earthenware. Their safety in hanging upon it depends not upon the quality of the cups, but the

stability of the "Nail." (See Isaiah xxii. 23, 24).

Believe on Him, then, because *He* is worthy, and take the pledge of His own word, that the blessing is yours. "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).

2. Have I the right kind of faith?

We should like to ask, What would it avail if you *had* the right kind of faith, if there wasn't the right kind of Person to have faith in? And who can this Person be but, the One who is both able and willing to meet your soul's felt need?

What man, after being made sensible of some enormous debt, and his own utter inability to meet it, would talk like this after he had heard of a friend's generosity in 'paying it? Put yourself into such a position and

see how such language would sound in your lips, "I do believe my friend has paid all for me, but I wonder if I have believed in the right way?"

If a question arose at all, would you not rather enquire, "Has the payment been made in the right way, and is my creditor satisfied with this way of settling my account?"

But it may be enquired, Is it not possible to believe with the head and not with the heart? Alas! it is to be feared there is too much of it.

What, then, is the difference?

To believe on Him in your heart, is simply to believe on Him with the consciousness in your heart, that He alone is the One who can meet your case, and that without Him you will perish for ever; and so to confide in Him. It is more than a mere assent to the historical fact that He died and rose again. It is to see yourself, *without* His precious sacrifice, hope-

lessly shut up to judgment, and so to believe in Him.

It is one thing for a man to say, "I believe that, in a certain nook on the shore, a lifeboat is kept, with willing hands ever near and ready to man her;" it is another to find himself on the shivering deck of some stranded, sinking vessel, sending up rockets as signals of distress, in order that he may be saved by that lifeboat, and eagerly stepping on board when she approaches. It is one thing to believe that a certain skilled physician visits a fever-sick neighbour every day, and another thing—conscious that *you* have caught the same malady—to stand anxiously watching for his approach, in order to put your own case into his hands; and, when he comes, gladly and trustfully to submit yourself to his treatment.

A weakly mother hears, at midnight, the stealthy footsteps of burglars in the house. Her two children are in

bed, the eldest, only a girl of nine. Which of them will she call, think you, to grapple with these ruffians? Neither of them. Her great fear is that they will be awakened by what is going on. She has no confidence in them to meet the difficulty; neither is she, in her weakness, equal to the task. What, then, is to be done? Well, she has long known that every night a policeman patrols the street in which she lives. Though she has not for years *doubted* that fact, yet how differently it is brought home to her now, as she opens the window, and with all the energy she possesses shouts, "Police! police!"

Does not her call to the police-officer prove two things: 1st, that she has a real sense of her need of him; 2nd, that she has confidence in him to meet it? Now turn to Rom. x., and you will see that verse 10 says, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness"; and verse 13, "For whosoever shall call upon the

name of the Lord shall be saved ; ” and again, verse 14, “ How shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed ? and how shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard ? ” The report which I hear of Him wins my confidence in Him. Then because I believe that He alone can meet my need, I call upon Him and get the assurance of His word that salvation is mine ; for He says, “ Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ”

But do not let the reader get occupied with faith itself ; as though, forsooth, God wanted us to have *faith in our faith*. What would it avail you, we repeat, to have the right kind of faith, and plenty of it, if there was not the right kind of Person to have faith in ?

For example, what would it have availed the woman just referred to, that she had very much faith in the man who lived next door, if, when she called and knocked, this man

was either not at home or could not be awakened? The strongest faith in him would not have saved her from the burglars, while the call prompted by most trembling faith in the policeman brought instant deliverance. Yea, it was for this very purpose that he was on the watch.

Have you called upon the Lord in the sense that without Him you are for ever undone, and that He is ready and willing to save you? Then take the sweet assurance, which His own faithful word affords, that salvation is yours. Do not hesitate to confess it, nor longer withhold the praise that is due to Him for it.

3. I am trying to believe, but cannot.

If the reader should be making this serious mistake, it must be that you have never soberly considered what is really involved in it; and the writer would earnestly beseech you, before reading further to look to the

Lord for His gracious help in the matter.

God has fully declared Himself in the Person of His beloved Son, sent into the world and acting in perfect consistency with all that God is. "The only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). And He Himself said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). But on this side there is more than this. After the death and resurrection and enthronement of Jesus at the Father's right hand, God sent a special message to sinful men—the Gospel message—by the Holy Ghost from heaven. Yet, according to what your words convey, He has in doing all this, so far forfeited all claim to your confidence, that though you are willing to *try* to believe it, you really *cannot*! What an insult to the Spirit Who brought it! What could better suit God's great adversary?

It is written that "Abraham

believed God" (Rom. iv. 3). How simple is that statement! We are told subsequently (verse 19) that he did not consider appearances, he did not look at himself; he had another Person before him, One so reliable that he believed He was able to perform what He promised. And thus, we are told, "he gave glory to God."

Suppose it had been written, "*Abraham tried to believe God, but couldn't,*" what a serious reflection it would have cast upon the Eternal God who cannot lie!

Now compare your own statement with this, dear reader, and get upon your face before Him, and confess the God-dishonouring character of your unbelief.

Beside this, does not your statement manifest its own folly on the very face of it? Consider; it makes you out to be trying to trust an untrustworthy person! If it were only the question of a few pounds; what

business-man would *try* to trust an *untrustworthy* customer?

“ Oh, but I don't think *He* is unworthy ! ” Then your words do both you and Him an injustice ; for who would speak of *trying* to trust one in whom they really had confidence ? Has a child to *try* to trust its mother ?

It is to be feared that you are looking at faith as some great work that you are required to perform, in order to secure salvation for yourself.

This is all wrong. We must learn to discern between faith and the activities of faith. A bank offers you good security, and you *prove* your faith in it by depositing your money there.

You are in a strange land, in company with friends who know the neighbourhood well. A deep dark stream has to be crossed, and only one solitary plank connects the two banks. You are told, by those best able to judge, that the plank will bear, and *because* you believe them, you

unhesitatingly place both feet upon it and walk across.

If you took your berth on board an American liner, it would *prove* your confidence in her seaworthiness. Your faith in her might be very wavering or very firm, but the moment, as a passenger, you board that vessel, you confess by action, if not by word, your confidence in her ability to carry you safely across the broad Atlantic. You heard of her, your confidence was inspired by that which you did hear, and then came the act which publicly expressed that your trust in her was a real thing. So we read: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

"Faith cometh by hearing,
Hearing by the word of God," and
The word of God testifies of an
All-worthy Saviour.

In that word I get such a report of Him that, *without any trying*, I do

believe on Him. And when I go to Him and tell Him so, and act accordingly, I am but confessing by lip and by life that my confidence is reposed in Him.

Behold that worthy One in the place where righteousness has now placed Him, and the next time you say in your heart, "I cannot believe," ask yourself the following questions:—

1st. *What is there lacking in His character* that I cannot trust Him?

2nd. *What has He said* that is so unworthy of my acceptance?

3rd. *What has He done* to sacrifice my confidence in Him?

Let Jesus Himself have your heartfelt answer.

4. My faith is not strong enough.

How many there are who seem much more occupied with the reality of their faith and the genuineness of their conversion than with Christ Himself, the personal Saviour whom

God puts before their needy souls. Whatever be the consequences to *us*, the fact remains the same, that in the gospel God has spoken to us about His Son. "The gospel of God . . . concerning His Son Jesus Christ" (Rom. i. 1-3).

If a great artist were to send one of his paintings to another for inspection, we should not expect the receiver of the picture to go on talking about his own eyesight, and the like, but to express his judgment as to the merits or demerits of the painting. He might treat the picture with indifference, or perchance turn from it with disgust; he might feel constrained to applaud it, or valuing it *very* highly, he might desire to possess it; but in both cases it is the painting and the painter's skill he is thinking of, not of himself or his own refined tastes.

Well, the figure is at best but a beggarly one beside the reality; for in the gospel God puts CHRIST before

you. He has much to say about His blessed, glorified Son, much about the wonderful work He accomplished, and in which you are interested, belonging, as you do, to the class for whom the work was done; for He came to save *sinners*. God asks you for your verdict as to the merits of Jesus. Is He trustworthy or untrustworthy? What have you to say? What think ye of Christ? Can you from your heart say He is worthy? If it were possible for you *outside* the gates of glory, to hear the heavenly choir singing, "Thou art worthy"; would your heart honestly unite with what the countless voices of the blood-washed were singing *inside*? For therein lies the secret of fitness for that glorious dwelling place.

Real faith is believing in the worthiness of the provided Saviour, with a sense that you are lost without Him. All the merits are on *His* side, the guilt and need on *yours*; and this

will be the same in principle to the very end.

Do not stop to question therefore, Is my faith strong enough? Have I really believed? Am I right in calling myself a Christian, and the like? but rather ask, Is the One who died for sinners really worthy of my heart's confidence? Can I do without Him and be at rest? Great faith may bring great comfort to the one who has it, but it does not bring a greater salvation than little faith. "Go in peace" was the Lord's word, both to her who came with a timid touch and to her who came with a bold touch. (Compare Luke viii. 48; vii. 50.) True faith, however feeble, always lays hold upon Christ. It rests upon His precious blood for safety, and allows no other trust to intrude. It flies for shelter to Him as the only door of refuge, and will accept no other offer, however plausible it may be.

The manslayer who reached a

“city of refuge” in the land of Canaan, was not secure because of the greatness or strength of his faith, but because he had reached a refuge of God’s own providing. He might have entered and stood within its gates in greatest fear and trembling, or he might have been there without a shade of doubt or the faintest tinge of misgiving ; but he had reached the refuge, and that was enough, in God’s account, to secure his safety.

A manslayer’s safety did not consist in *believing that he was safe*. He might presumptuously have believed this, stayed at home, and perished. This would not do ; but having availed himself of God’s provision, he was as secure as that provision could make him.

May the gracious Spirit of God direct the reader’s heart to that glorified Saviour at the right hand of God, wearing upon His blessed brow the certain proofs of what *God* thinks of His finished work and peerless Person.

5. Trying to feel satisfied, instead of believing that God is satisfied.

Souls in this state may *think* that they see what Christ has done, but if they *really* understood the nature of His finished work they would not be occupied with *their* satisfaction but rest in God's.

Now *God's* acceptance of the Substitute's work has been abundantly proved. The rent veil, the open grave, the glory that came down to raise the once forsaken Sinbearer out of it, His present place of highest exaltation at the Father's right hand, the glory which shines in His face, the crowns which encircle His brow, all, all assure us that His work has been accepted. Then, added to this chorus of heavenly testimony, are the wondrous words which fell from His own blessed lips, ere He ascended to the Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John xvii. 4).

Then how cheering it is that it is *God's word* which appropriates this work to the sinner. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15 ; see also Rom. v. 6-8).

Let us suppose the case of a prisoner lying in his condemned cell awaiting the fixed and fatal day. A messenger enters with news of importance. "I am sent to tell you," he says, "that someone outside has volunteered to die for you."

How excited the prisoner looks all at once ! How flushed ! and no wonder.

"Offered to die for ME ! Who, who ?" he gasps out, "Who is it ?" Then follows question after question in quick succession.

"Ah ! it sounds too good to be true. Do you think he *really* means it ? and even if now sincere, may he not change his mind after all ?"

"No fear of that," says the

messenger. "It is my privilege to inform you that *he has already died for you!*" "But what of the Government authorities? Is the King satisfied?"

"Yes; your friend was accepted as your voluntary substitute before he went to the scaffold at all; and now that the execution has taken place, His Majesty has sent me to tell you that there is no bar between you and liberty and home. Forgiveness and freedom are, through him who died for you, graciously announced in the King's name."

Now, not only did Christ offer Himself without spot to God for you (see Heb. ix. 14; x. 9), but He "hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God?" (1 Peter iii. 18). Why is it added "that He might bring us to God?" Because God wanted to have us near Himself. And now God has not only declared Himself *satisfied* with the work—doubly satisfied, His

loving heart and holy claims both satisfied—but *glorified* also.

This is of the utmost importance ; for of what avail would any man's death have been for the condemned man if the Throne had not accepted the act of substitution ? [The *criminal's* acceptance of the substitute is of course here supposed.]

Now listen to the word of God (John xiii. 32) “ *If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.* ”

This He did ; for we read :—

1. “ *He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father* ” (Rom. vi. 3).

2. That He was “ *received up in glory* ” (1 Tim. iii. 16).

3. That He is “ *crowned with glory and honour* ” (Heb. ii. 9).

What greater proofs than these could God give that He was satisfied with the work of Christ ? And if *He* is satisfied, should not we be also ? Satisfied, not with ourselves or our

mean doings, but with Christ and the work whereby He brought eternal glory to God, and secured eternal blessing for man.

May the reader be no longer occupied with his or her feelings of satisfaction, but be able to say :—

“ Sweetest rest and peace now fill me
Sweeter praise than tongue can tell ;
God is satisfied with Jesus
I am satisfied as well.”

6. Mistakes in connection with obtaining forgiveness.

In considering the question of the forgiveness of sins it is important, in the first place, to see the real ground of it. If I get God's forgiveness I must surely get it in God's way. Now, it is plain in Scripture that God links our forgiveness with the redemption value of the blood of Christ. “ We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ” (Eph. i. 7).

Two great mistakes on this point seem to be common in the present day. One, that we shall secure forgiveness if we beg hard enough and long enough to induce God to give it us. The other, that we shall be made sure that it is ours through certain inward emotions. The truth is,

1. That it is *secured* for us by the blood of Christ.

2. It is *received* by faith in Him whose blood was shed.

3. That it is *assured* to us by the word of God.

Not that any sober-minded Christian could be other than glad to hear a cry for mercy from the heart and lips of a convicted sinner. But it is not the less important for an anxious soul to see that it is not by his tears and cries that forgiveness is *secured*, but by the blood of Christ, and by His blood alone. "Without the shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). Nor, on the other hand, could we help rejoicing to see

a forgiven sinner's heart overflowing with "a joy too deep for words." But we would remind him that he must have, for the *settled assurance* of forgiveness, something more solid to rest upon than the deepest feelings of joy could afford. How many thousands have, before now, found this out to their sorrow. While the joy and freshness of first love lasts they feel secure; but in learning themselves, their joy ebbs out, and they are left stranded in darkest uncertainty.

We must learn to link our forgiveness with the price which secured it. What solid rest it would give a poor debtor, if he had not only seen the bill settled in his creditor's office, but the very £5 note—which a friend had paid for him—pinned to the page of the ledger where his account was recorded. How boldly he could say, "I am clear of my debt; and haven't been *begged off* by instalments either; nor, to use a common figure, 'let

out on bail ' until a future reckoning. My account has been *cleared off* in full, once for all."

" The trembling sinner feareth
That God can ne'er forget ;
But one full payment cleareth
His memory of all debt.
When nought beside could ease us
Or set our souls at large,
Thy holy work, Lord Jesus,
Secured a full discharge."

7. How can I be " always confident " **when my state of soul is so variable ?**

Our souls are never fully established until we see that our ever-changing practical state has nothing to say to our acceptance before God.

When Abel brought his offering to the Lord—" the firstling of his flock and the fat thereof"—we are told that " he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his *gifts.*" It was not the personal excellence of *Abel* that God looked at

in counting him righteous, but the *excellence of the sacrifice* he brought, and his faith in it. As when a business man takes a cheque to the bank, he gets in full what that cheque is worth. He would not get more if his character were ever so good, nor less if ever so bad. It is not a question of what *he* is worth, either morally or commercially, but what the *cheque* is worth which he brings. It was thus with Abel, and it is thus with every sinner coming to God through Christ. God reckons to the account of every such believer all that *He* knows the work of Christ is worth.

Is it *perfect*?

Yes.

Is it *for ever perfect*?

Yes.

Then the believer's place of acceptance corresponds thereto. Therefore we read, "*By one offering he hath perfected for ever* them that are sanctified;" i.e., those who have faith in Him. (See Acts xxvi. 18.)

Mark, it is not merely "perfect." There is no intermission, no breaks, no intervals when it is not so.

A few years since the writer, in company with a few Christians, drove from the town of Penzance, in Cornwall, to the Land's End. Sitting on the box with the driver, the latter drew his attention to a church in the distance. "That church," said he, "we shall presently pass, and I am told that, between this point in the road and the church, we lose sight of it nine times over." This made the writer curious to put his statement to the test. Presently we descended a small hill and entirely lost sight of the church. Once more we rose to the crest of the next hill, and once more the building could be distinctly seen. Again we dipped into the valley, the church becoming hidden from view; again we reached the summit, and beheld again the church. Thus we travelled on, sometimes losing sight and sometimes catching

a fresh view, until we came within a few yards of the ancient pile, with its peculiar crosses, etc., full in view; having, as the coachman had stated, lost sight of the old building nine times over within that three or four miles.

But why are you telling us this? the reader may enquire. Only for the purpose of asking you a suggestive question; namely,

How often do you suppose the church went up and down, in that short three or four miles drive?

"The church up and down!" you say. "Not once. The ups and downs were with *you*, not with the church."

Exactly. And, let us add, in the variable conditions of soul which you speak of, the ups and downs are with you, not with Christ. There are no ups and downs in God's thought of Christ's personal worth, or of the value of His sacrifice; and if He accepts you on that ground, there can be no ups and downs in your

acceptance either. There is no change in Him above. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and God "hath made us accepted in [Him] the Beloved" (Ephes. i. 6).

If you would know what God thinks of the believer, you must turn the eye to Christ; for "as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17).

A preacher of our acquaintance, who had spent long years in the hopeless endeavour of reaching a kind of perfection in the flesh, at last got set free, and thus expressed himself: "I used to think that *I* must try to be good enough to be accepted, but now I see that it is *Christ* who is good enough to be accepted, and *God accepts me in Him.*"

If our behaviour had anything to do with our title to acceptance, then a flaw in our behaviour would necessarily mean a flaw in our title. But, thank God, the truth is that our

behaviour flows from the knowledge of our place of acceptance before the Father, and not that our acceptance is based upon our behaviour. We are "called saints;" i.e., constituted saints by the calling of God, and then asked to "walk as becometh saints." We are called to behold the manner of love bestowed upon us that we should be called His children, and then told, "as dear children, to walk in love" (1 Cor. i. 2; Eph. v. 3; 1 John iii. 1; Eph. v. 1). To use a figure, God first fills the purse, and then teaches us how to spend what He bestows.

8. The worst of mistakes—deceiving myself.

Of all forms of deception, perhaps self-deception, and especially *religious* self-deception, is most to be feared. The issues at stake are so tremendous that one cannot well be too jealous about it.

But there is one thing certain, namely, that you can only be deceived by the person or thing that you trust. Ananias and Sapphira sought to practise deception upon the apostles ; but Peter was not deceived, for he did not believe them. The serpent whispered a lie into the ears of Eve and, believing it, she was “deceived.” If, therefore, you would escape the terrible consequences of self-deception, beware of the too common snare of self-occupation. Self cannot deceive you if it is not trusted, therefore, we repeat, beware of it. What the heart of man is naturally has been declared by Him, who alone knows it, to be “*deceitful above all things*” (Jer. xvii. 9). Well did Solomon say, therefore, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Prov. xxviii. 26).

One of the West of England banks has adopted a capital motto, and has had it printed on their bank notes, “Weave *truth* with *trust*.” The excellence of this motto lies in the

fact that appearances cannot be trusted. When Eliab, the son of Jesse, came before Samuel, he said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me;" but "outward appearances" could not be trusted. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth" (1 Sam. xvi. 6). The captain of the *Dunbar* thought he was all right, no doubt, as he steered his vessel toward Sydney harbour. But, alas! he mistook the North Head light for the South Head light, and his gallant ship was speedily reduced to a helpless wreck. *Appearances* deceived him. The patriarch Isaac had his misgivings about the one who, with savoury dish in hand and claiming to be Esau, sought his father's blessing, but he thought he might at any rate trust his *feelings*. He did so, and was deceived thereby. Had the patriarch, and the unfortunate captain, woven "*truth*" with their "*trust*," they would not have been thus mistaken.

Does my reader ask, How is the truth to be arrived at? We let Scripture answer, "Thy word is truth" (John xvii. 17). "Thy word is true from the beginning" (Psalm cxix. 160).

Would you make sure against steering your vessel by a false light, and making eternal shipwreck? "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. cxix. 105). "The entrance of Thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (verse 130). Would you have the truth itself without any human adulteration? "Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest *He* reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. xxx. 5, 6). "The truth is in JESUS" (Ephes. v. 21). He said, "I am the truth" (John xiv. 6). "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John i. 17). An old Christian once said, "In coming to

the word of God you will do well to remember three things:—

“ 1. Add nothing to it.

“ 2. Take nothing from it.

“ 3. Change nothing in it.”

Three men in uniform stood talking together in the waiting-room of a country railway station, a policeman, a soldier, and the stationmaster. The policeman looked up to the clock which was hanging there, and exclaimed at the same time (referring to a piece of paper pasted across the face of the clock), “What does that mean?”

“She hasn’t been keeping the time lately,” said the stationmaster, “and being anxious that no one should be deceived by her, I placed that cover upon her face. But if you want the exact time,” he said, bringing his watch from his pocket, “I can give it you. It is just three minutes to train time.”

What a sensible thing, I thought, as I stood by. He has learned by

experience that the clock is not to be trusted, and he treats it accordingly. Oh, that many a self-occupied soul would learn a lesson by this railway official, and write across the feelings and emotions of their own hearts, "Not to be trusted." It is not that our frames and feelings are always wrong. Indeed, we know they are not. A clock that never makes a tick is sure to be right *twice* in twenty-four hours. Nor would we say a word against happy feelings. Nay, there is something wrong in the believer's walk or ways if he does not feel happy. All we say is, If you do not want to be *self-deceived*, do not trust self in any way. Rest not your assurance upon the brightest frame of mind ever experienced, nor upon all your happy feelings put together. Be glad of them if you have them, but as soon as you get occupied with them instead of with Christ, all that is worth keeping about them will vanish, and you will be left chartless

and compassless on a changing sea
of doubt and misgiving.

Our every-day safety is in trust-
fully turning to our gracious Friend
at God's right hand, and saying :—

“ As weaker than a bruised reed,
I cannot do without Thee ;
I want Thee here each hour of need,
Shall want Thee too in glory.”

GEO. C.