

“Unto the Church of God . . . to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.”—1 Cor 1. 2.

# THE CHARTER OF THE CHURCH

Revised Notes of  
AN EXPOSITION OF THE  
FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

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VOLUME I. CHAPTERS I to VIII.



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# THE CHARTER OF THE CHURCH

VOL. 2.—CHAPTERS IX. TO XVI.

DEALS WITH

THE SEAL OF APOSTLESHIP

CLERGY AND LAITY

BAPTISED UNTO MOSES

THE PATH OF OBEDIENCE

EVERY BELIEVER A PRIEST

BAPTISED INTO ONE BODY

*GIFTS OF HEALING, ETC.*

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD

PUBLIC MINISTRY OF WOMEN

RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

CHANGED IN A MOMENT

ANATHEMA MARAN-ATHA

AND OTHER THEMES

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## REVISED NOTES ON FIRST CORINTHIANS.

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### Introduction.

**H**AD not the Epistle to the Romans come before the Epistle to the Corinthians, how very incomplete it would have been! For it is God's way first to bring the conscience and heart into harmony with Himself, into rest in His presence, before He begins to speak to us either as to our individual walk or our collective relationships.

The Epistle to the Romans deals at the outset with the state of every man by nature, and shows us how the grace of God, through the propitiatory death of Jesus the Lord, the shedding of His blood, has come in and met every need of every individual sinner. It reveals God's provision whereby His righteousness is maintained at the same time that the guilty are justified and pardoned. Then follows in chapter iv. that it is not of works, but by faith; so that all boasting is excluded. In chapter v. we see



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how God's grace *abounds* toward us; it is here we get so often that expression, "much more," and we are led on to that climax where it is said, "and we also JOY IN GOD." Nothing can surpass that. Throughout eternity we shall never rise higher than that, to find our joy in God Himself. What a contrast! Instead of groaning afar off under the intolerable burden of a guilty conscience, we are brought to find in that very God, against whom we had so grievously sinned, our rest and joy.

In chapter vi. we are shown our deliverance from our old corrupt Adam—self; and in chapter vii. from the old Husband—the law. Then in chapter viii. we find "no condemnation" to those who are in Christ Jesus and "no separation" from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In chapter xii. we come to practical exhortations as to individual walk and behaviour; but here there is also a very pointed reference to the gathered capacity of the saints (see verses 4, 5, and 6). This passage, I say, speaks to us not merely as *individuals* having peace with God and finding our joy in Him, accepted in the Beloved and having the Holy Spirit dwelling within us; it speaks to us also as members of a body, as having corporate relationships and responsibilities to discharge one towards another as members of the same body.

The line of truth in Corinthians mainly concerns the gathered or corporate capacity

of the saints—the order of the house of God: that in Romans mainly bears upon the individual heart and conscience, nevertheless the assembly character of the saints is distinctly referred to in Romans, even as Corinthians is not without its instructions for the individual. Indeed, the Epistles to the Corinthians are full of precious principles which have a practical bearing upon every department of our life.

I have thought it well to take up this portion of God's Word and go straight through it, believing that in so doing we shall escape the snare of dwelling exclusively on favourite subjects, better maintain the proportion of many-sided truth, and so receive such a variety of instruction that we shall not fail to get profit. Amongst the many courses of lectures and sermons upon the Word of God which I have heard of, I do not at present remember ever having heard of a course of expositions of this epistle. I believe there may be a reason for this. So long as denominationalism is gloried in and clericalism maintained, how is it possible to face the truth that is so prominent in Corinthians?

In order to get blessing to our souls there must be the letting go of all our own opinions and a simple child-like desire to hear the voice of God and to learn His will. Are we learners? Or do we only desire to pick up a few nice thoughts to afford gratification to our minds? Are we going to take our place

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at the Master's feet? He is our Lord and we are His bond-servants. We are His—spirit, soul, and body; His redeemed, His purchased slaves. As individuals we are called to be subject to Him, to own Him Lord in all things. And as gathered ones forming together a little assembly, family, household, who is over it? Who has authority there? "Christ the Son over His own house." Christ is the One whose right it is to speak and to be heard, and who alone has authority to order everything in His own house.

### Chapter I.

The writer of the Epistle begins with his own name, "**Paul.**" He speaks with authority. We might ask, "Paul, who are you? What right have you thus to introduce the subject with your own name?" But Paul was not speaking of or from himself. He was merely a servant, an instrument through whom the Lord was speaking. Thus all the Scriptures, whoever the writer may be, lay claim to our attention as being the very voice of God. This is specially shown in this Epistle (chapter xiv., verse 37): "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

Thus God brings in a test of true spirituality. He tests our thoughts of ourselves.

Some think themselves "perfect" when no one else does. Paul, then, is merely a servant, but he was chosen by the will of God. In this church there were some who questioned his apostleship, and consequently the authority of his instructions to the saints (see 2 Cor. xi.). Therefore he asserts strongly at the outset that he is not an apostle by the will of man; he was not chosen by man, nor through the casting of lots, like Matthias, but he was chosen and set apart for the apostleship by the Lord Himself in a very special way. The signs of an apostle were manifest in him "in all patience and signs and wonders and mighty deeds" (2 Cor. xii. 12), and his character, sufferings, and the fruit of his labours all bore witness to the fact that he was chosen by God.

In this Epistle, then, from the hand of Paul, we have the divine pattern of the house of God. Had I lived at the time of the making of the tabernacle, I might have said to the busy workers, "What pattern are you working after?" They might have answered me, "It is a divine pattern." "But where did you get it?" "We got it from Moses." "And where did Moses get it?" "He got it from Jehovah in the Mount during the forty days he was there alone with God."

Who would dare to interfere with that divine pattern? If God said that around the skirt of the High Priest's garment there

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were to be alternately a golden bel and a pomegranate, who would dare to say there ought to be two golden bells and two pomegranates? The spirit of lawlessness might say, "What about it? it is a non-essential; it is only an ornament." But God had spoken and Israel obeyed; the work was finished "as the Lord commanded Moses" (see Ex. xl. 16-33), and the glory of Jehovah immediately filled the place.

Again God has spoken. Not by Moses, but by one equally chosen to convey His mind to His people, by "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God." Before us in this Epistle lies open the divine pattern and ordering of God's spiritual house, and to alter it or to depart from it is practically to set aside the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to substitute the will and the wisdom of man.

We are dealing with solemn subjects. Nowadays men fancy they may hold what opinions they please; and being their own opinions, they can waive them at pleasure, and care not to suffer for them. But faith knows nothing of mere opinions. Faith has laid hold upon the word of the Lord, and bows to the will of the Lord. That which we have received from God is worth holding firmly and worth suffering for.

Sosthenes is also here mentioned. He was not the writer of the Epistle. But Paul loves with truest courtesy to identify with himself this faithful brother, who was his

companion and fellow-helper, and who had suffered for the Name of the Lord.

2. **"Unto the Church of God."** In speaking to the Ephesian elders he uses the same expression, "feed the Church of God." Again, Peter says, "feed the flock of God" (1 Peter v. 2). It is not feed "your own congregation," but God's assembly. Great as was the apostle's authority and fatherly care for the saints, he never called any church "his Church"; never was he heard saying of any company of saints, "my people." The word translated church (*ecclesia*) literally signifies "the called out." The word is applied to the congregation in the wilderness. They were called out of Egypt, and gathered around Jehovah in the wilderness. So the Church is God's "called out" company called out from the world, and called unto Himself.

2. **"To them which are sanctified in Christ Jesus."** Every one of them was sanctified. If there was an exception, we do not read of such. Paul regarded them as, and believed them to be, an assembly of sanctified ones. That is God's ideal of a church.

The Church of God, moreover, embraced every sanctified one in Corinth. Never let any one of us presume to call the little gathering where we meet "the Church of God"; we will be making a great mistake if we do. The Church of God is a term that embraces all God's children, notwithstanding

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that it is broken up, scattered, mixed up with the world, and as God's corporate witness upon earth has utterly failed. There are some who would arrogate to themselves exclusively the title "the Church of God." Many children of God there might be in the same town members of the Body of Christ, but all who are not included in the circle of *their fellowship* are regarded as outside the Church of God.

It is in this same Epistle that Paul by the Spirit divinely maps out all mankind—the Jew, the Gentile, the Church of God (x. 32). These believers who are not in the circle that claims to be the Church of God, what are they? They are not Jews. They are not Gentiles. They can be only, as the Scripture says, of the Church of God.

We may say that we are "a church"; for there are "the churches of God" (1 Cor. xi. 16), and "the churches of the saints" (1 Cor. xiv. 33). We may form one or many assemblies gathering unto the Name of the Lord; but never let us assume to be what we are not. It is not our business to attempt the reconstruction of the Church of God. God is going to reconstruct it. By-and-by He is going to call out from earth and from the grave every member of the Body of Christ. All will be "gathered together unto Him" in the heavens. Jesus will be "in the midst"—the Centre of the gathering, the Head of the body, the Lord of all. Then shall the world know that the

Father sent the Son, when they see those who witnessed for Him on earth reigning with Him in heaven. But meantime our course is plain. However others may be bound by the traditions of men, our business is subjection to the Lord. We have the divine pattern before us in the Word, and we dare not substitute any other model.

2. "With all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." How strong this is! There is no *narrowness* in God's thoughts, and the apostle in the same spirit here embraces every redeemed soul. Jesus was Lord of Paul and Lord of every believer at Corinth. The Jewish saints at Jerusalem would not eat with the Gentile saints at Antioch, but Jesus was Lord of both. He was their Lord and He is our Lord. Faithfulness to the Lord may lead us into a very separate path, but nevertheless we are to embrace in our hearts every child of God, and seek to be made a blessing to all, however dark, however ignorant, however wilful. A beloved brother once remarked, we should always bear in mind that however great the differences amongst the children of God in spirituality, in attainment, in obedience, yet all these distinctions are small compared to the difference between the *living* and the *dead*, and as another esteemed servant of Christ once said, it is ours to walk with a large heart in the narrow path.



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3. **"Grace unto you, and peace,"** &c. The apostle begins and ends his Epistle with "grace." The way of the apostle in writing to this church is very beautiful. He deals with them severely, yet it is in manifest love. God would have us to be faithful one toward another. He would not have us suffer sin upon our brother without rebuking it. But if we do not in our dealings one with another make it felt that they are the outcome of *love*, we shall utterly fail in attaining our object. See how the apostle seeks to assure them of his love. He says he wrote to them with "many tears." Again he says, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you all, though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved." He breathes out his very rebukes in accents of love, and with tears of love trickling down his face. We would do more good among saints if we dealt with them like this.

And notice that Paul thanks God for them. He was going to deal severely with their sins and errors, yet first he acknowledges the grace of God which he saw in them. If we would be helpful to fellow-saints, it is in this spirit we must act. First, discerning and acknowledging the grace that is in one another, instead of seeking for and dwelling upon one another's faults.

A notable feature of this Epistle is the frequency with which we find the authority of Christ asserted. For example, in these few first verses, notice how often these

words occur, "Jesus Christ our Lord" and "the Lord Jesus Christ." I believe there is deep significance in this; for all the disorder that had crept into the Corinthian Church had arisen through failure to recognise Jesus Christ as Lord among His saints; and all the terrible confusion and apostacy of what is called Christendom come from the same cause—viz., not giving to Christ His own rightful place as Lord in His own house.

Observe that note of thanksgiving in verse 4: "**For the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.**" All the grace which is at our disposal is treasured for us "in Christ Jesus." It is not our place to limit by our unbelief what God's grace can do *in us*, or *for us*, or *by us*. His grace is at all times, and in all circumstances, "sufficient for us." It is called "manifold grace," meeting us at every turn, supplying our every need. He saw evidence of that grace in the Corinthian saints, and therefore he thanks God on their behalf. Whatever there may be in any child of God to condemn or reprove, let us ever seek to see first in such what the grace of God has wrought in them. Some are naturally gentle and refined in their disposition; others are rough, coarse, ill-tempered in their nature as well as by their upbringing; but when we meet with such, and find them not all that they ought to be, let us consider how much worse they were before they knew the

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Lord, and would still have been had it not been for His grace. It is in such a gracious and considerate spirit that we must needs go if we would be helpful to such an one. The beam that is in our own eye must be dealt with before we can effectually deal with the mote that is in our brother's eye. There is all the difference in the world between sitting in judgment on another and stooping down to wash his feet. If my object is to help and cleanse a brother, then I must first, in God's presence, have considered myself lest I should be tempted (Gal. vi. 1). Then there will be something of the gentleness and lowliness of Christ, instead of the pride and severity of nature.

5. **"That in everything ye are enriched by Him in all utterance and in all knowledge."** Mark it! **"ENRICHED BY HIM."** Not enriched by this world's endowments, or by the learning of the schools. All the wisdom of Athens and Corinth could not enrich the Church. They were enriched by the Man at God's right hand—enriched as the members of the body from the Head. Paul had laboured among them and instructed them, but he does not say they were enriched by him; it was all from Christ the Head. Whatever we have of grace, knowledge, or utterance in the things of God it has been got from Christ. There is such a thing as sanctified natural ability, and God can make use of it; but the power and grace to use it must come from

the Head, otherwise it will only do damage. We are very prone to look too much to man, and to put man out of his true place. The most talented, gifted, or spiritual who ministers in our midst is nothing more than the channel through which blessing flows to us from Christ.

If we give that place to the servant which belongs alone to the Master, then the Lord will have to lay aside the earthen vessel in some way or other, for our God is a jealous God, and will have us know that blessing comes alone from Himself.

In the Epistle to the Colossians much is taught us concerning the riches that are in Christ the Head for us the members. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell (Col. i. 19). "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in Him" (Col. ii. 9, 10). "The Head, from whom all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Col. ii. 19).

Thus are our hearts directed to the fulness that is in Christ for us; but notice, that just as it has pleased God to use the lips of redeemed sinners to tell out the gospel of His grace for the salvation of the lost, so it has pleased the same God to use redeemed lips to minister the treasures that are in Christ to the members of His body. It is through the

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mutual ministry of each member to the whole—the passing on of that which each one has received from Christ the Head—that the body is to be edified and knit together.

Satan has his eye upon this truth. He knows that the body—the Church—can only be effectually edified as it receives through the ministry of *every* member, and the effectual working of *every* part that which is supplied for its nourishment from the Head. Therefore the method, so universally adopted in Christendom, of putting all ministry into the hands of one person, and he, it may be, not at all a channel for the communication of the treasures that are in Christ, perhaps not even a child of God, not even a member of the body of Christ at all. Thus the body is starved. Satan will not object to the Church being rich and increased with goods, or with human learning and influence, if only he can deprive the members of the body of Christ of their appropriate nourishment. We do not here speak of *persons*. Many who occupy the position of being the one “minister” in a church are godly, and gifted too, but we speak of the *principle* which limits ministry to one man, albeit there may be others equally qualified by God to edify.

But even where this human system of ministry is renounced, and liberty exists for the Holy Spirit to minister the things of Christ in the assembly as it pleases Him, and by those whom He has fitted, how often

are the supplies of the treasures that are in Christ hindered and cut off through worldliness, carnality, indolence, and pride. How often is that presented as divine ministry which is only the outcome of the ignorance and conceit of religious flesh. It is only as each one is walking in fellowship with God that the whole can be duly edified.

6. **“Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.”** That is to say, the testimony of Christ which came to them in the gospel and through the ministry of the apostle was confirmed in their own experience. The apostle might go away and leave them, but there was “the testimony of Christ” still. It was not dependent for its continuance on the servants of God through whom they had received it, but was maintained and borne witness to by themselves.

There are some places where the saints are so dependent upon some “leading brother,” that if he left them they would probably break up as an assembly and go—I know not where! There can be no higher testimony to the labours of any servant of God than that if he is taken away *he can be done without*. His ministry was of such a nature that it cast the saints upon the living Christ and upon the written Word.

7. **“So that ye come behind in no gift.”** Why should we come behind in any gift? Why should there not be a sufficiency of pastoral and teaching gift in our midst? I do not mean man-made pastors and



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teachers, but God-given shepherds, with hearts to feed the flock in wisdom and in grace. Is not "the oversight" too often rather a self-constituted board of management than a company of spiritual and experienced shepherds.

If we do not look for them from the Head in heaven, how can we expect such! When the lack is felt all sorts of proposals come readily from the carnal mind. "Invite some gifted brother to come and reside among us." "Ordain one or two in every assembly." As though God had committed the ordaining power to any of us!

But what are God's thoughts in the matter? "He gave some apostles," &c., &c. (Ephes. iv. 11). "Enriched by Him in all utterance, so that ye come behind in no gift." I do not now look for miraculous gifts, but I do look for the Lord to supply the need of His people. We ought to look to Him to bestow shepherd hearts to care for the flock, and men able to minister the Word of God, and to edify the Church. But He will be enquired of for these things. How seldom do we hear these gifts prayed for at our prayer meetings? We should be making these things subjects of constant prayer, in the deep consciousness that from no other source but the Lord Himself can they be supplied.

7. "Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Such was the attitude of the Church then. Is it that now?

Is it like the Thessalonian saints, waiting for the Son of God from heaven? Waiting for the revelation of the hidden One? Waiting to behold the Head who ministered His riches to us in the wilderness? Such was the position God put the Church into at the first, to wait as a stranger, pilgrim company between the Cross and the glory; between the sufferings of Christ and His coming again to reign; separated by the Blood of Christ from the world that is hastening on to judgment.

For centuries the Church had almost, if not entirely, lost sight of this blessed hope, but in these latter years the Lord has been stirring up the hearts of His people to a renewed interest in the hope of His return.

Men have attempted to fix dates for His coming. They fixed 1866, but that year passed away without the fulfilment of the promise, and scoffers said again, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Then men talked of 1881 being the year in which He was to come, but hitherto all such predictions have been falsified by the event. I am not told to fix dates, but to watch and to wait with a prepared and expectant heart. Some say there are so many prophecies yet to be fulfilled before He comes that He cannot possibly come for a very long time yet, and that we are certain all to die. But I do not so read the Scriptures. We know not the day nor the hour. He *may* come to-night. It is ours to be ready with girded

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loins and burning lights, like unto men that wait for their lord.

I fear the subject of the coming of the Lord is finding latterly a very secondary place amongst us. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If we are to judge from what the mouth has spoken amongst us during the past few years, our hearts have not been much occupied with the hope of His coming. There are those whose prophetic views lead them to ridicule the idea that Christ *may* come at any time, and those who look thus for His appearing are now dubbed "Any-momentists." Be it so, we still cling to the hope that at any hour He may come, and are prepared to give sufficient reasons for the hope that is in us.

8. "**Blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ;**" that is the day when we shall stand before His judgment-seat to give an account of our stewardship. Shall we indeed be blameless? Shall we be able to look in His blessed face and say, "Lord, Thou knowest I have sought to please Thee!" Will it be said to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant?" Or shall we witness the burning up of our works as of so much "wood, hay, and stubble?" Not our success, not popularity, not to stand well with fellow-Christians, should be our object, but rather to be "a workman approved unto God."

9. "God is faithful, by whom ye were

called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." There is not a grander thought than this in all the Bible! Who could ever have imagined such a thing? None, unless God had revealed it to us.

Has the Lord of Glory taken us into partnership with Himself? Yes, this is the very meaning of fellowship. We are called to be sharers with Him in His rejection by the world, His sorrows and sufferings upon earth, and also hereafter in the glories of His coming kingdom. Do we understand this aright? Fellowship with Christ is the foundation of all Church truth. The Church may be likened to a firm with many partners, and Christ is the head, who is to direct, and control, and supply the means, and then at last the profits are to be shared by all! All the unsearchable riches of Christ are thus ours, made ours by His work accomplished for us on the Cross. He became poor that we might become rich.

Shall we say, "I want the fellowship of His glory," and shrink from the fellowship of His Cross? Such was the spirit that was creeping into the Corinthian Church. They were seeking to reign as kings before their time (chap. iv. 8).

The First Epistle of Peter is rich in instruction concerning this fellowship with Christ in His sufferings now and His glory hereafter (1 Peter i. 11; ii. 21; iv. 12, 13; v. 10). "God is faithful." Well it is we have a faithful God to depend upon. So also in

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1 Peter iv. 19, "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." Fellowship with Christ is sure to bring us into suffering here—into trials which are like a fiery furnace. The closer we seek to walk by the Word, the more will we find our need of a "faithful God"—faithful to hold us up every step of the way, and faithful to recompense us at the journey's end. Yes, the same faithful God who called us out from darkness and the power of Satan, out from our death in sin, into life, and light, and the fellowship of His Son, is the God whose grace is pledged to uphold us all the way.

Such is the gracious preface to the First Epistle to the Corinthians. You may have read many a preface to human books, but you never before read one like that! How deep and precious are the things of God! How much the world is missing by not having its eyes opened to behold His grace! Can we meditate upon these things, which are our eternal portion, without thinking of those who are in darkness and death, without God, and without hope. They pass through many like sufferings to those God's people undergo; they suffer sickness, and pain, and loss, and carry loved ones to the grave, and have not one ray of hope or drop of comfort. Oh! may the thought stir up our hearts to live for Christ! Alas! that a word from our lips,

a look, a step should ever be a hindrance to the reception of that glorious Gospel that cost our God the blood of His own dear Son.

10. **"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ."** With verse 10 begins, as it were, the business of the Epistle. And mark that the Apostle's very first words are a "beseeching" of them "by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ." With what power, with what influence over heart and conscience ought exhortations to come to us which are introduced by such urgent beseeching! Yet is it not the case that throughout Christendom there is no portion of God's Word which receives less serious attention or is more systematically set aside!

10. **"That ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."** In this verse we have unity demanded as regards *mind* and *mouth*. In Acts iv. we find a different aspect of unity. "The multitude of them that believed were of one *heart* and one *soul*." Mark the difference between the two. The first thing is "one heart and one soul" for Jesus our Lord: the next thing is to have "one mind," the mind of Christ; and one mouth speaking only that which expresses the mind of Christ within.

It is vain for us to attempt to have the "one mind and mouth" if we have not the

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“one heart and soul.” It is only the Person of the Lord Jesus who died for us and rose again that can unite our hearts in one. It is only as the love of God, seen in Him, draws our affections to Himself as the one centre of attraction that we can be of one heart and of one soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit, in the early Church every heart was fixed on the risen Christ; therefore not one in that multitude said that aught he possessed was his own. All belonged to Him, all was yielded up to Him; hence the oneness of heart and soul.

But in the First Epistle to Corinthians we have the Apostle dealing with a condition of things far different. Satan had come in to divide and split asunder, and had already introduced the elements which in the end would reduce to fragments the fair fabric of the Church of God.

Before touching upon the broad principles of unity, I would, in the first place, observe that sin is the great disintegrator, the great breaker-up of everything.

Disease is just a type of sin. This is seen typically in the law of leprosy in the Old Testament. The process of disease is to loosen fibre from fibre, to separate particle from particle, until death is caused, and then comes the breaking up of all that binds member to member, and this goes on till bone is severed from bone, and nothing is left but isolated particles of dust. The weakness that results from a few days’

illness, requiring weeks or months to regain the lost firmness of muscle, is caused by this partial disintegration, the result of some poison having entered the system, which we call disease.

Such is sin. It first severs the link between the soul and God. The moment Adam sinned his soul was separated from God. Then after separation from God there follows the separation of friend from friend, of children from parents, natural affection crumbles away, every social relationship is undermined by a gradual process of decay, until in the world before the flood, "the earth was filled with violence." Sin had wrought the overthrow of the whole social fabric, and God in judgment swept it away.

But God has ever before His heart one blessed purpose toward which He is working, the very opposite of what sin has wrought. This we get in Ephesians i. 9, 10, "to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him." Such is God's purpose; but what is Satan's? It is to divide, to break up, to scatter if possible that which God is uniting and gathering together in one.

One of the purposes for which Christ died was, "that He might gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad"; and in fulfilment of this, God is making out of Jew and Gentile "one new man" in Christ Jesus. Yes, the purpose of God is unity, one blessed, glorious, perfect,



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eternal unity. Notice, in passing, how often in the Epistle to the Ephesians you get the word "one." "Gather together in one," "one new man"; again, in chapter iv., "one body," "one Spirit"—seven unities! "ONE" is, as it were, the keynote to the Epistle—it is God's purpose. And in pursuance of this, the mind and purpose of God, the Lord Jesus said, "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth abroad." How important, then, that we act in harmony with the purpose of God—that our service here be a gathering with Christ, and a gathering unto Christ as the one centre and Lord.

Counterfeit has always been one of Satan's most successful ways of opposing the work of God. If God has a unity, Satan will endeavour to get up an imitation unity. After the flood, we read the whole world was of one language and one speech. They had one purpose too, and to effect that they banded themselves together to build a city and a tower, and to make themselves a name lest they should be scattered. But all this was without God; it was Satan's unity, therefore God in judgment, and in mercy too, scattered it to the four winds.

But in the last days Satan will again work on the principle of unity. Turn to Isaiah viii. 9, "Associate yourselves, O ye people." "Association" is the great idea of the age in which we live. The universal belief is that "union is power"; hence associations of

every kind, unions, clubs, &c. But only God's purpose shall stand. The unity that He has purposed shall be brought about in the end, and every other association must perish. Further down in the same chapter (Isa. viii. 20), we get the only principle on which real divine unity can be maintained. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." This corresponds exactly with the beseeching voice of the apostle in 1 Corinthians i.: "That ye all speak the same thing." But how is this unity of speech to be secured? Only as each one speaks in accordance with the Word of God.

Another glance at Satan's unity. In Revelation xvii. 13, we read concerning the ten kings of the last days, that "these all have *one mind* . . . these shall make war with the Lamb." Such is the end of this world's associations, enmity against God and the Lamb.

The same satanic unity is witnessed again in Acts vii., where it is written that, at the stoning of Stephen, "they ran upon him with one accord." Just as by the Spirit of God the multitude of them that believed were of one heart for Jesus, so the multitude that resisted the Spirit of God were of one heart in their purpose of destruction; it was the unity of the spirit of Satan.

We might follow out this view of truth much further, but it is well that we should

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see clearly the principles that are at work in the world. How important it is in these days of the mighty energy of the spirit of Satan that the children of God should not be ignorant of his devices. That they should not be found in anywise furthering Satan's plans to break up every effort at divine unity, and construct a unity of his own; but rather intelligently working in with the glorious purpose of God, which shall be perfected in the ages to come, to the glory of Him who planned it and wrought it out.

From this beseeching exhortation it is evident that it is no light matter that the children of God should all speak the same thing; that to be speaking different things, contrary the one to the other, each holding and propagating his own opinions, is not the mind of God.

There is unity in the membership of the human body, and yet what variety! Again, it is written, "the heavens declare the glory of God." We look up to the sky at night, and what at once strikes us is the variety; but, at the same time, what unity! What harmony!

As we sing together there is harmony and yet variety; four different parts can be taken by different voices, yet all can harmonise together in one perfect chord. But let a note be struck that is out of tune, and we no longer call it *variety*, it is discord.

So in the Church of God. It is a unity,

but there is variety also. Variety there ought to be; discord there ought not to be. Harmony is what God desires. All speaking the same thing, because all speaking according to the Word of the Lord. All of "one mind," because all having "the mind of Christ."

There might be a denomination of Christians all of one mind, having articles of faith signed and adhered to by every member; but this, instead of being God's unity, might be brought about by Satan's device. God's unity is where God's mind is the mind of each one, and where God's Word is the word of each one. Nothing less than this is divine.

I would like to refer to a few other Scriptures bearing on this subject to show what importance God attaches to this manifested oneness, and how essential it is that it be sought after and prayed for by us who are His children.

Romans xv. 5, 6: "Now, the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one to another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God," &c.

Mark where like-mindedness is to be found, "according to Christ Jesus." Only as we have His mind, His thoughts, His spirit, and follow His example, can we be so like-minded as to glorify God "with one mouth."

2 Corinthians xiii. 11: "Finally, brethren,

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farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you." It is important to see these words coming in at the end of these two Epistles. They contain two couplets of exhortation: first as to our individual souls, "be perfect," *i.e.*, be sincere, be straight up and down, be transparent; then, be of good comfort. The second couplet concerns the saints as gathered together, "Be of one mind, live in peace."

But some one perhaps has the thought, it is best to "agree to differ"; a common thought, and perhaps well meant, but not of God. Dare we agree to differ where GOD HAS SPOKEN? He says, "Be of one mind." Are we willing to bow before God, saying in our hearts, "Lord, I have no mind of my own, and I want to have no mind of my own; but show me Thy mind in Thy Word." God will indeed show us His mind if we are willing to bow to His will. "If any man be willing to do His will, he shall know" (John vii. 17).

Philippians i. 27: "Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel." Chapter ii. 2, "Fulfil ye My joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Chapter iii. 15: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." This

is not each one holding his own opinions and perhaps sinking for a time existing differences. Paul sought more than a temporary unity, that each one might have the mind of the Master, and speak the truth of the Lord.

1 Peter iii. 8: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another."

Many other Scriptures might be referred to, but these will suffice to show how God's desire for real, practical, manifested unity among His children is breathed throughout the Scriptures.

Whilst in the Church of God there will be found the weak and the strong, the babe and the experienced father in Christ, distinctions and varieties that are right, and which harmonise together, yet ought we to grieve and mourn over every instance of difference of mind, and speech, and judgment? God would have us content with nothing less than being "of one heart and soul," of "one mind and mouth."

But the exhortation is stronger still, "that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

It is not merely having got the length of *putting up with one another*. How perfectly every bone, and joint, and muscle, and nerve in the body is joined together! What pain is caused even by the separation of a hair from the skin! We are thus indeed, by God's grace, one in Christ; but Satan has succeeded in getting many to accept it quite

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as a doctrine that it is not intended that we should be **one** in the eyes of the world. Nor indeed are we taught in Scripture that a united Church will be seen again on earth as it was in Pentecostal times. When the Lord comes and gathers His redeemed to Himself in the skies, then will the pearl of great price, the glorious unity of the Head and the members, be seen. Then there will be diversity, and yet unity—variety, and yet harmony. Every saint will reflect the likeness of Christ, and every heart will beat in loyal subjection to His will. That is the unity God delights in. But though it may not be realised till the appearing of our Lord Jesus, be it ours meantime to learn His mind, to drink in His Spirit, and to be subject to Him as our Lord in all things.

11. "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you." The house of Chloe are Paul's informants as to the state of things at Corinth. This was not evil speaking or backbiting. It was not exposing to others the faults of brethren to gratify a corrupt nature. It is quite a different thing to make known an evil to a wise and godly one with shepherd heart in order that it may be dealt with according to God.

Oftentimes there is something wrong in an assembly; some root of bitterness is springing up. It is known to many of the younger ones, and they talk about it one to

another until it spreads, and many become defiled; whilst those who would deal with it faithfully are never informed of it, but rather kept in the dark. But whenever Paul was informed of what was going on at Corinth, he went straight to the mark at once, and is not afraid to name the house of Chloe as his informants.

12. "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." By comparing verse 12 with chapter iv., verse 6, we learn that the parties in the Corinthian Church were not specially attaching themselves to Paul or to Apollos; but Paul, with his usual tact and delicacy, avoided mentioning the names of those who had been leaders of division, and in a figure transferred the whole to himself and Apollos. If it would be so wrong to form sectarian divisions around such names as Paul and Apollos, how much worse to be taking sides with men who had neither their authority nor their grace!

Now mark the Apostle's answer in verse 13, "Is Christ divided?" Compare this with chapter xii., verse 12, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." A division in the Church of God is in the sight of the Apostle, and in the mind of the Spirit, equal to a rent in the Body of Christ. That is the way God wants us to see it. All denomi-



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nationalism, whether it be Romanist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian—whatever it be—is, to our shame, a breaking up of the Body of Christ, accomplished through the subtlety of Satan. Not that the Body of Christ can be really eternally broken or deprived of a single member. The whole elect company *shall* be gathered, the “one new man” to fill the new heavens and the new earth. God’s purpose shall stand. But Satan’s object in the meantime has been accomplished, by getting that which is *one* in the sight of God broken up into fragments in the eyes of men; that which should have been separated unto God mingled with the world, and God’s truth and character and purposes belied and misrepresented.

Who was Paul or who was Apollos? Were they not mere instruments in God’s hands? What a dishonour to Christ the Head to say, “I am of Paul,” as though Paul had been crucified for some, and Christ for others! And yet even to this day men call themselves by party names, thus practically denying the grand truth of the *unity* of all believers in Christ Jesus. And are there not those who say without hesitation, “I belong to the Brethren”? I met one lately who said, “I once belonged to the Brethren, but I don’t now.” I asked him, “But do you not now belong to Christ?” “Oh! yes,” he replied. “Then,” I said, “you cannot help being still one of the Brethren.” We may imagine we have come out from sectarianism

to own the One Lord, the One Head, and the One Body, and yet we may carry with us sectarianism deeply rooted in our hearts. Whilst obedience to the Word of the Lord may shut us up to a separate path from other Christians where few may care to follow with us, yet never may that interfere with our holding and owning the blessed truth that all believers are one—one with us—in the risen Christ.

13. **“Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptised in the name of Paul?”** I dare not even say, “I of Christ” any more than “I of Paul,” lest by that I should seem to imply that others of the children of God are not as really “of Christ” as I. Thus the question, “Is Christ divided?” or **“were ye baptised in the name of Paul?”** goes right to the root of the error. The Apostle is not here making light of God’s ordinance of baptism. He is thanking God that it was so ordered by the Lord that only a very few had been baptised by him personally. Peter in Acts x. did not himself baptise, but commanded them to be baptised, and this must, therefore, have been done by the “certain brethren” who accompanied him from Joppa. We do not even know their names. Thus it is evident that Apostles did not do everything themselves. The wise thing is to see that each one is being led on to do whatever service he is able to perform to the glory of God. Paul was not sent specially to baptise, but

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to preach the Gospel. Nevertheless he did baptise some, showing that he did not set aside the Lord's will in this matter, although his life-work was worthily to proclaim the Gospel of God's grace, leaving that to be done by others which they could do as well as he. If, as some now say, the ordinance of baptism belongs to another dispensation, would Paul have baptised with his own hands even a few? or would he have referred to it, and base such important and practical teaching upon it as he does in Romans vi. and Colossians iii., both which epistles are so evidently the heritage of the Church.

18. **"For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."** Now, as is his way in many of his Epistles, he glides into the subject before him. He foresees that the principles at work in Corinth would develop into sectarianism, and ripen at last into that terrible hydra-headed monster which Christendom has become. He prepares the axe to lay it to the root of the evil, and the first thing he attacks is *man's wisdom*.

The preaching of the Gospel was not to be **"with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect"** (verse 17). As it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this

world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

20. **"The scribe"** was one among the Jews instructed in the letter of the Scriptures. **"The disputer"** may refer to those among the Greeks who contended upon questions of philosophy or science. But God did not choose these as His instruments. He rather chose those who in the eyes of men were weak and despised. Neither was it His purpose to reveal Himself to the wise of this world. The blessed Son of God our Master and Example did not fret because the wise rejected His testimony. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. xi. 25).

21. God has written folly upon all the wisdom of this world by the Cross of Christ. **"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."** That is, by what the world calls foolishness—viz., "the preaching of the Cross." Whether wise or foolish, rich or poor, male or female, God has set aside all distinctions in the flesh, and saves all that believe. And this He does through "the foolishness of preaching." God did not mean by this that His servants should preach foolishly, though in the eyes of the world it may appear folly to expect such mighty results from such instrumentality. The religious Jew and the wise Athenian were alike stumbled at the preaching of the

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Cross, nevertheless it was God's appointed means whereby sinners were to be saved.

22. **The Jews** required a sign; but they got none save the sign of the prophet Jonas, for they had bad hearts, and signs will never convince hearts that are filled with enmity to God. **The Greeks** sought after wisdom, but they could find nothing in the Gospel to gratify their craving for philosophic speculations.

23. "**We preach Christ crucified.**" Not Christ the wise One, or Christ the great One. This was what stumbled the Jew and appeared folly to the Greek. "But unto them which are called." Though Jew and Gentile might alike by nature reject God's message, yet God has said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," and His mighty quickening voice is heard in hearts of every sort and degree; called by the grace of God, they hear and believe what stumbles the Jew and is foolishness to the Greek, and through believing they are saved. I often think of Paul, after preaching at Athens on Mars Hill, turning away from that centre of the world's learning, perhaps down-hearted, as some mocked, and others put him off with a promise to hear him again; but God was with him, and some clave unto him and believed. But who were they? Dionysius—an Areopagite, one of the wise, the learned, but called by the power of God, and saved by what was folly to others;—and a certain woman named Damaris. We know not who

she was—perhaps a careless passer-by. To these Christ was the power of God and the wisdom of God.

“We preach Christ crucified.” That is what met our need; whether we were ignorant or educated, whether religious or irreligious; when we saw ourselves to be guilty sinners, what was it but the story of Christ crucified that gave us peace!

But what is the meaning of the Cross of Christ? I do not think any of us has sounded its depths—it will take eternity to do that, but I want you to consider for a little its deep meaning. And, first, the Cross of Christ brings out *what man is*. God meant it to do that. It manifested two things about man, his enmity against God and his unrighteousness. Behold the Son of God! He goes in and out among men for thirty years. For three years He laboured incessantly in the midst of Israel—in patient, unwearying grace—doing mighty works of love, leaving behind Him a track of light and rejoicing at every step. What was the result of all this love? The multitude surrounded the Lord of Glory, crying, “Away with Him, away with Him; crucify Him, crucify Him.” Thus was manifested what was in man. And this is what was in you and me by nature. Although we were brought up to respect the Name of Jesus, yet our hearts said, “Away with Him.” We desired Him not.

Shall the Holy One, against whom not a

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single accusation could be proved, be condemned to death? Shall the innocent be judged as guilty? Yes, He is condemned as a criminal to be executed. The murderer is set free according to the people's desire; and the Just One is crucified between two thieves. Was there ever unrighteousness like that? Oh, it is the Cross that tells me what I am. That shows me my unrighteousness as God sees it. That is the sort of creature which God has loved and forgiven.

But the Cross of Christ not only reveals what man is, it also manifests what God is. It is blessed to see God's love brought out alongside of man's enmity and guilt—

"The very spear that pierced His side  
Drew forth the blood to save."

See that Holy, Blessed One nailed to the Cross; does He cry for vengeance on His enemies? No; it is, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Does He utter the prayer that would have summoned to His deliverance more than twelve legions of angels? No; "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." And in all this He is the expression of the love of God to rebel man. "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). Then there was the pouring out of His soul unto death in atonement for sin, that the guilty might be pardoned and saved. And in that

**Cross** I see, not only the love of God, but combined with that, His infinite holiness. Infinite love and infinite holiness meet together there. The God of Calvary is not a God who could deal loosely with sin, passing it over lightly. On no other ground could He grant forgiveness than on the atoning Blood of His own dear Son.

I believe we shall get a sight of what sin is when the vials of wrath are poured out upon this earth, and when the smoke of the torment of the lost ascendeth up for ever and ever, but never shall we get such a sight of its exceeding dreadfulness as at the Cross of Christ. When the sun was darkened; when the cup of wrath was given Him to drink; when that exceeding bitter cry was wrung from His broken heart, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" When I see the emptied bosom of my God and crowds of angels that surround His throne, as it were in silent amazement looking on, whilst He who knew no sin was made sin for us—it is there that I learn what sin really is, and how a Holy God abhors it.

Thus it is that in the Cross of Christ, God and man are brought together. What love and holiness in God! What enmity and unrighteousness in man! Oh, wondrous Cross! Oh, wondrous death! Let us bow and worship in the presence of the mystery—  
**CHRIST CRUCIFIED!**

23. "Unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolish-



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**ness."** To show that Christ crucified was really "a stumbling block" to the Jews, turn to John xii. 31-34. Here we find the real difficulty which presented itself to the Jewish mind. Christ had just spoken concerning His death, and indicated even the manner of it in terms which they well knew meant crucifixion. They had heard out of the law that Christ was "to abide for ever"; that of His kingdom there was to be no end; length of days for evermore were His portion. How then could He be the Christ, or the Messiah, if He was to die on a cross? So they asked for a sign. Did they not get signs in abundance? Every miracle He wrought was a sign. Abundant evidence there was that He could be none other than the Son of God, "but though He had done so many miracles before them, they believed not on Him" (John xii. 37).

A solemn word was that spoken to them by the Lord (Luke xvi. 31), "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

No amount of demonstration will ever save a soul. It is only by the mighty quickening power of the Holy Spirit, opening the understanding, and getting right into the very core of a man's being, as by the thrust of a sword into the heart, that salvation can be effected. Whilst we seek in all simplicity and clearness to preach Christ crucified and risen from the dead, and

exalted a Prince and a Saviour at God's right hand, oh! let us never forget that we are dependent on the Spirit of God to carry that message in power to the unsaved, and that only as God thus gives testimony to the word of His grace can our preaching be blessed. Clearness of preaching is good, but clearness will not save souls. We are cast on the Living God alone for the increase.

We have seen how a suffering, crucified Messiah was a stumbling block to the Jews. They did not see that Messiah was to die and rise again, nor would they receive it. Resurrection is the key that unlocks the mystery, and so the Lord told them, "Ye do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."

But this was not the difficulty of the Greeks. They sought after wisdom. This poor world has all along in its blindness been groping after wisdom, whilst rejecting that Gospel of God's grace wherein the wisdom of God is pre-eminently displayed. It did not come to them in the way their proud hearts liked. It came not by the learned, the educated, the great ones of the earth. It came to them into the midst of their learning and philosophy with nothing that could commend it to them according to the flesh. It was only the story of one Jesus of Nazareth, who lived and died in the land of Canaan, who was crucified as a malefactor between two thieves, then laid in

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a sepulchre and sealed, and afterwards reported to have risen from the dead.

Might not an Athenian say in the pride of his heart, "Is this the sort of preaching that is to save my soul and give me everlasting blessedness? What folly!" Thus they rejected "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God," and clung to their own wisdom, science, and philosophy. But whether we are addressing the poor and ignorant, or the rich and learned of this world, we have only one story to tell. It is all about Christ. It is God's message, it is God's power unto salvation "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4).

25. **"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men: and the weakness of God is stronger than men."** Jesus was "crucified through weakness" (2 Cor. xiii. 4). In the cross it seemed to the world as if God was defeated and the enemy triumphant, but "*the weakness of God is stronger than men,*" for now the crucified One "liveth by the power of God."

26. **"Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, but God hath chosen the foolish things."** The preachers of the Gospel were not the wise or great of this world; the Lord did not choose such, but fishermen from the shores of Galilee. "When they perceived that

they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts iv. 13). And this was God's appointment, in order that none might glory in man; and so it is still, the men who are most mightily used by Him are very commonly those who have but little of this world's learning, but their power is that they have "been with Jesus."

Satan's aim has been to get "Christianity," as it is called (but the word is not a scriptural one), allied with the wisdom, philosophy, and science of the world; allied with the state and the crown; thus to strip it of its Christ-like garb of lowliness, and to give it a standing and a respectability among men. In short, to lift off the reproach of the cross from the followers of Christ. But it cannot be. It is Satan's plan to remove the cross from the disciple by beguiling the disciple from Christ.

And accordingly, in all this age, the majority of God's people are the poor. Not all; as the Countess of Huntingdon once said: "I thank God for the letter M. He has not said: Not *any* noble, but, not *many* noble." God has His witnesses among all classes. In the House of Lords as well as among the poorest. As in Israel of old, the offering of first fruits contained a handful from every field, so God will have among His first-fruits a specimen of every sort, from every kindred and nation, and people, and tongue,

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to show forth His praise. His object in choosing that the bulk of His people are and always have been the poor and ignorant is that there should be no glorying in the flesh.

If there ever was a time when the flesh was gloried in, it is now. It is a day of hero-worship—political, literary, martial, scientific heroes. Every class of men has its heroes and its hero-worshippers. Let us who are the Lord's beware of this sin, beware of glorying in the flesh. Whenever we begin to glory in man, God will have to blow upon it. If saints begin to glory in God's servants, then God will have to lay them aside. I believe that many a time when a prominent servant of God has fallen into sin, or been removed from his sphere of service by weakness, it has been permitted by God in His wisdom because His people were glorying in the man. It was the world's spirit of hero-worship, and God must blast it.

Whilst we ought to thank God for help and blessing received through any servant of His, let us beware of glorying in the man. Nearly all divisions in the Church of God have circled round men that have been gloried in. The Cross of Christ lays the axe at the root of all this. We have One to glory in, even Christ Jesus the Lord! He is the treasure-house of all wisdom. Whatever we have received from man has come through the man only as the channel, but from Christ as the source.

As I pass on through this Epistle, I would like to linger here and there on special verses; and this is one of these—

30. "**Of Him are ye**"; compare with this, "We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." It is not merely, as the creation is, "*of Him*," but in a special and deeper sense every child of God is "*of Him*." You will find this in Hebrews ii. 11: "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Just as Christ, the Sanctifier, is "*of God*," so are we, the sanctified, who believe in Him, "*of God*." The Father is "bringing many sons to glory." Christ is the first-begotten among many brethren, and He is not ashamed to call us poor feeble ones His brethren. It is wonderful grace in Him to call us by such an honourable name; but He uses the term not simply in condescension, but because of the believers' personal dignity as begotten of God: children of His own Father, as He said after His resurrection, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, unto My God and your God." Therefore, let us not degrade that precious name "brethren" into a sectarian title. The Lord Jesus looks down upon every one redeemed by His blood and says, "They are My brethren; and we are to know and to own every believer as a brother or sister, because all are "*of God*."

30. "**Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus.**" What depth of meaning is treasured in these

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words, "in Christ Jesus." In the Epistle to the Ephesians, you will observe how often these words occur, "in Christ," "in Christ Jesus," "in Him." It is absolute unity; it is that we are a part of Christ; the Head and the members are one. God does not look on us apart from His Son. In His sight we are for ever identified with Christ. Therefore each believer can say, "I am crucified with Christ," "I died with Christ," "I was buried in the grave of Christ," "I am quickened in the life of Christ," "I am glorified in the glory of Christ, and will soon be with Him in that glory." "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

30. **"Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."** What is He made unto us? He is raised from the dead, and seated at God's right hand. What is He to us? He is everything to us.

I. He is made of God unto us wisdom. Christ is the wisdom of God. Read Ephesians i. 7, 8: "He has abounded to us in all wisdom and prudence." The world's wisdom has ever been vainly seeking for man blessing in the flesh, but over the wreck of human wisdom the wisdom of God shines forth in Christ Jesus.

The grand redemption-work of Christ crucified and raised from the dead is the very concentration of the wisdom of God. The salvation proclaimed through Him

abounds in "wisdom and prudence," and springs from the deep counsels of God planned from eternity.

God is "the only wise God." All wisdom emanates from Him. When God planned His salvation work, He did not only gratify His love and mercy, but He did it in wisdom and prudence. He considered all the interests that were involved in taking a rebel from the pit of his own sins and setting him as a child at His own table, an accepted worshipper before His throne. All is counselled for in Christ. "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." All the wisdom that we can possibly need is in Him; and surely we may be content to have it so.

Shall the Church of God pass by the treasures that are in Christ and betake itself to human learning or tradition for wisdom? Read Colossians ii. 8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in Him." Read also Colossians iii. 11, 16: "Christ is all, and in all." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Mark in these verses how God casts us upon Christ for wisdom, and how wisdom is to come to us through the word of Christ. Read 2 Timothy i. 7: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and



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of love, and of a sound mind"; and in connection with that look at Isaiah xi. 1-3. In these verses we have the essential characteristics of the Spirit of God, and that is the Spirit which God has given to dwell in each one of His children; not only the spirit of power and of love, but of wisdom and counsel, and of a sound mind. I know of nothing more miserable than the folly of Christians. Truly, as the Lord Jesus said, "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." With the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, and with access to all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are in Him, why then should we be fools? God meant us to be fools in the eyes of the world, but He never meant us to be a foolish people. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." "The wisdom that cometh down from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." How beautiful is the wisdom of God! May God grant us much of this wisdom. It is not in the flesh. The carnal mind cannot acquire it; it is from above; it cometh from God, and is ever available to the prayer of faith.

II. Christ is also made of God unto us **RIGHTEOUSNESS**. "We are made the righteousness of God in Him." Standing before God in Christ, He sees us righteous in His own righteousness; as John Bunyan said,

"My Righteousness has been in heaven for 1800 years." The righteousness of God is "unto all," and it is "upon all that believe." Just as I have to get my wisdom from Christ, even so have I to get my righteousness from Christ. I am to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, but I can only do so as I am abiding in Christ, for without Him we can do nothing. Is there such a thing as an unrighteous Christian? Yes, plenty. There are many who have trusted in the Blood of Jesus, but who are not living righteously before their fellow-men. Let us ask ourselves, Are we so living before the world that no one can point their finger at us and say, "That person wronged me"? It is a poor thing for me to be preaching God's righteousness if I am not showing that righteousness practically in my life. If the testimony of the life gives the lie to the testimony of the lips, how then can the word preached be commended to the consciences of men? People will scout the doctrine of imputed righteousness, and say with a sneer, "Let us see it in your life?"

It was by faith in Jehovah of Israel that the saints of other days "subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness." How contrary to the thoughts of man to bring together two such diverse results of faith.

Does some one say, "I would like to subdue a kingdom by faith"? Well, that is no greater a miracle than in spite of the

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world, the flesh, and the devil, to live righteously in this evil age. Only by faith can either the one or the other be accomplished.

III. Christ is also made unto us "SANCTIFICATION." The meaning of the word is separation unto God. All of us by nature were separated *from* God; but now in Christ not only are we made the wisdom and righteousness of God, but we are also sanctified, or set apart for God. Being sanctified to God once and for ever in Christ Jesus, it is the will of God that we live a sanctified life, a life set apart for God Himself. How am I to be enabled to do this? Only through Him who is made of God unto me sanctification. Just as I am living by faith on Him, feeding on His Word, walking in communion with Him, will I be really and practically set apart for God. In what measure am I to be set apart for God? In the same measure as Christ was. There is no limit to this. To what extent are we to live for God? Altogether for God; as it is written, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Is it hard and grievous to serve Him, or do we account it our greatest joy and delight? We have a good God, a gracious and compassionate Father, who wants us to live in the constant enjoyment of His love. This is a sanctified life.

IV. Finally, Christ is made of God unto US REDEMPTION.

Am I foolish by nature? then Christ is

WISDOM for me. Am I guilty and unjust by nature? then Christ is RIGHTEOUSNESS for me. Am I separated from God to the devil's service by nature? then Christ is SANCTIFICATION for me. Am I under the power of sin, and corruption, and death by nature? then Christ is REDEMPTION for me.

The redemption that is in Christ Jesus takes me from the power of Satan and the grave, to present me without spot before the throne of God for ever.

Oh, what consolation we have in Christ Jesus our Lord. May it be our desire henceforth that, depending upon His grace, our whole life may be one entire offering up of thanksgiving unto Him; that according as it is written, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

## Chapter II.

"HOWBEIT we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought."—1 Cor. ii. 6.

Paul was a man of education, such as became a Roman citizen. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; and, as may be inferred from his address on Mars Hill, he was acquainted with Grecian literature. But when he came to Corinth—the headquarters of man's learning and refinement—he laid aside as useless, and worse than useless, all

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the wisdom and oratory that as a man in the flesh he had acquired and gloried in. He determined not to know anything among them save "**Jesus Christ, and Him crucified**" (verse 2). Man's wisdom and elocution, which he calls "excellency of words," could not help; they could only tend to obscure "the testimony of God," therefore his determination to confine himself to that which is embraced in this epitome of the Gospel, "**Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.**" Had you been one who listened to his preaching you would have come to the conclusion that Paul knew very little upon any other subject. That was the unvarying burden of his testimony: a Christ at God's right hand, who was crucified on Calvary. The world, with all its wisdom and religiousness, with all its guilt and folly, had been crucified to him and he to it, and so he says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi. 14).

Nowadays, knowledge, learning, eloquence are sought after; and that is popular preaching which pleases the ear by a display of mental culture, but leaves the conscience untouched. The world says "knowledge is power," and there may be some truth in that, but the knowledge we want in declaring the truth of God is the knowledge of the crucified One, and the power we want is power with God. Then God will use us in His service, not merely in the conversion of sinners, but also in gathering the saved around the Lord

Jesus as their centre. Paul wrought with God, and according to the mind of God, and therefore he was mightily used.

We read in Acts vii. 22 that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." He went forth in His own strength to deliver his brethren, expecting they would understand that he was chosen of God to be their deliverer, but he met with nothing but disappointment. In the work of God the wisdom of Egypt could not help him; mighty words and deeds were of no avail. He had to be taken by God to the desert, there—during forty years of divine discipline—to unlearn all he had learned, to find that he was only a poor, weak stammerer; and thus trained in the school of God, he is sent forth in the power of God to deliver Israel.

Our lack of human wisdom and learning has never hindered us in the work of God: not that we would undervalue learning in its own proper sphere, as, for instance, in the translation of the Scriptures into our own or hundreds of other languages, but God can use our weakness and our foolishness to confound the might and wisdom of this world. Witness the case of the man born blind in John ix. See him surrounded by enraged and wily adversaries, endeavouring to turn him against the One who had opened his eyes. But ignorant and feeble though he was, and contemptible in their eyes, yet was he more than a match for them all. He

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stuck to what he knew: "Whereas I was born blind, now I see." And how often still has the testimony of a feeble, ignorant, inexperienced convert been used of God when he testified only that which he knew! "One thing I know, Jesus has saved me. He loved me. He died for me. He lives to save me to the uttermost. I know my sins are all forgiven. I know, on the authority of the Word of God, that I have everlasting life." To go forth in the power of the Holy Ghost with a testimony like that is better than all the excellency of speech or wisdom of words that the schools of human learning can impart.

3. **"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."** What a picture this is of the man who is so often styled the great Apostle of the Gentiles! Many a time he was "cast down" and "perplexed"; enduring the sharpness of the thorn in his flesh, and so beset with the enemy around that, doubtless, he once would have departed from Corinth in despair, had not the Lord specially revealed Himself to him in a vision, saying, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city?" When he was weak, then was he strong; strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, although in himself like a reed trembling in the wind. But why did the Apostle tremble? Was it not that, conscious

of the solemn responsibility laid upon him, he trembled lest by any means "the testimony of God" should be marred.

God appointed of old that His altar should not be made of hewn stones. No tool of man was to be lifted up upon it; no grove was to be planted near it; no tree was to cast its shadow over it; nothing was permitted to intrude that would attract the eye, and draw it away from the bleeding sacrifice thereon. The Apostle understood the meaning of all this. He knew the simplicity which is in Christ. When he gathered the converts together unto Him he appointed no ornate ritual, no incense and vestments. His preaching was adorned by no learning or oratory; all was in keeping with the testimony of a crucified Christ; all was perfect simplicity.

The Church of Rome, with its gorgeous cathedrals, its splendid services, its enchanting music, its elaborate ritual, is the headquarters of apostasy from the simplicity that is in Christ. But are not the Protestant Churches following in her track? Do we not see around us, on every hand, that the simplicity of the apostolic testimony has been departed from?

4. **"Enticing words of man's wisdom"** may be required to please the ears of men, but such was not the Apostle's object. His addresses were not philosophic essays, got up to attract the scientific and the learned. His speech was plain, but it was "in de-



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**monstration of the Spirit and of power."**

And this is still what is required in the preaching of the Gospel. Let us seek for grace from God to put the Gospel very simply and plainly before the hearers, so that the weakest and most ignorant may understand. All this is right and necessary; and yet, be it ever so plain and simple, it is only the Spirit of God that can *demonstrate* its truth to the understanding, and heart, and conscience of the sinner. During "the Revival" of 1859, many as they listened to the preaching were struck down and rendered insensible. By some this was declared to be the work of the Spirit of God. But I do not find in Scripture that the Spirit of God ever so works. I do not believe that to have been the work of the Spirit of God, but rather Satan's opposition to the work of God's Spirit. The demonstration of God's Spirit is not in noise and outward excitement and tumult. It is the bringing home to the consciences of men in living power, by the Word of God, the grand truths of sin and salvation. Pray for those who preach the Gospel, that they may be kept clear of Satan's snares, that they may not mar by "enticing words" the testimony of God, but preach in all its fulness the truth of Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

5. "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." The Apostle was very jealous lest the faith of those to whom he preached

should stand in anything short of "the power of God." It is good for our own souls to deal with the awakened—it is wonderfully refreshing—but there is a danger connected with it against which we would do well to be on our guard. It is possible to press and reason with one, plying them with text after text, until we get them to admit—as they would admit the truth of a mathematical problem—that Jesus died for sinners, therefore He died for them, and therefore they are saved and have everlasting life. But let us take care that, whilst seeking to meet every difficulty, and make plain the truth of the Gospel from the Word of God, we are ever casting the soul of the enquirer upon God, so that, in receiving the Word, they receive it, not as the word of man, but as the Word of God to their own souls. (See 1 Thess. ii. 13.) See that the "believing" is indeed a transaction between their soul and God. What is the value of a profession of conversion if there be not a personal dealing with God Himself and committing of the soul to a living Saviour as the result of believing "the Word of the truth of the Gospel."

Remember the case of the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip spoke to him—an anxious, enquiring soul—and pointed him to Christ, the Lamb of God. Immediately after, the servant of the Lord was caught away by the Spirit. The Ethiopian was left alone with God and His Word; and he went on His

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way rejoicing, not in Philip, but in God. The Spirit had demonstrated to his soul that He of whom he read in Isaiah liii. was Jesus, who had died for him, and in Him he trusted and rejoiced.

6. **"Howbeit we do speak wisdom among them that are perfect."** The word "perfect" here does not mean "sinless," but "mature," or full grown; that is, capable of understanding the things of God. It is as though he said, "We have got wisdom to speak as well as the philosophers of Corinth; we have a wisdom that is infinitely deeper than all the knowledge of the scientific and the learned; and yet it is not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, which come to nought."

7. It is called **"hidden wisdom."** It is that wisdom of God which was kept secret as a mystery from ages and generations—the hidden wisdom which was ordained before the world unto our glory, but which is now revealed by the Spirit. This is the wisdom the Apostle has to speak of, but he can only do so to those who are capable of understanding it. This wisdom is a mystery. If you search through the New Testament you will find seven distinct mysteries, the unfolding of which is entrusted by the Spirit to the Apostles for the instruction of the Church, so that they were, in a special sense, "stewards of the mysteries of God."

8. All the world's learning results in the worship of man; it exalts man and ignores

God. But the wisdom of God breaks us down in His presence, and we say, To Him be glory, to Him alone. But the wise and the great, **the princes of this world, knew not the wisdom of God.** Had they known it—had Satan, the real “prince of this world,” known the hidden counsels of God, and all that in His wisdom would result from the death of the Lord Jesus, would he ever have hounded them on to crucify Him? Had they known that, as the result of the murder of the Son of God, a countless multitude would be raised up from under Satan’s sway to trample him in resurrection triumph under their feet, would they ever have crucified the Lord of Glory?

But they knew it not, for God had kept it a secret hid in Himself. Like the man who found the treasure in the field, he kept it secret until he had paid the purchase price and secured it for himself; so God kept secret these wondrous purposes of His concerning the union of Christ and the Church until the purchase price was paid and Satan spoiled; then taking Jesus from the grave to the right hand of the throne, He sends down the Holy Spirit to declare “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” and to make all see what is the administration of the mystery which from the beginning of the world was hid in God.

9. **“Eye hath not seen nor ear heard.”** And here many a saint of God has stopped, as though it were still impossible to know

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what God has prepared; "BUT," it is added, "GOD HATH REVEALED THEM TO US BY HIS SPIRIT." And what a revelation! The veil is drawn aside and we look up into heaven. There we see the Throne of God. The Lamb is in the midst, and seated on thrones around are the glorified saints redeemed unto God by the Blood of the Lamb. Seated in the heavens with Christ, they have fellowship with God in His dealings with this earth. There they are seen gathered within the veil. The bride and the Bridegroom, the Heir and the joint-heirs, all gathered together.

When we come to consider such purposes of the heart of God as these, O what is all the world's wisdom in comparison? What are the discoveries of science, wonderful as they may be, compared to a glimpse like this into the heavenly and eternal glory? Let us, indeed, seek to occupy our minds with the wisdom of God, to be thoroughly furnished out of His treasures, that we be not the erring, foolish ones we often are, so foolish as to be even rebuked by the world.

The Christian ought to be the noblest, most refined, most courteous, and yet most humble of men, seeing God has bestowed upon him His own Spirit, His own mind, His own wisdom.

I want you to notice three things in this portion (verses 9 to 16) for which we are dependent on the Spirit of God—the Spirit acting in three different capacities.

First (in the 10th verse), we have Him as the **Revealer**. Secondly (in the 13th verse), as the **Teacher**. Thirdly (in the 14th verse), as the **Enlightener**.

I believe it is important to see these three offices of the Holy Spirit. None but the Spirit of God could know the hidden counsels of the mind of God. For this reason He alone could be the Revealer, and we are thus shown the utter impossibility of man ever attaining any knowledge whatever of the counsels of God, except He had given a revelation of Himself. The apostle here quotes from Isaiah lxiv. 4: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." But, observe, he does not stop there; he goes on to add:

10. "**But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit.**" I do not think that Christians generally have a right apprehension of the marvellous revelation the Spirit of God has given us since Christ ascended to God's right hand, of His thoughts and purposes. There is, indeed, one part of the New Testament which is called "the Revelation," *i.e.*, "the Book of the unveiling of Jesus Christ"; and surely it is a wonderful "revelation." But there is not any part of the Old or New Testament that is not equally a "revelation." It is the Spirit of God making known to us that which was hidden in the heart of God. If God has thus taken us, as it were, into

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His confidence, treated us as His friends, by telling us His counsels and purposes, surely it is our responsibility to give attention, and to use the greatest diligence, that we may understand what He means to convey to us.

13. **"Which things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."** In this verse we have the Spirit of God brought before us as the Teacher. He is not only the Revealer of the mind of God, but He unfolds it to us in certain *words*, which were not received from man, nor learned in his schools, but *taught by the Spirit of God*. When the Apostle wrote he did so in the words of the Holy Spirit. This is a point on which we should be very clear in these evil days. We say **again** that not only was the Spirit given to be the REVEALER, but the TEACHER of the counsels of God; and He has revealed them to us in words which are divine, and therefore perfectly adapted for conveying the thoughts of God, and not to be tampered with by human criticism.

I do not say that this applies to the translation that we now have, nor could it be said of any translation but to the original language in which it was written. We know that the translators were not inspired by the Holy Spirit to put the original into its present form. They used their knowledge and ability in order to give a faithful rendering of the original. Many passages might

be better rendered, but that does not touch the point for which we contend, viz., that it was originally given in the words which the Holy Spirit taught, so that the Apostles wrote the very words which God gave them to write. The Lord help us to be clear and firm on this point, for the current of infidelity is setting in with tremendous power; and "if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

14. **"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."** Why are they foolishness to him? Why can he not know them? The answer is, "Because they are spiritually discerned." This is a point that we ought well to consider, viz., that our mere natural understanding is not capable of comprehending the things of the Spirit. Until a man has been "born again," and has received the Holy Spirit, he has not the capacity to understand the teaching of the Spirit of God.

There is much in the Scriptures that the natural man may to some extent understand, such as the plain precepts of the Book of Proverbs, the demands of the law, &c.; but the unfolding of God's mysteries, as therein given to us by the Holy Spirit since Christ ascended to the right hand of God, nothing can enable a man to understand but the Spirit of God, which dwelleth in each believer.

The precious truths of the believer's one-



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ness with Christ and joint-heirship with Him, and His coming again to take His own to be with Himself, these and many more precious truths have been kept from the Church almost since the days of the apostles; it is only of late years that these things have been brought to light, and only here and there are they yet taught.

The teaching of the Church fell into the hands of the unregenerate, as in the Church of Rome, until Luther came forth from her with the blessed doctrine of justification by faith, and not works. But it has gradually slipped back again to a large extent into the hands of the unregenerate, even among the denominations of Protestantism.

The reason the Scriptures are not understood by such, and therefore not taught as God would have them taught, is that they are dependent on their own wisdom, and not on the Spirit of God.

All God's truth is absolute and eternal. Then do not let us go to the Scriptures without depending upon the Spirit of God to enlighten and enable us to understand them. Thus shall comfort and sustaining grace be ministered to our hearts as we read and meditate therein.

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## Chapter III.

IN the previous chapter two classes of persons are mentioned—in the 14th verse, "*the natural man*," and in the 15th verse, "*he that is spiritual*." That is one way of describing the difference between the saved and the unsaved; between the man who is not born again and the child of God. In the third chapter we have two distinctions among Christians, that is, "spiritual" and "carnal."

1. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." Notice, in the first place, that the Apostle says of these Corinthian believers that they were carnal, and that because they were carnal he could only treat them as babes. Now, some have argued from this that babes in Christ must necessarily be carnal, and, therefore, that there is no difference between a babe in Christ and a carnal Christian. A babe requires to be fed upon milk, because its digestive organs could not bear anything stronger. A grown-up person may have become, through sickness, so feeble that they have to be fed on milk also; yet a sick adult is not a babe, and a babe is not a sick grown-up person. We may have to say of the sick person of thirty years, "You must be treated as a child, and be fed on milk." That is the simile we have here. "And I,

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brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual." Why? Because they were "carnal," that is, "fleshly"—because they were not "spiritual" in the sense in which the word is here used.

Turn to another passage which throws light upon this, and confirms what I have said, Hebrews v. 12-14: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." The writer of this epistle has got the length of mentioning Melchisedec, concerning whom as a type of Christ he has a great many precious things to open up to them; but he suddenly breaks off, and says in the eleventh verse, "seeing ye are dull of hearing." That is another way of describing their condition—another description of what it is to be carnal. A carnal Christian is one who has not a quick ear to hear what God has to speak. His ear has become dull, just as one who is accustomed to be where there is much noise; he cannot hear a gentle voice. How hard it is to speak to a deaf person!

You will find that these two passages differ much from one in 1st Peter, which

also refers to babes and milk (ii. 1, 2): "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, &c., as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." These words have reference to little children—to those newly converted; this is the word of exhortation to them. Thus we have before us two classes of persons who require the simplest kind of nourishment, to whom the deep things of the Scriptures are unsuitable, and therefore, what they need is the most fundamental teaching; such as that which concerns man's ruined condition and the provision of God's grace in the person and work of His Son.

In this passage in 1st Corinthians Paul charges them with being "carnal," that is, "fleshly." Here it is put in contrast to "spiritual."

The difference between carnal and spiritual is that in the one case there is the carrying out of the sentence of death on your corrupt nature—living and walking in the Spirit. In the other case, not owning the judgment of God on the flesh—walking in the flesh, pleasing and gratifying it instead of mortifying it. Are we spiritual? Are we living the new life? Is it our daily business to mortify old self through the grace of God given to us? By God's reckoning we have been executed and have passed through God's judgment in the person of Christ, and we are to reckon as God does. We cannot reckon ourselves to be what we are not.

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God says, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Is it true? If I were poor and in debt and someone told me to reckon myself worth £10,000, what good would it do me? It would not help me to pay my debts. But if he brought me word that a rich relative had died and that £10,000 was left to me in his will, then I could reckon on having it though I was not yet in possession of it. Nevertheless that old, corrupt Adam nature exists in us and is ready to rise up and manifest its presence. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us that we can carry into practical effect God's sentence on the corrupt nature.

If the Lord were to come now He could not take us as we are into heaven. We would require to be changed. Corruption could not inherit incorruption; mortality could not inherit immortality. That word "changed" is a word that almost has the signification of "exchanged." It is the same word that occurs in Hebrews i. 12. Just as on Saturday a man puts off his working clothes and puts on his best for the Sunday, he has changed or exchanged his clothes. So, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye . . . we shall be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 52). What a difference when we are taken up from the sphere where Satan has power and liberty to tempt and buffet us—and from the world with its entanglements and defilements—and out of the flesh

with its sinful desires! That is the hope which is before us.

Now turn again with me to 1 Corinthians iii. 3: **"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"** There are two things I want you to notice about these carnal persons. First, he calls them carnal, but never calls in question that they are saved persons. Compare chapter vi. 9-11: **"Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified,"** &c. Also look at the 19th verse of the same chapter: **"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you,"** &c. Also the 15th verse: **"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ."**

**"Ye are washed,"** but **"ye are carnal";** **"ye are justified,"** but **"ye are carnal";** **"your bodies are the members of Christ,"** but **"ye are carnal";** **"your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost,"** but **"ye are carnal."** What is the meaning of this? Instead of having mortified the old man, they were walking after the mind, thoughts, and desires of the old Adam nature. Instead of the Spirit having been obeyed, the flesh had been gratified and the Spirit grieved.

The second thing I want you to notice is that in the first chapter of this Epistle we read of the Corinthian Church being richly endowed with gifts—such as the gift of

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prophecy, healing, working of miracles, &c.; and, moreover, they were "waiting for the coming of the Lord." But what does the Apostle say? "Ye are carnal." How did he know? Because there was "*envy, strife, and division.*" There was not subjection to the Lord; there was not the binding together of love. They had knowledge indeed, but they were puffed up with pride. There was a want of lowliness and love one to another, and therefore the Apostle says, "Ye are carnal." He was not going to gratify their morbid love of knowledge. He would therefore minister to them that which would cut at the root of fleshly pride—"Christ crucified." It is therefore according to divine wisdom that before he takes up the subject of the breaking of bread or the exercise of gifts, &c., he deals with the *condition of their souls*. He shows them their carnal state. Is that not what **we** need? We who professedly gather to the Lord Jesus and own His authority in the assembly of His redeemed ones, what is the condition of our souls? Is there subjection to Christ? Is there mortifying of our sinful, corrupt nature? Is there true godliness and fervent love? Does our vanity and self-will stand a word of rebuke? Or do we resent and take offence at it? The Lord would deal with our individual condition of soul first, and then we shall be better fitted to learn His will concerning our responsibilities as members of His Body and as gathering in His Name.

4. **"For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"** There are places where the Apostle Paul magnifies his office. When his authority as the Lord's servant is called in question, he then asserts the divine character of his apostleship. But if carnal Christians were making the name of "Paul" the badge of a party, exalting the instrument, and so dishonouring the Name of Christ, Paul at once says:

5. **"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man."** All ministry is *service*; it is well to bear this in mind. The modern conventional use of the word "minister," as applied to the clergy, has no place in Scripture; *it is simply the word which signifies a servant*. There are two words in the Scriptures translated servant—the one meaning "a free servant," and the other "a bond servant" or slave. The one we have here signifies simply a servant through whose ministry they believed.

The Word of the Lord had been put before them by His servant, and they received it, not as the word of men, but as it was in truth, *the Word of God*. Wherever the Lord's servants have done the work He gave them to do, and in the way He would have them do it, similar results have always followed, whether seen at the time or, it may be, never heard of; hence such a



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verse as we have in 1 Corinthians xv. 58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Mark, it is not "Always *abounding in work for the Lord.*" There is much work done for the Lord which is not "the work of the Lord." Notice also the words "forasmuch as ye know." It is not, "forasmuch as ye have reason to hope"—it is an absolute certainty.

I believe that it is important for any of us who are labouring for the Lord to bear this in mind. God will give a measure of success to every true labourer whether he sees it or not. If we are sure we are doing the Lord's work—*His work*—doing it to Him alone, and doing it in His way, giving Him all the glory, then we may look for His blessing as certain.

6. **"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."** That is to say, Paul was the first who went to Corinth. He was the one who began the work. He planted the Corinthian Church. Apollos followed after him. He was "an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures." He had been helped through Priscilla and Aquila, who expounded unto him the way of the Lord more perfectly. Of him it is written that "he mightily helped those who had believed through grace." O, that every one of us here were mighty in the Scriptures! That we might not only know the Scriptures, but be able to *use* the Word of God as an

expert swordsman uses his weapon. We need much a thorough knowledge and wise understanding of the Word of God so as to be able to meet the critical and infidel spirit of the age. Infidels as a rule are exceedingly ignorant of God's Word. And how many there are even of the children of God, converted years ago, and yet whose knowledge of God's Word is very imperfect! If there had been diligent searching of the Scriptures, as for hidden treasure, how much more they would now possess of the mind of God! We do well to make it our constant companion, our one book of reference and study. May God put it into our hearts to seek that we may be like Apollos, who drew from the Scriptures the living water which he poured upon the thirsty plants.

But though Paul might plant and Apollos water, it was God alone who gave the increase. So it is in the natural world; man cannot give life or growth. Man is only the instrument. God only can give the increase. We are cast on God to cause our Gospel addresses to take effect in the hearts and consciences of the unsaved, and no less are we cast on God to cause the word spoken to believers to bear fruit in the life.

8. **"Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."** Turn in connection with this to John iv. 36-38: "And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit

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unto life eternal ; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon you bestowed no labour : other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." In this passage the Lord Jesus Himself is the great sower. He is the one referred to also in the 126th Psalm : " They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him."

In verse 8 there is more than the fruit being gathered into the garner and the joy of the harvest home. There are wages, goodly wages, for the work done for Him ! There is " the recompense of the reward " to which Moses had respect (Heb. xi. 26). " For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards His Name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister " (Heb. vi. 10). It may be ministering a cup of cold water to a sick or thirsty one, or instructing His saints in His truth. Whatever service we may do for Him, He is not unrighteous to forget it. I do not say that we are to do it for reward. Unless we engage in it as saved by His grace and constrained by His love, our service will not be acceptable. The planter will receive his reward and the waterer his also.

9. " For we are labourers together

with God." What a thought that is! It has pleased God in all His present *Redemption Work* to associate with Himself redeemed sinners. I do not say that with reference to the work on the Cross. Here God was alone. The three persons of the Godhead were there seen engaged in the mighty work of atonement alone—"CHRIST, *who through the ETERNAL SPIRIT offered Himself without spot to GOD*" (Heb. ix. 14). But in the spread of the Gospel, or the edifying of His people, He is pleased to use redeemed sinners. He did not do that in the creation of the world. He called the world into being without the help of any. But in the work of the Gospel He has called saved sinners to work with Him—to be workers after God's pattern and by His grace. I believe His work is often done in a careless way, as if it were of little account, instead of engaging in it as the grandest work we could do, for "we are workers together with God."

9. "**Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.**" It is not human work, or work which affects human interests; everything about it concerns the glory of God. We are God's fellow-labourers; we do God's work. I believe that the thought which specially attaches to "husbandry" is *individuality*, whilst that which attaches to the "building" is the gathering together of the saved. In husbandry, every plant has its own individual life; but in a building all the stones are brought together, and each

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one is dependent on the other. In John xv. 1, we have the same truth set forth, where our Lord says, "I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman." Also in Ephesians iii. 17, "Rooted and grounded in love"; and in chapter iv. 15, "Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things"; all these correspond with the words before us—"Ye are God's husbandry." Plants have to be cared for, watered, pruned, &c., and so God has to deal with His people as the great Husbandman, in order that there may be fruit found, which God can delight in,—fruit which will bring glory to His great Name. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John xv. 8). God delights in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23). This is what God wants to see in us as the result of his tillage. All the tillage is in vain unless there is this fruit. God looks for Christ to be reproduced in our lives—the meekness, gentleness, love, and patience of Christ. If there be not this, then there is nothing that He can delight in, however much appearance there may be of zealous service.

What is the object of a building? When we speak of a building it takes us back to God's temple. What was the object God had in view in having a temple at Jerusalem? It was the place where His honour was to dwell, from which His truth was to be made known; it was the house of prayer

for all nations, where His worship was to be carried on according to His will; the place of His name, character, honour, and glory; God's testimony on the earth. He would not let David build it; He would have Solomon build it, and He would have it built after His own pattern. It was a dwelling-place for God in which He would manifest His glory.

What is God's object in the Church—His spiritual temple? Is it not His holy dwelling-place, where His worship and service are to be carried on, and in which the glory of His character is to be shown? A building composed of living stones to be the pillar and the ground of truth, that all the world might see there the truth of God maintained, and His love shown in the fellowship and care of His people one towards another, and in their compassion and ministry towards a guilty world? But men have departed from God's ways; and, instead of building up with the truth of God, they have introduced the wisdom of the world; instead of gold, silver, and precious stones—types of the precious things of the truth of God—the wood, hay, and stubble of human wisdom, tradition, and philosophy have been brought in to build up the House of God. This is one aspect of God's building as entrusted to human responsibility, and it ends in utter failure.

But turn with me to Ephesians ii. 19-22, and mark the contrast. Here we have no

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mention of human instrumentality. It is "an holy temple in the Lord." It is stone after stone brought out of the quarry and prepared, finished, and put into its place in the great building of God, which will appear in resurrection a complete and glorious temple. God will have His temple completed, and every member of that elect body of His Son will go to form that glorious dwelling-place of God. Neither man's folly nor Satan's malice can interfere to frustrate the accomplishment of His glorious purpose, although meantime God's corporate witness on earth is scattered, divided, mixed up with the world.

10. "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder." The Apostle calls himself "a wise master builder." He was not, like many others, a mere builder. He was somewhat in the capacity of a foreman builder, who is in possession of the plans of the architect. According to the wisdom given to him he gave special instructions as to the order of the House of God. He in his preaching laid the foundation, which is Jesus Christ—Christ is God's foundation. Although error has inundated the Church and the faith of some has been overthrown, whilst others have made complete shipwreck of it, nevertheless, amid this terrible breaking-up and apostacy, "the foundation of God standeth sure"; God's foundation cannot be overthrown.

But, it may be asked, in what sense did Paul lay the foundation? Was the foundation not laid by God? Is it not the crucified, dead, and risen Christ who is the sure foundation? Certainly it is; and so the Apostle says:

II. **"Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."** But Paul, when he went to Corinth, determined to know nothing among them "save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He preached unto them not man's wisdom, but Christ, as God's foundation for their faith to rest upon and to be built upon. He gathered them as living stones together unto Christ, not only as the foundation of their faith as individuals, but as the foundation of the building composed of all the living stones. Their faith rested upon a Person—not upon mere doctrines. As they heard about God's beloved Son, Who died and rose again, Who ascended to the Throne of God, and there exalted, was able to save to the uttermost all who came to Him—their faith found its rest, its foundation in Him.

Paul's visit to Corinth was only for a limited period. The ministry of Paul was followed up by Apollos. Thus, by the Spirit of God, gifts for ministry were bestowed upon the Corinthian saints, and thus they in their turn also became builders upon the foundation.

10. Here Paul, foreseeing a danger,



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sounds a note of warning : " **But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.**" In this Epistle it is not so much the individual as the gathered capacity of the children of God with which the Apostle deals. It has to do with the construction and ordering of the Assembly, the corporate relationship of the saints. All saints are called to be in some way builders. The word "edify" is simply "to build." All ministry is for edification, or building up, of the Body of Christ, individually and collectively.

The two figures of the *building* and the *body* are remarkably brought together in Genesis ii. 21, 22 (see margin): "And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man *builded* He a woman." Herein is a foreshadowing of that divinely-built company who form "the Body of Christ," the Bride of the Lamb and the Temple of God.

In chapter xiv. 26 there is this expression, "Let all things be done unto *edifying*." Pulling down is the opposite of edifying. Dividing and scattering is the opposite of gathering stones together and building them. Before the Apostle's mind there are the divisions in the Corinthian Church. He foresees the mischief that Satan would seek to do through the introduction of false material. The Apostle foresees that principles of evil were being introduced which would counteract the edifying influence of the truth in Christ Jesus and lead to breaking

up, even as it is around us this day in Christendom, with its several hundreds of sects. Man's thoughts and principles and wisdom and will brought into the building of God have wrought the havoc.

Turn to Ephesians iv. 15, 16: "Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things who is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love." Here you see that every member of the body has its own function to perform. Everyone of us, without exception, is thus called to be an edifier of the Body of Christ. So it is written again in the same chapter, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." Mark that word "*corrupt*." I say it solemnly, everyone of us must be in our daily conversation either an EDIFIER or a CORRUPTER. Let us look back on the years that are past of our intercourse with saints and see *which we have been*.

12. "If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble." It is possible to begin with a perfectly sound Gospel, to have the saints all right as to the foundation, and yet to go on building upon that what ministers to the fleshly mind instead of spiritual edifi-

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cation. Many true believers are satisfied if they get what is called "a pure gospel," and concern themselves little as to the teaching that is built thereupon.

I would not be fanciful in the things of God. Fanciful interpretations of Scripture are dishonouring to God, and we ought to be on our guard against such a snare. But when God uses figures, we ought to search for the mind of the Spirit in them. The word here used for "precious stones" does not signify gems such as rubies or diamonds, but rather, as in the building of the temple, where we read of "great stones and *costly*."

Three different materials are here referred to, "gold, silver, precious stones." I would leave with you a thought as to what these three materials may signify. Gold may refer to the truth concerning the Godhead; silver to the truth concerning the redemption work of the Lord Jesus; the precious stones to the truth concerning the operation of the Holy Spirit in quickening and fashioning the members of the Body of Christ.

In the wood, hay, and stubble we have three classes of false material and three degrees of worthlessness. Wood is in its own place useful, but it will not stand fire. Hay also has its own use, but not in building. Stubble I know of no use for at all. Now, apply this to what the Apostle has been speaking about. He has been showing up the vanity of the world's wisdom, learning, eloquence, &c., and how these could never

edify, but only **mar** the building of God. Such things, like wood and hay, may have a use in their own sphere, as pertaining to the world and to this life. Such are politics, social science, education, &c., &c. They are not even like the world's frivolities, which are useless as stubble; but introduced into the teaching and ministry which is for the building up of the House of God, for the edifying of the Body of Christ, they are valueless, and however imposing in the eyes of man, will never stand the fiery test of the judgment seat of Christ.

Lot, no doubt, attempted to improve the condition of Sodom. He sat as a judge in the gate. His righteous soul was vexed in seeing and hearing the filthy conversation of the wicked. He sought their good in his own way, but he could not avert its coming doom, and all the improvements and attempts at reformation in which he busied himself were burnt up in the day when the mercy of God dragged him out of it.

And such is the work of Christian philanthropists and world-reformers, with their many plans and schemes and associations, all stopping short of the only reformation that will pass through the fire—"Ye must be born again." "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

13. **"Every man's work shall be made manifest."** In connection with these words I wish you to look for a little at John iii. 20, 21: "Every one that doeth evil hateth

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the light." There are plenty of Christians who love not the light: who are not prepared to submit their whole life to the test of God's truth. It may be something regarding their own family, or some practice or connexion, which they fear to bring to the light. Or it may be the subject of Baptism, or "the breaking of bread," about which they will not face the light. Yes, believers can, and do, keep away from the light, but "he that doeth truth cometh to the light." Why? He has nothing to hide; God's interests are his interests; the Lord of Glory has taken him into fellowship with Himself; he is a partner of the Son of God; he only desires in the light to know His will that he may do it. "He that doeth truth *cometh* to the light." He does not need to be dragged into it. He says: "I want to understand the mind of God; I want to know my Father's will." "That his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." This word, "made manifest," is intimately connected with the teaching of the passage we are considering—concerning the judgment-seat of Christ. A man who deals with God desires every day to be searched and judged by His Word; he is, as it were, every day at the judgment-seat of Christ, bringing his daily life into the light of the presence of God. He brings into the light his home life, his business life, his church life, his service and testimony, in order that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in

God. Why should a believer desire for a moment to have any separate existence from God? "In Him we live, move, and have our being," therefore, as those dwelling in Him, all our deeds ought to be "*wrought in God.*"

But whether we come to the light and allow it to judge us now or not, there is a day coming when all our works shall be tested and *manifested*. I desire to impress this on your souls and mine; we are apt to forget, as each day passes over our heads, that our life-service to the Lord will be brought back again, that we shall face it again at the judgment-seat of Christ, where all will be tested by the perfect light of His holy judgment. It is written, "our God is a consuming fire." The holiness of God will test our works of what sort they are. O what a *manifesting* there will be in that day! A great deal done for God that now passes for gold, silver, and precious stones will be only rubbish then. I feel that the coming of Christ is a searching thought. It is then that we shall see how mixed were the motives which actuated us in service for the Lord, how self came in and was mingled with it all; the light, the fire, will test and manifest all this.

But do you not want to have this manifested *now*? To know *now* whether or not your deeds are wrought in God? If you do not want to know it now, if you are content to move along without coming to the light,

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then it will be a terrible manifestation when Christ comes. If we would judge ourselves now, then there will be the less to judge when He comes, the less wood, hay, and stubble to be consumed. All that is done for Him by His grace in us, all that is "wrought in God" He will recognise and recompense.

In the Book of Revelation, chapters ii. and iii., the Lord Jesus is seen in the midst of the Seven Churches in the attitude of judgment with eyes as a flame of fire. Each of the Seven Epistles to the Churches begins with the words, "I know thy works." He is, as it were, anticipating the judgment-seat in love to His people. He says now, "I know thy works." "THEN *we shall know*, even as also we are known." Then in the light of His presence we shall be able to see and know all that He knew long before though we knew it not; many a secret backsliding in heart known to Him from its first beginning will be manifested to us then. The gradual declining from Himself that not even our most intimate friend detected, all this will be shown in that day. "Every man's work shall be made manifest."

13. "The day shall declare it." This expression, "the day," occurs elsewhere, and always refers to the day of the Lord, and is connected with His coming again.

13. "Because it shall be revealed by fire." Fire is that which represents the holiness of God, hence in dealing with sin it

represents the judgment of God. When God's holiness comes in contact with sin it must consume it. In that day the works and service of the believer will be tested by God's infinite holiness. **"The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."** There is no exception, every man's work must be tried. You young men who are at the outset of your lives, remember that your life's work will be manifested in its true character at the judgment-seat of Christ. Is it to be burnt up? Is it to be a lost life? Or is it to be that which will abide the fire? **"He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."**

Roman Catholics make a great mistake regarding this trial by fire. It is upon such passages as this that the doctrine of purgatory is based. They teach that there is after death a purifying by fire even for the saint, and upon this they build the iniquitous practice of extorting money to pay for the deliverance of departed friends from the fire of purgatory. Such is man's religion. But notice, the passage before us does not teach that the fire is to try the man, but his *works*.

I want you specially to observe here the emphatic distinction God marks between the *man* and his *works*. Suppose that I was by trade a builder. I build a house, but instead of using stone, I introduce at various parts wood and hay. One day the house takes fire, and at once my work is made manifest **"what sort it is."** The builder



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stands and looks at *his work* perishing, but he himself is not involved in the conflagration.

Such is the thought here. If your ministry has through the power of the Holy Spirit been helpful to the saints, if your work has been "work of faith," your labour "labour of love," then you will receive a reward. The reward is all of grace. The very same grace that loved us when we were sinners, after saving us, takes us into service, supplies all that is needed for the service, and then rewards us for it.

So Paul says, "I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I but the grace of God which was with me." Again he says, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day."

15. "If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss." It does not say he shall suffer purgatory, much less that he shall be cast into hell fire, but only "*he shall suffer loss.*" What loss, then, will he suffer? I say he will be an eternal loser. He will lose the reward that he might have received. There is a kingdom coming, a manifested kingdom. Christ will be the King and His saints are to reign with Him. It is with reference to that coming kingdom that our works will be tried. The place we shall occupy in that kingdom—the place of honour and of authority—will be determined according to faithfulness in the smaller stewardship of our service on earth. This

is shown in the parable of the nobleman (Luke xix. 12, &c.). The same is taught in 2 Peter i. 11: "For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This may be illustrated by the cases of Abraham and Lot; the one was called "the friend of God," and maintained the path of faith and obedience. Such an one will have an abundant entrance into the coming kingdom. Lot, on the other hand, was "saved so as by fire"—all his works destroyed, a saved man—but his life was a lost life.

In the fifth chapter of Revelation the saints are seen as the twenty-four elders enthroned around the throne of God. In the 19th chapter the same saints are seen as "the armies which are in heaven." We have in these chapters two aspects of coming glory for the Church. In the fifth chapter we are seen as worshippers, and there all are alike, all are on one level. But in the 19th it is the King and His armies coming forth to execute judgment and to take the kingdom. The very idea of an army supposes differences of rank and honour and authority. So was it when David came to the kingdom. His "mighty men" were appointed to positions of honour, differing according to their faithfulness to Him during the period of His rejection. See 2 Sam. xxiii. 8, &c.

Till He comes, let us seek, not to please ourselves, nor to please men, nor to please even our brethren, but our Lord alone.

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15. "He himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." It is presumed that the man here referred to is a child of God; and mark, the rightness or wrongness of his building or workmanship does not touch the question of his personal salvation, "He himself SHALL be saved." Why? Because the whole question of our *guilt* was settled at the Cross. It is the question of our *service* that is taken into account at the judgment-seat of Christ. As *criminals* we were judged and condemned and executed at the Cross of Christ. As *sons* we are judged and chastened by the Father in this life. As *servants* we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ and see our works tested in the fire of God's holiness.

And further, to show our perfect security as to our eternal salvation, when will this judgment take place? It will be when the Lord comes. Then, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed and caught up to meet Him; so that when our works are thus tested by fire, we shall be standing as glorified saints in the presence of God. I believe we shall be satisfied, perfectly, fully, eternally satisfied, but some will shine brighter than others. Some will have positions of authority in the coming kingdom which others will not be accounted worthy of. Oh, that all earthly ambitions may perish, and that we may covet, through faithfulness to the Lord here, to be as it were among the aristocracy of His coming kingdom!

Do not be satisfied with passing well with fellow-Christians. You may stand well with them, and yet your soul may not be right with God. You may be doing a great deal of work, and yet it may not be such as God can approve or delight in. Dear fellow-saints, let us seek to be much in the presence of God, testing ourselves as to whether we are doing truth—that it may be manifest *now* that our deeds are “wrought in God.”

I desire now to trace with you the testimony of Scripture concerning the Temple of God.

It was an ancient purpose in His heart to have a dwelling-place among men. So far back as the Song of Moses in Exodus xv. it is spoken of. It was an inspired song, and therefore shows how the Spirit of God was looking forward to and anticipating a dwelling-place in the land after the wilderness was past. “He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation ;” again, “Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people whom Thou hast redeemed ; Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation” (Exod. xv. 2-13).

The wilderness was but a short journey, and might have been crossed in eleven days (Deut. i. 2). It was because of unbelief that they were caused to wander there for forty years (Num. xiv. 28-35). But God did not wait till at last they entered the land for His dwelling-place amongst them. Even in the wilderness, and ere they departed from Sinai,

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He said : " Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I might dwell among them " (Exodus xxv. 8).

The tabernacle constructed in the wilderness after the pattern shown to Moses in the Mount was therefore a typical dwelling-place of God in the midst of His people. It is therefore called " a sanctuary," " a holy place," and was a type of the dwelling-place of God in heaven itself, which is also to be our dwelling-place for eternity (see Heb. ix. 24, vi. 20; John xiv. 1-3).

Again, while they were yet in the wilderness, we find distinct mention of the sanctuary that was to be in the land of their inheritance. " But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, . . . then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His Name to dwell there," &c. (Deut. xii. 10, &c.).

This again was an anticipation of Jehovah's cherished purpose to have a dwelling-place among His people. Now pass on to 2 Sam. vii. It was in David's heart to build an house to Jehovah. But David was not the one chosen of God for this service. The Divine purpose, prophetically spoken of by Moses in Exodus xv., and again in Deuteronomy xii., must indeed be fulfilled, and it was pleasing to God that David's heart should be set on its accomplishment; but to Solomon his son was the work committed. " Then Solomon began to build the house of

the Lord at Jerusalem, in Mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite" (2 Chron. iii. 1).

In reference to this let us turn to 2 Sam. xxiv., where we find recorded the sin of David in numbering the people. We here find that whilst the pestilence was raging, which the Lord sent as a chastisement for David's sin, he was in sore trouble. He had a shepherd's heart, and was truly a shepherd king. He looked upon the people as a shepherd looks upon his sheep, and said to the Lord: "Let Thine hand be upon me; . . . but these sheep, what have they done?"

Then came the Divine instruction to erect the altar and to offer the sacrifice. "And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. So the Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel." Now, this is the spot which God had chosen for His dwelling-place. It was where the avenging sword of the destroying angel was arrested—the place where the altar had been erected, the sacrifice offered, and judgment stayed. This is one most blessed reminiscence connected with the chosen spot.

But another of the hallowed associations of the place is to be found in Genesis xxii. Here God tells Abram to take his son, his only and his beloved son, and offer him up for a sacrifice in Mount Moriah. Here again

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there is the altar and the sacrifice—Isaac as a type of “the only begotten of the Father,” “the well-beloved son,” is offered up and received again from the dead in a figure (see Hebrews xi. 19).

Substitution also is seen, for the ram of God’s providing takes the place of the one over whom the knife of judgment was uplifted. Such is the Mount of God. Such are the associations of the place, all telling of the wondrous grace that was in the heart of God, and foreshadowing the place where His own beloved Son was yet to be offered up for rebel sinners.

The place was the threshing-floor of Ornan a *Jebusite*. He was one of a cursed race. The citadel of Zion belonged to the Jebusites, and remained in their possession after all the rest of the land had been subdued, even until the time of David (2 Sam. v. 6-9). Is it not remarkable that the place which God had made choice of for His sanctuary should be that which the enemy held to the very last? Depend upon it, Satan will use his utmost power and subtlety to oppose every thought of God concerning His dwelling-place; he hates the very idea of God having a dwelling-place among men.

“And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto Him: I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to Myself for an house of sacrifice.” The very spot where Isaac was offered, where the ram caught in the thicket took his place, and con-

cerning which it is said, "God shall provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering;" the very place where the altar had been erected by David, where the angel with drawn sword was seen ready to smite Jerusalem, but where judgment was averted because the bleeding sacrifice was there accepted by Jehovah: this is the place of Jehovah's choice. "For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that My Name may be there for ever, and Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually" (2 Chron. vii. 16). Mark what God says about "His name," "His eyes," and "His heart." He had, as it were, concentrated all His attention upon that spot—that one appointed, chosen dwelling-place, where His people might meet with and worship Him.

We know something from the Old Testament of what that house was for; but let us glance at what is said concerning it in the Gospel by Matthew. Matthew xxi. 12: "And Jesus went into the Temple of God"—mark this expression, it is still recognised by Him as the Temple of God—verse 14: "And the blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple."

The blind and the lame had once been there before—the cursed ones (the Jebusites), and they had been destroyed by the sword. But now the place having been purged by judgment, had become the scene of the House of God—"His Father's House." No longer was it the place where judgment was exe-



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cuted on the sinner. The blind and the lame are no longer executed as by David, but the eyes of the blind are opened, and the lame man leaps like a hart for joy (verses 15, 16). Here is the true service of the sanctuary. Again, it is a place of praise and a house of prayer. All this the Lord Jesus delights in. It is also a place of giving and receiving, and He who said "it is more blessed to give than to receive," could look on and find joy in the gifts that were poured into the treasury, and most of all in the widow's mite. Healing, prayer, praise, and giving—all these are suited to the character of the House of God; but *bargaining*, buying, and selling was foreign to every thought of God, and hence the severity with which the Lord Jesus deals with those who had made His Father's house an house of merchandise and a den of thieves.

Was not such a place as this blessed, and do not these services of the House, as well as the associations of the spot, all combine to tell out the character of our God?

And the service of the House of God is still the same. In His spiritual temple the same truths concerning the character of God ought ever to be borne witness to. The Church was intended by God to be a place that was inseparable from the memory of the Cross—the gift of the only begotten Son—the place where the arresting of judgment by the precious Blood of the Lamb is held

in never-fading remembrance. He meant it to be the place of prayer and intercession, of thanksgiving and praise, of healing and comfort, of giving and receiving blessing. Such is the service of the House of God. But what has man made it?

The House of God at Jerusalem had its doom pronounced by the Lord Jesus with tears. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. xxiii. 38). No longer does He call it "My Father's House," but "your house." A few years after, and it was razed to the ground and not one stone left upon another; it was burnt with fire, and the heathen defiled what was once the Temple of God, whilst the favoured but guilty nation was scattered to the four winds of heaven.

Those who compose "the temple" are also the priestly family who serve and worship therein. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, . . . ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter ii. 4, 5).

The "sacrifice of praise" is to be offered up "continually" (see Heb. xiii. 15). Prayer is also to ascend to God, as it is written, "That supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings and for all that are in authority," &c. (1 Tim. ii. 1, 2).

But this temple of God has also its ministry towards the world. It is not only the place in which God is worshipped and served, it

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is also the place whence healing streams flow out to all around. It is written of the Church at Thessalonica, "From you sounded out the Word of the Lord." As streams of life are seen issuing forth in vision from the temple at Jerusalem (see Ezek. xlvii. 1-5), so streams of the water of life—streams of salvation—through the preached Gospel, flowed forth even to the ends of the earth.

As in Ezekiel's vision the stream issued forth from under the altar, so the Word of the Gospel which sounded out both in the life and testimony of the Thessalonians told out the virtues of the Lamb of God and the cleansing power of His precious Blood, and witnessed to the power of the living God to save unto the uttermost.

Streams of life such as these cannot flow forth from the dead. Only those who are converted to God and indwelt by His Spirit can send forth such a testimony.

But where is now the temple of God? Surely "judgment has begun at the house of God," and scarcely one stone is left upon another; the living stones are divided and scattered, and the dead are mixed up with the living.

There are two aspects in which the temple of God is seen in Scripture. In Ephesians ii. 19-22 it is the divine aspect. There God alone is the architect and the builder, therefore it is seen as a complete and perfect thing—growing unto an holy temple in the Lord. In that aspect it still exists. The

purpose of God cannot be frustrated, and in due time, in spite of all the powers of darkness, God's holy temple, of which Christ is the chief Corner-stone—the body, of which Christ is the Head—shall be completed.

But in the chapter before us it is the house of God as entrusted to human responsibility that is seen. So it is written :

**17. "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy."** The sense of this is somewhat obscured by the translation. The words rendered "defile" and "destroy" are the same in the original. It might perhaps be clearer if read thus, "If any man spoil the temple of God, him shall God spoil."

He who through false teaching, through ministering the doctrines and commandments and traditions of men, in the power of fleshly wisdom, instead of the pure Word of God, in the power of the Holy Ghost, is a spoiler of God's temple. The result is that the dead are introduced into the Church, being made Christians by "education" or by "baptism," and that the Church is divided into countless sects, glorying in the very rivalries which prove that the temple of God has been spoiled by man. Such, instead of receiving the recompense of the faithful labourer, shall come under the judgment of God.

There are many instances in Scripture of the Lord's servants being in this sense "destroyed" or "spoiled." The "man of

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God" in 1 Kings xiii. 24 was slain by a lion. Moses entered not in to the land of promise. Hymenæus and Alexander made shipwreck of the faith, and were "delivered unto Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. i. 19, 20). The responsibility of those who are teachers or builders in the Church is thus shown to be very serious. Were it more fully realised how different might be the ways and the teachings of many.

But though the temple of God is thus spoiled and broken, is there, therefore, no resource for those who are concerned as to the carrying out of the will of God—for those who desire that Christ, as the Son of God, should be owned as Lord amongst His gathered people?

Even in Old Testament times, when the temple at Jerusalem was destroyed, and Israel was scattered, God left not His people without resource. In Ezekiel xi. 16 we read, "Yet I will be to them a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." Wherever they were they could own Jehovah as their Lord, obey His Word as far as it applied to the circumstances in which they were found, and acknowledge that their captivity was their shame and the judgment of God upon their disobedience.

And for us also there is such a promise. "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst" (Matt. xviii. 20). The temple may be broken down, corrupted, spoiled, nevertheless, where

two or three of the "living stones" are gathered in His Name who is at God's right hand, there is His presence in the midst as really as in the days when "all that believed were together."

There, gathered unto Him, the service of praise and prayer can be offered—worship in the Holy Spirit can ascend acceptably to the Father. There can the Spirit's ministry of comfort and edification be enjoyed, and thence can healing streams of Gospel testimony flow out to a world under condemnation.

If He is in the midst He is there as Lord. He is there as the One who has authority to order the household, and who, by His Spirit and His Word, guides and controls in everything.

It is no uncommon thought that a servant of God should not only be so acquainted with the Scriptures as to be able to expound and apply the truths therein, but that he should also be abreast of the philosophy and science of the day, so as to gain the respect of this world's mighty and learned ones. There are many of the most religious and orthodox who see no incongruity between the world's wisdom and the wisdom of God. They think it is quite possible to combine the two so that a faithful servant of the Lord may be reckoned amongst the wise of this age.

We frankly admit that "*science*," in its true sense, can never conflict with Scripture. That is to say, the knowledge of the works

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of God can never be opposed to the knowledge of the Word of God.

Revelation cannot conflict with creation, seeing both proceed from the same Divine Author. This, Scripture fully admits; for, speaking of the oppositions of science to the truth of God, it says, "Oppositions of science *falsely* so called" (1 Tim. vi. 20).

But the so-called science and philosophy which the carnal minds of unregenerate men have conceived or sought out, and which the men of this age esteem and applaud, are almost entirely opposed to the Scripture, and not only so, but their tendencies are unquestionably towards scepticism and even infidelity.

Evidently amongst the Corinthian believers there had been the attempt to amalgamate the wisdom of the Greeks with the wisdom of Christ. The results may have appeared good in their eyes. Evidently from chapter iv. 8 it may be fairly concluded that prosperity in the world had marked this departure from the truth, and to them this may have commended the error; but the apostle detects the terrible danger—he sees what the result will be if this building with false material goes on; he lays the axe at the root, and shows the incompatibility of the two:

18. "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." Then by two quotations

from the Old Testament, he shows that the wisdom of men had always been opposed to God.

Arts and sciences flourished in the line of Cain until the world of the ungodly, ripe for destruction, was swept away by the flood. Again, in the day of Babel, everything points to the extraordinary development of human knowledge and power. "Now nothing will be restrained from them that they have imagined to do" (Gen. xi. 6); but here also man's wisdom is shown to be opposed to God, and in judgment it meets its doom.

And such is this age of ours. The wisdom of man is developing with unprecedented rapidity. Every force in Nature is being analysed and pressed into the service of human pride and self-will. But to what is it all tending? We would cry aloud the apostolic warning, "Let no man deceive himself." Its end will not be a triumphant church and a converted world, but the culmination of Satan's deepest schemes in the Man of Sin, whom all the world will worship, and whom the Lord Himself shall consume.

21. "Therefore," says the apostle, "let no man glory in men: for all things are yours." The world has its wise men whom it glories in, and the Church may fall into the like error, glorying in man—it may be great and good men such as Luther or Wesley, Paul, Apollos, or Cephas—but seen in the light of God, what are these? They



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are only servants whom God has gifted to serve the saints.

23. **"And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."** "All things are ours." Why? Not because Christ is ours; but because we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. All that the Father hath is His, and we are His, joint-heirs with Him, sharing, as the wife with the husband, all His wealth.

Eve was Adam's, therefore all that Adam had was hers. Rebekah was told of all the wealth that was Isaac's, because he was Abram's only and beloved son, and well she knew that as Isaac's wife it would all be hers. So is it "all things are ours, for we are Christ's."

And not only are these servants of the Lord ours—for they are in a very special sense as having written the Scriptures, and thus, though dead, they are yet speaking to us—but the WORLD also is ours. Its very opposition is turned into blessing, and the trials that come through it to the believer will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. But in another sense it is ours. The land wherein dwelt the Caananite was Abram's by promise. Although he confessed himself a pilgrim and a stranger in it, paying even for a burying-place, yet he knew it was his in the counsels of God. And this very world is Christ's by promise. He is the Heir. His power will yet make it worthy of Himself. When He reigns, the world will

be the sphere of His dominion, and "*we shall reign with Him.*"

Life also is ours. Said Paul: "To me to live is Christ." Life is not to be despised or thrown away. It is a blessed opportunity to serve our rejected Lord amid opposition and reproach—an opportunity that will never be repeated. No reproach of the Cross will attach itself to service in the age to come. Then shall the righteous flourish, for Christ and not Satan shall reign. Now is the time when it is given to the saints "not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. i. 29). Thus life is ours. With all its sorrows and trials, temptations and discipline, we cannot do without it—it is ours, for we are Christ's.

And death is ours. Death even cannot harm us. The apostle Peter knew during all his ministry that according to the word of the Lord Jesus it would end in death. Paul also towards the close knew that he would suffer death, and said, "I am now ready to be offered." But suffering unto death was the pathway to a crown of life. And should the Lord call us to go by the way of the grave, and not to "tarry till He come," it is to be present with the Lord—and that is perfect guarantee of rest, and peace, and joy.

Things present and things to come are also ours. Faith often rises superior to the pressure of "things present," but faints at the thought of "things to come." It is the

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dark, unknown future with its dread forebodings that Satan often uses to harass the feeble saint. But we are Christ's and Christ is God's, therefore things to come, whatever be their form, must all be ours. Embraced in the love of Christ as Christ is in the love of God, as well may He dread things to come as we. All power in heaven and on earth is given unto Him, therefore we may sing:

" My times are in Thy hand,  
Jesus the Crucified ;  
The hand my many sins has pierced  
Is now my guard and guide."

### Chapter IV.

IN chapter iii. the apostle exhorts the Corinthian believers not to glory in man. Paul, Apollos, Cephas, were only servants or channels through which the Lord had given the blessing. But the work to which they had been called was highly honourable and deeply responsible, and so he says:

1. "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." God's children are all, in one sense, ministers or servants of the Lord Jesus, but it is not the ordinary word for "minister" or "servant" which is here used, but one signifying an "official servant," one specially called to special service and responsibility. The Lord

had entrusted Paul, and others along with him, with what he calls the stewardship of "the mysteries of God." Again and again Paul refers to these mysteries, all of which were special revelations not made known in the Old Testament, but communicated by the Holy Ghost to the Lord's "official servants" after His resurrection and ascension. There is the mystery of Christ and the Church, as found in the Epistle to the Ephesians and elsewhere; the mystery of the translation of the saints at the coming of the Lord (1 Cor. xv. 51); the mystery of God's purpose in the casting off of Israel and the calling out of an elect heavenly company during the time of Israel's rejection as a nation (Rom. xi. 25); the "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess. ii. 7), and all the counsels of God concerning the Church and its heavenly calling, and worship, and order. The Apostle Paul not only received from the Lord by the Spirit the knowledge of these things, but he wrote them down and also committed them to others, "to faithful men" (2 Tim. ii. 2) to be handed down for the benefit of the children of God throughout the whole age. We are now reaping the blessed results of this stewardship.

2. **"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."** There is a sense in which all believers are stewards. This is found in i. Peter iv 7-10. Here the Apostle is anticipating the time when each shall give an account of his

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stewardship, just as Paul does in the passage before us. It would be well for us if our minds were more constantly fixed upon this "end."

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Thus we see that every believer is entrusted with some stewardship for God. Have you ever paused to consider, "What has God entrusted to me?" If He has gifted you with knowledge, wisdom, ability to instruct others in the truth of God; much or little of this world's goods; a tender, pitiful heart for the poor, the sick, the sorrowing;—if any, or all of these "gifts" are entrusted to you, it is for the blessing of His saints, for the edifying of the Body of Christ, for the glorifying of God—and the responsibility rests upon you to make use of them diligently for Him as a "good steward."

Turn to another passage on stewardship, Luke xvi. 9, 10: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." We are here shown the impossibility of serving two masters. If I am pleasing myself, or if the love of money sways me—then it is impossible for me to be a faithful steward of the Lord Jesus. This passage has chiefly reference to the use of money. It is, in God's sight, only "that which is least," though man esteem it so highly.

Here the Lord sets before us a good use to put it to. Use it for the relief of the poor and the suffering; use it for the spread of the Gospel, so that there may be those to receive us into everlasting habitations who will acknowledge the blessing our stewardship has yielded to them.

And mark the principle the Lord here brings in. In His kingdom, whom will He reward with honour and responsibility? Those who have been faithful to Him in the little stewardship of life here. Such will hear His "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Why is it that so few among us are talented preachers of the Gospel? So few able teachers of the Word? So few entrusted with much of this world's goods? Alas! He knows that if we had much wealth we would probably be found spending it upon ourselves instead of using it as stewards for Him. If we had great powers of eloquence for preaching, we might be puffed up and boastful about it. If crowds came to listen to us, and many seemed to be converted, even that, instead of humbling us, might be a snare to us. Let us mark well and keep watch over the pride and ambition of our deceitful hearts, and seek in His presence that day by day we may be serving the Lord only.

We are all apt to be more or less influenced by human judgment of us. Even the apostle may not have been insensible to it; but he is able to say:

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3. **"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment."** Every servant of Christ is liable to be judged, and perhaps severely judged, by man and fellow-saints. Even of Paul the Corinthians were saying such bitter things as "being crafty he caught us with guile." The imputation was that he would not take from them himself, but that he had sent Titus to make a gain of them (see 2 Cor. xii. 16, 17). Thus corrupt, unsubdued flesh in the Lord's people will judge and impute evil motives to the Lord's servants. But with Paul that was a very small matter. His eye was fixed on the coming day, when he would give account to the Lord, the Righteous Judge.

4. **"He that judgeth me is the Lord."** Another passage bearing upon this subject is Romans xiv. 12, 13: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more." How many of us are occupied in passing judgment on one another! How much time is thus spent! But let us ask ourselves the question, "How much time have I spent in passing judgment upon myself, my motives, and my ways?" Let the Word of God search us in His presence. Let us not leave all the judgment till the judgment-seat of Christ, but let us in self-judgment now see that we are pleasing Him, and that we give no occasion of stumbling to our brethren. Let our inward life, our

home life, our business life, our church life, all be subject of daily judgment, and thus shall the truth sanctify us.

Now turn to another passage. Read Second Timothy iv. 1. Notice here the two judgments. "At His appearing"—that is, when the Church is taken up to meet Him, then is the judgment of the saints; and "at His kingdom," that is, when He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords to judge the world. The judgment of the dead will be in His kingdom, before He finally delivers it up to God (see 1 Cor. xv. 24, &c.). All judgment is committed to the Son because He is the SON OF MAN (John v. 22-27).

But from this passage in Romans xiv. we learn the solemn truth that none of us liveth to himself, neither does any one die to himself. He who died and rose again that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living is the One to whom our life's account shall be rendered.

Some of us perhaps have the thought that as the days, weeks, months, and years pass by and are forgotten by us, they are done with for ever. Not so. Assembled before His judgment-seat at His coming, we shall be *eternal losers* if we have been unfaithful stewards, living to ourselves instead of to Him. Here is the confession of one who had lived in the full prospect of that day: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my



course, I have kept the faith." Here he speaks of himself as the good soldier, the winner of the race, the keeper of the stewardship entrusted to him. He therefore loved and longed for the appearing of Jesus Christ.

You can say when you think of departed friends to be restored to you that you "love His appearing," they were dear to you, they have fallen asleep, and then you will see them again. And when you think of getting quit of this body of sin, and weakness, and decay, you can say, "I love His appearing." And when you think of seeing, as He is, the One who died for you, you can say that the thought of His appearing is blessed. But when you think of Him as the One to whom you must render account of your stewardship, as the One who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the heart, what then? In view of that hour of judgment that will search all hearts and all motives, can you say, "Yes, I love His appearing, for I know there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day"? It is a good thing to be *transparent*; to be as one said, "perpendicular for God,"—straight up and down—no crookedness. To walk in the light of God's presence and be searched through and through. If *now* you are covering up some hidden way that you would not like to be exposed to the light, all will be manifested *then*. Then

will our service be so manifested that we shall see it and judge it exactly as God now sees it and judges it. May the Lord give us grace to search ourselves and our ways now, so that we may not be "ashamed before Him at His coming."

5. **"Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come."** It is important to ascertain the meaning of such a Scripture as this. It is often quoted, as well as Matthew vii. 1, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," to support the idea that a Christian has no right to discern between believer and unbeliever; or, again, that we have no right to condemn that which we perceive to be contrary to the Word of God. But that this cannot be the meaning of these Scriptures is evident from chapter v. 3-12, where the apostle forms his own judgment concerning the evil-doer, and then calls upon the assembly to judge, showing that the Church is a sphere of judgment within which the saints are called to judge: "Do not ye judge those that are within, but those that are without God judgeth." A believer is commanded to marry "only in the Lord" (1 Cor. vii. 39)—then in such a case he must judge.

The evident meaning of such Scripture is, that we have not the power or the right to judge hearts or motives. Actions and ways we can compare with the Word of God, and so form our judgment concerning them—but man cannot see the heart, man cannot discern the motives, therefore the final judgment

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of all must be left till the Lord come—He searches the hearts. To be sitting perpetually in judgment upon others, attributing always the worst of motives, and at the same time to fail entirely in judging ourselves, is what the Word of God so uniformly declares to be evil: "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way" (Rom. xiv. 13).

In Revelation i. we see the Lord in the midst of the Seven Churches in the attitude of judgment. As the priestly Judge He pronounces His infallible judgment upon each (see chapter ii. 19): "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." We may see one another's works and service, but we cannot see the charity, and faith, and patience that accompanied them. But the Lord sees all. He could say, whilst approving all that was good, "I have a few things against thee." Mark the gentleness of His judgment. He does not begin with "I have a great deal against thee," but first approves what He can approve, and then speaks of the *few* things He has to complain of.

In Exodus xxviii. 29 we read, "And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart." Notice here, that to the high priest and not to the king was committed the judg-

ment of the people of God. The king had to obtain counsel at the lips of the priest. In the breastplate there were the names of the children of Israel, but in connection with these there was also what is called "the Urim and Thummim," or "*the lights and perfections*," by means of which the mind of Jehovah was infallibly made known to the priest. He alone could judge perfectly who, having the Urim and Thummim, was in the secret of God's counsel.

Turn to Numbers xxvii. 18-23: "Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, . . . and set him before Eleazer the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord." In Joshua ix. 14, we find distinctly the reason of Israel's being deceived by the Gibeonites: "The men took of their victuals and *asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord*." David, again and again, is seen resorting to the priest for Divine counsel (see 1 Samuel xxii. 10; xxiii. 9; xxx. 7\*).

The Lord answered David, but when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams nor by Urim nor by prophets, and at last this child of disobedience went to the Witch of Endor for counsel.

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\* Up to 2 Samuel v. he appears to have made a practice of this. Then there is a period during which it is not once recorded that he asked counsel of the Lord. Then follows the disaster of chapter vi., the crime of chapter xi., and many succeeding sorrows. Then three years of famine—year after year (chapter xxi. 1) before David is found again inquiring of the Lord. Meantime man had usurped Jehovah's place, and Ahithophel's counsel was with David as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God (2 Sam. xvi. 23).

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The Lord Jesus Christ is the Priest with Urim and Thummim. The names of all His saints are borne upon His heart, and He, with the "light and perfection" of Divine knowledge, searches the hearts and tries the reins and pronounces His perfect judgment upon each, and rebukes and chastens whom He loves. With the Spirit of Christ and the Word of Christ to enlighten and to guide us, we need never be at a loss, even amid the trials and perplexities of these last days. It is our business to go to Him, to open His Word and ask that His Spirit may give us counsel therefrom, knowledge and understanding to fulfil acceptably our service and stewardship.

With open ear to hear His voice, and honesty of purpose to do His will, we need not fear His judgment now or when He comes. At His judgment-seat the priestly Judge will bring all to the test of the written Word: "The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you."

He will (5) **"bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts."** What counsels are held within our hearts! How often the Lord tells us to speak to some one, or to do some service for Him—but immediately there is, as it were, a council held within. There is a conflict between flesh and spirit. Satan is there also, and says: "But will not this bring you into trouble?" "What will So-and-so

think of you?" Thus the Lord's authority is set aside, and our own heart is listened to, and our own will is done instead of His. All this is open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. He sees it now, but at His tribunal He will manifest it to us. Perhaps we are contented if we pass well with fellow-men, if we pass for being upright or spiritual among fellow-believers, whilst in the secret of our hearts His Word is not controlling us, and we seek not our counsels from Him. All this will be tested and manifested when He comes.

He knows now all our crookedness, all our lack of faith and love, all the hypocrisy of our ways. Does He give us up because of these things? No! He may rebuke us, He may chasten us, but never will He surrender one name upon His breastplate. He died for us, He lives for us, He maketh intercession for us, He will save unto the uttermost. It is perfect judgment combined with perfect love that we have to do with. And after all the testing and manifesting of the judgment-seat, what will be the result?

5. **"Then shall every man have praise of God."** Mark, it is not "then shall every man be praising God"—but then shall every man be receiving praise of God. "What!", you say, "Will God praise His people?" Yes, with all their faults, and sins, and rebellions, He will yet find something in everyone to praise. Take up the New Testament, and mark how the Spirit of God refers to the

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Old Testament believers. We read of David's knowledge of the heart and ways of God, when he took the shewbread and ate it (Matt. xii. 4), but not of the lies and deceit recorded in that same chapter (1 Sam. xxi.). We read of Solomon's wisdom and glory, but not of his folly and shame. We read of Sarah calling her husband "lord" (1 Peter iii. 6), but not of her laugh of unbelief recorded in the very same verse (Gen. xviii. 12). We read of the faith of Isaac when he blessed Jacob and Esau (Heb. xi. 20), but not of his love of venison that well-nigh led him to rebel against God. We read of the faith of Abraham, but not of his unbelief in going down into Egypt and saying that Sarah was his sister.

Thus God delights to blot out the past. He has mentioned *once* their sins, and He will never refer to them again. So at the coming tribunal, the manifestation will be complete, thorough, final. The judgment will be pronounced in perfect righteousness. What is of God will be mentioned to our eternal praise, what is of the flesh will be consumed and done with. Then will rewards be granted, the prizes distributed, the positions of honour appointed in the coming kingdom, according to faithfulness here: "Then shall every man have praise of God."

Let us now seek to walk under the eyes of Him who says, "I know thy works." Fellow-saints may praise us and think well of us when even our own hearts condemn

us; again, they may blame us and condemn us, when we know that their judgment is not just. Blessed it is to be able to look up into the face of Him that judgeth righteously and appeal to Him. It is a very small matter to be judged by man. Even in my judgment of myself I may greatly err. May we from this time earnestly seek to live in prospect of that day when each one of us shall give account of himself and of all his ways to God.

6. "And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another." From this verse we learn that the divisions in the Corinthian Church did not so much circle round Paul and Apollos as others in their midst whose names he does not mention.\* For the sake of illustration, and that no unnecessary offence might be given, he transfers it to himself and Apollos, the two best known and most used by God among them. He would teach them thus not to think too highly of men, and not to be "puffed up for one against another."

The people of God are always liable to overestimate those who have been used in blessing to them. The Spirit of God foresaw the danger, and thus warns us, lest the

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\*One of these may have been Diotrephes, who caused division in the assembly where Gaius was resident, and from Romans xvi. 23, and other internal evidence, it is more than probable that this was actually at Corinth.



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very gifts bestowed by the Lord for blessing should prove a snare to the Church. It is remarkable how many of the divisions which have rent Christendom into pieces have arisen through taking sides with gifted men of God, and being puffed up "*for one against another.*" Hence many of the sects are called by the names of such men, *e.g.*, Lutherans, Wesleyans, &c., showing how needful was the warning here given.

Suppose that one is more highly gifted than another, having greater ability, more knowledge and influence among saints, the question is, Who made him thus to differ? Who made the members in the body to differ? Does one member boast itself against another? The same God makes one member to differ from another in the Body of Christ, setting each member in its place as it hath pleased Him, qualifying each to fulfil its own special function. What is there, then, to boast of or to glory in? What hast thou that thou didst not receive? All is of the sovereign bounty of the Lord.

If Paul laboured more abundantly than they all, he adds, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. xv. 10). The gifts and abilities which the Lord has given to any of us are not to be denied or buried—neither are they to be trusted in or boasted of by ourselves or by others; but rather are they to be held in trust, and diligently used in all grace and humility, in responsibility to the Lord and for His service.

8. "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." Here we have another aspect of warning to the Corinthian Church. They were becoming self-confident, proud, and boastful. They were getting into a state of worldly ease and respectability, because they were losing the stigma of identification with a crucified Christ.

The apostle had the mind of Christ, and walked in the Master's spirit; but Corinth had gone far from the mind of the Lord. Hence the contrast between the two so strikingly wrought out in this passage. But the Spirit of God foresaw the development of the worldly principles here at work, and gives the needed warning. We shall see a picture of the end to which it was inevitably tending in Revelation iii. 14, &c. There is an important difference between this epistle and each of the other six. It is not "the Church in Laodicea," but "the Church of the Laodiceans." It was their Church. They were thoroughly well pleased with it. The Lord addresses it in His character as "the faithful and true witness." The Church should have been God's faithful witness in the earth, but its utter and final failure in this trust is here viewed by the Lord, and hence this mode of address so strongly marking its real condition. Again, He calls Himself here "the beginning of the creation

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of God." It is His judgment upon the whole course of religious man. The Spirit of God turns from it all to the new creation, where Christ is all in all.

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot." This, I believe, is the character of the last stage of Christendom. It is not on the part of the unbelieving but professing Christians a day of red-hot opposition carried out by fire and sword. Neither on the part of true believers is it a day of burning zeal and fervent love. Everything is toned down and mixed up—a condition of things most aptly expressed by the term here applied, "lukewarm."

The end of it is that the mass of detestable profession will be spued out of the mouth of Christ, and this answers exactly to what we get in Romans xi., "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." Through the disobedience and unbelief of Israel, blessing has come to the Gentiles. Whilst Israel nationally (here called the natural branches) is cut off, the current of God's grace has been flowing past them to the Gentiles, even to the ends of the earth. But is this place of privilege to be continued to the Gentiles? Hear the answer, "Behold the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise *thou also shalt be cut off.*" This exactly corresponds with the Lord's rejection of the

Church as His witness in its Laodicean stage.

But mark what is said further about this Church, and see how it is just the fuller development of that which in principle was at work already in Corinth. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." This is the true verdict of the Lord upon poor self-satisfied Christendom. Unconscious of its need, and filled with worldly prosperity, it had been turned away from Christ. He is no longer within to order and preside over His house, but thrust out, and standing at the door knocking for an entrance. Turn now to Revelation xviii., and you will find fuller details as to the character at last developed in guilty Christendom, ripe for sudden judgment from God. In her was found the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Who lit the martyr fires and built the dungeons of the inquisition? Was it not professing Christendom, with Rome, the city of the seven hills, as its centre and place of dominion. The Church, instead of living according to its calling as a heavenly stranger on earth, espoused in holy separation to its rejected Lord at God's right hand, and waiting for His appearing, long ago settled down on the earth, joined hands with the world's power, assumed dominion in the absence of earth's rightful heir, and boasted, "I sit a

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Queen, and am no widow; I shall see no sorrow."

Thus the heart of apostate Christendom is unveiled. The hope of reigning with Christ when He comes again has been lost; the reigning time has been antedated. But that shall have an end, for the very beast on which the guilty woman sits turns round upon her and gores her to death. The infidel spirit that is rising up with such amazing rapidity on every side, and among all classes of the people, will no longer tolerate the restraints of a false religion. Under the guise of toleration for all religions alike, infidelity will in the end maintain *nothing and tolerate nothing to which even the name of Christ is attached*. Let God's own saved ones be taken away from the earth, and what would be left? A mass of mere profession; a hollow mockery, despised by the infidel rationalistic world. A religious incubus which political power will overturn and utterly destroy.

Whilst the Corinthians were becoming rich, worldly-wise, honourable in the eyes of men, how was it with the apostles? Holding fast to the testimony of the Lord, and owning their identification with a rejected Christ, theirs is the very opposite experience. They are fools, weak, despised, hungering, thirsting, naked, buffeted, &c., &c. What a contrast! They had the sentence of death in themselves, that they should not trust in themselves, but in God who raiseth the dead

(2 Cor. i. 8, 9). Therefore, they looked for no better position upon earth; they were contented to let this life go if thereby they might serve and honour the Lord Jesus. The treasure was in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, as he says in 2 Corinthians iv., "Always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal body, for we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake."

Had these truths concerning fellowship with a crucified Christ been maintained, the Corinthian Church would not have been so respectable in the eyes of the world. But, though they were willing to have their reigning time without the apostle, he was not willing to reign without them. He says, "I would to God ye did reign, for then we also would be reigning with you." His eye is on the time when, with the Lord in the glory, Christ and His Church, Head and members, shall reign together.

9. "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." The apostles, instead of having the most honourable place in the Church in the eyes of men, seemed to have had the very lowest place assigned to them—being, "as it were, appointed unto death." But such was the

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way of the Lord. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister [servant]; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant [bond-servant]: even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 26-28).

Several of the apostles suffered martyrdom. The Lord was showing through them the character of the Church's calling. That is, to suffer with Him here, and to reign with Him in His kingdom. They became, therefore, a gazing-stock or spectacle to the world. The idea is, something that the world is looking at with intense interest, like the audience in a theatre watching the performance. But the world's interest in the man who is following hard in the footsteps of Christ is not that of admiration, but the gaze that comes of despising hearts.

But there were other onlookers besides men; they were a spectacle also to angels. This is a truth borne witness to by many Scriptures, that the angels take a lively interest in all that concerns the Church. That which concerns the Church concerns Christ Himself, and this is what calls forth the interest of these heavenly beings. We are one with Christ. Members of His body. Joint-heirs with Him. The whole mystery of the incarnation, birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus possesses the most intense interest for the angels. Refer to the

following Scriptures: Luke i. 11-26; ii. 9, 10, 13; Matt. iv. 11; Luke xxii. 43; xxiv. 4, 23; Eph. iii. 10; 1 Peter i. 12, and many other passages.

Contrast the position of those who were maintaining their true character in fellowship with Christ, and the position of those who were going by worldly principles and letting slip the very fundamental principles of Christianity.

**II. "We both hunger and thirst."** The Apostle endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Well might such as he exhort Timothy to do likewise. He went as the bearer of the Gospel to many a place where he had poor fare. In his long and toilsome journeys many a time he knew what it was both to hunger and to thirst.

**II. "And are naked."** That is, insufficiently clothed. What a contrast to the costly vestments of his would-be successors, whether Romish, Anglican, Irvingite, or others.

**II. "And are buffeted."** Knocked about, often receiving rough handling from men; but, in addition to that, even the very elements seemed to be let loose against the Apostle. He was no more exempt from storms and shipwrecks than other travellers. But it was all fulfilling the Word the Lord had spoken at his conversion, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake."

But amidst all, God preserved him as He



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had done Daniel in the lions' den, or the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. He did not exempt them from the trial, but He preserved them in it. And this is the character of the Lord's dealings with the Church. He has promised to preserve us in and through all our trials, giving us in the midst of them to know the joy of fellowship with Himself.

12. **"Labour, working with our own hands."** He might well have accepted support from the saints, in some cases he honoured them by receiving help (Phil. iv.); but over and over again we find him rather resorting to his own trade, and working as a tent-maker, that he might not be burdensome.

12. **"Being reviled, we bless."** Paul thus kept true to his calling, as we find in 1 Peter iii. 9. We are called like our Lord to be the bearers of *blessing* to the world. We are not, as men say, "to give as good as we get," but rather to return blessing for cursing.

12. **"Being persecuted, we suffer it."** He bears the persecutions in patience.

13. **"Being defamed, we entreat."** What a very humble position to take! It is not, "Being defamed, we raise an action for libel and go to law to get our character cleared."

13. **"We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."** He won't be that always. There is a time coming when

the Lord for whom he suffered will honour him with a crown of righteousness. The last shall be first; the one who humbled himself to suffer in fellowship with his Master shall be exalted.

14. "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you." About what was he warning them? In the whole of the previous chapters we see plainly the drift of his warning. He perceived that the doctrine of Christ was being corrupted by the introduction of man's thoughts, wisdom, eloquence, philosophy, into the teaching of the Church. The pure teaching of the Holy Spirit was being undermined by the introduction of that by which Christianity, instead of incurring reproach, rejection, and suffering, was becoming altered in its character to suit the flesh—the carnal-mind—the world. And what the Apostle foresaw and warned against has come to pass.

Christianity, instead of being that which the unregenerate would hate and oppose, has been through Satan's subtilty, and, by means of false teaching, deprived of all that was most peculiarly its own, and adapted to man in the flesh. Thus the unregenerate lay claim to the name "Christian" as no longer a term of reproach, but the title of an honourable and respectable religion. In connection with this, turn to Phil. iii. 18—"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that

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they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ," &c.

It is not that they are "the enemies of Christ," though I believe they really were so, but that is not the thought here—it is their opposition to the *Cross* of Christ that he is calling attention to. Such have no objection to Christianity as a *religion*, as a system of morality; they will acknowledge the purity of it and extol Christ as the Founder of it, giving Him perhaps a higher place than any other of the world's great teachers. But let it be shown what Christianity really is, that it involves becoming a disciple of the meek and lowly One, that it means not only professing to be a Christian by baptism or church membership, but believing in Him to the saving of the soul, owning Him as Lord, seeking in all things to obey His word, then it will be found that the offence of the Cross has not ceased. There will be manifested the same deep-rooted enmity to the Cross that there was at the first.

But why does Paul weep? Is it not because he sees how Satan would succeed by such in degrading the Church from its heavenly character to a mere worldly system of religion, adapted to the likings of men in the flesh?

The persons he has in view are not saved persons, for he says, "whose end is *destruction*." And he sums up their character in this, that "they mind earthly things." They

take, it may be, a sort of religious interest in improving the condition of the world by education, political reform, &c., &c. They will not object to Christianity so long as it does not interfere with their covetousness and their pleasures. But bring in a Christianity with a Cross—with a testimony to a rejected Christ—that draws the line between the living and the dead; and what then? You will find that still, as of old, there are "the enemies of the Cross of Christ" on every hand.

The world holds up and preaches a Christ of its own imagining—a Christ that can be owned without reproach and without a Cross. Be it ours to know and own the Christ of God, to bear the reproach inseparable from the confession of Him as our Lord, and to glory in His Cross.

**15. "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel."**

The word here rendered "instructors" is rendered "schoolmaster" in Galatians iii. 24. The law was powerless to give life; nevertheless, it was an "instructor" in righteousness and morality—a "schoolmaster" to Israel until Christ came. But the Apostle was far more to the Corinthians than a mere "instructor" or "schoolmaster." He had been the means of bringing to them the Gospel. From Athens he went to Corinth (Acts xviii.), and finding there a Jewish synagogue, he preached Christ, and got a

hearing from some. But great was the opposition raised up—the Jews opposing and blaspheming, so that he turned from them to the Gentiles. At this time he seems to have been cast down, and for a moment, as it were, on the point of being disheartened; but the Lord, ever mindful of His servants, and pitiful, spake to him by night in a vision. “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city” (Acts xviii. 9-11).

For a year and six months, therefore, he remained teaching the Word of God among them. He was not like some who go to a place to labour in the Gospel for a fortnight or a month, but, having another engagement already made for a fortnight or a month later, they must leave when their fortnight is ended. Many a time have I seen one of the Lord's servants come to a place, and after the Lord had begun to work, and souls were beginning to be saved, and many getting interested and coming to hear, they had to leave the place to fulfil a prior engagement, and so the work was, for the time being, stopped. The Lord's servants ought to be careful as to their engagements, to be free to go and to stay where the Lord would have them.

The Lord did not say to Paul: “If you go and leave Corinth all these souls will be lost.” No; away back in eternity they had

been made choice of by God—from the foundation of the world their names were in the Lamb's Book of Life; who they were none but the Lord Himself knew; but, idolators though they were, in the blindness and ignorance of heathenism, He knew them every one, and could say: "I have much people in this city." If Paul should flee from the work, the Lord of the harvest could send another to reap the ripening sheaves. Blessed and honourable work it is for any servant of the Lord to be upon the ground where He has *many* whom He is about to bring to the knowledge of Himself.

Thus brought to the Lord through him, whilst with them, as he said, "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling," they were dear to him as "his beloved sons."

He did not want their money; he could labour with his hands; but he wanted their souls for Christ. He had towards them a father's heart, and he claimed a father's relationship toward them, for he was the one whom God had used in their conversion. This is a spiritual relationship of no mean value, and the influence of which God intends to be used for His glory.

16. Paul could say: "**Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me.**" The Lord said of the Pharisees: "Do ye not after their ways." "Do what they teach you, but don't do as they do." But the Apostle was another sort of person. He

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could point to his life and show that it was after the example and spirit of Christ. The spirit of Christ shone out of him. He could point them not only to his doctrine, but to his ways. As he says :

17. **"For this cause I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord."** Turn to Acts xvi. 1-3. Paul was on a journey, visiting the Churches, confirming them in the faith. What a monstrous perversion of this gracious service is what is now known as "confirmation!" A bishop putting his hands on the heads of young people, mostly, if not all, unsaved, and thus confirming upon themselves the baptismal vows of their sponsors, and admitting them to what is called the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Is it not confirming them in a delusion of Satan rather than confirming disciples in the faith of Christ?

No place in all the Apostle's journeys did he meet with such a reception as at Lystra. It was there that he was stoned and left for dead. But back he goes again, for, in spite of all Satan's opposition, God was working, and there was a Church there to be helped and confirmed in the grace of God. And is it not most beautiful to see that one of the fruits of his testimony there—of the precious seed that had been indeed sown in tears—was the young man Timothy, who was destined to be the helper and comforter of his after-life service to the Lord.

How he loved Timothy, and how Timothy loved him! "I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I might be filled with joy." It is more of this touching heart-to-heart affection that is wanted among the children of God; out of this flows blessing. If we look at one another in the flesh, we will more likely hate than love. Paul was willing to live and die for the saints, because he looked at them as *in Christ*—members of His body.

Is Christ the Head—now in glory—dear to me? Then shall not every member of His body on earth be dear to me as He? The Head is in the glory, but the feet are still on earth. Let us anoint and kiss the feet. The affection that is poured upon the feeblest member on earth will not be lavished in vain. Make up your mind that there will be plenty in fellow-saints that is unlovely. The flesh in Christians is no better than the flesh in the unregenerate. But Christ is in the most weak and crooked Christian, and where Christ is there must be something to love! Let us seek to consider one another, and to bear one another's infirmities, and thus love will be drawn out and increased.

17. "My ways, which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every Church." But what was Timothy to do for them when he visited them? He was to bring to



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their remembrance Paul's ways, which were in Christ. Every step he had taken among them had been, so to speak, within the circle of the will and ways of Christ. Will it be said of us after we have left our present sphere of service, "His ways were ever in Christ?" Timothy had a heart to mark and admire the Christlike ways of the Apostle, and therefore he could bring them to the remembrance of others. And, note, the teaching of Paul was the same in "*every Church.*" He did not teach one sort of way in one place and differently in another. He went by the will of the Master; he preached and taught Jesus Christ and His Word, declaring all the counsel of God. May we indeed be followers of Him, even as he was of Christ!

### Chapter V.

"THE temple of God is holy: which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians iii. 17). "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, for ever" (Psalm xciii. 5). The grace of the New Covenant, and the simplicity of its ordinances, as compared with the august and complex ceremonial of the old, has a tendency in unexercised minds to detract from the solemnity and holiness that ever becomes the presence of God. This had been notably the case in the Church at Corinth, and the apostle finds it needful to convict them of the low moral tone to which

they had fallen, as well as to instruct them on the subject of doctrinal errors that were prevalent among them. Chapter v. is like the introduction of salt to antidote the leaven. In the days of Elisha, when there was "death in the pot," the prophet called for meal and poured it into the poisoned food, and that which had been deadly became wholesome. The pungent truth of chapter v. was needed, and the Apostle does not spare them.

1. **"It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife."** He specifies one case of flagrant sin in their midst, so heinous that such was not even named among the Gentiles. Natural conscience revolted at it. Alas, the flesh in believers is no better than the flesh of the unregenerate, and the natural conscience of an unsaved man may be nearer to righteousness than the unexercised and hardened consciences of carnal believers. Let children of God beware of trifling with conscience. Men do not commonly come under bondage to divers lusts until conscience having been stifled and violated, its voice sounds less and less loudly, and finally ceases to be heard at all.

2. **"And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away**

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**from among you."** The moral state of the assembly is exposed by the very toleration that was accorded to the sinning one in their midst. They ought to have mourned over such a condition of things, and so mourned and prayed that possibly God Himself, being thus appealed to, would have come in, and in judgment have taken the evil worker from their midst. Instead of this they are "puffed up." They are glorying in their gifts, or in their numbers, or in their outward prosperity, like the Church of the Laodiceans in Revelation iii., when they ought to have been broken-hearted because of the dishonour brought upon the Name of the Lord.

4. So in the Church the final act of putting away was to be in the presence of all. **"In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together."** The apostle, no doubt, had special power entrusted to him, power delegated by the Lord, mercifully not to all His people, but to those whom He had specially called and fitted to be the administrators of such gifts.

4. The simple withdrawal of a guilty one, or even the dealing with such an one by elders in private, and no longer suffering him to assemble with the saints around the Lord's table fails to answer the purpose of the solemn public act. The reason of its being **"when ye are gathered together"** is "that others also may fear."

5. He in spirit promises to be present

with them and to use his apostolic authority\* on the occasion, delivering the offender to Satan "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." The saints, apart from apostolic authority, have the power of putting away from among themselves, thus severing the sinning one from all fellowship as saints, and, as it were, thrusting him back into the outside place where judgment is taken up by God Himself.

The effect of so solemn a judgment in the presence of all, if duly apprehended, cannot but be salutary. It is like what we find in 1 Timothy v. 20: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." Subsequently in 2 Corinthians vii., referring no doubt to the action taken in accordance with 1 Corinthians v., we read that they sorrowed after a godly sort. "What carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." Thus the judgment of the one brought about much-needed self-judgment in all. As the leprous stones were to be taken away from the leprous house, so was the "wicked person" to be put away from the assembly. But the judgment of the

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\* As instances of apostolic authority, see Acts v. 1-13; xiii. 6-12; 1 Tim i. 20. See also 1 Cor. iv. 19-21; 2 Cor. xiii. 10. No such power is vested in the Church.

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house did not end there. "He shall cause the house to be scraped within round about" (see Lev. xiv. 40, 41). The leprosy had defiled it all. 1 Corinthians v. answers to the taking away of the leprous stone; 2 Corinthians vii. answers to the scraping of it all within.

6. **"Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"** As leaven works in dough, transforming it gradually into its own nature, so does evil, whether moral or doctrinal, spread from one to another. Not that those in contact with it become necessarily guilty of the same evil actions, but their moral tone is lowered, and failing to abhor and to judge it their conscience becomes defiled.

Under the law there were certain specified forms of defilement that rendered the Israelite so unclean that his presence in the camp was not to be tolerated. In Numbers v. Israel is commanded to put out of the camp "every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead."\* Many minor defilements were to be matters of self-judgment, self-cleansing, and being "unclean until the even." But these more serious forms were to be taken cognisance of by the congregation, and the cleansing of them in any case involved the expiry of at least a week (see Num. xix. 19; Lev. xiv. 8)

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\* Not as J. N. D. Synopsis, 238. "Every defilement was to be purged out."

So in regard to New Testament legislation as in the chapter before us. Every form of evil was not to be dealt with by the assembly in this way. There are many sins, such as pride, self-righteousness, envy, want of love, want of patience, which may be noticed, and which ought to be dealt with graciously and wisely by the application of the Word of God. No question of assembly action is raised, nor is "putting away" hinted at.

7. **"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."**

Here, as elsewhere throughout Scripture, leaven represents evil. It is not God's way in Scripture to use a figure in one place to represent evil, and in another good. But this figure occurs so frequently in scripture, that it may be profitable to see how unvarying God's use of the type is.

And where else *can* we ascertain the mind of God but in His Word? Here leaven represents unqualified evil—being applied both to the immorality of life that was to be dealt with, and more generally to "malice and wickedness," and is, therefore, contrasted with the "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." In Galatians v. 7-10 we find a similar use of the type. It is here used to represent false doctrine, which had been introduced by false teachers into the churches of Galatia. They had sought to mix up law and ordinances with the

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Gospel of the grace of God. This was fundamental error, dangerous, yea, even fatal; hence the apostle characterises it as "leaven," and expresses his confidence that the saints would deal in judgment with him who had introduced such error, whoever he might be.

In the book of Genesis we find the first reference to leaven (chap. xix. 1-3). From its being here stated that Lot baked unleavened bread for his heavenly guests, it may be inferred that leavened bread was ordinarily in use in Sodom. This is further supported by reference to Genesis xviii. 6, where no mention is made of the absence of leaven in that which Sarah prepared as though it had not been used in the tent of Abraham.

The next allusion to leaven is in Exodus xii. 15. In connection with the passover was the feast of unleavened bread; during the seven days of its duration leaven was to be put away from the homes of Israel. Any one who should dare to eat of leavened bread was to be cut off from Israel. From this it is evident that, as in Sodom, so also in Egypt, leaven was in ordinary use. Is it not significant that we thus trace its origin in scripture to Sodom and Egypt? \* Is not its typical character thus stamped upon it from the very earliest?

We next find it referred to in Leviticus

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\* The character of Sodom and Egypt is shown in Revelation xii. 8.

II. 11: "No meat-offering, which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord made by fire." Notice here, it does not say that leaven was to be excluded from every offering, but from any offering "*made by fire.*"

Those offerings which came before Jehovah upon the altar-fire were all intended to be typical of Christ, and of Him alone. Nothing could come with acceptance upon Jehovah's altar but that which represented Him. Hence the prohibition of leaven and honey in all such offerings. Honey is similar in nature to leaven. A baker would use honey to quicken the action of leaven. On the other hand, *salt* was not to be lacking in the offerings. In its nature and action it is opposed to leaven, as any baker will testify. The conversation of the believer is, therefore, to be like that of the Master, not only free from "leaven," but "seasoned with salt" (Col. iv. 6). Salt no doubt represents the searching healthful power of the truth as preserving from corruption.

But in Leviticus vii. there is an offering prescribed which was to be baken *with leaven*. The "peace sacrifice" specially represented communion with Jehovah, for it was not like the burnt-offering wholly burnt upon the altar, nor was it burnt outside the camp as the sin-offering, but divided into three portions. Part was laid on the altar for God, part pertained to the priest, and part was to



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be fed upon by the offerer. Thus it answered exactly to 1 John i. 3: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

But *along with* the peace sacrifice it is written (Lev. vii. 13), "He shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace-offerings." How fitly does this represent our service of thanksgiving to God? As the leavened offering could not be presented by itself, but only with the blood of the peace-offering, so neither can our thanksgivings be accepted unless they ascend to God by Him who is both our Peace Sacrifice and our High Priest. This is the teaching of Hebrews xiii. 15: "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." Mark that "by Him." He is the perfect peace-offering; He is the unleavened bread mingled with oil and the pure frankincense.

Our whole life ought to be one continual sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. But is it so? Are our praises, or our meditations, or our services unleavened? God knows that they are not, and we know it too. There is leaven in it all. But is it, therefore, rejected by God? Verily no. He loves to hear our praises and to receive our service, be it ever so lowly or feeble, but He can only accept it as presented *by Him*.

The leavened bread was never put upon the altar. It was waved before the Lord and accepted, but never came upon the

altar-fire. Only Christ could stand the test of the searching fire of God's holiness. He was tested to the last, and instead of the test revealing corruption, it only manifested the fragrance of His offering, as the fire caused the frankincense to ascend and fill the air with its sweet odours.

The next reference to leaven is in Leviticus xxiii. 9-21. A sheaf was to be taken at the beginning of harvest and waved before the Lord for their acceptance. With it was to be offered a burnt-offering and a meat-offering, but no mention of a sin-offering. The sheaf of firstfruits represented Christ risen from the dead (see I Cor. xv. 23)—the only untainted One that ever died. The corn of wheat that fell into the earth and died but rose again, no longer alone, but associating with Him in resurrection life the many sons He is bringing to glory.

After this, seven weeks were allowed to pass—busy harvest weeks, but on the morning of the fiftieth day a *new meat-offering* was to be brought to the Lord. This offering was to consist of two wave loaves made of two-tenth deals of fine flour—the same quantity and the same material as the meat-offering that accompanied the sheaf of firstfruits. These were to be baked with leaven. These also were a firstfruits-offering. Baked with leaven, presented on Pentecost, do these not fitly represent the Church? We, too, are said to be “a kind of firstfruits” (James i. 18). The two loaves no doubt point to

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Jew and Gentile brought together and accepted in Christ, as taught in Ephesians ii.\* All this was no doubt gone through at the temple. The sheaf would be waved as usual, though the vail had been rent; the loaves would no doubt be brought on Pentecost and presented before the Lord, but these were only the shadows with which blinded hearts were occupied whilst the great realities were being enacted by God in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and fifty days after the acceptance of 3000 blood-washed sinners in and through Him sealing them with the Holy Spirit, and making them members of the body of Christ.

The same idea is found applied to the Gentiles in Romans xv. 16: "That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." And here, again, we see the difference between the sheaf which represented Christ and the two loaves which represented the Church. With the loaves there must needs be offered "seven lambs, one young bullock, and two rams for a burnt-offering," but in addition to this there was also to be one kid of the goats for a sin-offering, and two lambs for a peace-offering. Thus all the fulness of the atoning work of Christ is presented in type along with these two leavened loaves, and upon this ground alone are they accepted. And hereby are we taught that our acceptance

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\* The full truth of oneness in the risen Christ is not here expressed, that being a secret hid in God; see Eph. iii. 9.

is in Christ alone. All the infinite preciousness to God of His person, His life, and His death is for us, presented and accepted on our behalf.

These two loaves were to be "for the priest." So the Church is for Christ. They are those whom the Father has given Him. He has made a marriage for His Son, and those who form the bride are sanctified in Christ Jesus—chosen in Him, loved as He is loved, accepted in the Beloved.

The typical character of such ordinances as these can only be read in the light of the New Testament. There, through the Holy Spirit's teaching, the hidden meaning of these ancient shadows is revealed. Talk of these being devised by Moses! The Spirit-taught child of God can see far beyond Moses; he can trace every word to the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Thus is the Divine authority of the Scriptures established more and more to faith.

A word in conclusion as to the parable in Matthew xiii. 33. The popular interpretation of this does violence to all other scriptures where leaven is mentioned. It makes out leaven to be good, *i.e.*, the Gospel; meal to be bad, representing the world; and the result of the leavening process to be the overcoming of evil and the conversion of the world to Christ. Surely, viewed in the light of all scripture, this is a turning of things upside down. But if the woman is viewed as representing

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the Church herself, the meal as the pure, unadulterated truth of God, and the leaven as corrupt doctrine, then all is in harmony, and the appalling rate at which the leaven of evil doctrine is now permeating the ministry of the Word among all denominations is no longer wondered at, but becomes evidence of the infallibility of the Prophetic Word.

10. But the grosser forms of evil here enumerated, viz.: **"fornication, covetousness, idolatry, railing, drunkenness, extortion,"** call for absolute separation—**"with such an one no not to eat."**

11. **"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."**

The world is evil. The devil and the flesh are in league with it. But the saints, though not of it, are yet in it. The Lord did not pray that they might be taken out of it, but that they might be kept from the evil. And it is just in the necessary intercourse with the world, in relationships with it that are unavoidable and continuous, that the Christian's testimony is to be felt and to be effective. The salt must come into close contact with the meat to preserve it; the light must be carried into the darkness, if it is to in any measure dispel it. Shutting up into monasteries and nunneries those who are supposed to be specially in touch with

heaven is not God's thought; rather is it Satan's device for depriving the world of the testimony it needs. Moreover, such places develop a world of their own, in which the flesh and the devil play their part as in the world without.

Therefore the apostle writes that if the believer is to have no intercourse, no business transactions with unrighteous and unholy persons, he "must needs go out of the world." But in the assembly of the saints it is different. There one may have been "called a brother," and recognized as a child of God, but if he is persistently guilty of any of the sins of which a catalogue is given in the verse before us, his claim to be named as "a brother" is forfeited, and he stands before the saints in the character of "a wicked person."

Great differences exist among saints on many important subjects, such as Ecclesiastical position and procedure; baptism, the subjects and the mode of it; ministry, and the manner of its exercise; association with others in worship and service. Yet few would venture to deny that on all sides of such questions there are to be found many godly persons who hold the truth of the Gospel in its great fundamentals, and whose personal character is holy and righteous. To regard these as "wicked persons," and to treat them as such, refusing them such fellowship as we can offer, giving them the outside place in our assemblies with the

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worlding and the excommunicated, is worse than uncharitable, it is a denial of the authority of the Lord who claims the reception to His glory of those whom He has received.

11. The sin which gave occasion for the writing of this chapter, with the wealth of precious teaching it contains, is one the very mention of which causes shame. The term, "**fornication**," is generic, and includes all kinds of unlawful gratification of the passions of the flesh.

Sad and shameful as it is to say it, such sins have had oftentimes to be dealt with in the assemblies, and not only among the young and foolish, but even among professed servants of Christ and prominent labourers in the Gospel. It seems as if in some cases conscience was seared, as if the depth of the sin and the dishonour brought by it on the Name of Christ and the cause of the truth, was unfelt, and repentance either altogether absent or deplorably shallow. Yet restoration to fellowship is immediately demanded, if indeed they were put away, and there are seldom wanting those who will press the demand, although shepherd hearts fail to discern any satisfactory evidence of repentance and restoration. How true it is that the flesh in the believer is no better than it was in his natural state. There is no sin to which unregenerate nature can descend that a believer may not be guilty of, if the living God be departed from and the flesh allowed

to have its way. "Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." No sin is committed in outward act that has not first been conceived in the heart and in the imagination. If the heart be "purified by faith," the sin that dwells in the flesh will not be suffered to break out. Though conscious of its presence, it will be mortified and kept in the place of death. All sin from which the blood of Christ can cleanse, the Holy Spirit's power is able to subdue.

11. The next sin mentioned is "**covetousness.**" So little shame attaches to this sin that it is seldom if ever dealt with. Yet it is the idolatry of the present age—"covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. iii. 5). The Lord Himself gave the warning, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth."

Haste to be rich is the snare that entraps so many, and destroys the usefulness of so many lives that began with fair promise. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition and destruction; for the love of money is a root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10). It has been said that he whose expenditure is always within his income, is practically rich; whilst



he who expends ever so little more than his income, is practically poor. It is this latter tendency, resulting from a desire to emulate those that have larger means, which lands so many in debt and all its inevitable cares and anxieties. The commercial man who hastens to be rich, who incurs liabilities and risks beyond his means, and finds himself in financial difficulties and ultimately insolvent, rarely finds it possible to maintain a good conscience. He will be pressed into straits involving misrepresentations and falsehoods, of which in other days he would have thought himself incapable.

To cultivate a spirit of contentment, of patient industry and economy, never swerving from the path of uprightness and integrity, never engaging in any transaction on which the blessing of the Lord cannot be confidently reckoned upon, trusting at all times in His wisdom and in His sustaining grace, it will be surely proved that His will is "good and acceptable and perfect," and that all His paths drop fatness.

11. The next character mentioned is "an idolater." This, applying as it does to heathen lands such as India, Africa, and China, has a significance and application there which it cannot have in these professedly Christian lands where literal idolatry is practically unknown.

12. We therefore pass on to the next, viz., "a railer." More disputes and divisions have arisen in assemblies over this form of

evil than almost any other. Very often it has been taken advantage of to get rid of a brother with a sharp tongue, and who usually occupies an opposition bench. There are some such in most meetings, and they are a constant trial of patience and grace. Herein they may become a blessing to exercised souls, though performing a barren function as regards themselves.

The railer is not one who merely utters hasty, inconsiderate, and unkind remarks. Few would not be "rainers" if this constituted the character so described. The ingredient of personal animosity is a necessary part of it. It is a course of personal and malicious abuse carried on with the intention of discrediting and detracting from the influence of the one aimed at. It is a deep-seated evil, and like all the rest of the sins here enumerated indicates a total departure in heart from God, and an effort to carry out the will of the flesh by unscrupulous carnal means. Where this really exists there remains no course open for the safety of the assembly and for the reaching of the conscience of the "wicked person" but that which the Scripture prescribes, namely, putting him away from among the saints. The spirit of it is infectious, and the young and inexperienced are liable to imbibe it and thus to increase the trouble.

11. Next comes the "**drunkard.**" Alas! that such should ever be found among the ranks of those who profess to love and serve

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the Lord. Yet many such cases have arisen, and have required to be excluded from the fellowship of the saints. Rarely if ever is this sin fallen into suddenly. There has preceded it a heart departure from the Lord, a carelessness as to maintaining a good conscience, probably a friendship with the world and a going in with its ways, and trifling with a known danger as a foolish child will play with fire, resulting at last in the open fall, and the man who in the fear of the Lord was as strong as Samson becomes the prey of a worse than Philistine lust, against which all his struggles are in vain. Even prominent preachers of the Gospel have fallen before this hideous snare. He who walks in the Spirit will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh (Gal. v. 16). There is no safety in self—the will may pledge itself to abstinence and carry out this safe course for a time, but apart from the keeping power of the Lord Jesus there is no safety for any. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Utter helplessness, relying implicitly upon divine power is ever safe. Sad and terrible is the case of those who fall into this sin. Yet there are also cases of blessed restoration in which, when, humanly speaking, every effort and means seemed to fail, a repentance deep and thorough has been granted, and the restored life been yielded in lowly contrite service.

As regards the world, the Satanic infatuation seems hardly reached by the energetic

and well-meant efforts to stem the tide by means of the temperance movement. The Gospel is the one great panacea. Legislation can do little for the man who is under the power of the craving for alcohol. The only legislation that would approach being effective is one which no government, whatever its majority, dare propose. If, as we believe, drunkenness is the cause of nine-tenths of the crimes that fill our police courts and prisons—the cause, above all others, of insanity, infantile mortality, and divorces—why then should it not be enacted that drunkenness itself is a *crime* punishable by law? Why wait till the unconscious maniac has done some irretrievable damage? Drunkenness not only means vice, but also dirt, debt, disease, death, damnation, and utter misery to all within its sphere. Oh! that any reader of these lines who may already be slipping down the path that leads to such results may awake and take hold upon God for grace to stand back in horror from the snare, and henceforth to walk in lowliness, clinging moment by moment to the Saviour's gracious and mighty hand.

II. Lastly, there is the "**extortioner.**" One who takes advantage of the weakness of his neighbour to enrich himself at his expense. He is a thief in reality, only he accomplishes his end by means that do not bring him under the power of criminal law. Zaccheus was an extortioner, for he seems to have resorted to false accusation to enrich

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himself. Some circumstances lend themselves to this sin more conveniently than others, but if one is unscrupulous enough to condescend to it, there are ever ways at hand to extort more than is just, and feather one's own nest.

Under the law no man was to be put to death at the mouth of one witness (Deut. xix. 15). This is still God's order in the sphere of Church judgment (see Matt. xviii. 16; 2 Cor. xiii. 1). Every accusation must be sifted and proved, so that there may be no dubiety as to the facts. Especially must charges against an elder be guarded, and not even listened to except in the presence of two or three witnesses (1 Tim. v. 19). These are matters where divine prudence is required, and if given heed to, much would be avoided in the way of division and evil feeling.

12. In those days the Church at Corinth comprised all the saints in Corinth. There was a definite "**within**" and "**without**." *Within* were all that called upon the Name of Jesus Christ the Lord, *without* was the world. Factions there were within the Church, but as yet no open breach, no competing or contending sects. But it was not always so. The last view we get of the Church, ere the curtain of divine revelation falls, is in 3 John, where the *within* is lorded over by Diotrephes and *without* are the Apostle John, and all who would dare to receive Him as belonging to Christ.

What a solemnly awful wreck ! And such is the wreck to-day of corporate testimony on earth. Let us beware of the attempt to reconstruct what has in the judgment of God been broken in pieces. By narrowing the circle, like Diotrephes, and receiving none but those who see with us and bow to our authority, we may construct a circle of fellowship and call it "*within*" and all other saints *without*. But God can own no such unity, and, as a matter of fact, has ever blown upon all such attempts, shattering to fragments in His judgment the fairest and most promising of such ecclesiastical fabrics.

13. **"Put away from among yourselves that wicked person."** It is thus seen that the assembly is constituted by God a sphere of rule and of judgment. It matters not whether it consist of two or three gathered in the Lord's name in a private house, or two or three hundred in a public hall; the principle is the same, and the form of discipline prescribed is not affected.

One found to be guilty of practising such sins, whether he is afterwards proved to be a child of God or not, stands before the assembly as a "wicked person." He may have been "**called a brother**," but he has forfeited his claim to such a title. Moreover, for the purity of the assembly, for the honour of the name of the Lord, and for the restoration or salvation of his own soul, he must be put away from among the saints.

This putting away, commonly called "ex-

communication," is a most solemn act. It is what might be called the "extreme penalty" which the Church can inflict. It answers very much to death under the law. When Achan's sin was discovered and brought to judgment it is written, "All Israel stoned him with stones." It was not the act of Joshua or of the Elders of the people only, but the act of "all Israel." No one could turn round and say "they did it; we had no fellowship with it." It is as if each individual cast a stone at the offender. And how could they have been more forcibly and solemnly impressed with the evil of sin and the awful consequences of rebellion against the command of Jehovah.

## Chapter VI.

1. "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints." That trespasses and offences would occur within the assembly, was foreseen by the Lord, and instructions given for such cases in Matthew xviii. 15, &c. Here, in the Corinthian Church, not only had there been immorality as in chapter v.; evidently there had also been unrighteous dealing one with another of such a nature that the world's law-courts had been either threatened, or resorted to, in order to obtain justice.

The divine instructions are absolute upon

this matter. For brother to go to law with brother before the unbelievers was a shame to them, and a dishonour to the name and doctrine of the Lord.

But although the apostle so strongly denounces the course some had been adopting, he by no means leads us to suppose that it is the Lord's mind that the Christian should be without a court of appeal, without a judge to deal righteously with his case. He asks, to their shame:

5. "Is it so that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one who shall be able to judge between his brethren?" It is not to be expected that a spiritual man will ever be regarded as a "wise man" by the world. Christ was counted a fool, and so were His apostles; and the more closely believers follow in His footsteps and theirs, the more will they be regarded by the world as fools, or at least weak and narrow-minded.

But though we may be counted fools by the wise men of the world, and though the very preaching of the cross, which is the power of God, may be reckoned foolishness by men, yet God never intends His people to be really a foolish people. He desires that they might be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. i. 9). He gives us access full and free to Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Some are specially gifted with the



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“word of wisdom” (1 Cor. xii. 8). His Spirit is the spirit of “wisdom and understanding” (Isa. xi. 2); “the spirit of power and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. i. 7); and *all* have the promise, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God . . . and it shall be given him” (James i. 5).

Is it any wonder, then, that the apostle, as he hears of them seeking to the world’s wise men for judgment, asks in reproachful surprise, “Is there not a wise man **AMONG YOU?**”

But he also makes mention of the wonderful purpose of God concerning the Church.

2. “**Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?**” and, again:

3. “**Know ye not that we shall judge angels?**” The ordinary idea has been that at the end of the world all would be gathered together before the throne of God—saints and sinners—in one vast mingled company, then and there to be judged by God, and to be separated as the sheep from the goats.

But how can such a doctrine as this be found to agree with the teaching of the chapter before us? Plainly it is irreconcilable, and it arises from not seeing and understanding the unique position and calling of the Church as one with Christ, joint-heirs with Him, destined to come with Him when He comes in manifested glory, having been previously taken up to be with Him; destined to reign with Him when He reigns, and to execute judgment with Him when He judges.

The scriptures upon this subject were more fully referred to when we were considering chapter iv. 8; but what may well strike us here is that the apostle does not appear to take into account the change that will take place upon the saints at the coming of the Lord. He does not say that resurrection and glory are needed to fit us for the great occasion of judging the world. Of course we know that the sleeping saints must first be raised and the living must be changed, and that, glorified and changed into the likeness of our Lord, we shall reign and judge. But he ignores all that here, and why? Is it not because of this—that, little as we apprehend it, little as we live in the power of it, we have even now in our weakness and humiliation all the wisdom of God at our disposal as fully as we shall then? Even now we have God for us, Christ as our storehouse, His Holy Spirit within us, His Word to instruct us—all this we have *now*, what more can we have *then*? Surely nothing more; only the flesh that so hinders here shall then be dropped, and God shall be all in all.

And is it so that those who are so honoured, so gifted, so empowered by God, shall in time of trouble, and writhing under a sense of injustice, turn from the Church of God to the world, as if wisdom or justice were not to be found among the saints—not to be found in that sphere wherein God dwells, but must needs be sought for at the

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hands of those who know not God and obey not His Gospel?

It is true Paul appealed to Cæsar. But would Paul have done so had his accusers been of the Church of God? Surely not. The world was acting towards him in gross injustice, going contrary to its own laws to do him injury; he therefore appealed to the world's own highest authority at the time. Some there are who judge the apostle to have been wrong in this; such would not appeal to law, even when the injustice complained of comes from the ungodly. They prefer to commit their cause wholly to the Lord. It is wonderful oftentimes how God honours such simple faith as this, and Himself espouses the cause and vindicates the rights of those who trust Him. But in the passage before us what is forbidden is not the appeal to law in the case of injustice coming from the world, but in the case of alleged wrong between brother and brother.

The army protects our country from invasion and bloodshed, and for this we can thank God. The policeman protects our home from robbery, and for this also we can thank God. Romans xiii. is a chapter which shows how fully human government has the sanction of God, and how the just administration of law is according to His will.

If, therefore, the Christian appeals, as did Paul, against the world's injustice to the world's law court, he may even then have

cause to thank God that in His good providence such a provision is made for the maintenance of right in an evil age.

But in the case of differences arising between brethren, it is only to those *within* that the matter should be made known. The decision of Christian men of prudence and experience ought to be more to such than the decision of any law court.

But even if the moral and spiritual condition of an assembly is so low that no one is found able to deal with the case, or that the judgment of capable Christian men is set at nought or rejected, what then? The Word is explicit.

7. **"Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"** Any who thus commit the matter to the Lord will find that God will defend the right in His own time and way.

The Revised Version might be referred to as shedding light upon verse 4, **"If then ye have to judge things pertaining to this life, do ye set them to judge who are of no account in the Church?"** Of what account among the saints would be the decision of a heathen judge? Clearly it would not carry conviction to the saints, though it might be legally final and binding. To carry conviction and to effect a settlement, such matters ought to be judged by wise experienced Christian men.

9. **"Know ye not that the unright-**

**eous shall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven?"** We are taught in verse 7 so to consider the honour of the Name of the Lord as connected with His own people, that we would rather silently bear any amount of wrong from a fellow-Christian than suffer it to come before the world. But in case any should suppose by this that sin may be made light of, the apostle immediately brings forward the other side of the truth. Having rebuked those who were so impatient of wrong—be it real or supposed—that they would take their cause before the world's courts, he now turns to rebuke those who were doing the wrong.

9. **"Be not deceived."** It is important to notice in how many of the epistles we find similar warnings to this against self-deception.

1. Ephesians v. 6, 7: "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience; be not ye, therefore, partakers with them."

2. Philippians iii. 18, 19: "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." No doubt the persons here referred to were professed Christians, who had joined themselves to the people of God, but *self* was their object, and not Christ.

3. 2 Timothy iii. 1-5: "For men shall be

lovers of their own selves . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away."

4. 2 Peter ii. 18-22: "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning . . . But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Notice the "escaping" here referred to is not through "*faith*," but only through "*knowledge*." There are persons such as Herod of whom we read that he "feared John . . . and observed him; and when he heard him he did many things and heard him gladly" (Mark vi. 20). Though he "did many things," so that an outward change may have been noticeable in his life, yet he was not saved. The change was not salvation, it was self-deception. The dog and the sow only followed the instincts of their unclean nature. It is the nature of the sow, be it washed ever so clean, to wallow in the mire. Not so the sheep. A sheep may fall into the mire, but it will struggle to be out; it never loves it, it never wallows in it.

5. Titus i. 15, 16: "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure. . . . They profess that they know God, but in

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works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

These passages suffice to show that as Christianity became corrupted self-deception would increase. I am persuaded that in these last days, when the power of Satan is so great and his devices so subtle—and, on the other hand, the Gospel of the grace of God so abundantly proclaimed—there will be more and more the "turning of the grace of God into lasciviousness"; taking advantage, as it were, of the doctrines of grace to give the reins to self-will and pride and lust; as if it were written, "He bore our sins that we might have liberty to go on in sin," and not "that we being dead to sin might live unto righteousness."

Hear, then, the solemn warning of God, "Be not deceived."

11. **"Such were some of you."** The Lord had gathered out from the mass of Corinthian idolatry and wickedness a chosen people for His Name. When the apostle was first there delivering the Lord's message, declaring the unsearchable riches of Christ, the opposition was so great that probably he would have left had not the Lord appeared to him in a vision, saying, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts xviii. 9, 10). Some of these were at that very time such sinners as we

read of here. In Revelation xxi. 8 there is a list of the sins of which those have been guilty who have their part in "the lake of fire"; and as we look at the roll of the redeemed at Corinth, we see some of the very same characters pardoned and saved!

The apostle brought no "handmaid" along with the Gospel when he came to Corinth. He resorted to no questionable or outlandish means to render the Gospel attractive. He determined to know nothing among them "save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." It was not Christ and something else, but Christ alone he preached, "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." It was Christ alone that saved. No matter how deep dyed with sin, or how low they were sunk in corruption, the Lord of glory stooped to save them. They were "washed," for He purged their sins on Calvary. They were justified from all things the moment they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; and being justified they were also sanctified, set apart for God, sealed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. What a mighty change! What but the power and grace of God could have wrought it! Yes, Corinthian sinners once vile as those who weep and wail in eternal perdition shall surround the throne of God, eternal monuments of His saving grace!

Do not let us be afraid to trust the simple Gospel for the salvation of sinners. Let us with all boldness and confidence proclaim



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the story of the cross, for we know "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Let us trust Almighty God to use the means that He Himself has appointed for lifting the chief of sinners out of his sin and uncleanness, and making him an heir of glory.

I would that in these days of many devices we had more simple, single-hearted faith in the power of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. Many Old Testament types illustrate the power of the Gospel. To the natural mind what foolishness it was to expect the water of Jordan to cure the leprosy of Naaman! And, again, to think of a look to a serpent of brass arresting the venom of the serpent's fang as it circulated in the life-blood of the bitten Israelite! Yet to these, as the means, God had attached His power. They became the power of God to effect the result that He had declared. And such is the Gospel. Insignificant and inadequate as it may seem in the eyes of the wise and prudent of this world, yet God has attached to it His power, so that it becomes "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

As the first-fruits offering in Israel was, as it were, a specimen from every field, so, through the Gospel testimony, God is gathering a kind of first-fruits out of every kindred and nation and people and tongue, and not only so, but a specimen of every sort and condition of sinner; everyone of

whom shall go to form that blood-cleansed company whose new eternal song shall be the Gospel: "Unto Him that loveth us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (Rev. i. 5).

Those who profess to be saved or who even think that they are saved yet continue to live in sin, what does God say to them? "Be not deceived." Such are not the sort of people who inherit the kingdom of God. The same Saviour-God, who forgives sin, delivers from its power. The Spirit of God is mighty to subdue every sin from which the blood of Christ can cleanse. I do not say that a believer may not fall into sin, yea, daily have many sins and shortcomings to confess to God. But when he does sin, instead of going on in it as his element, he will turn to the Lord in confession and receive the full benefit of all the gracious provision which God has made in Christ Jesus for a sinning child. In the main righteousness and holiness must characterise the life of every child of God. We are not called upon to acknowledge any man to be a Christian to whom this description cannot be applied.

II. "But ye are washed, but ye are justified, but ye are sanctified in the Name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Though many of the Corinthian converts had been great sinners,

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deep dyed in sin, yet by the grace of God they were now set apart for Him. They were "*washed*" in the blood of Christ, they were "*justified*" by God the Father, and they were "*sanctified*" or set apart for God by the power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The blessed Name of the Lord Jesus was named upon them and the Holy Spirit of God had taken possession of them as His temple.

12. "**All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient.**" This is a most important principle. There are many things a Christian might do which would not be a breach of any law, yet upon other grounds it is not expedient he should do them.

Take, for instance, the case of a Christian sitting at table with an idolater (see chap. x. 27). The Christian is aware that the meat set before him has been offered to an idol. But he also knows that an idol is nothing in the world, and that the meat is neither better nor worse on that account. So far as he himself is concerned, he could eat it with a good conscience—to him it would be perfectly lawful to eat, and he might do so freely in his own home where no one with this species of weak conscience was present. But there is another Christian present who has not this knowledge, who regards that which has been offered to an idol as defiled, and who, therefore, would violate his own conscience were he to par-

take. He calls the attention of the other to the fact that the meat before them was offered to an idol. What, then? "Eat not," says the scripture. Not on the ground that the meat is defiled; not on the ground of its being unlawful; but on this ground, that by the one who has knowledge eating, the one whose conscience is not so enlightened, and therefore weak, might be emboldened to do that which would violate his own conscience, just because he saw the other do it. Thus I am taught in love to consider others, and to consider the effects of my actions upon others; and by so doing I may often require, on account of others, to refrain from doing that which to myself is lawful.

Take another illustration. A Christian might be quite at liberty to take wine himself. It may be no snare to him. Yet he might be sitting at table with one to whom it was a snare, and to whom it might prove an occasion of stumbling. The lawfulness of taking it is not questioned, but under such circumstances it is not expedient.

The apostle would judge everything he did in every department of his life with reference to its effects upon others. He would allow himself in nothing that might prove a hindrance or an occasion of stumbling to another. Never would he permit his knowledge to lead him into a course in which he would be a stumbling-block to the ignorant or the weak.

12. "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." We are liable, through the corruption of our nature and the deceitfulness of our own hearts, as well as through the wiles and power of Satan, to be brought under the power of, or into bondage to, things which are in themselves lawful. My business may be in itself perfectly lawful, and to attend to it diligently my duty; nevertheless it may so acquire power over me that morning, noon, and night I am never out of it. It engages my whole attention, occupies my whole time, and taxes all my energies. Constant watchfulness and care are needed, lest that which is lawful acquire dominion over us.

Some are apt to think that strong drink is the only thing which acquires power over those who yield to it, and that if they are free in regard to this they are beyond danger. Not so. Money to one, and dress to another, and knowledge to another, and many other things, may prove to be snares as fatal, if not so disastrous in their temporal effects.

We read of Isaac, that in his old age his love for venison, savoury meat, such as Esau brought him, so warped his affections and enfeebled his judgment that he failed to know the mind of the Lord as to his two sons, and sought in opposition to God to bestow on the elder, his favourite, the blessing that was ordained for the younger.

And so may we, in service and in judgment for the Lord, be biassed by our likings, unconsciously led by our love of things savoury and pleasant into associations that otherwise we should have avoided, and avoiding openings and lines of service into which God would have led us and blessed us.

Satan will often make use of the veriest trifles to hold us in bondage and keep us from being free to serve the Lord. Let us seek to have our spiritual senses so exercised that we may discern both good and evil, and know how rightly to use, without abusing, everything that God has given us.

It is written concerning the Lord Jesus that He was of "quick understanding [or quick scented] in the fear of the Lord" (Isa. xi. 3). He was made this by the Spirit, but not apart from the Word of God, by which He lived as by His daily bread. So it is "by reason of use" (Heb. v. 14) that the Word of God will enable us to discern between good and evil. It is by habitually consulting God and His Word in everything that His principles will be instilled into us and become part of our being.

13. **"Meats for the belly and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them"**—that is to say, "meat and our natural appetites." God has created us with these appetites, and has given meat of various sorts to satisfy them; but for a man to make eating and drinking the object of

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his life is folly—it is wickedness. The appetite is right, and the satisfaction of it by food is right, but all to be kept in subordination to the will of God. The meat and the desire for it shall perish. They are but passing needs, like the world and the lusts thereof which are passing away, “but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John ii. 17).

God only knows to what an extent this world lives for the gratification of its desires. “Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,” is God’s description of the natural man (Eph. ii. 3).

The tendency of modern civilization is more than ever to create desires, in order to find pleasure in gratifying them. The craving for alcohol or opium, or even tobacco, which must be gratified, or if not gratified leaves a man miserable and restless, is not natural, it is acquired. And other things of quite a different nature may be so indulged that they acquire a power which nothing ought to possess. Others have a passionate craving for fine music, beautiful pictures, jewellery, dress, &c., desires which have been so pampered that now, unless they are gratified, there is a feeling of emptiness and unrest.

But the Christian is called to have his whole being in control, so that he is not brought under the power of anything, but at all times a free man—free to discern and to do the will of God.

13. **"The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."** Here we have a principle of the most solemn importance. That is to say, my body is a purchased body, and therefore it is for the Lord who redeemed it; and, on the other hand, being redeemed or purchased by and for Himself, He says, "It is mine; I am for it." Spirit, soul, and body, we are the Lord's. Being His by purchase by right, He says, concerning that which is His, "Not a hair of your heads shall perish."

I fear that Christians generally have almost lost sight of the fact that the redemption which God has effected concerns our bodies as well as our souls. The whole man—"spirit, soul, and body," not "body, soul, and spirit"—that is man's way, and it is often so misquoted, for man would begin without, but God begins within and works outward—the whole man, I say, is redeemed, and salvation is meant to show itself in our bodies.

14. **"God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by His own power."** The very power that raised up Christ will raise us up. His resurrection is the pattern and pledge of ours; and not only so, but that same power worketh in us even now (see Eph. i. 19, 20; and iii. 20).

15. **"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?"**

19. **"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"** Did



you ever stop and think of this? That these very bodies of ours, these weak, frail, corrupt, depraved bodies are looked upon by God as the very members of Christ? As God raised up Christ, the "Head of the body," so God shall raise up every member of that body. We are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Mark how practical this is: Am I using this body with all its members as instruments wherewith to serve the Lord? Are my members being used as Christ Himself would use them?

17. **"He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit."** Did God dwell in the temple at Jerusalem? Far more really and literally He dwells in us. Did we bear this in mind, how it would separate us from the world!

We read of those sins which the heathen indulged in, that they "dishonoured their own bodies." But if such sins were shameful in a heathen, oh! what must be their heinousness in God's sight if committed by one who is "a member of Christ!" How fearful for a member of Christ to be found drunk! How fearful for a member of Christ to be guilty of any form of uncleanness! How fearful for a member of Christ to use his redeemed tongue to speak a lie, or filthy language, or to speak evil concerning other members of Christ! God would have us to live in the constant remembrance that our bodies are the members of Christ.

19. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" That we may further gather the teaching of Scripture regarding our bodies, turn with me to Romans vi. In verse 6 we read of "the body of sin," in verse 12 "your mortal body," and in chapter vii. 24, "this body of death." Again, in Philippians iii. 21, "our vile body," or "the body of our humiliation."

Although, as to the body itself, moral evil does not attach to it, for it may be used as an instrument of righteousness as well as an instrument of sin—nevertheless, the scriptures referred to, show the degenerate character of even our corporeal nature. And, indeed, in view of these scriptures and of all experience, it cannot be denied that, even in our bodies there is an affinity for evil which renders them much more easily and readily instruments of sin than of righteousness. I mean that the material corruption inherent in our flesh through sin gives to our very bodies an affinity for, or inclination towards the moral corruption of our nature. Hence it is that the desires and appetites which are natural require to be reined in or held in check, so long as we are dwelling in these bodies of sin and of death, of mortality and corruption. Hence the necessity for a change of body in order to the enjoyment of the Sabbath rest of glory. How could it be complete without that

change, which we so delight to anticipate, whether it be in resurrection or at the coming of the Lord, from the carnal, the mortal, the earthly, the corruptible, into the spiritual, the immortal, the heavenly, and the incorruptible?

In chapter ix. of this epistle (1 Cor.) we see a man in downright earnest to live for God. Before his mind, as an illustration of his position, is one striving to obtain the prize in one of the Grecian games. To excel in such sports involved a life of continual self-restraint. "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." So, says the apostle, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection," and this word "keep under," is stronger in the original, and means to "beat it black and blue," rendered in the "New Revision" "buffet or bruise," implying a tendency to resistance, which requires strong measures to bring it into subjection. And thus he imposed a continual restraint upon even natural and lawful desires, with a view unceasingly to one end, one purpose of his life, viz., so to run as to win the prize, so to wrestle that in the day of awards he might be the victor crowned, and not the vanquished one disapproved.

But there is another side to this line of truth on which Scripture gives definite instruction. In Colossians ii. 22, 23, we read of "the commandments and doctrines of men," of "a show of wisdom in will, worship, and humility," and also "neglecting

(or 'punishing, or not sparing') the body." There is such a thing as a "punishing of the body, which is not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh" (see Revised Version, Col. ii. 23). It may proceed from a false humility, such as our Lord refers to in Matthew vi. 16: "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, and appear unto men to fast. . . . But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face." It is not the will of the Lord that one should look as if their body was "neglected," filthy, and miserable. He commands on the contrary, "Wash and anoint." God would have His people to be a happy people, and to appear so to others.

The temperance in all things, the cleanliness, the sufficiency, the peace of mind, the rest of heart and conscience, the hopefulness of a life of faith and obedience to the Word of God, are all conducive to good health and comfort, and this of itself is in many cases a notable testimony for the Master whom we serve.

There are, no doubt, many exceptions. Some for the service of Christ have brought themselves into poverty, suffering, yea, "nigh unto death." If it be in obedience to Him, and the outcome of faith and love, He will own it and recompense it.

But, *as a rule*, it is not the will of God that a Christian should neglect his body in any respect. Whilst not pampering or in-

dulging in laziness or in luxury, any more than in positive sin, yet ought he to have the sleep—God-given sleep—which his body requires to fit him for daily duty; the needful food which, with thanksgiving and the blessing of God, is for his sustenance, and the raiment that is necessary for warmth and decency. Thus will he honour the God that “giveth us all things richly to enjoy.”

20. **“Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body.”** The Lord Jesus, before He went forth to the cross, could look up into His Father’s face and say—“I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.” Though His fixed purpose to glorify His Father brought Him at last to the cross, yet He laid down His precious life in the assurance that the Father would raise Him up and glorify Him with Himself. And as the object of His life was to glorify God, the same ought to be ours. Whatever of loss or suffering may be involved in obedience to the will of God, we have the same assurance which sustained His soul, “He which raised up the Lord Jesus will raise up us also.” Even though we may be called to pass through death, nevertheless these bodies are precious to God and to Christ. They are part of that for which He covenanted when He came to accomplish the great redemption work.

The resurrection of the body is part of the triumph of Christ. Till then His trium-

phant power over the adversary is not fully manifested. So long as there remains the dust of one redeemed one in the earth, His triumph is not complete. We wait the moment when the dead shall be raised and the living changed. Then shall be the gathering together unto Him in the air, of which our gatherings together every Lord's Day are an ante-past and pledge. May we be taught by His Spirit to live more in the power of this blessed hope.

## Chapter VII.

1. "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto Me." Notice these words, for they give character to the whole chapter. This chapter, as well as other parts of this epistle, was specially written in answer to questions that the Corinthian believers wanted light upon from the Lord. They wrote to the apostle that they might know the mind of the Lord upon the subject of marriage. In reading this chapter we should bear in mind that although Corinth was one of the most cultivated and highly civilised cities on the face of the earth, yet its moral condition was very low. The marriage contract seemed to have no power, and was totally disregarded. The Gospel comes in, not to set aside the order of nature, but to restore to its proper place and order every natural

relationship. The grace of God that hath brought salvation has also brought us the purest, holiest, and most exalted instructions regarding every natural relationship. It is through the gospel—through what is called Christianity—through the truth of God, as we have it in the New Testament Scriptures, that, in those countries where the Word of God is taught and regarded with some degree of reverence, marriage is upheld, and the rights of all protected and preserved. The woman, instead of being a slave, is put in her true place as the man's equal and companion. The world is greatly benefited by the doctrines of Christianity, even though it rejects Christ.

1, 2. "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, . . . let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." Put alongside that a few verses in 1 Timothy iv. 1-4: "Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils (demons); speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry," &c. Satan has his spirit-emissaries in the world, and his doctrines come in to undermine and corrupt the doctrines of Christianity. "Speaking lies in hypocrisy," speaking what is opposite to God's truth. "Having their conscience seared with a hot iron," *i.e.*, they

are past feeling. "Forbidding to marry." Now, this unquestionably points to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the celibacy of the priesthood, as if it were a higher and holier state to be unmarried than to be married. The Scripture does not say that one state is holier than another; on the contrary, we read in Hebrews xiii. 4, "Marriage is honourable in all." The first of the Lord's miracles was performed at a marriage feast.

Nevertheless, the apostle states here decidedly that it is good for a man to be unmarried. Mark how wise are God's instructions. He recognises differences of constitution. It was no snare to the apostle to remain unmarried; he was a freeman, and could go alone to the ends of the earth happy in the Lord. There are others that could not do this, being differently constituted. Paul walked in a higher path than most, and few were fitted to follow in it. Another man might be qualified by God to bring up in a godly way a large family. The apostle recognises such natural differences, and allows liberty for each to occupy his proper sphere. I remember once walking along some cliffs by the sea-shore. I was accompanied by some who were accustomed to go along these cliffs every day. I said to one, "I don't much like this, I feel my knees shaky." He said, "Get out of this, then." I soon saw the wisdom of this. In all probability I would have become giddy as well as shaky. I felt that I was not fitted to walk where he



could walk unharmed. Thus one man differs from another. One can go if the Lord calls him alone without companionship, and another requires company. The Lord recognises this difference. While He says that it is good for a man to remain unmarried, yet it is added, "every man hath his proper gift of God." He may remain single for the Lord, or marry in the Lord.

8. **"I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I."** This shows us that the apostle was unmarried.

10-12. **And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, let not the wife depart from her husband; but, and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord."** The apostle in some places says, "not I, but the Lord," and in other places, "the Lord, not I." Some have taken these expressions to show that all Scripture is not inspired. But this has nothing to do with inspiration. All that he writes is inspired. Paul is the instrument that the Holy Spirit used to make known the mind of God. The Apostle Paul says of a number of things, "I have received this from the Lord"—certain instructions and commandments he received immediately from the ascended Head. Such we find in 1 Corinthians xi. 23: "I have received of the

Lord that which also I delivered unto you." This is something more than inspiration; also in 1 Thessalonians iv. 15. This is not only inspiration, but implies a direct personal communication from the Lord Jesus to himself. We must be very much on our guard as to this modern doctrine of Satan that all Scripture is not inspired.

10. **"Yet not I, but the Lord."**

12. **"But to the rest speak I, not the Lord."** He got the one from the Lord, but he gives the other as a man enlightened by the Holy Spirit to know what the mind of the Lord is. Whilst he says in one place "the Lord says this," and, in another, "I say it, not the Lord," yet both are equally inspired, the difference being that in the one he writes as guided by the Holy Spirit, and, in the other, he writes that which was received from the lips of the risen Lord Jesus.

This passage is evidently written in answer to questions sent to the apostle concerning the case of a converted husband whose wife remains uncovered, or a converted wife whose husband remains unconverted. It was very natural that they should have a difficulty upon this point because of the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. Jehovah was very plain as to His people Israel not making marriages with the idolatrous nations (see Deut. vii. 1-6).

It was a natural thing that these young converts from heathen idolatry brought newly to the knowledge of the Lord, having

had the Scriptures read to them by Jewish converts or others, should say, "If God did not allow His people Israel to marry with idolaters because they would turn their hearts from the Jehovah, then if I continue with my unconverted husband, or if I remain with my unconverted wife, he or she will turn away my heart from the Lord."

Now read Ezra x. Ezra was a man of God, and when he heard that the people of Israel, whom God had chosen to be a peculiar people, had gone and married idolaters, he regarded it as a fearful calamity. How many of God's children go and marry the unconverted and think little about it? And instead of their brethren humbling themselves before God about it, they seem quite unexercised and indifferent.

Ezra x., verse 1: "Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children, for the people wept sore." The man of God wept and the people wept. If any of us desire to be used by the Lord, then know that He uses those who are weeping before Him about the sins of His people. He will not use in judgment those who are stout-hearted themselves. It is the weeping elders that have a weeping congregation gathered around them. If we had more weeping elders we would have more weeping congregations.

There's hope for a man when we see him weeping for his sins. It is a sign that he is being humbled, and God will yet bless him. "Shechaniah . . . said unto Ezra, we have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and those that tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the law" (verses 2-5). Not only were they not to marry strangers, but, after they had married, they were to put away all such wives, and not the wives only, but also the children born of them.

Turn to Nehemiah xiii. 23-25. "In these days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab; and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and bade them swear by God saying, ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves."

There was a man acting for God. I don't say that this is the way we are called to act, nor is it the way that the apostle acted. It was spiritual power he exercised, not physical force. Nevertheless God would

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have us show holy indignation against all sin. He would have His people to be a holy, separate people now as then.

In view of such Old Testament Scriptures as these, the question would arise in the minds of these Corinthian believers, "Am I to put away my wife?" "Am I to separate from my husband and children?" The apostle, in answer to this, gives the mind of the Lord.

10, 11. "Let not the wife depart from her husband; but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife." Here is the plain statement of Scripture, that the believing wife is not to depart from her husband. But if the idolatrous husband says he won't have her, what is she to do? Is she to leave him and marry some one else? That would close the door against the husband for ever. The Lord would rather keep her waiting continually before Him for his salvation, so that, when converted, the way would be open for their being happily reunited.

Therefore, it is not for the Christian to separate, but to show how she can suffer and bear, and thus to win the unsaved husband, as we read in 1 Peter iii. 1, "Likewise ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands, that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation (behaviour) of the wives." That does not mean without the word of

God. It ought to be, "that it any obey not the word they also may *without speech*," that is, without the woman saying anything, "be won by the behaviour of the wife." There is nothing so likely to be used by God in the salvation of the unconverted husband as the godly life of his wife. Then let Christian wives who have unsaved husbands take encouragement and endure patiently, and wait in faith for the Lord to save.

14. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband." It is important to understand aright the meaning of the word "sanctified" and "holy" as used in this verse. In what sense is the unbelieving husband *sanctified* by the believing wife? It cannot be that his relationship toward God is in any respect altered. He is here regarded as still an unbeliever, and, if so, in all likelihood an idolater.

A similar use of the word which serves to illustrate its meaning here, is to be found in 1 Timothy iv. 4, 5: "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is *sanctified* by the Word of God and prayer." This does not imply that any change takes place in the article of food referred to, but simply that it is set apart for the Christian's use by the Word of God, and God is acknowledged as the Giver by him, who in the using, gives thanks. Men might command to abstain, but if God sanctions its use by His Word,

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then it is *sanctified* in a relative sense, so that I can eat to the glory of God. So the unbelieving husband is relatively sanctified, *i.e.*, he is set apart by God for the believing wife. Godward, he is just where he was, a condemned sinner. The conversion of his wife has made no change in his relationship to God, except it be in adding to his responsibility and deepening the guilt of his unbelief. But as concerns his wife he is so "*sanctified*" that for her to depart from him would be contrary to the will of God. The same principle applies exactly where the husband is converted to God and the wife remains in unbelief.

14. Then comes the much misunderstood clause, "**Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy**" or "*sanctified*," the word is the same. We have already seen that had the rule of the Old Testament applied as in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, not only must the unbelieving husband or wife be separated from, but also the children born of such unions. In fact, the apostle says, "**Else were YOUR children**"—not merely the children of parents, one of whom was converted—but the children of the Corinthian believers altogether. Their children had no hereditary title to blessing. They had not been circumcised and brought into any such covenant relationship with Jehovah as attached to the Commonwealth of Israel. The Corinthians had but recently been

converted to God from idols, and, therefore, their children born to them, whilst they were heathens, and not having yet themselves believed, regarded from the Old Testament point of view, were "unclean."

But the same "sanctification" that applied to the unbelieving husband or wife, also applied to the children. "Now are they holy." It does not mean any more in respect to them than it does in the case of the husband or wife. It is argued, "they are *holy*, therefore, let them be baptized and so admitted into the visible Church." But if this Scripture warrants the baptizing of children, surely it also warrants the baptizing of the unbelieving husband or wife. If it warrants the regarding of the children as Christians, then surely it warrants the regarding of the unbelieving husband and wife as Christians also. Moreover, if the children were baptized upon the conversion of one or both parents, and thereby constituted Christians, what could be the meaning of the words "Else were *your* children unclean"? Such words have no meaning if they had already in the ordinance of baptism been "engrafted into Christ," according to Presbyterian doctrine, or "regenerated" according to the doctrine of the Churches of England and Rome. They rather prove that no such sanctifying (?) process had been applied to them, and that until they themselves became children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, they were only



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relatively sanctified, in the same sense as the unbelieving husband or wife.

As the believing wife was taught to look for the conversion of her husband, and so to behave herself as to win him for God, so believing parents are taught to bring up their children in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and so to look and pray for their conversion, until which time no external rite can either engraft them into Christ or make them regenerate.

16. "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" Here is encouragement to cheer amid the trials inseparable from such a close association of the saved and unsaved. A hope is held out, which in many cases would be realized.

18. "Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised." Verses 17 and 18 seem to be a taking up of another matter about which the Corinthians had written to the apostle for counsel. They were in doubt as to circumcision. Man is ever prone to attach value to external rites. For ages, circumcision had been the divinely appointed token of the covenant of promise to Israel in the flesh. But in the new dispensation the flesh is set aside. "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircum-

cision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." That is to say, so long as circumcision *was* a commandment of God, it was right that it should be observed, there was blessing in obedience; now it is no longer a commandment, it is therefore "*nothing*," but the great thing for us is still to "keep the commandments of God," for in so doing now as ever, there is great reward. It would have been a terrible loss to a Jew under the old covenant not to be circumcised. He could not eat of the Passover, or worship at the Temple; he had no access to any of Israel's privileges. But with the death of Christ, the veil was rent, the middle wall of partition was broken down, and the whole ceremonial law passed away.

But are the people of God now left without commandments? Certainly not. The New Testament contains explicitly many commandments. There is the great commandment to "love one another, as I have loved you" (John xv. 12)—and all that is involved in it. Then there is the acknowledging that such instructions as are written by Paul in I Corinthians for the ordering of the Church are "the commandments of the Lord" (see I Cor. xiv. 37). There is the Lord's command, "This do in remembrance of Me"—and also His command concerning baptism. For every department of our life, He has given commandments, either from His own lips or by His apostles, and

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concerning them all He says, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

20. **"Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called."** All the lamps in the city are not gathered together in one place, they are distributed in every part, in order to give light to the whole city. So God calls one in one sphere of life, and another in another sphere; one in one family, and another in another family. One a wretched idolater, another a religious self-righteous Saul of Tarsus. One is called as a free-man; another as a bond-servant, and God's instruction is, "Let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God." God means him to shine where he is.

There are some who, when God saves them, are engaged in callings wherein they dare not count upon God to be with them. Some are called being soldiers. He goes to the war and aims his rifle at the heart of an enemy—a man to whom, as a witness for Christ, he ought to be declaring the gospel of God's grace. He feels there is something about this calling that is inconsistent with his character as a follower of Christ, and he seeks his way out of it, not by deserting, but by being honourably set free.

Some may be called as they are serving behind the counter of a public-house. He feels that he dare not rebuke sin or witness for Christ in such a position, he cannot therein abide with God, therefore, he seeks to be delivered from it. Wherever the

Christian is, he must not part company with God; he must walk in the light with God; he must be able to hold communion with God in every department of his life.

There is a story told about a house in which there was a secret chamber. It was never opened, no friend or servant had ever seen into it—when at last it was opened, it was found to contain a skeleton. Is there a corner of your heart that you have never opened up to God? Is there a skeleton chamber there that you would fain keep God from seeing, and into which you wish the light might never shine?

Be wise and open it up to God. Sooner or later God will break it open, and the light shall shine into it. Let your prayer now be "Search me and try me, and see if there be any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Take God into your counsel about everything. Put not forth your hand to a transaction upon which you cannot ask your Father's blessing.

29. **"The time is short."** I do not believe that the apostle refers to the period of man's natural life. It is quite exceptional in the New Testament to find any of the apostles referring to death in the case of believers as a necessary event at all. The Lord told Peter that he was to die, and when he spoke of John He said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Immediately, "this saying went

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abroad among the brethren that that disciple should not die" (John xxi. 22, 23).<sup>\*</sup> In the New Testament we find that the thing in prospect before the minds of the writers is invariably the near approach of the Lord Jesus Christ. With reference to the Pass-over it is written that they were to "keep it a feast *throughout their generations*." In the New Testament, in connection with our Feast—the Lord's Supper—we are to keep it "*till He come*" (1 Cor. xi. 26). Death, as a necessary event to the believer, passes out of sight. He may, or may not go till the Lord comes. The *hope* set before the believer is the coming of Christ, and we are continually exhorted to be waiting, looking, and hastening to that hour when the Lord will come and take us to be with Himself. Many have said about this subject that it is not practical. I do not know any subject more practical. Suppose it was known that the Lord was coming *to-morrow*, what an influence this would have upon our minds and ways. In 1 John iii. 3 the practical bearing of this hope is forcibly presented—"He that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (R.V.). "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

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<sup>\*</sup>This was a wrong construction to put upon the Lord's words, for He had not said so, but it serves to show how literally the disciples understood the Lord's allusions to His coming again, and how broad the distinction between *His coming* and *the believers' departing* to be with Him.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Romans xiii. 11, 12).

Here we find at so early a date the Spirit of God inditing these words, "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." Turn also to Hebrews x. 25, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." If the day of the Lord was near when the apostle wrote these words—how much nearer now? I do not say that anyone of us can discover the time when the Lord may come. It is purposely hidden by God. All man's predictions as to the date when Christ would come have turned out to be false. Jesus said, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). The Father had kept it secret. But He has put this very plainly before us, that He is coming, and that we are to be on the outlook for Him. This hope is to be ever before us; to govern, mould, and fashion us in all our ways down here.

I would ask you to notice this point—whilst we are told of certain signs that will precede the DAY of the Lord, and whilst we see the day approaching, there is no sign given us to precede the *coming* of the Lord for His saints. We know that the *day* is

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approaching, and that the night is far spent. We know that these are the last days, and every sign that marks them is abundantly evident on every hand. We are not called to look even for antichrist, but to wait for Christ.

It is in prospect of the return of our Lord that the apostle says, "the time is short." Whilst he says the time is short in the prospect of the age running its course rapidly, we also know that if we were to live three-score years and ten, it is but a little while at the most. The apostle looked at it thus when he wrote to the Corinthian saints: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is *but for a moment*, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," &c. (2 Cor. iv. 16, 17). Mark how every word is in contrast, "light affliction" against "a weight of glory"; "afflictions" against "glory"; a moment against eternity.

What is our lifetime compared with eternity? It is but a little time to serve Him while He is being rejected and cast out by the world. Therefore, may we redeem the opportunity, and this is what we get in the Epistle to the Ephesians (v. 14-16): "Wherefore, He saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." It is the living ones asleep among the dead. "See then that

ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." "Circumspectly" might be rendered "*strictly*," or "*accurately*." It is like one crossing a stream on stepping-stones. See that ye walk by the light that Christ will give you; see that you are not walking according to the darkness of your own mind, but according to the light of God's word. "Not as fools," who do not know where they are going, "but as wise," having a definite purpose before you. "Redeeming the time," or, more literally, "buying up for yourselves the opportunity." This life is a little opportunity that we have for glorifying God; a little opportunity to win reward, to gather souls, to bear reproach, to share in the sufferings of Christ. If we are serving self it is all lost time. The Apostle Paul said: "I count all things *but loss* that I may win Christ."

The Lord desires that we should know His will in order to do it. He has a plan for each one of us, and our wisdom will be shown by following it out—walking in His way, and serving Him only and fully. How many of us may have to write "fool" on our past life? The man who writes death on self and lives for Christ will be found at His coming to have been the wise man.

Look in connection with this subject at a passage in Hebrews x. 35. "Cast not away your confidence which hath great recompense of reward," and now turn to the Epistle of James v. 7, 8: "Be patient there-



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fore unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." To those Hebrew saints, who had been enduring a great fight of afflictions, who had suffered reproaches and persecutions through their testimony for Christ, and also being identified with the apostle, who was in bonds for the truth of the Gospel, he says, "Cast not away your confidence," "you will be rewarded for it all when your Lord comes." And so we read in the Epistle of James, that just as the husbandman bestows expense and labour upon the ground—ploughing, manuring, harrowing, and casting in the seed; and the work for the time being done, he waits for the harvest; he does not grudge the expense and labour that he has put upon the ground, for he looks for and expects a full return for it all. And we are called now to sow the seed of the Word, to scatter it abroad, waiting till the Lord comes, when the result of all our labour and patience will be manifest, and the reward bestowed. And the apostle in writing to the Thessalonians in view of the coming of Christ, in connection with his labour amongst them, says: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" There was the reward that he was looking for. What

a recompense! To see those to whom he had preached the Gospel, and for whom he had endured such tribulation and affliction, gathered around his Lord.

In the thirteenth chapter of Romans we read: "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed—let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light." Here it is a question of conflict; therefore they are exhorted to arm themselves, for it is but a little while till He comes. You may be enduring a great fight of affliction for the sake of Jesus, and Satan would tell you there is no use so enduring, and would tempt you to cast away your confidence. No! hold on! for there is a great reward awaiting you when the Lord comes, and it's only "a little while" till then. Whether it is in prospect of a fight of affliction, or of the sorrows of the way, that which is brought into cheer is that the Lord is near, as we read in Philippians iv. 5: "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." "Let us therefore gird up the loins of our mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter i. 13). Three times these words occur in the last chapter of the Revelation: "Behold, I come quickly," and there is the response, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." "Keep all the sayings, for I am going to bring My reward with Me." Therefore we are cheered with the hope that the

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Lord is coming, and it is only a little while to wait.

29. The aspect of the shortness of time presented here is like the governor of a steam engine, which regulates and controls its speed. "But this I say, brethren, the time is short; **it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none.**" That does not mean that a man having a wife is not to behave as a husband should behave. But it means that a man is not to allow his relationship to his wife to hinder him from keeping his eye on the Lord and serving Him. I would say this as a warning, do not allow your wife, child, or any one to come in as an idol between you and obeying the Lord. It is not idolatry to love your wife or child, but if you allow the object of your love to come in between you and your obedience to the Lord, then God says: "I am a jealous God." He cannot allow you to give the first place in your heart to wife or child. See that these blessings do not become a curse to you by not keeping them in their right place. So walk as to have the Lord's blessing in every relationship of life.

30. "**They that weep as though they wept not.**" It does not say that we are not to weep or sorrow when the Lord takes a beloved one away from us. A man would not be a man that could not weep. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. But we are not to sorrow "*as those who have no hope.*" We

have a source of comfort that the world knows nothing of. It is a libel on what God has done and has promised to do for us if we sorrow as the world. We ought to pity the world in its times of bereavement and sorrow. It is a sad sight to attend the funeral of one who has passed away without knowing Jesus as his Saviour, and leaving behind him those in the same sad condition. God's children ought not to sorrow as the world. There are many sorrows beside the loss of friends; life is full of it. If God did not permit sorrow to be felt while here, we would make the world our rest. He causes one sorrow to follow after another, to draw us nearer to Himself, and to direct our hearts into His love and into the patience of Christ.

30. **"They that rejoice as though they rejoiced not."** God would have us enjoy all His blessings. We read that the early Christians "did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." This was one of the results of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As they ate their food, thanksgiving ascended up to the Mighty Giver. Our hearts ought to be filled with joy and gratitude day by day, and our whole life should be a life of thanksgiving. We are not to be as the world, which gets intoxicated with its prosperity; its joys and pleasures do not satisfy; they are transient and short-lived; but we have "pleasures for evermore"—"fulness of joy." This world

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must be dissolved, its possessions must be let go, and its sorrows and joys alike come to an end. It is but *a little while*—that is the regulator and moderator. Let us keep that in view, and it will moderate both our joys and sorrows, as nothing else will.

30. This principle also affects the business of daily life—**“They that buy as though they possessed not.”** The Christian is to buy, but not to set his heart upon his possession. We are not to be over elated with prosperity, or cast down by adversity. Remember that we have the Lord, who will bless us apart from wealth or riches. Paul could say: “I know what it is both to abound and suffer need.” He knew that the Lord was with him, and that it would all turn out at the end for blessing.

30. **“And they that use the world as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.”** That is, using this world, and only keeping it for use. The Lord may give us much blessing and prosperity as long as we walk with Him, and hold it and use it for Him, but if He sees that it is becoming a snare to us, He will take it away. God will not allow the world to come in between us and our fellowship with Him, and if it does, then He will come in in judgment and restore our souls through it. “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts” (1 Tim. vi. 9). The Lord give us grace to go on calmly and humbly

with Him, using this world and not abusing it. Oh what a stroke to the grandeur of this world will the coming of the Lord be! Everything that is high will be abased, and the Lord alone will be exalted at that day. In a little moment judgment and destruction will do its work; as a dear brother said, "It's all for the bonfire." "The earth also, and the works that are therein, will be burnt up."

As we pass through it, let us remember that the time is short, and may we walk in the light of the coming of our Lord, keeping our eye upon Him and our heart true to Him. Let us be thankful to God for every blessing, understanding what the will of the Lord is concerning our walk and testimony in this world; assured that the Lord is coming soon, and the one who has served Him best will have the richest reward.

39. "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord." It may be said, was it necessary to tell these Corinthians to marry "only in the Lord," after what the apostle had said to them already on the subject? Yes, it was needful as a safeguard, in case any should think that the divine sanction given to a Christian wife to dwell with her unsaved husband might also warrant a Christian woman becoming united to an unconverted man. Therefore the prohibition comes in,

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that marriage must be "only in the Lord." Suppose a woman is converted, and her husband remains an idolater, but he leaves her, what is she to do then? As long as he lived she was not at liberty to marry, but when he was dead she was free. That is brought out in Romans vii., where we see the law looked upon as the old husband, which cursed and killed us, and we died to it, through the body of Christ. For what purpose? "That we should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead." Therefore believers in Christ are united to the risen Son of God, who is at God's right hand. We are set free from the law, as the wife is from the husband when he is dead. We are free from the law, but married to Christ. Though I am not under the law, yet I am not to be lawless, but subject to my Lord, who is at God's right hand. There is no room for self-will in the economy of grace.

The question has been asked, Do these words, "only in the Lord," mean that she is to marry none but a Christian? It certainly must mean that. But does it mean that she may marry whom she will—make her own choice, provided only that he be a Christian? It goes deeper than that. Especially in a matter of such importance, what we do ought to be in perfect harmony with the will of God. He means, that we are to take Him into our counsel. One Christian may desire to be united with another merely for

his or her money. This would not be for the glory of God. Such a motive springs from a covetous heart, and therefore would be sinful in God's sight.

Mark that expression, "in the Lord"; it invariably qualifies the action. "Children obey your parents in the Lord," not only because they are Christians, but whether they be Christians or unconverted they are to obey them "in the Lord." To receive another believer in the Lord is to own Christ as our Lord: to act in subjection to His authority and will. This principle goes very deep. It brings us into fellowship with Him as regards every department and relationship of life. Let that principle be brought into exercise in all our life as Christians, and it will have a mighty influence. It will show how far short we come of God's claims upon us. We are called to nothing short of loving the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength, and our neighbour as ourself. That is the offering laid upon the altar. That was done by the Lord Jesus perfectly in His life and death, and also in His service on behalf of His people in resurrection. Even when He takes His great power and reigns over this earth a thousand years, when He shall have put down all rule and authority, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, complete and perfect, "then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things



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under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 24, 28).

Whether it is my business, family duties, service to the church, or towards the world, it is all to be done "*in the Lord*." Everything is to be done in fellowship with Christ, thereby enjoying His approval and blessing.

40. Then follow these words, "**she is happier if she so abide.**" That is, as a widow—unmarried. There is a deep and important principle for us to lay hold on here. For instance, here is one who has had a happy married life, but now she is a widow; the Lord has laid His hand upon the object dear to her heart; upon him on whom she had leaned and looked up to for counsel, comfort, and support. He is removed, and she is left alone. Is there **any** one more worthy of our compassion? God has said that "pure religion and undefiled is to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction," &c., having a heart to weep with those that weep, and to help them in their helplessness. The apostle here has before his mind what such an one may do for the Lord in such circumstances; she may use all the affection of her widowed heart in service to the Lord. If you turn to 1 Timothy v., you will see this brought out.

Verse 5 says: "Now she who is a widow indeed [that is one who accepts the breach that God has made in her life, and in effect says, 'This is the end of the world for me; I will live henceforth only for the Lord'] and

desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day." It will be a desolate life, inasmuch as she is bereft of the husband, whose companionship, counsel, and human support she had shared; therefore in that sense she is desolate. In another sense she is not desolate, because she has communion with God. If such an one does not know the comfort of the Holy Spirit, then her's will be indeed a miserable and desolate life. That might be said of the life of many a one. The world is spoiled for her, and if she does not walk with God, if she has not the joy of the Lord, she is miserable indeed.

Verse 6 says: "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." I beseech you to take that expression to heart. "Dead while she liveth." How many there are, children of God, who are practically dead while they live: they are not walking with God, nor enjoying Him. You would scarcely know them to be Christians. Such are a hindrance instead of a help to others: cumberers of the ground. The Lord save us from self-seeking; rather may we seek to serve Him whose we are.

Verse 9 says: "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old . . . well reported of for good works—if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted," &c. These refer to widows who were supported

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by the bounty of the Church. We have here a list of acts that married women may take up and do for the Lord. No reference to any public ministry, all is private, in keeping with the place divinely assigned to the woman. You see how the Lord takes a glance back at her Christian life; what has she done since she was converted? Everything is observed and noticed by the Lord. Have we such in our midst to-day—godly, aged women, who have been addicting themselves to like service for the Lord? Such may help the younger women—give them counsel and instruction, that they also following in their footsteps and copying their example may likewise help others as they grow up to be aged women also. It is in view of the widow's life being thus occupied for God that the apostle says, "She is happier if she so abide."

Marrying only in the Lord is a large subject, but I will refer to only a few of the scriptures that bear upon it.

Turn to Genesis i. 3: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness." Compare with this Ephesians v. 8: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of the light." 11th verse: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Who are the darkness if we are the light? Every unsaved,

unregenerate one is "darkness," and every saved one is "light" in the Lord. If we go down among the world and walk in self-will we are in the dark, and no light will shine out from us. The moon receives its light from the sun, and if the sun is not shining upon the moon as, for instance, during an eclipse, it throws no light upon this dark world. So if you and I are not walking in the light, in subjection to the Lord, then we are just as dark as the world around us, and more misleading. We are to walk as children of the light, for God has separated the light from the darkness.

2 Corinthians vi. 14: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" There you find the same thought. What communion can there be between light and darkness? There cannot be any; the one is opposed to the other, and therefore there cannot be communion. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" Thus God would give us instruction on this subject from the very first chapter of Genesis.

Now look at Genesis iii. 15: "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed." There are two seeds—the woman's seed and the serpent's seed. Who are the serpent's seed? Every unregenerate one. What is the woman's seed? It is Christ; and inasmuch

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as we are Christ's we are the woman's seed. And do we not incur the serpent's enmity? Is he not still our enemy, as he was Christ's? Who has put enmity between the serpent's seed and the seed of the woman? God says, "I put it." Why did God put it? He meant separation: that the light should be separate from the darkness; children of God from the children of the wicked one; and just because it is God's desire, therefore Satan opposes it, as we see, down the whole course of the Scripture. It is Satan's object to get the Church mixed up with the world, and the world with the Church. We see how this comes out in the sixth chapter of Genesis. The sin which we read of here, culminated in the judgment of God by the flood. In the previous chapters we read of the line of Cain representing the ungodly, and the line of Seth, of whom were Enoch and Noah, the godly. We read that "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose," &c. Therefore the way of the Lord became corrupted upon the earth by the amalgamation of the two seeds, and thus the collective testimony was spoiled. There was then only individual testimony, as Enoch and Noah. When Noah was left he was the only witness for God. We are not told that his sons were righteous, but they were saved through the righteousness of Noah.

Turn now to Exodus xxxiv. 11-17, and

you will see that God commanded His people Israel to keep themselves separate from the inhabitants of the land. He said, "If you make a covenant with them, then the result will be that you will give up Me; and I am a jealous God." I never knew the case of a Christian marrying an unconverted person who did not give up God. Not that they worshipped idols as Israel did, but they "departed from the Living God."

Pass on to a most solemn instance of this in the book of Numbers, 22nd chapter, 1st verse. This is the chapter where we have the account of Balak hiring Balaam to curse the people of God, and how God turned the curse into a blessing.

In the 25th chapter of Numbers you will find that the Moabites, who were a little while before this so distressed about Israel (hearing what God had done to the Egyptians), that they hired Balaam to curse them, are now on friendly terms with Israel. It was the daughters of Moab that were at the root of this. Just get behind the scenes, and we see who did it. Numbers xxxi. 16: "Behold, these caused the children of Israel, *through the counsel of Balaam*, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor." Mark that when Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, had been hired to curse the children of Israel, and failed to do so, God having turned the curse into a blessing, it was then he suggested another

way of getting the victory over them. He no doubt said, "Just invite the people to a dancing party, and get your daughters to make themselves most attractive to them, and then you will succeed." They fell into the snare set for them; they were beguiled and led away from the Lord; and we read that "the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab," and then "they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat and bowed down to their gods." And thus Satan through Balaam succeeded in leading God's people away from Jehovah; and then He came in in judgment and dealt with them for this terrible sin. It was the devil, the wily serpent, that was plotting against God's people, as he had done from the beginning.

1 Peter iii. 7: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." Fellow-heirs of the grace of life. Are the living to be yoked together with the dead? Those who are dead in trespasses and sins? If they have not the grace of life, however fair they may be outwardly, it is just as the white-washing of the sepulchre. What, then, can the manner of life be of the living who are yoked together with the dead?

Let the light shine, and that will save you from the temptations of the world and the

flesh. Shine with the light of God; walk in communion with Him; speak of the work, character, and claims of Christ, and the light will soon overcome the darkness. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

If you want to bring about total spiritual shipwreck, then get inveigled in this yoke. I have known cases, even after the forbidden union had been gone into, in which the unsaved one has been brought to the Lord, but it is only one here and there. In the majority of cases it has only resulted in utter misery and disaster.

If the prayer of husband and wife be hindered by the one being alive and the other dead, how then must God regard the worship that is offered by an assembly composed of the living and the dead? If God calls us to separation from the marriage yoke, does He stop there? Would He not have His own redeemed ones gathered together unto Him; separated from the world and subject to Him, who is our Lord at God's right hand? Ought they not to be gathered together to do what He has commanded to be done—the Word of the Lord their only standard and appeal? Shall we say that there is no difference between a meeting where the Gospel is preached to the unsaved and a meeting where God's own people are gathered to worship Him? Shall we mix them up together? Let us rather learn from the Word of God what a separation He has made between the living and



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the dead. We are not to be uncourteous to the unsaved. The responsibilities of every earthly relationship are to be owned and fulfilled whether to the saved or the unsaved. But let us be ever on our guard lest we be tempted to come down to their level, and walk and act as they do. May we so walk in fellowship with God that through our testimony many may be led to consider their ways in the light of God's Word, and thus be led to Christ.

### Chapter VIII.

As I have before remarked, the writer of the Epistle to the Corinthians appears to have had, as his first object, to answer a number of questions which had troubled the minds of these converts from heathendom, and to give them the mind of the Lord about these matters, so that thus they might act together for God's glory. One of these questions appears to have been about the eating of those things which were offered to idols.

1. **"Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge."** It is very easy to see how such difficulties would arise in their minds. If you turn to the 25th chapter of Numbers, you will see that one of Satan's devices for the ensnaring of Israel in the wilderness was of this nature. Also, turn to Acts xv. 28, 29, where we read, "For it seemed good to

the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols," &c. It is thus clear from the Old and New Testament that this was contrary to the mind of the Lord; not on the ground of these things being unclean in themselves; but it was absolutely necessary that converts being gathered out from the heathen abominations around should be kept separate from it all.

There was always a table associated with the sacrifices. If we read of "*the offerings*," it may refer to the burnt or meat-offerings; but if we read of *sacrifices* it almost invariably refers to the peace-offering. And the special characteristic of the peace-sacrifice was *fellowship*. The burnt-offering was wholly given to God upon the altar; but of the peace-offering part was laid upon the altar for God, a prescribed portion was given to the priest; and then the worshipper's table was spread, and he, with his family gathered around the portion of the sacrifice which was his, and they ate it together. Thus the teaching of the peace-sacrifice was fellowship. Jehovah had His portion, the priest had his, and the offerer had his also. God, the priest, and the offerer all fed upon the one sacrifice, a type of what we have in 1 John i. 3, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

God delights in His Son—He said, "This

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is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He is called "the Bread of God." Our souls, created anew and fitted to find our joy in communion with God, can rest and delight in that same Saviour, and feed upon that same "Bread of God." God has spread a table for us with the very same provision that satisfies and rejoices His own heart; and this is fellowship.

The sacrifices of the heathen were usually accompanied with a table, upon which part of the sacrifice was laid, and at which the worshippers of the idol feasted. Just as the offerer in Israel was having fellowship with Jehovah in the peace-sacrifice, and as we have fellowship with the Father and the Son when we eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of the death of the Lord Jesus, so an idolatrous feast signified that they were having fellowship with their god. It was therefore a very serious thing even to appear to be mingling in with such abominable revelry. Hence the injunction not to eat of those things sacrificed to idols, for in so doing they were having fellowship with Satan—he was the object of worship, and not God. "What say I then? that an idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [demons] and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (1 Cor. x. 19-21). These idolatrous practices were instigated by Satan

—he was their author; and, in reality, this was devil worship.

Covetousness is idolatry (Col. iii. 5), and the man who, with a greedy heart, is set upon amassing a fortune—who is determined to make money at all costs—is a worshipper of the devil, although he does not know it. All idolatry is really worshipping of Satan.

1. **“Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.”** The Corinthians were the most highly educated people on the face of the earth at that time, but the filthiest idolatry was associated with the highest cultivation of the intellect.

Although men’s intellects may be highly developed, their moral condition may be very low. Such are mere tools of Satan, and the greater their intellectual attainments, if they are not converted, they serve his purpose all the better. Do we say anything against education? No. But whatever education we have, let us see that our sharpened intellects are used for God. In these latter days, when knowledge is on the increase, and when education without God is being made as universal as it can be, it is the more rapidly preparing the way for one vast fellowship in iniquity with “the man of sin.”

These Corinthians were an intelligent people, and when the light of the truth entered into their hearts, they soon found out that an idol was not anything. These

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Corinthian saints were a gifted people, even with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is a solemn fact that even knowledge of the things of God, instead of being used in blessing to our souls and others, will only puff up with pride, unless it is coupled with the fear of the Lord.

Let us look at two scriptures to show this—Isaiah xi. 1-3: "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 the fear of the Lord; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." In the blessed Lord Jesus, the pattern servant, these two things were coupled together and never were separated, viz, "Knowledge and the fear of the Lord." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov .i.7)—28,29 verses, "Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer: they shall seek Me early but they shall not find Me, for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord." These are two things which must go together. If we have knowledge of the things of God, and have not coupled with it the fear of the Lord, then the necessary result will be that we shall become puffed up with pride. That is one way in which Satan gets God's servants spoiled. We may know a great deal of the Scriptures,

and consider ourselves deeply taught in divine things, and people may be hanging upon our lips, but all the while we may be getting puffed up, and may not be very far off from a grievous fall. As we increase in knowledge, may we in like measure increase in humility and in the fear of the Lord.

Turn now with me to 2 Peter i. 5-9, "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge." Let us not disparage knowledge, although we are on the other hand to take care that we be not puffed up by it. Seek to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter iii. 18)—not only in knowledge, but also in grace. In all our searchings of and meditations on the Word, let us seek to do so in humble dependence upon the Spirit of God to teach us. Knowledge thus acquired, let us not disparage. In the Lord Jesus "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). Reading and pondering the Word of God in His presence, we shall judge ourselves and see how far we are living out what God is showing us from His Word. There is a remarkable illustration of this tendency of knowledge to puff up that we do well to look at—2 Cor. xii. 7, "Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." We don't find the Apostle Paul talking much

of the revelations that were given to him. He does not appear to have mentioned this till fourteen years after it occurred. He says that "he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words that it is not lawful [or possible] for a man to utter."

There is such a thing as gratifying the pride of our own hearts by telling to others in a boastful spirit of spiritual experience. God saw that even the Apostle Paul, notwithstanding all his humility, and the discipline the Lord had brought him through, was in danger of getting puffed up. Therefore the Lord, in His mercy, anticipated the temptation of His servant, and gave him "a thorn in the flesh" to keep him humble.

There is no time we need more to be on our guard than when servants of God get together and recount what they have seen of the Lord's work, or what they have learned of His truth. So often this is not done in a spirit of humility, and then it degenerates into glorying in service and in knowledge, rather than in the Lord who called to the service and gave the grace to do it. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. i. 31).

1. **"Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth."** Love is here placed in opposition to knowledge. Love forgets self, and considers how it can bless another. God is love, and is therefore the Universal Blessor. He is the Servant of all. He openeth His hand and satisfieth the wants of every living

creature. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth His rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. v. 45). "God is love," and even when you read of God's terrible judgments, do not let Satan insinuate into your heart that He is anything else than love. Love will not wink at iniquity; love will not tolerate sin; our worst enemy is sin.

There is a danger in human love; it seeks rather to enjoy than to bless its object. That is the history of every spoiled child. The Lord Jesus loved His disciples, and when they needed it He rebuked them sharply, but never drove them from Him. You find Him rebuking them, and the next moment the rebuked one may come if he will and lay his head on His breast.

True love is bound up with knowledge; love cannot act for God without the knowledge of His will. Love will seek in God's presence to know how and in what way to deal with sin and the sinning one that so he may be gained for God. There is no necessity for love and knowledge being antagonistic to each other. "LOVE BUILDETH UP." What is accomplished through mere knowledge, in the work and service of God, cannot stand, but must fall to the ground to the sad disgrace of all who have had anything to do with it; but what is built up through loving, wise dealing stands firm.

2. "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he



**ought to know."** In acquiring fresh knowledge of God and His truth, the more we learn the less we seem to know. Sir Isaac Newton said that he seemed like a little child gathering pebbles on the sea shore, whilst the great ocean lay before him unexplored. Many show their ignorance by thinking that they know everything, but we know nothing as we ought. If we are learning in the presence of God, and by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, we shall feel that we are just babes at the best. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). We may go on knowing God and the Lord Jesus Christ for years, for a life-time, nay more, for a thousand years, and still there will be more to know; more of His wisdom, power, and love, and the treasures of His heart still to be unfolded. That will be our occupation in eternity.

The more we know of God, the more do we love Him. It is not so with man. The more we know of man in his natural unregenerate state, the less we think of him. How many disappointments do we experience with people. We find by-and-by that they are not what we thought they were, nor even what they professed to be. But the more we know God, the more we love, venerate, and worship Him.

3. **"If any man love God, the same is known of Him."** In connection with that

verse read Galatians iv. 8, 9, "Howbeit, then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods, but now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God." What you know of God is true and eternal knowledge. God, as it were, has a special knowledge of the one who has trusted on His Son—"He knoweth them that trust in Him" (Nahum i. 7). God knows all our trials and troubles, and as we go about our business day by day He can sustain and strengthen us, and cause us to find our joy and blessing in Himself. In Him alone is perfect rest, peace, and joy. God knows us through and through. When did we begin to love God? "We love Him because He first loved us." Whenever we saw that God gave His spotless Son to bear our sins,

"Then the love sprang up spontaneous,  
That we could not force before."

What does He say of anyone who loves Him? God knows him. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye." Don't give him the cold shoulder because he knows less than you. Does he love God? Then God knows him. "If any man love God, the same is known of Him." A man may have a great deal of knowledge, and yet he may not know God.

"Let everyone of us please his neighbour for his good to edification" (Rom. xv. 2). "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby

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one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (Rom. xiv. 19, 21).

11. "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" How can we reconcile that verse with the one in John x. 28? "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish." This word "perish" has different significations in Scripture. For example, Luke xi. 51—"From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple." The word "perish" may be applied either to temporal or eternal death, or to many other of the troubles and afflictions that come upon men. The real teaching of the verse is that through want of consideration of your brother you may bring him under the chastening of the Lord; it may be to "the destruction of the flesh," see 1 Corinthians v. 5, where one who has sinned is delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

12. "When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." The word wound here means "to smite." What a terrible sin it is to wound the weak conscience of a child of God—one for whom the

blessed Master suffered Himself to be nailed to the cross. If you or I cause another to stumble by our eating or drinking, or by our extravagance in dress, or in other ways, then let us remember that "everyone of us shall give an account of himself to God."

"No one liveth to himself." Every action has an influence on others, emboldening to evil or strengthening to resist. For the results of our actions God holds us responsible. If my ways are such as to stumble a weak one, the sin of that one is chargeable to me. Hence the apostle's solemn conclusion:

13. "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

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