

LECTURES  
ON THE  
FIRST AND SECOND  
EPISTLES OF PETER.

BY  
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# The First Epistle of Peter.

## Introduction.

**P**ETER'S line of things is different from Paul's. Peter was a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory (see 1 Peter v. 1). Paul was a witness of the glory (Acts xxii. 14-15), and a partaker of the sufferings (Col. i. 24 : Phil. iii. 10).

Paul's theme is the heavenlies : Peter's theme the wilderness.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, believers are seen as already in the heavenlies, there blessed with all spiritual blessings.

In the First Epistle of Peter, they are viewed as in the wilderness, strangers and pilgrims, and here also we learn how God is leading His people safely home. Peter wrote to the saints in those countries where Paul most laboured (see chap. i. 1) ; and in the closing words of his Second Epistle, he speaks of Paul as his "beloved brother" (2 Pet. iii. 15-16), and claims for his writings the authority of Scripture. There is no contention between them : no contradiction in their writings. One Spirit guided and inspired both, and we need both equally. Paul lifts us up into the presence of God, and shows us our standing there,

while Peter tells us how God is guarding and guiding us safely along the wilderness till we get to heaven.

There are three great lines of truth in God's Word, especially in the New Testament—

1. CHRIST Truth. This, John, who leaned on Jesus' bosom, has been chosen specially to unfold in his Gospel, and his Epistles.

2. CHURCH Truth. This, Paul, who had seen a glorified Christ in heaven, but not a suffering Christ on the Cross, has been specially called to bear witness of, and to minister (Acts xxii. 15, Eph. iii. 5-7).

3. KINGDOM Truth. This is what Peter, James, and Jude specially write of.

These several lines of truth correspond with the service of the three families of Levites, who carried the tabernacle through the wilderness.

*Merari*,—which means "bitterness"—carried the boards, the bars, the sockets: types of the Person of Christ. Cypress wood, His humanity; gold, His Divinity; silver, redemption. This is John's theme.

*Kohath*,—which signifies "an assembly,"—carried the holy vessels of the tabernacle, which correspond with Pauline, or Church truth.

*Gershon*,—"a stranger there,"—carried the curtains and the cords. This corresponds with Peterine, or Kingdom truth. Thus does God now as of old give a portion to each, for He will have all His truth fully revealed, and harmonised.

## Chapter I.

**P**ETER addresses the saints as "strangers scattered." Paul's word is "no more strangers" (Eph. ii. 19.) Up there in heaven, we are at home ; down here, "strangers," no longer at home in the world. Every true Christian knows this, and the more he is in the Spirit, and living in the presence of God, the more shall he feel this stranger-ship. "Scattered," or more exactly rendered—"strangers of the dispersion"—the same as in James i. 1—which shows that this Epistle was primarily written to believing Jews. But its teaching is just as applicable to us now treading the wilderness ; a scattered people, a few here, a few there, yet all known perfectly to the Lord. Soon we shall be all gathered around Him, for—"Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. xlix. 10, with John xi. 50-52). Like the morning dew ; a moment here on the grass, the next moment gone to form a rainbow in the skies.

*Verse 2.*—"Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God." There is a difference between election and predestination. The former looks at the place from which we are taken, the latter at the place to which we are going. "Election" is the word here, for the saints are seen as chosen "out of" the world ; "not of" the world, even as Christ is not of it (John xvii. 16).

“The fore-knowledge of God.” The same word is used in verse 20, concerning Christ, the Lamb of God, “Who verily was *fore-ordained* before the foundation of the world.” God had found a Christ for His people, and a people for His Christ, before the world was. He set His love on Him, and on us, and “made us accepted”—literally, took us into favour—“in the Beloved” (Eph. i. 6). He puts Christ and His people together thus in 1 Cor. i. 30—“Of Him (God) are ye in Christ Jesus.” Of the wicked He says—“I never knew you:” of His people—“I knew you before the world was.” It is very grand to see these things, and to have them dwell in power in our souls. O to think that God thought about us, loved us, and planned about our blessing, long before we had a being, and before He founded the world.

*Verse 2.*—The next word is “Through sanctification of the Spirit.” That is separation when we were born again; the setting apart of the Spirit when He made us to live. This looks at the earliest of God’s operations in our souls. The first thing He does is to quicken us, to give us a new life. When first begotten, this life may be very small in its measure, but it is “the life of God,” proceeding from a living Christ upon the throne, and it utterly dissociates us from all around. Who does not know that Christ when here, was separate from all the evil that surrounded Him, because He was the Son of God. So are we, as possessed of His life, and one with Him. As the apostle John says, “Which thing is true in Him, and in *you*” (1 John ii. 8.)

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Sanctification is separation—separation *from* evil, and separation *to* God (see also 2 Thess. ii. 13.) The practical question, therefore, is—Am I a separate man, or do I love the world, and abide in it?

“Unto obedience.” This is always what the Spirit aims at. If God has called us to be His chosen, the first thing is to learn to obey Him. And see what sort of obedience ours is to be. “Of Jesus Christ.” Not a half-and-half thing, but a simple, hearty, thorough and constant obedience, of which “Jesus Christ” is the pattern. He was the obedient One. He could say “The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious” (Isa. l. 5.) He became “obedient *unto* death, even the death of the Cross” (Phil. ii. 8.) This is to be our standard, a much higher one than law, and we have the same “Spirit of life” (Rom. viii. 2) in us which was in Him, though in smaller measure. We have the same power, but with this important distinction, that we have an evil and fleshly nature in us, to oppose and fight against the Spirit, which He had not.

“Sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” The Spirit quickens us to shelter under the blood. The work of the Spirit always makes us prize the blood of Christ. No man by nature prizes it. If I begin to trust in it as my only plea, my only title, that shews the Spirit is at work in me, leading me away from self-confidence and from self-religiousness. Nothing is to be added to that precious blood as a plea, or a resting-place before God. It is alone in its perfection. But although the blood alone is our plea

before God, it is only by the Spirit we begin to enjoy the nearness into which it brings us. Our competency for the enjoyment of God is the new birth, the new nature, and the indwelling of the Spirit. He gives the capacity to "joy in God." What then is the profession of a valuing of the blood of Jesus, if held apart from separation and obedience? The three must always go together.

"Grace unto you and peace, be multiplied." The Epistle is addressed to believing Jews who had been under law, which leads to bondage and dread of God. "The grace of God" (Titus ii. 11) had brought salvation to them; now they are to have grace "multiplied," to have their hearts "established with grace," as we have it in Heb. xiii. 9. Is God contented with what grace you have? No. He wants to give you more, to "multiply" it to you, to have "grace and peace" flowing into your heart like a river.

*Verse 3.*—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He begins with a hymn of praise. O, how can we but praise God for what He has done? The wonder is we ever cease. "Who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us." Most appropriately does Peter thus begin His Epistle, which views us as God's people passing through the wilderness, by telling us that God had "begotten us again." This is what makes us strangers here. Christ was a stranger here, because He was the Son of God from Heaven, and so are we, for His life is in us. What a real thing this makes regeneration. Not merely a doctrine, but a fact: the very life and nature of God communicated

to us—"born *out of God*" (John i. 13, Greek). Let us remember our spiritual birthday; it is the most important era of our life. Begotten unto two things: (1) "A living hope;" (2) "An inheritance." What is the hope? The coming again of the Lord Jesus. The unconverted dare not look on to the future: the believer is to be sustained and carried through by the power of "the hope." To him the future has already begun to be a source of joy.

"A *living* hope, by the resurrection of Christ Jesus out of the dead ones." Here again we are reminded that our life is identical with Christ's. In Scripture there are the two expressions; "Resurrection *of* the dead," and "Resurrection *from* the dead"—literally—"out of the dead ones"—leaving the dead behind. The latter was that of Christ, and is ours. We have been quickened, and raised up out from the spiritually dead already. We are associated with Christ risen: one with Him up there before God. Not before He died—He was then alone—God's only begotten Son (John i. 18; iii. 16): but in resurrection, He is the first-born among many brethren (Rom. viii. 29). We are reproductions of Christ: the actual life of Christ in resurrection has flowed down into us, and we ourselves are so many proofs that Christ is risen.

"To an inheritance." The hope is present: the inheritance future. What a hope, and what an inheritance! Already we have the Holy Ghost, "the earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. i. 14); and we joy in God, although sometimes our hearts are depressed by reason of the way.

Thus by redemption, regeneration, and resurrection, God has made believers His real children, His begotten ones. They have the same life, the same nature, and the same place as the First-born. "Begotten unto an inheritance." Only the few on earth have an inheritance: the bulk are born to poverty. But all the children of God are heirs of an inheritance. "If children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17.) There is no law of primogeniture in heaven, save that in all things Christ shall have the pre-eminence. His inheritance is ours. In the Epistles specially written to believing Jews, the inheritance is said to be a kingdom—"heirs of the kingdom" (Jas. ii. 5), while in the Pauline Epistles it is something beyond the kingdom—"heirs of God." Beyond that we cannot get; to be sharers with God is our highest bliss. Had Israel been obedient, they would have been the first of the Nations, and through them all the world would have been blessed; but by their disobedience and rejection of Christ, the kingdom in its earthly form has been postponed. Now, by the obedience of One many have been made righteous, and raised to share in heavenly blessing, where with Christ they shall rule creation, but beyond this they shall enjoy God, for "God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." A man is an heir before he gets possession of his inheritance. He may get part before the time for full possession comes. We have received "the earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. i. 14): "the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor.

i. 22) already, and when the Lord comes, we shall get the rest. There is what men call "the pleasure of anticipation" and this the Spirit gives, by revealing to us even now such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. It is part of His work in us to bring some of heaven's joys into our souls here, and to lift us up into the enjoyment of them. The Holy Ghost is in God and in us; He searches the deep things of God, and reveals them to our souls. And thus we anticipate the joys and pleasures that await us there at God's right hand for evermore. If we only walk in the ungrieved communion of the Holy Ghost, how bright and full of heaven He will make our lives to be! Then until we get full possession of the inheritance, we have the hope. It buoys us up and makes us rejoice, even though the way may be rough. Yonder at the end, is the inheritance all secure for us, and it is to be ours for ever. Surely then we may sing—

"We expect a bright to-morrow,  
All must be well."

"Incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." This is all the description God has given us of it, just enough to whet our appetite, to make us long and sigh to be there. Everything around us here is full of corruption and defilement, and the grandest things in the world are fading away. We are to have incorruptible bodies, free from defilement and fitted for the glory—"fashioned like unto the body of His glory" (Phil. iii. 21). O, what a

grand future awaits us ! The Holy Ghost brings it near to us, and gives us a taste of it. This is His way to make us let go the present world, and long to be there.

“Reserved in heaven for you.” In 1 Peter, heaven is reserved for the saints, and the saints are kept for heaven : and equally so in 2 Peter, hell is reserved for the wicked (2 Pet. ii. 17), and the wicked for hell (2 Pet. ii. 9).

*Verse 5.*—“Who are kept by the power of God.” This hints how strong our enemies are, and what assaults are made upon us. The allusion is to God’s triumphant deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and His escorting of them to Canaan. The sprinkling of the blood and the inheritance are first mentioned : then the power that kept them and led them in the wilderness. When Jehovah sent down the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, it was more than He promised, for He never just keeps His promise, but delights to exceed it. How soon we would miss our way, and be overcome by our enemies, if it were not for the power of God being continually engaged to defend us. The Lord Jesus said, “While I was with them in the world I kept them in Thy Name” (John xvii. 12), and then He prayed, “Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name, those whom Thou hast given Me” (verse 11). This grand statement, “Who are kept by the power of God,” is the answer to that prayer. We read of “the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe” (Eph. i. 19), and of “the power that worketh in us” (Eph. iii. 20). God will not leave us nor forsake us, until He

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has brought us home; until He rest in His love and joy over us with singing. So long as Israel trod the wilderness, Jehovah dwelt in a tent and a tabernacle, a pilgrim God, in the midst of His pilgrim people—"Their Guide, their Glory, their Defence."

And see too *how* He keeps: "through faith unto salvation." He keeps us by strengthening our faith, and making us cling to Him. There is much said about faith in this chapter: the *exercise* of faith, the *trial* of faith, the *end* of faith. Faith appropriates what God gives: it feeds on what God reveals. The manna was sent from heaven day by day, but Israel had to gather it; so faith gathers what God gives for its sustenance day by day. Yesterday's manna will not suffice for to-day, nor will what came from the Word with power to our souls in time past, sustain our faith in God for the present. The Lord preserve us from an inoperative faith, but as the plant puts forth its "feelers" into the soil from which it is nourished, so may our faith feed on the Word of God and be sustained thereby.

"Unto salvation, ready to be revealed." God does not tell us what He is going to do, save through the Word. But all is ready: there is nothing wanting on His part. He is ready to bring us into the inheritance: what if His people are not ready to enter? God is waiting till every one of *His elect* has been converted, till every saint has been severed and separated from evil: till Christ has been implored to come again. O how He longs to hear the yearning cry—"The Spirit and the Bride, say, Come."

*Verse 6.*—"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season if need be, ye are in heaviness." What a singular combination! "Ye greatly rejoice," yet "are in heaviness." As Paul says "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. vi. 11). Mark, it is not "in heaviness" at one time, and "rejoicing" the next, but both blended together. We have much to mourn over, yet much to rejoice in. There is joy underneath our tears, and our sorrows are mingled with singing. This Epistle contemplates the saints as passing through the wilderness, and describes their actual experiences there. He does not describe the saints as if they were seraphs, but as they truly are, often a riddle to themselves.

"For a season, if need be"—if you need them. By God's grace there is a qualifying clause. They are only for a season, but you need them. The joy will wax greater till it ends in everlasting joy: the heaviness is only "for a season," it will have an end.

"Manifold temptations"—trials of various kinds, mental and spiritual. God does not take them away, nor always deliver us from them: His way is to give "manifold grace" (chap. v. 10) to bear them, and to so uphold and sustain His people's faith that they may endure them with joy.

*Verse 7.*—"The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold." Precious things are seven things mentioned in Peter's Epistles. Faith, the trial of faith, precious blood, precious promises, the precious stone, twice, and "He is precious." Of these seven, the trial of faith gets

the first place. It is compared to gold tried in the fire, which only makes it the brighter, and the purer. Faith tried in the fire becomes stronger, and such trials bring the soul into a closer acquaintance with God. Thus God allows His people to be brought into all sorts of circumstances in order to try their metal. Nothing so acquaints us experimentally with God as trials. We get to know God intelligently through the Word, but we become acquainted with Him experimentally by means of trial. To be a Christian is a very real thing, a hard thing to the flesh, but a blessed reality to faith. A genuine Christian is a man who exercises his conscience before God as to what will please Him, and as to the path he has to tread. He is thus distinguished from the sham professor, who is like a balloon without ballast. The path marked out by God for His people is a path of trial, yet full of blessing, in proving His timely aid. When did the Lord Jesus use the words "Abba, Father?" Only in the garden of Gethsemane! In the hour of His exceeding sorrow, when all had forsaken Him. Ah! well may we know that the path of sorrow is the path of safety, for it is the path along which God leads His children safely home. It is a precious thing in God's estimation to be trusted and confided in; clung to in a world where His Son was rejected, and where He is disowned. How it must have pleased Him to hear Job say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

*This* is the time, then, of the fiery trial of faith: there will yet be a trial of works by fire (1 Cor. iii. 13: 1 Cor.

iv. 5) when Jesus comes, but that will be by the Lord Himself. Now He allows our faith to be tested, and when in the midst of the trials we can trust Him and say, "Father, I know that Thou lovest me," He will make us even now to feel that He is pleased. And often He causes us to joy in His presence, just before some sharp and heavy trial, for He would not have us to be mere lip-worshippers, but experimentally acquainted with Himself, and in heart cleaving to Him.

"Praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." What a grand day that will be for His tried and suffering people! How it tells how God will make up all that they have lost by their faithfulness to Him, and His Word. Three things are here named: praise, honour, and glory. The first itself should be enough to nerve us to be faithful. Think of the Lord Jesus calling a poor, despised, and lowly servant of His, who had borne reproach, and shame for His sake, and suffered because of faithfulness to His truth, and publicly praising Him before all. That is what will be done. He will say, "Well"—there is no word for "done"—"Bravo, good and faithful servant." Mark, it is not successful—but faithful servant. The world will praise what it calls success, but it takes no account of faithfulness to Christ. But He does, and will not one word from these lips of His, make ample amends for a whole life-time of reproach? O let us hold tight to His commandments. Faithfulness to His Word is what will be owned and praised in that day.

*Honour* comes next. This may refer to the crowns He will bestow. Not only will He praise in words, but in action. He will reward all that has been well pleasing to Him. This invests the present life with grave responsibility. Every one will see by the crown He gives, how I had acquitted myself on earth, and how much of my life had the approval of the Lord Jesus. The crowns He gives are eternal. Such will be the honour put by Him on those who make it their aim to please Him here. Alas! how much is sacrificed to earn the praise of men! But as a rule, the praise of men is exactly the opposite of the praise of God. In Luke xvi. 15, we read, "That which is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God." And that word "abomination" is a strong word: it is used to describe idolatry in the Old Testament (see Ezek. viii. 9-13.) Yet how many seem to live for the applause of men! How much grander will it be to know the fulfilment of the word—"Then shall every man have praise from God" (1 Cor. iv. 5.)

*Glory*, comes last. "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together" (Rom. viii. 17). What glories await the Son of God, the full recompense of His Cross and shame! Would you share the praise, the honour, and the glory that He will then bestow? The clue to the whole is identification with Him now. And be it remembered that all these are eternal, not for a brief period like the honours of earth. The Queen may raise her faithful servants to rank and honour for a few years, then their

honours perish ; but our Lord and Master has eternal honours, and eternal glory at His disposal. How intensely real this makes the present life to be. We are writing our lives as in a book, and shall hear it read to us bye and by. Not one day we live now, but will affect us then: our course of action here will intensely colour our existence there. And some will suffer loss (1 Cor. iii. 14, 15), while others who have gone on whole-heartedly to the end, will have "a full reward" (2 John 8).

"At the appearing of Jesus Christ:" that is at the revelation, or unveiling of Jesus Christ. When the believer's standing in grace, and his place in Christ, are under review, it is the *coming* of the Lord to the air for His church that is spoken of as "the hope:" but when it is a question of how we have lived and what we have been doing here for Him, it is the *appearing* that is to the front, for then those who have suffered loss for Christ because of their identification with Him, and faithfulness to Him, will appear with Him in glory (Col. iii. 4), wearing the rewards He has bestowed upon them. The appearing will be stage after stage: first with the saints, then gradually unfolded more and more, judging one class after another, and the more that glory is unveiled, the brighter will the rewards of Christ's faithful followers appear. All will not share alike, the reward will be according to the measure of faithfulness here. Of two brothers both in Christ, one may suffer loss, the other have a full reward, and as the glory is unveiled, the difference between them will be perpetuated. And these rewards will

endure, for the abundant entrance is into "the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour" (2 Peter i. 11).

*Verse 8.*—"Whom having not seen, ye love." This refers to love in action, love in practice. Love when it stands the test under fire; love in the heart first no doubt, but seen in the ways of those who dare to do for His sake what He bade them. The proof of such love is, that it stands fast to the cross, and bears the trial at some cost to itself. When tempted to avoid suffering, love remains firm and unmoved, cleaving to the truth. Oftentimes the Lord brings His people into circumstances where their love is tested. Some temptation arises, some bait is offered. Do you love Christ? Then you will say—"No, I love my Lord," and for One you have never seen, but on whom your heart is fixed, you stand the fire, you endure. It is concerning this that the passage in James i. 12 speaks—"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is *tried*, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to THEM THAT LOVE HIM." The force of "love" here is love in action: love that endures. People talk a lot about love, but the true test of love to God and Christ is, that in the trial it says—"I would not lose the favour and smile of God, so will rather suffer than grieve Him." Love will be content with a crust and the smile of God, rather than a better position and the popularity of the world without it. Such tests must come to all the true children of God; they winnow the chaff from the wheat. The gold comes out from the fire tried, and purified from its dross.

Abraham's day of trial came when he was asked to give up Isaac. And his prompt response, when he arose early and took the knife and the fire to Moriah with his son, and stretched for his hand to slay him, shewed that he loved God more than to withhold from Him his only son. And the answer from heaven was—"Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son" (Gen. xxii. 12.)

"Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory"—or GLORIFIED. When our joy becomes very intense, we are on the very edge of glory, at the very threshold of heaven. Glory is ever closely connected with joy—"In Thy presence there is fulness of glory, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." We could not in our present condition stand the full blaze of glory, but when our joy in the Lord is very full, it is glory diluted, a scintillation of the eternal glory in which we are to dwell.

*Verse 9.*—"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." It is thus acknowledged by God to be faith indeed. If I believe in Christ, I become a heavenly man, with a new life: if not, it is implied my faith is not real. There is a salvation present, which God gives to all who have faith (see Acts xvi. 31: Eph. ii. 8), and there is a salvation yet to come unto which we are kept through faith (v. 4), and which is nearer now than when we first believed (Rom. xiii. 11).

*Verses 10-12.*—"Of which salvation the prophets have diligently enquired"—"Which things the angels desire to

look into." Prophets wrote by the inspiration of the Spirit, but they did not understand all they wrote. They knew that their writings contained deep purposes of God, but they were not fully unfolded to them. "Not unto themselves but to us they did minister." The fulness of God's grace could not appear till Christ came. God could and did save sinners and take them to heaven as He did Enoch before, but union with Christ and all that such union implies, could not be until Christ died and rose again. O how God delights to heap honour upon His Son! And how very grand God makes the position of those who in this age believe on His Son, who was rejected here. The prophets "enquired and searched diligently." They studied their own writings to get glimpses of the grace that was to come to us. How this should rebuke us! Do we search the Word with such diligence? Do we explore the Word on bended knee and with critical heart, as they did, to learn more of Christ. Think of David pondering his twenty-second Psalm, and Isaiah his fifty-third chapter, to find out the fulness of their meaning! And we pass them by as a tale oft-times told. "Angels desire to look into" them. Some have thought that this refers to the cherubim bending over the mercy-seat, but it seems rather to call to mind those angels who gazed with wonder into the empty tomb, where Christ had been laid, and out from which God had raised him. That sight excited their wonder, that God should so love guilty hell-deserving men as to give His Son. God is thus teaching

angels and saints His character; angels objectively, by seeing His love expended on us: saints, by knowing and enjoying it (Rom. v. 4.) "That in the ages to come, He might *show* the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward *us* in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 7.) The kindness is to us, while others look on. And thus the "principalities and powers" learn through the church "the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10.)

"The sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow"—*glories*, not glory. These were the subjects of the prophets. Prophecy speaks of the sufferings and the glories as if they were together, yet nearly two thousand years have come between. Two mountains viewed from a distance might appear to touch each other, yet as you approach them, you find that they are separated by a deep, wide valley between! In that gap comes in the present dispensation: we stand between the cross and the glory. And this is what accounts for the riches of the inheritance, into which grace is now calling us. God is telling out the matchless worth of His Son, whom men rejected, on whose Name worms of the dust heaped dishonour, but who has been glorified in the highest heaven. The parenthesis between the sufferings and the manifested glories is filled up with the gathering out of the Church by the Holy Ghost, by associating those who now believe, with His Son in resurrection glory. This is how God is filling up the gap between the "sufferings" and the "glories." The same parenthesis may be seen in other Scriptures, as for example,

Matth. iii. 11, where the baptism of the Holy Ghost is present, the baptism of fire future: and in Psalm ii. 7, where the Son is seen in resurrection, while verse 8, looks on to judgment. Then He will ask for vengeance on His foes; now He is asking that those whom the Father has given Him may be with Him where He is, to behold His glory (John xvii. 23.)

In these three verses, there are three stages of His glory unfolded.

1. The Spirit in the prophets spake of Christ rejected and glorified.

2. The Holy Ghost is come down to tell believers of His glory up there, still hid from mortal sight.

3. The revelation of Jesus Christ Himself, the crown of all our blessing, the unveiling of His glory when all shall see it.

“The Spirit of Christ which was in them.” He was in the prophets, but only as the Spirit of prophecy. He dwells in all believers now, as their Guide, their Comforter, and Teacher, proceeding from a glorified Christ; in us to give the actual enjoyment of the present grace of God, and pre-libations and foretastes of the coming glory. Yes, the Holy Spirit is in us to give the enjoyment of these heavenly things here on earth, before we actually dwell amid them there. Hence we at no time should reckon that we have got our portion, unless the Spirit of God has made our hearts to glow with the enjoyment of them. If we are content with the mere knowledge of these things, we are like

one in possession of a water-pipe, without the water that flows through it.

“Reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” Were it not for the presence of the Holy Ghost here, what is preached would be a mere “report,” but God would not have it thus. The Holy Ghost has been sent, literally, been “sent away from heaven.” His mission is to take of the things of Christ and shew them to us, to bring them near and make them real. Thus, when the Word is preached “*with* the Holy Ghost,” it is not a mere report, but a message full of living power which makes its way to the heart. The only Person who could tell us about the glories of the risen Christ is the Holy Ghost. He knows them ; He sees and hears what is up there, and delights to communicate the whole to us, so that our hearts may be swayed and glow with the enjoyment of Christ and heavenly things.

Strictly speaking, the Holy Ghost is in heaven, for He is God, but in a special and peculiar sense He is here upon earth during this present age, in the believer and in the Church, escorting the Bride of Christ through the wilderness. Where is the Church? Not in heaven yet, but in the world. Although there are thousands more of saints in heaven than upon earth, yet the Church with the Holy Ghost in it, is regarded as being dispensationally here, until the Lord comes.

*Verse 13.*—“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind.” Here is the practical side of the truth. The power of the

things we have heard acting upon us in daily life. The power of the glory is to make us "gird up:" not having a bit of our mind set on heavenly things, and a bit on things below. In Ephesians vi. 14, we read, "Having your loins girt about with truth:" whatever is not according to the truth, not in the Word, do not love it; cut it off, give it up. The Holy Ghost has made you taste the glory, as Israel did that beautiful bunch of grapes from Eschol; "wherefore" rein in your desires, and be very careful not to soil your garments in the scene through which you are passing. "Gird up."

The next word is "Be sober"—or, clear. In chapter iv. 7, we read—"Be ye therefore *sober* and watch unto prayer." "Be sober," means to shut your eyes to all that dazzles or enchants down here. "Watch" means to keep your eye on the future. If a Christian gets his ideas of the future from the world's newspapers, he is not sober. Hence the word is—"Be sober,"—clear, unmuddled. You are a heavenly man, do not let earth's cares, or opinions, or judgments warp your mind. Get all your thoughts from God's Word, no matter what men may say or think to the contrary. Thus will your mind be sober, and you will not be saying the world is getting better, and such like, when God says the opposite. "Hope to the end"—that is, "Hope perfectly." He has waited for more than eighteen hundred years, but hope still, hope perseveringly, hope perfectly. Do not allow the world's notions of the future to dim your hope, or rob you of it.

“Grace to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” At His unveiling, He will bring us what will compensate for all the world’s jeers. All believers love the Lord’s coming, but to “love His appearing” (2 Tim. iv. 8) we must be in the path and doing the work that He would have us.

*Verses 14-17.*—“As obedient children,”—or, children of obedience. In Eph. ii. 2, the unregenerate are called “Children of disobedience.” Sin is lawlessness, wilfulness, acting apart from God. Now, begotten of God, we have His nature, and the desire of our hearts should be to obey Him. How wonderfully these verses are linked together. What God looks for in His children is obedience, and at the unveiling, the measure of that obedience will be seen and owned. What God values most in His children is subjection: He does not own the kind of love that does not obey. “If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love Him” (John xiv. 23). This is what He values. Nothing else. You send your child to post a letter; he does not do it, but returns bringing you an orange. Would you be pleased? “Not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts”—or, desires—“in your ignorance.” To yield to sin, is to learn to love it, and to be moulded by it. Before we knew God, no wonder we wanted other things, and ran to cisterns which could hold no water. Now the desire of the new nature is after God, and the indulgence of the flesh in a saint is sin. In the days of “our ignorance” of God we might have said—“I cannot

help it," but now God has called us, and the power of practical holiness is in His call, and that call is always associated with holiness, We are saints by His call, "called saints" (Rom. i. 7)—and called to holiness (1 Thess. iv. 7). Holiness is separation, and separation has two sides: *from* that which is evil, *unto* that which is of God. Both are referred to here.

*Verse 15.*—"As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye—or become ye—holy"—"for I am holy." There is a striking variation of the words here. God is holy, absolutely so: He dwells in light. To us He says, "Become ye holy." It is implied that He intends us for association with Himself, to be in His presence as His companions. But before we can be holy in practice, we must be so in principle: ere we can have communion with God we must have His nature. He cannot come down to our level, but He can raise us up to His. He cannot accommodate Himself to the evil propensities of my flesh, but He can give me a nature to enjoy Him, and set me in the light where He is. And this is what God has done. In one sense the believer is perfectly sanctified already (1 Cor. i. 2: Heb. x. 10): Christ is his sanctification (1 Cor. i. 30) as well as his righteousness: in another sense it is progressive (see 1 Thess. v. 22.) "Become ye holy, for I am holy." It is important to notice the word "become," because it shews there is a growth in Divine life. He has given us His nature, lifted us up into His light—the very light in which He dwells, to live there under His smile, to dwell in His

love, and thus to assimilate and become like Him. The blood of Jesus Christ is our title to be there: the Holy Ghost is our qualification, and there is no necessity for walking in darkness.

Thus, there are three reasons why saints should be holy—

1. The Father who hath called us is holy.
2. The Son whose blood has redeemed us is God's holy Son.
3. The Spirit who indwells is holy.

“So become ye holy in all manner of conversation.” In proportion as the saint lives in the light of God, feeds on Christ who is the source of holiness, and walks in the ungrieved power of the Holy Ghost, will it come out in his daily life and behaviour.

*Verse 17.*—“If we call on the Father.” It is a Father you invoke. Who would not try to please a Father, who has so loved you and cared for you? Here He is presented in His Fatherly character as Judge. “Who judgeth according to every man's work.” This is not the judgment-seat of Christ, that is future: this is present. He is looking on, taking notice of all, whether there is integrity of purpose, intelligence of mind, and desire of heart to please Him. He marks each real endeavour to walk uprightly; others may misunderstand it, He cannot.

“Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” We are in an enemy's country, passing through; blessed be God we will not be here for long, it is not our home. Pass the time like a man on guard, “in fear” lest you should sleep,

or be overcome by the enemy, or tripped up. Yonder is our home in the glory, there shall we be perfectly at ease, at full liberty; no watchfulness required, because no foe lurks there. "In the liberty of the glory" we shall breathe freely, for there will be nothing to disturb or distract, to mar our full enjoyment of the love of God.

*Verses 18-21.*—"Forasmuch as ye know." Not like the popular religion of the present day which says "We doubt." God's Word is a Book of certainties, and His people are believers in—not doubters of Christ. "Redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ." What an appeal for holy living: the most cogent of all! Think of what it cost God to get you: He had to give up His own Son to the death. "The precious blood:" one of the seven things in this Epistle called "precious" by God. How different from the world's estimate, is God's! That precious blood is the blood of the uncreated Son of God. This is what gives it value: faith gets all its preciousness from that blood, and the trial of faith is precious because it tests the reality of our faith in that precious blood. In heaven they ascribe everything to the blood: "Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain" (Rev. v. 9.) Surely we down here, may well recognise its worth, by yielding ourselves up to God, whose we are, and owning ourselves redeemed and set apart from all our former manner of life to become His. "Without blemish and without spot," tells of His fitness to be our Redeemer. Had He been otherwise, there would have been no redemption, no salvation. Thus we have three

strong inducements to holiness. May they be continually speaking to our hearts.

Then follows a digression, in which some beautiful things are said about the Lord Jesus. First: He was "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world:" "fore-ordained," or "fore-known," as the word is, the same as in verse 2. How sweet it is to see that God had thus provided a people for His Son, and found in His Son a Redeemer for that people. The allusion here is to the paschal lamb in Exodus xii., which was set apart before it was slain (see verses 5-6.) So God's Lamb was fore-appointed. Man's sin and ruin did not take God by surprise. Grieved He was by man's fall, but not surprised; He was prepared with the remedy. Not that we would extenuate sin, but admire and praise the grace of our Saviour—God, who was able to point Adam and Eve to the sacrifice, which had been fore-appointed by Him. And so when Isaac asked of Abraham, his father, on Moriah—"Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" He was able to reply—"My son, God will provide for Himself a lamb." No doubt Christ was then in the thoughts of God as the Lamb fore-known. There are two expressions used in connection with the election of the heavenly and earthly saints, which are often confused and misunderstood. Of the heavenly saints, the Church, we read—"Chosen in Him *before* the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4), and of "the grace which was given us in Christ Jesus *before* the world began" (2 Tim. i. 9); while of His earthly people it is said they were written in the book

of life of the slain Lamb, *from* the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8, with Matth. xxv. 34.) "But was manifest in these last times." At last in God's good time, the Being became visible whom God had provided to be the Sacrifice for sin, and the Foundation Stone of a new creation which is to stand for ever. The word here rendered "manifested" is in Hebrews ix. 26, "appeared." "Now, once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put sin away." He has come into sight, and as we gaze upon the Cross, we learn how God's Lamb secured redemption, and laid the foundation of a new creation, in which already we share (2 Cor. v. 17), by having a new life, and a new nature, both derived from Christ risen from the dead.

"In these last times"—or "the last of these times," as in Heb. i. 2. The thought is, that at the Cross of Christ the world's moral history was closed. If God should allow it to go on for two thousand years, there would be nothing new: it has shown itself fully, and got to its end before God. He has by the resurrection begun afresh, and will from Christ as His new Centre, cause blessing to flow far and wide. The first to share it is "the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven."

"For you, who by Him do believe in God." There is a limitation and a definiteness in the work of the Cross, which are sometimes lost sight of. True as it is that Christ gave Himself a ransom for all; that His blood was shed as a propitiation for "the whole world," in order that the Gospel might be preached to "every creature," yet there is a special

sense in which He died for "you who believe." He gave His life for the sheep (John x. 11): for a chosen band, that little flock which "He purchased with His own blood." There is great force in the word "who by (or through) Him do believe in God." It is a latent thought not always perceived, that it is through the Lord Jesus that we are brought to believe in God, and He is, as it were, under obligation to Him to receive all who do thus believe. So conversely, Christ receives, and will not cast out those whom the Father has given Him, when they come to Him (John vi. 37).

"Raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God." "Faith" eyes the resurrection: "hope" the glory. That sight of Christ on the throne is to teach us, among other things, the way to trust God. He trusted God, even in the hour of death, yet His sorrow was beyond measure. He had to say "I cry in the daytime and Thou hearest not" (Psa. xxii. 2): yea, some of His sorrows were on God's account, as He says "For *Thy* sake I have borne reproach" (Psa. lxix. 7). Suffering, sorrow, and shame gathered around His path, because He stood up for God in a world where He was dishonoured: yet God allowed Him to suffer. He allowed Him to go to the Cross, and sink into the grave as if He was taking no cognizance of His trust. Then in the darkest hour, God shone out from His glory in heaven, and raised Him up from the dead. O, let us learn to have faith in God, and wait His time. It is a life-long lesson, not learned in a day.

*Verse 22.*—"Seeing ye have purified your souls (yourselves) in obeying the truth through the Spirit." A believer is a purified man, and he is therefore to purify himself (see chap. ii. 1.): the one is his position, the other his practice. This double aspect of truth is the invariable way in which the Spirit teaches. We are "inside the veil" positionally: "let us draw near"—experimentally (Heb. x. 19-22). The death of Christ has put us "outside the camp": "let us go forth" (Heb. xiii. 11-13). What is meant by "the truth" here, and what is "obeying" it? In Eph. i. 13, the truth is spoken of as the Gospel, as also in Col. i. 5. Obeying is said to be believing (see Rom. i. 5, xvi. 26: 2 Thess. ii. 13). Truth is the manifestation of God: Christ is therefore the Truth, because He tells of Him. In John xiv. 6, He says—"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" while in 1 John v. 6, we are told—"The Spirit is Truth." Thus the Son tells us of God plainly, manifests Him: the Spirit reveals Him to the heart. He has poured the love of God into all (Rom. v. 5) who believe: faith takes it in, hugs it to the heart, and there it purifies us. "Love to all saints," is the love of God bursting out to those who are loved by Him: it is something higher than mere natural affection.

*Verses 23-26.*—"Being born again." Here it is the beginning of a new life, the operation of God: I am passive. Begotten of God: His love has got into our hearts, His nature been imparted to us. The Word of God is the seed of this new life; through the Word it is implanted in the soul. Blessed be God: if, by our first birth, we inherited

death and corruption, so in this new birth we get life and incorruption. Then we learn how this is done. The Spirit breathes upon the flesh, and it withers as grass (Isa. xl. 5-8). The Spirit breathes upon the dead and they live (Ezek. xxxvii. 1-7). Here we learn the way of God. As long as there is natural activity, fleshly goodness and strength, the Spirit can but blow upon it and wither it up; but when we take the place of death, and let God's voice be heard, then life is begotten through the Word. By comparing verse 23 with verse 25 we learn, that as the Word is eternal, so is the life that is begotten by it. And this life and love of God now being in us, we love one another with pure hearts fervently.

## Chapter II.

THE opening words of this chapter are connected with what has gone before.

*Verse 1.*—"Wherefore, laying aside all malice." "Seeing ye have purified yourselves" (chap. i. 22), put away these unclean and fleshly things. Being pure, we are *to purify* ourselves. The former is our position, the latter ought to be our practice. The new birth gives a new life, the Spirit indwells the children of God, the effect is they love one another. But the flesh would oppose this, if it had its way. The flesh would practice "guile, hypocrisies, envies, and evil speakings," but God says, lay all these aside. In proportion as we are filled with the Spirit, and the new life comes out, we are "generously simple." The essence of Divine life is love: there is no cunning or hypocrisy in it. If one has a bad temper, a little cunning, a tint of hypocrisy, he is not purified practically. The only way to be guileless and free from hypocrisy, and all else that God here bids us lay aside, is to walk in the light with God, and whenever these things crop up, make a clean breast of them at once before Him.

*Verses 2-3.*—"As new-born babes, desire the guileless milk of the Word." In the family of God some are babes, others little children, young men, and fathers (1 John ii. 13). Some have longer known and enjoyed His love than

others: their capacities have increased: they have grown. The way of growth is here set forth. You have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," got a little sip of His grace and kindness; go on and get more. It was through the Word that you got what you have; now that it has gained an entrance let it flow in freely. "Desire" it, as the unweaned babe does its mother's breast (see Isa. xxviii. 9). His Word is pure—"guileless:" there is no taint in it. God your Father never will deceive you, so you may take in His Word freely, appropriating it to yourself. As you learn more of Him and of His love and grace, you will grow. It is not the work of a day, but as we take in the Word, we become acquainted with Him, and get fuller glimpses of His love and grace, and this begets the "desire" to know more of Him. God our Father desires our companionship; strange it is that we should need to be told to desire His."

"That ye may grow thereby, *unto salvation.*" The last two words are missed out in the Authorized Version. But they ought to be there. Salvation is presented in three aspects in Scripture:—1st, As something done: "Who *hath* saved us" (2 Tim. 1-9). 2nd, As something going on at present: "He is able to save completely those who are on the way to God through Him" (Heb. vii. 25). 3rd, As something yet future: "We look for the Saviour" (Phil. iii. 20): "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. xiii. 11). The salvation mentioned here is present salvation, from day to day. It is carried on by the Spirit working in us through the Word. Then it comes out in life

and walk, and in this way we work out "our own salvation" (Phil. ii. 12). If envy or hypocrisy is practised, then you need saving from that. In God's account we have not got full salvation, until everything belonging to the flesh is got rid of. This will be so, finally, when the Lord comes, and we get bodies fashioned like unto the body of His glory, but all that I learn of God and of His salvation here, will be to my eternal profit hereafter.

*Verse 4.*—"To whom coming as unto a living stone." Here we first learn what God has to say of Christ, next what He says of ourselves in association with Him.

In the Old Testament, Christ is generally called the Rock: in the New Testament, the Stone. The Rock speaks of what He is in very deed, essentially the Mighty God; the Stone tells us that He has come down, contracted Himself, if we may so say, in order that we might apprehend Him. He who in the Old Testament proclaims Himself the "I AM," says in the New Testament "I am the Door, the Way, the Good Shepherd, the Life." He has come down to our capacity, within reach of our comprehension. Yet we have to remember that in His death He was the Rock, (not the Stone) cleft, in order that there might be a hiding-place for us: the Rock smitten that the stream of life might flow, for it was in all the Majesty of His Person that He offered Himself a Sacrifice. So also as the foundation on which the church is reared. "On this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Satan did everything to get Christ down and to keep

Him there, but life was mightier than death, and triumphed over it. As one of the Puritans has said—"Death stung itself to death, when it stung Him." Death did not, could not prevail, against that solid Rock of Divine life, nor can it prevail against those who are built upon Him. The allusion is doubtless to the memorable words of Matthew xvi. 13-18. Peter is here full of that scene. The Lord Jesus had led His disciples to Cæsarea Philippi, just on the borders of the land of Israel. The place was in keeping with the revelation there given, for in the Church—of which here the Lord gives His very first intimation—there is neither Jew nor Gentile, for out from the twain the Church is built (see Eph. ii. 15). To Peter's confession of Christ as "the Son of the living God," the answer was made "Upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The Church is built upon Christ as "the Son of the living God." Life has conquered death, and triumphed over hell. Peter here calls Him "a living Stone," and His people "living stones," each possessed of the same life, having the same nature. Coming to Him, they find in Him life, and He says to all such "Because I live ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). How grand it is to see this, to grasp it, and to rejoice in it. There are a number of beautiful parallels between the scene in Matthew xvi. and the teaching of this chapter, each serving to explain the other.

Peter had been taught by the Father to know the Son : it had been revealed to him that Jesus was the Christ, the Son

of the living God. Then He came to Him, as we read "Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto Me" (John vi. 45). Here it is "to Whom coming, unto a living Stone"—there is no *as*, it is a reality—"ye also as living stones:" there is thus identity between the Son and the sons of God. Peter himself was a "stone," built upon the Rock, from Whom he received a new life and a new name. Simon was his name by nature: Peter his new name by grace (John i. 41-42).

"Disallowed, indeed, of men"—the Christ to whom we have come is a rejected Christ. He was "despised and rejected of men" then: He is disallowed and rejected by the world still. Do you realize this? The more you cling to Him, the more you will share His rejection. It was not for curiosity that at Cæsarea Philippi he asked, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" before hearing Peter's confession of Him, but to shew how far from God's thoughts were all human opinions of Him. Some said He was John the Baptist, some, Elijah, others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. With all their boasted knowledge, none of them knew anything of Him: even the learned Rabbis were in ignorance of Him. "Disallowed, indeed, of men, but CHOSEN OF GOD." Yes, heaven's estimate of Him is different from earth's. God's choice is what the world rejected. Earth gave Him a cross: God gave Him the throne. The world put Him between two malefactors: God raised Him to the place of supreme honour on the right hand of the Majesty on high. I own

frankly, that I do not seek or want the world's esteem after that. It tells me how little it is worth, for the world despises what God has chosen, and hates that which God loves. So "that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke xvi. 15). It is one of the signs of how far the people of God have fallen, when they can have the world's caress. Why, if we were like our Master, we would have the world hurling stones at us, or giving us the cross. "Chosen of God, and precious." There was no one else to choose, on whom the work He had to do could have been laid. The Word "precious" shews the choice was not arbitrary. The new creation is to be built up on the worthiness of Christ. How the Holy Ghost delights to tell of the worth of Christ, to stand up for the honour of Christ! He tells it out, unfolds it, and repeats it again and again, lest we should have a low or imperfect thought of the worthiness of the Son of God. We were anything but "precious," for when we came to Christ we were vile and guilty sinners, fit only for the flames of hell. But blessed be His Name, He "made us accepted"—literally—took us into favour "in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6.) As we have it in 1 Cor. i. 30, "Of Him (God) are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "Unto you, therefore, which believe, He is precious"—or, the preciousness. There is no worthiness in me, but God has found enough in Christ, and He has put my worthlessness and His preciousness together, to display the worth of

His Christ. "He is the preciousness," and all for me. I do not wonder when I see that, that God loves and blesses me so much : it is all because of what He sees in Christ for me. As we sometimes sing—

"The love wherewith He loves the Son,  
Such is His love to me."

"Ye are built up." There is not only salvation but edification also in Him. There is church truth seen in clinging to Christ, as well as Gospel truth ; they both converge upon a living Christ. Peter does not mention the word "Church," but it is clearly implied here in our being "built up." He builds only living stones—the dead have no place in God's habitation. "In whom *ye* also are builded together for an habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22). God is building for Himself a house to dwell in ; this is the grand climax of all His work. We are so apt to think of *our* salvation as the object God had in view when He gave His Son, but the great thought and purpose of God was to gather out from a world wrecked and ruined by sin, stones, each of which cost Him O how much, and after gathering, chiselling, and polishing them, to build them on a living Christ, His new and abiding foundation, for a dwelling-place unto Himself, every atom of which will be instinct with His own Divine life. And then His glory is to fill it, permeate it, and flow out from it to beautify and bless all creation. Like as you always find in the Old Testament connected with the Cherubim, the presence of God, so wherever we have the house of God, there is the presence of God filling it.

As we keep on coming to Him, cleaving closely to Him, we are "built up a spiritual house." Such lines of truth as are here suggested, brought and keep me out from the world's systems of religion. I see that God's way of building up is by clinging to Christ, and I dare not add anything to Him whom God has pronounced the only foundation of His Church. All other names divide and scatter: His Name unites His own. "An holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices." After the house comes the priesthood: first, the stones, then the building, next the priesthood, the worshippers within. God must fill His temple with praise. Of us, as of Israel, true it is—"This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise" (Isa. xliii. 21). Some say they have nothing to offer. "In His temple every one says—Glory!" (Psa. xxix. 9) it is all vocal with His praise. "By Him let us offer the *sacrifice of praise* to God continually" (Heb. xiii. 15). In calling us priests, God reminds us that we are His worshippers, and that we have something to offer. Worship is higher than service, for in our service we are occupied with man, but in our worship with our God. In Rev. iv. 4, we see the heavenly priesthood seated on thrones, with crowns upon their heads. There, their full dignity is seen, for they have reached the other end of the sanctuary, and are glorified in heaven: here they are on earth, in the wilderness. They are twenty-four in number, thus shewing their completeness, as David divided the priesthood into twenty-four courses to praise Jehovah (1 Chron. xxv.) Of old the priests were of the

house of Aaron, descended from him, one flesh with the high priest: now all the "royal priesthood,"—the only worshippers owned of God in this dispensation—are descended from Christ, and one Spirit with Him. What an honour! What a dignity! Under Christ, the Church will lead creation's praise. Even now, God is tutoring us for this holy dignity. O what a privilege is ours to worship God, to offer sacrifices "well-pleasing to Him!" God is delighted to be refreshed with the joy and praise of His people; "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me" (Psa. l. 23). As the Levites were given to Aaron (Numb. viii. 19) to serve, so we are the servants of God, under Christ. The words of Romans xv. 16, shew what true Levitical Gospel service is. But worship is higher than service, although less esteemed. Many still approve of selling the alabaster box of ointment, and giving it to the poor in Levitical service, but Mary "brake the box" and anointed the person of Christ in priestly worship (John xii. 3.)

*Verses 6-8.*—"Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Sion." This is a quotation from Isa. xxviii. 16, a prophecy uttered seven hundred years before Christ, and here after Christ had died and risen Peter says the same. So important is the truth here stated, that it is repeated twice. And God calls our special attention to it by uttering the word "Behold." Thus He calls attention to His own work. "Behold I lay." What a comfort that God Himself has seen to the foundation. He bids us rest securely on what He Himself has seen to.

Need we wonder that He adds—"And he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." God warrants the security of all who trust in Christ. Just think of that: God has made all secure below, and He guarantees all above. What a comfort! What a mercy! While the Christless sinner sinks at death into hades (Luke xvi.) the believer sings with the solid Rock beneath his feet—

"On Christ the solid Rock I stand,  
All other ground is sinking sand."

"A chief Corner Stone:" Christ not alone supports, but also holds the building together. The corner stone unites two sides of the building together. The more closely saints cling to Christ, the more will they be seen as one. There is no other way of unity save through Christ, the "Corner Stone." God has only one way of saving sinners, and one way of uniting saints—both through Christ.

"Head of the Corner"—the top stone: this points to the glory, when He whom men rejected will be seen as Head over all. But to the unbeliever, the disobedient, who refuse to "obey the Gospel" (chap. iv. 17), this same Christ becomes a "stumbling stone" and a "rock of offence," and shall yet crush them in judgment (Dan. ii. 34-35: Matth. xxi. 44.) "Whereunto also they were appointed," does not teach reprobation in the sense that God appointed some to die in their sins and go to hell, but that all who reject God's overtures of grace, and persist in disobeying His Gospel, hardening their hearts, shall perish as sure as God has appointed it. Man now scorns and

rejects God's call ; by and bye God will laugh at his calamity, and mock when his fear cometh (Prov. i. 26).

*Verse 9.*—"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people"—a people for a possession. Here we have a variety of terms, all full of deepest meaning, applied to the people of God. They are so precious in the sight of God, that like a fond mother to her child, He utters one term of endearment after another over them. Are you tired of hearing them? or would you like God to give up one of His fond words of endearment toward you? As I have already said, Peter writes specially to believing Jews, hence, these words are all taken from the Old Testament Scriptures, they apply primarily to them, but to us also who are now one with them in Christ. Israel was the chosen nation, but when they, as a nation, rejected Christ, God began again with those among them who believed on Him, and they became the nucleus of a new nation, and in the privileges of this we share, as belonging to the "chosen race" under grace. Jehovah offered to make Israel a nation of priests (see Exod. xix. 5-6), but Israel chose to be put under law, and forfeited all by breaking it, and He had to choose a priesthood from among them in the house of Aaron. Instead of going on as they had begun, they put themselves under a covenant of works, say, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," and Jehovah answered—"If ye keep my covenant, *then* ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me." He offered to make the whole nation a "Kingdom of

priests," but they would not have it. Has God's purpose been defeated? Nay, verily. A few centuries to Him are as nothing, and what the nation of Israel did not want then, the true "Israel of God" (Gal. vi. 16) has received now. The words of Hosea i. 10 and ii. 23, are applied in Romans ix. 24-26 to us, just as if God had said—Now you have the thing I promised then. "A chosen race:" there was a race of men, and a race of angels before, but now there is a new order of beings altogether; men, indeed they are, but possessed of Divine life and a new nature—"born out of God."

"A royal priesthood," allied to Christ, the King-Priest, the great Melchisedec, who "shall be a Priest upon His throne" (Zech. vi. 13.) Under the old covenant, the office of prophet and priest had been combined in one person, as Ezekiel, as also that of prophet and king as in David, but God never allowed any single individual to hold the offices of priest and king together. This honour is reserved for Christ, and through our being descended from Him, having our genealogy clearly traced to our priestly head, we are a "royal priesthood." A priest gives up all earthly inheritance: a king receives and rules over all. As priests we enter in where our great High Priest has gone, prevailing *there*: when He comes forth to reign as King we too shall come forth to rule with Him here. As priests we worship now in the immediate presence of God; as kings we shall come forth with Christ to rule with Him, and under Him the entire creation for God. God's full time for Christ to reign has not yet come, for "we see not yet all things put

under Him," but when it does come, His saints shall reign with Him.

"A people for a possession," a people for God to clasp to His heart, to live in His love, to dwell in His presence. It is like that beautiful word in Eph. i. 5, "Having predestinated us . . . unto HIMSELF": to be His own, a people near to Him. How the world's religion denies all this, by making such distinctions as "clergy" and "laity," with their altar rails, with humanly-appointed priests inside, saying to all others, "Keep off, stand aside; I am holier than thou." God make us to cleave to, and tremble at His Word, and to love and keep His way. "To shew forth the praises of Him who called you." God has done all this for us, and we are to drink it in, believe it, enjoy it. What for? Is there to be no response, no concomitant results? Yes, indeed. These great and glorious facts are to sway us, to take hold of us, so that we shall give out praise to Him who has done so much for us. When we come together to worship, to be glowing as seraphim, not whispering, but "shewing forth" God's praises, giving Him a foretaste even now, of what He shall have from "the great congregation" of His saints by and bye, and when we go forth among men shewing forth in our lives His excellencies. "Into His marvellous light"—that uncreated light in which He dwells, is our home. He has called us into it, fitted us for it, and there we are to abide, looking down upon the world. What a calling! What a place! "Into His marvellous *light*"; "without blame, before Him in love" (Eph. i. 5). Oh, my

God, Thou hast done all this for me! How do I respond? Do I love to gather with God's saints to worship and to pray, or would I clip the time for worship and for prayer? Or do I practically deny that I have been "called out" to be for God's possession, in a Risen Christ, by going into the world, muddling in its politics, taking part in its schemes, and voting for its rulers, as if I belonged to earth?

"An holy nation, a peculiar people." What a wealth of names God delights to heap upon His own! Not meaningless, as many of earth's titles are, but all telling out His heart's love for His own, with the place He has called them to fill up there, and down here. "A peculiar people"—purchased to be His own, to be controlled by His Word, different from all others upon earth. How God delights to see His own respond to the call, taking their place before Him as the objects of His love, and standing out clear and separate from the world as "the people of God."

*Ver. 10.*—"Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God." This should be another incentive to praise. What were we, where were we, but for God's grace? The reference is to the passage in Hosea i. 9, where God calls Israel "Lo-ammi—not My people," which abides until this day. Will God have no worshippers, none to praise Him during the time the sentence is being executed upon Israel? Romans ix. 23, 26, is the answer, where God tells that He will call, from both Jews and Gentiles, a people to whom He will shew the riches of His glory, in making them "vessels of mercy, prepared unto glory."

*Verse II.*—"Dearly beloved, I beseech you." Here is the language of endearment, God beseeching, rather than commanding. Similar is the language used in Romans xii. 1, 2 Cor. vi. 2: grace first bestows, then entreats. How unlike man it all is! He assumes to be great, and issues his commands peremptorily; but He who *is* the great and mighty God, uses the language of entreaty to those who are the creatures of His hand, the subjects of His saving grace.

"As strangers and pilgrims." "Strangers," eyes the land where we now are, for God has called us out of the world. "Pilgrims," eyes the land to which we are going. The one word marks our relation to things below, the other to things above. Do we look like strangers here? Do the world's festivities and pleasures charm us as once they did, or has God's call to something higher and better, spoiled us for them all? "Pilgrims," because we are going home. "I go to prepare a place for you," said the Lord Jesus. He would not have called us away from things below, without preparing something better for us above. "If it were not so I would have told you." He would not set us on pilgrimage, and bids us suffer here, without giving a full reward. Even now, He gives "an hundredfold" for everything lost for Him. How? you may ask. By the whispers of His love, by foretastes of His glory. He makes His pilgrim people even now so happy, that they wish they could sacrifice more for Him. Soon the pilgrimage will be over. We shall hear sounds and see sights earth never dreamt of,

and better still, we shall take part in them. Not the music of earth, so marred and associated with forgetfulness of God, often the handmaid of Popery and worldliness, but the harps of God, and the songs of the redeemed.

“Abstain from fleshly lusts.” You are a pilgrim; be content with pilgrim fare. Fleshly desires fulfilled, will numb your spiritual life and hinder you. “If ye live after the flesh, ye *are* about to die” (Rom. viii. 13). “Having your conversation honest”—your behaviour, or manner of life beautiful, “among the Gentiles.” In the general habit of our lives among men, when we enter a shop, or travel in a train, do those around know that we are Christians? This is what glorifies God: not loud talk and low walk, but a behaviour becoming the Gospel of Christ (Phil. i. 27). “In the day of visitation.” There are times when God takes special dealing with ungodly men, when He makes them feel that He has to do with them; then, if they have been convinced by the reality of the manner of life they have seen in Christians with whom they have come in contact, that will come up, and they will confess there is a difference. If they do not own it now, they shall in the day of the Great White Throne. They may “*speak against*” God’s people “*as evil-doers*”: not *think*, for whatever their lips may say, godly behaviour leaves its witness in the consciences of the unconverted, which they cannot resist.

*Verse 13.*—“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake.” Although not of the world, yet for “the Lord’s sake,” who owns us, we are to obey those who

are in authority. We are in the world, as well as in the church, and as subjects it is ours to obey.

*Verses 15-17.*—When God's pilgrim people thus act and thus live, the enemies of the truth are muzzled; they have nothing to speak against, nothing to take hold of. "Love the brotherhood." This word occurs twice in Peter's Epistles, here and in chapter v. 9; neither of the other apostles use it. Peter once needed to be reminded that he was not above his fellow-disciples, when the Lord said: "When thou art turned round, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32). Now he uses this word to shew that all are to be together; no rivalry, no clerisy, no assuming lordship over brethren.

*Verses 18-21.*—These verses teach us, that we are not only to suffer patiently when we are at fault, but even when we do well; not only to love and obey the good and gentle, for sinners do as much as that (see Luke vi. 32, 33), but to shew grace and to exercise patience toward our enemies, even as Christ left us an example, for not only did He come on earth to die for us, but to shew us by His example how we are to live.

*Verses 22-24.*—"Who did no sin." Yet His life was a life of suffering, because He was so utterly opposed to all the sin around. "He was reviled." Many of the Psalms tell of the bitter reproaches he had to bear, yet He bore it all, He took it all to His God, to "Him who judgeth righteously." All will be made clear one day; leave it to God, and do not take your cause out of His hand.

*Verses 24-25.*—"Who His own self, bare our sins in His own body upon the tree." All His life He was a sufferer for righteousness; on the Cross He suffered for sin, not indeed His own, but "our sins." There He bore them "His own self." So took them upon Him that He could say, "*My* sins are not hid from Thee" (Psa. lxxix. 5). They were all reckoned to Him, in order that none of them might be counted against me. By His bruises we are healed, in order that, being freed from sin, "we might live unto righteousness."

*Verse 25.*—"Ye *were* as sheep going astray; but *are now* returned unto the Shepherd." Here the contrast between the past and the present of the sheep is very marked. "Going astray," self-willed, ungoverned. "Returned to the Shepherd and Bishop"—to be fed and ruled by Him, who lives to bring to glory, the "little flock" for which He died. What a variety of offices He fills, and how worthily and faithfully He fills them all! How His Shepherd character shines out in such a passage as Isaiah xl. 10! He never tires of it, never delegates it to others. True under-shepherds do not gather the sheep around themselves, but, like the sheep dogs, they only bring the sheep around His feet to be fed by Himself.



### CHAPTER III.

**H**ERE we get instruction from God on many details of life and conduct. God's Word is very full not only of great principles, but of practical details, given in order that the man of God may be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. iii. 17).

"Wives" are first addressed. Here, as elsewhere, in grace, God begins with the weaker vessel. Subjection is the woman's place, not only when she has a good husband, but even when he is unconverted. The case here, does not imply that a Christian may marry one unconverted. That is peremptorily forbidden in both Old and New Testaments, and cannot be disobeyed without involving the direst consequences. But a wife married in unconverted days, may be converted after, while her husband is not. These verses tell how she is to demean herself in such circumstances.

"If any obey not the Word," shews why he remains unconverted: not, as some assert, because he is not elected as his wife, but because he obeys not the Word, he does not bow to the truth, Punishment falls upon men because they "obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. i. 9)—not because they are non-elect. To all men's objections and cavils God's answer will be—"You did not obey My Word."

“They may without the Word be gained.” The wife may not be able to speak the Word to her husband—he will not listen—but he may be won without speech, by beholding her chaste manner of life. Here is God’s way of breaking down opposition, overcoming prejudice, and commending the doctrine, where it is impossible to speak it. And while the instruction here is to “wives,” the principle may be applied to all unsaved relations. How sad to have any of them stumbled by behaviour unbecoming a Christian. And mark the word “won”—not only converted, but gained for God, and for you as well. Like the passage in Matthew xviii. 15—“Thou hast *gained* thy brother,” broken down his opposition, won him back to God, and to be a better brother to you than ever. O to think that in the unconverted around us, the battle rages every day; God and the devil both seeking to have them. As they “behold” the godly behaviour of those of their kindred who are saved, they may thus be won for God. Just think of that.

*Verse 4.*—“Whose adorning.” Here is something that everyone can see. How Christians slip over these very plain commands! I know of none so commonly disobeyed; yet they are the very words of God, given for His people’s obedience. People adopt the world’s style, because others do it. You would not wear jewelry and gold, or adorn yourself in gay apparel, if no one else did it; it is easy to follow the example of others, and they take their copy from the world. Ours is not to have our eyes on others, but to do the will of God from the heart, to be obedient in every-

thing. There is nothing little, nothing insignificant concerning which God has spoken. "The hidden man of the heart." "The Lord looketh upon the heart." The saints set the fashions, not of Paris or London, but of heaven. He sets the highest value on right motives. Saints have their ornaments too. "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." "Meek" means yielding, giving up your own interest, your own tastes. This in the world's estimation is mean and contemptible. The man of will, of determination, who carries everything before him, is admired, extolled; whereas one who yields, who gives up his rights is said to have "no spirit." What the world holds cheap, God counts dear. Meekness is in the sight of God "of great price." It is so rare, and it implies identification with a rejected Christ. Then follows an illustration.

*Verse 5.*—"The holy women who hoped in God;" their faith is held in everlasting remembrance; they trusted God. These are the patterns to copy, not the giddy worldlings who dress as butterflies. Sarah is especially mentioned. She called Abraham "lord," not in word only, but she did what he told her (see Gen. xviii. 12)—the only instance where this is recorded. Prompt and full obedience is the only proof of subjection (Luke vi. 46). Sarah, must have particularly pleased God. She is the only woman in the Bible whose age is given in the New Testament. To "trust God" and "do well," fearing no terror, is well pleasing to God, and will meet its reward from Him, whatever it may be thought of here.

*Verse 7.*—“Likewise, ye husbands.” The word “husband” means “house-band”—binding all in the household together. This shews his place, and what is expected of him. There is no thought here of the husband who is seldom or ever in his household, who leaves it to servants to order. Two reasons are given for the husband’s tender and considerate treatment of his wife. (1) She is “the weaker vessel”—not formed to rough it in the world, or to go foremost, as he is. (2) She is “a joint-heir of the grace of life,” one with him, and his equal in grace and glory. Subjection of wife to husband is only for a time, a temporary thing for the wilderness, wisely ordered by God for family and earthly life, but when the wilderness is past, and the Father’s house and Kingdom reached, these distinctions will be gone, merged in that which is eternal. What a plea for tender care on his part, and loving subjection on hers!

“That your prayers be not hindered.” This shews the innermost circle, the very sanctuary of domestic life. Husband and wife are so to live all day, that when they bend their knees together at night, their prayers may unitedly ascend to heaven. If there are broils and jealousies between them, their prayers will be negated, they will fall short of the mark. How all this should speak to those who are unmarried, to see that the partner they choose for life, is one who will be a true help-meet, and not a hinderer of spiritual life and communion with God.

*Verse 8.*—“Finally.” This word opens a new section. In the early part of the epistle, doctrinal truths are dealt

with, regarding our redemption, relationship to God, and pilgrimage upon earth ; then our relative duties as subjects, servants, masters, wives, husbands, are set before us ; now we come to more detail. First, what we are to be ; next, what we are not to be ; then how we are to set the Lord before us, and bring Him and His Word into this everyday life of ours. "Be ye all of one mind"—be like-minded. This is God's first command ; exactly opposed to the religious world's maxim—"Agree to differ." It does not mean we are to give up any of God's truth to secure oneness of mind, but conversely, grasping all the Word of God, taking it to our hearts to operate there, it will rally us around and keep us clinging to a living Christ. If we would but cleave to Him, and allow His Word to mould and fashion us in everything, there would be no divisions—no disagreements.

"Having compassion one of another—'literally'—Be sympathizing." This is Christ-like, for He sympathizes with our infirmities (Heb. iv. 15). Not in a little measure, like the Aaronic priest (Heb. v. 2). There is a striking difference in the Greek between the *two* ; the one means in a little measure, the other fully. We having the nature of the Risen Christ are to "sympathize" with each other, be to each other what He in perfect measure is to us.

"Loving as brethren ; tender-hearted, humble-minded." These are all traits of the character of Christ. They are to adorn us as His followers, especially in our bearing towards one another as His redeemed people in the world.

Next comes what we are not to be, or do. "Not rendering evil for evil;" this is a natural tendency, but it is not God-like. One of the old Puritans has pithily remarked—"To return good for evil is God-like; to return good for good is man-like; to return evil for evil is beast-like; to return evil for good is devil-like."

"But contrariwise blessing." Where God is, there ever is blessing. In the temple God dwelt with men, and blessing flowed therefrom; now the individual believer is the dwelling place of God (1 Cor. vi. 19), and the church is the temple of God in the aggregate (1 Cor. iii. 17), therefore, blessing should flow out in rivers of living water to all around. "That ye should inherit a blessing" does not imply merely getting a blessing, but to the action of blessing (see also James iii. 10). God would have us to be in the wilderness through which we pass, the channels of His grace to others.

*Verces 10-11.*—Here our good God is giving us instructions how to live a happy and peaceful life in the wilderness. We are to have the love and mellowness of heaven upon our lips; not to be controversial, dogmatic, cross, and unforgiving; not causing others to suffer by our hard, ungracious words.

*Verse 12.*—Here the Lord is brought in. His eyes are upon us: His ears are open to our supplications. Who is so near, so interested in us as He is? Just think of the great God, our own Father, bending down His ear to hear, every time we speak to Him! The wonder is, that we should tell our sorrows, our needs, our desires to any save Himself.

The words are a quotation from Psalm xxxiv. 15-16, and here God causes the Apostle to refer to them, just to shew us that He stands to them, and has not forgotten them. "But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." This is true of all dispensations, but if we turn to the Psalm we find that the next part of the verse, "To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth," is left out. Why does the apostle break off his quotation at these words? Because they are not being fulfilled in this dispensation. They will be in the millennium. When Christ reigns, He will do that, but in this dispensation of grace, God is allowing man to go on in his wickedness. But when the reign of grace is over, judgment will follow. The silence of Scripture is just as perfect as its utterances, and shews how divine it all is.

*Verses 13-14.*—"Imitators of the good One." The good One is the Lord Jesus. "The world lieth in the wicked one" (1 John v. 19). The Lord was a sufferer for righteousness' sake here, so have all God's saints of former times, but ours is something higher still—to suffer for Christ's sake, for being like Christ. But there is no need for being sad over it, "happy are ye." It is like Matthew v. 11—"Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you . . . for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad."

*Verses 15-16.*—"Sanctify the Lord Christ." To sanctify is to separate, to set apart. A saint is a separated person. But how can he "set apart the Lord Christ?" Separate everything from the Lord, set Him alone before you. Let

Him alone have your heart, be Lord of every affection there. Then the terrors of the ungodly will not shake you; when the Lord has His right place, when He fills the whole vision of the soul, the scowls of foes, "their terror" will not perturb you.

*Verse 17.*—"Be ready." This verse speaks of the Lord in the future. His coming is our hope. "Which is in you"—its right place is in the heart. "Let not your heart be troubled"—"I come again" (John xiv. 1-3). For that coming we are to be ready, waiting, looking. Here we are to be ready to answer those who ask us; this will be easy enough if it fills the heart. And as in the days of old the scoffer asked "Watchman, what of the night?" (Isa. xxi. 11-12), and was told "The morning cometh and also the night," so the scoffer's taunt in the last days is, "Where is the promise of His coming?", (2 Peter iii. 1). Happy, when we can answer, "It is in John xiv. 2, and in my heart." But such a confession is not to be made in a flippant or easy way, as if it were the most ordinary thing, but "with meekness" and although full of joy to the believer, yet a most solemn event for it will bring his reward (Rev. xxii. 12), or loss (1 Cor. iii. 14-15), therefore it is to be spoken of with "fear."

*Verses 16-17.*—"Having a good conscience." Only then can we look cheerfully on to the coming of the Lord, and steadfastly resist the world's attacks. "A good conscience," is a conscience enlightened by God's holy Word, bearing witness that we are pleasing God (2 Cor. i. 12: Acts xxiv. 16). Not talking high truth and living worldly, but by a

godly manner of life putting to shame those who revile us, so that when our enemies watch our ways, and would fasten on something to speak against, they may positively fix on that in which we know we are well pleasing to God. "If the will of God be so." Such suffering is part of our wilderness training. Our Father sees fit to let us pass through it. He knows we need it, it is His will. To suffer for well-doing is to be like Christ, what a joy and what a privilege. And then,

"O how will recompense, His smile,  
The sufferings of this little while."

*Verse 18.*—"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins." There is a fundamental difference between Christ's sufferings and ours. His suffering for our misdeeds: not for His own. His sufferings were expiatory and meritorious, not in chastisement as ours often are. If we suffer, let it not be for our misdeeds, but for likeness to Christ. The words that follow are very beautiful: "The Just for the unjust." The Holy Ghost is solicitous for the honour of Christ: He will not suffer it to be inferred that He suffered for any fault of His own. He is, and for ever was, "the Holy One and the Just" (Acts iii. 14): the spotless Lamb of God. "That He might bring us to God." Already has He brought us nigh by His blood (Eph. ii. 13): already has God taken us into favour in the Beloved (Eph. i. 6), and so we sing—

"So nigh, so very nigh to God,  
I cannot nearer be;  
For in the Person of His Son  
I am as near as He."

And as He *has* done it already, so He will yet do it for us bodily when the Holy Ghost, the Divine Eliezer, lifts us up, when Christ receives His Bride to Himself and presents her to the Father. "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit." Apart from Christ's death, there was no way by which a sinner could be brought to God: no access save by death and resurrection. He was "justified in the Spirit" (1 Tim. iii. 19), declared to be the Son of God in power by His resurrection from among the dead (Rom. i. 4), laying down His life He took it again (John x. 18). Thus His resurrection is attributed to the Spirit, to the Father, and to Himself, the proof that He was Son of God in power. There is in this Epistle, frequent allusions to the work of the Spirit in different ages, and how the Spirit's testimony has always been rejected by men. Christ in resurrection is rejected by the world and the Jew as He was while on earth. The Spirit's testimony to Him is not heard by the world at large, only a few heed it, those who obey the gospel and are gathered to Christ. Verse 21, shews that by His resurrection we get "a good conscience." All our sins are gone by His death: His resurrection is the proof of it, and by looking to that Risen One, my conscience is purged to serve the living God. It is well to see the connection of these verses: they help to shew the meaning of the verses between which have occasioned much controversy.

*Verses 19.*—"In which also He went and preached to the spirits in prison." Peter abounds in references to the Spirit's work: in sanctification (chap. i. 2): in the prophets

(i. 11) : in the preaching of the gospel (i. 12) : in conversion (i. 22). But the testimony of the Spirit is resisted now, as in ages past : the majority always refuse His testimony : only the few receive it. Look at the days of Noah, days of God's longsuffering, days of the Spirit's striving (Gen. vi. 4), days of Noah's preaching, yet only eight were saved : the rest rejected and perished.

This passage has been the subject of much controversy, and a doctrine has been extracted from it, which is contrary to Scripture from end to end. It has been made to teach (1) that after His death Christ went to the spirits of the redeemed which were in prison, and announced His victory, But such an interpretation cannot stand, for we are told they were "disobedient"—that is wicked spirits. Then (2) it is said, that Christ went and preached to the spirits which had been long in prison ; but that is to support the theory of purgatory, and is contrary to revelation. It is not said in the passage that the preacher went to prison to preach, nor is it said that the spirits were in prison when they were preached to. The simple reading of the passage is, that the Spirit of Christ in Noah, preached to the antedeluvians, who heard but despised the testimony, and are now in prison, not to be preached to, but "reserved unto judgment." This word follows the statement that Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. ii. 5, 9), and is meant to be a key to the former passage. "While the ark was a preparing," God in longsuffering waited for a hundred and twenty years, and during all that time the Spirit strove, and Noah

preached. Yet only a few were saved: the mass rejected the testimony then as now, and perished. It is a solemn warning to sinners now, not a hope of mercy in the world beyond, as the devil has tried to make it appear.

*Verse 21.*—"The like figure, whereunto even baptism doth now save us." The ark was a type of Christ. The flood fell upon it, and so all the waves and billows of Divine wrath went over Christ when He stood as our Surety on Cavalry. But the ark did not remain under the deluge. It was by these very waves of death borne to a new world, and all who were in it. It was brought to rest on Mount Ararat with its living freight, in a new world over which the bow without an arrow was spanned. Baptism is the figure of death and resurrection, of identification with Christ in both. All my sins put away, all I am as a sinner ended, buried out of sight. Raised up in Christ to a new life, a new world. How good! "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). Water baptism is the expression of the believer's identification with Christ—not a confession of Christ as it is most commonly called—but identification with Him. In this light the passage becomes beautiful, full of spiritual meaning and not an empty form. What baptism, represents is, identification with Christ in death and resurrection. It tells that I am no longer in Adam fallen, but in Christ risen. Those who see this grand truth, will not object to be immersed in water, when the Lord commands it, but will say like the eunuch "See here is water, what doth

hinder me to be baptized" (Acts xiii. 36) "Not the putting away, the filth of the flesh"—baptism does not do that, or express it, but its burial. "But the answer"—the request—"of a good conscience toward God." An *evil* conscience knows what I have done, and what God requires: a *good* conscience knows what Christ has done, and that God is satisfied. "By the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Not by making excuses, but owning all my sin and failure: I look to the risen Christ there in heaven, my righteousness, and I have peace. As He is clear of the grave-clothes, so am I of my sins. What a grand motto for those who are down-hearted and distressed about their sins—"A good conscience by the resurrection of Christ."

*Verse 22.*—"Who is gone unto heaven." Peter does not dwell at large on ascension; that is more connected with church truth, Paul's message, while Peter deals with the kingdom. Peter saw and received his ministry from a risen but not an ascended Christ: Paul saw, heard, and received his ministry from Christ glorified, at God's right hand.



## CHAPTER IV.

THE opening verses of this chapter are a continuation of the truths taught at the close of chapter iii., the practical application of them to us. Read in this light, their obscurity disappears.

“Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh,” is an allusion to chap. iii. 18: “Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind,” a reference to chapter iii. 17. He, according to the will of God, suffered for sin, He was assailed at all points, tempted to turn aside, to shirk the Cross, but He went on steadfastly, doing the will of God. We are to arm ourselves with the same mind, living no longer after the desires of man, pleasing ourselves, doing as we like, but making it our one business to do “the will of God” (ver. 2). In Christ, there was no will of the flesh, but in us there is, and we either yield to it or to God’s will. Walking in the Spirit (Gal. v. 16), the desires of the flesh are not fulfilled, although they are still in us, but as we yield to them and *live after* the flesh, then, as Rom. viii. 13 tells us, we “are about to die.” There are two wills and two counter forces, seeking our allegiance and obedience, and we must yield to the one, or walk in the other. “For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.” Of whom does the Apostle thus speak? Of Christ, or of persecution. When Hagar’s son mocked Isaac, God, hundreds of years after says he “persecuted” him (comp.

Gen. xxi. 9 with Gal. iv. 29). It is an abstract proposition, true of both. Of Christ most fully, for when He suffered in the flesh, He ceased to have to do with sin. The believer is dead with Christ, and dead to sin, as Rom. vi. fully teaches. The practical effect of this is, that you cannot be going on in sin, or doing your own will. You are a dead and risen man. When the temptation comes, you rather suffer than yield, you choose to die, rather than disobey God. This makes life a warfare. The believer, if he would live to God, and not to self, must be ever on the watch, grasping the sword, because everything around appeals to the flesh within, soliciting to live a worldly and a sensual life. There is this important distinction between the truth taught in John's Epistles and here: John speaks of the final issue as before God: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin": "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John iii. 9: v. 4), while Peter deals with the daily practical experience of the saint, in a world where everything is against him, and with a fleshly will and a nature ever ready to yield to what is opposed to God. But the believer has a new life and a new nature, and he can "no longer" live as he did when unconverted, satisfying the desires of the flesh or doing as he sees others do. His one ardent desire is to do the will of God. This makes conversion a very great event, and Christian life intensely practical.

*Verses 4, 5.*—"Wherein they think it strange." The world does not understand a true Christian. It laughs at him, perhaps speaks evil of him, and persecutes him. So

let it be : it is no more than the Lord promised (John xvi. 20). And if you have the consciousness that you are pleasing God, you can afford to laugh at the world's opposition. The ungodly who sneer and maltreat God's people, will hear of it some day, for they will have to "give an account to Him" of every word they have spoken. "Ready to judge the quick and the dead," reminds us that the whole dispensation hangs on a thread. What men think sure and stable, and build their hopes on, is ready to vanish. He is "ready," everything is ready, the only thing that delays the hour, is the longsuffering of God and the ingathering of sinners by the Gospel to His kingdom.

*Verse 6.*—This is a greatly perverted Scripture. It does not mean that they were dead when God preached to them : but that they are dead now. Peter writes especially to Jews. They had the promises and the covenants set before them in order that they might be saved, and live as spiritual men before God, or that they might be judged according to men in the flesh. Then as now, sinners needed to be "born again," and although these had not the indwelling Spirit as believers have now (comp. John viii. 39 : xvi. 13), yet they had life, and they lived to please God by the Spirit (Psa. li. 11).

*Verse 7.*—"The end of all things is at hand," Christ has been rejected by the world : the testimony of the Holy Ghost is being now rejected, and there is nothing to follow grace but judgment. God reckons from His own standpoint, judges in His own light, and He would have His

people do likewise. He directs us always to the end. It was only in the sanctuary of God that the Psalmist saw "the end" of the wicked (Psa. lxxviii. 17). Things appear in their true light there, therefore we should habituate ourselves to judge of men and things in that light, not after the world's reckoning. It is on the end of all things being "at hand" that the exhortations which follow are founded. They are fourfold.

*Verses 8-12.*—1. How as Christians we are to behave toward God. 2. How to behave toward each other. 3. How to conduct ourselves in the Assembly of God. 4. How to conduct ourselves in and towards the world. Godward, we are to be "sober," unmuddled, and "watch unto prayer." The former word will cut us off from the world's influence, sever us from its ways, as we see its end at hand. The latter tells us we are in the presence of God, where we can tell Him everything, seek His guidance in all, and receive grace and strength to live and act as those who are not of the world. Peter may here have in view that chapter in his own history when, failing to "watch and pray" (Mark xiv. 38) he became "muddled" and mixed with the world, denying his Lord. How easy it is to do so. O let us keep ever in view the end of all things "at hand:" it will keep us separate and dependent. 2. "Have fervent love among yourselves." Not "charity," which as the world uses the word, is a nauseous and worthless thing—but love, "fervent," or extreme love. This alone will keep saints right with each other. Then follows a quotation from Prov.

x. 12 "Love shall cover the multitude of sins." This does not mean that we are to wink at sin, or suffer it in our brethren. To do so would not be love, such as God's love is to me: but a false liberalism. But just as God has found a way at great cost to cover a multitude of sins, not winking at them, but righteously dealing with them, and so acting toward us in grace that we acknowledge them fully, so we as "imitators of God and beloved children" (Eph. v. 1) are so to seek lovingly, faithfully with tender hands and many tears, to turn the sinning one from "the error of his way;" and then shall we "save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins" (James v. 19-20). Love, will tell our brother his faults, after we have wept and prayed over them in secret, with the yearning desire to deliver him from them, but love will never whisper them to others behind his back, and all the time pretend to have great affection for him.

3. In the Assembly. If God has given you a gift, you are to use it according to the ability that God giveth, for the help and edification of others. There are two sets of gifts mentioned in the Word: those are Ephesians iv. 11-13 and 1 Cor. xiii. 28: then seven in Rom. xii. 6-8. You may not be a teacher able to expound the Word to thousands, but you can surely speak "five words" for the edification and cheer of others. But in view of the end of all things being at hand not to fill up time or to shew off your ability.

4. In the world. It is assumed, that if you are true to God you will be persecuted. It may only be the curling of the lip or the scorner's sneer, but God counts that

persecution. We live in days of luxurious ease, it may be that ere long the blast of red hot persecution may come and put us to the test. Would you think that strange? Would you be alarmed and flee? It is no more than others suffered, and the Lord promised (John xvi. 33), yet how few would "rejoice" to become sharers of Christ's suffering for righteousness sake, in a world where He was rejected. "That when His glory shall be revealed." How close to the "sufferings" is "the glory"; you seldom find the one without the other. What is "glory"? The uncovered excellences of Christ. The angels do not behold Him in all His glory, that sight is reserved for the Church. We shall be the first to see Him as He is (1 John iii. 4). What a sight that will be! Just to think, we shall gaze upon Him in all His peerless, matchless excellency, "as He is," and be like Him. If you have suffered a bit for Him here, you will "be glad with exceeding joy" then.

*Verses 14-16.*—"Reproached for the name of Christ"—not for the name of a church, or a creed; not for some pet name of our choosing, but for His Name. "If any man suffer as a Christian;" that is the proper, full name, called by God upon His people (see Acts xi. 26, of which the proper rendering is, "The disciples were called of God Christians first in Antioch.") Not for his own evil doings or his own bad name, but for being a true Christian "let him glorify God in *this name*." There is real joy now, and there will be a bright reward in the day of Christ's judgment seat for suffering thus.

*Verses 17-20.*—"The time is come that judgment must begin at the House of God." This is a solemn passage. It is an allusion to Ezekiel ix. 6, where the dwelling-place of God was the scene of Divine judgment because of sin allowed. And it began with those who were ancient men before the house. We learn the same lesson from Lev. x. 1-2. Officially, Aaron's sons were nearer to God than others, yet for one sin they were struck dead. Ananias and Sapphira's judgment in New Testament times shews, that while God is now dealing in grace, His character is unchanged. "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever" (Psalm xc. iii. 5). In His house then He will brook no evil. With His written Word in our hands we are called upon to "judge ourselves," that we may not be judged, but if we fail then He will chasten us. And if in the Church we fail to judge those who are within (1 Cor. v. 12), the Lord will come in and judge them Himself (1 Cor. xi. 32). He is building a house, making it exquisitely beautiful, to fill it with His glory, and He will take care that all belonging to it is competent to stand in His uncreated light. And here comes the pointed, solemn question: If God is dealing so in judgment with His own within His house, in this the day of His grace "What shall the end be 'of them that obey not the Gospel?'" The judgment of the Christless sinner is yet to come; he seems to escape now, but there will be no escape then (Heb. ii. 3). "And if the righteous scarcely be saved"—that is, saved with difficulty—saved even though the flesh within, the

world around, and the devil against them, combine to allure or drag them away. Yet because God was ever on the alert to keep, to strengthen, to restore to the narrow path, they are saved. But it took "the exceeding greatness of His power" (Eph. i. 19) to do it—a stupendous work, the full extent of which we shall only know, when we stand with Him in glory—"Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear!" An awful question? *Where?* Their case has yet to be taken up, in stern, inflexible judgment before the "great white throne" (Rev. xx. 12). There, before the eyes of the holy Judge, the "ungodly" in all his hideousness, and the "sinner" in all his filthiness must "appear," and from thence be hurled into the lake of fire.

Surely then it is better to suffer a little here, while God is breaking us down, scourging and correcting us, in order that we may be partakers of His holiness, whether the suffering come from the hands of man (as in Heb. xi. 34-40), or, directly from His own hand (as in Heb. xii. 5-10), than to come under the crushing judgment yet to come on the world. The closing words, "Commit their souls to Him in well doing as unto a faithful Creator," are very precious. They shew that when you suffer, you are to cling closely to Him, who first gave you being as "a new creation" (2 Cor. v. 17), who by that word which at the beginning said "Light be," called you out of darkness into His marvellous light, and who in loving faithfulness has watched over, shielded and kept you, amid all the dangers, trials, and persecutions of the wilderness.

## CHAPTER V.

THE allusion in the opening words of this chapter is to the threefold charge given to Peter by the Risen Lord, on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. "Lovest thou Me?" then "Feed My lambs," "Shepherd My young sheep." "Feed my sheep." This, for many years he had done, and now as the aged apostle, soon to end his labours and depart to be with Christ, as had been foretold him, he passes on the charge and exhorts others to continue the same work, for it is not the will of God that His flock should ever be without shepherd care. So long as there are sheep and lambs to be fed and tended, the Lord will raise up under-shepherds—not a shepherd, but shepherds, plural—to care for them. Notice too how affecting is his way of apostrophizing them, "I a witness of the sufferings of Christ. I saw a little of what the Good Shepherd bore ere the sheep could be His; I then learned how much He loved them." Then he adds "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." The "sufferings" and the "glory" here again appear together—for God delights to so present them to us. The "elders" here addressed are not contemplated as being distinct from the flock, but of it, and in it, all one, differing in gifts and attainments, but on an equality before God as His own. These elders do not seem

to have had any special appointment, as others evidently had (Acts xiv. 23 : Titus i. 5), but were senior believers who had hearts for the flock. Such are to be found still, doing the same work, and though there is no apostle to single them out or appoint them, the saints will easily discern them by their work (1 Thess. v. 12) and own them. "Shepherd the flock"—as the word is, and the extent of such work is well described in Ezekiel xxxiv. 4. To have a heart for the flock, feeding and caring for the sheep publicly and privately, entering into their difficulties, sharing their joys and sorrows, is the mark of a true shepherd. "Taking the oversight," acting the bishop. There must be rule in the church, and rulers; not to extinguish godly liberty but to conserve it. It is arduous work. See what "agony" (Col. i. 28-29 : ii. 1, 2) Paul had for the welfare of the saints, and how he yearned over them (Phil. iv. 1). It is a work that requires much labour, often gives much sorrow, and yields little present return. People have much interest in the evangelist's work, and there is a present joy in seeing sinners saved, but the shepherd's work is more arduous and often little in it to cheer. It is because of this that the "crown of glory" with its dazzling brightness, is promised from the Chief Pastor's own hand. He knows all the toil, has seen all the tears, and fully estimated all the labours spent upon the sheep for whom He gave His life. That crown of unfading glory will tell to all how much He appreciated the service of which men thought so little. But such work is not to be "by constraint, but willingly"—not to be done

because it has to be, but out of love to Christ. "Not for filthy lucre," for well He knew that carnal men would become bishops and clerics for the sake of gain, "neither as being lords over God's heritage." Love of power as well as love of money is in the apostasy, of which the bud, the blossom, and the fruit are all seen in Peter's Epistle.

*Verses 5-7.*—"All of you be subject one to another." There is no communism, no democracy, no monarchy or oligarchy in the church; one is as bad as the other. There is one Lord, one Head, and all fill their places as before and under Him. Subjection one to another here, is like love in 1 Cor. xiii., the oil which lubricates the whole; when it is absent confusion reigns. The Lord's way is very beautiful, but the clerical element, wherever it gets in, spoils all. "Be encircled with humility:" wrap it around you; learn to take the lowly place. The flesh likes to get up, to be at the front, when it ought to be silent, for it is not subject to God nor will it ever learn His ways. Thus it is that "God is drawn up against the proud." God is opposed to them but "He giveth grace to the humble;" true of all, but here spoken specially to the elder brethren doing shepherd work in the flock of God. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God"—a striking and solemn word. That mighty hand is near, ready to be put forth to cast down the proud, to raise up the humble; to put down in the church what He does not own, to raise up and strengthen what is of Himself. O, that mighty hand! how near, how real! "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for

you." What a good God we have, to allow us to cast our cares upon Him thus, and to exercise Himself so about us.

*Verses 8-9.*—"Be sober:" see things distinctly, clearly, in heaven's light. "Be vigilant:" there is a watchful foe, ever seeking, ever watching to catch you off your guard. "Your adversary the devil." In this epistle where the saints are viewed as in the wilderness, suffering, Satan is presented as "a roaring lion:" in the second epistle he appears as a subtle serpent, deceiving and beguiling by means of false religion. "Walketh about:" in Ephesians the devil is seen seeking to cast us down from our high position (Eph. vi. 12): here in the wilderness where the ills of life are met, he seeks to make us question God's love and care. He walks about "seeking whom he may devour." He first seeks to get us to sin, then accuses us to God. Happy for us it is, that we have an intercessor at God's right hand who get's nearer to God than he. And how good it is to know that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth" (2 Chron. xvi. 9), watching and guarding those whom Satan so eagerly seeks to devour. Our adversary is not more anxious to devour than our God is to deliver, and when he would insinuate that our path is more thorny and our lot harder than others, in order that we may murmur against God, let us remember that "the same afflictions" have been and are endured by "the brotherhood"—as the word here is—and are no more than the Lord promised (John xv. 19-20).

*Verses 10-11.*—"The God of all grace:" one of His seven New Testament titles, all so full of blessing to His own.

O to have hearts saturated with grace; all "grace," every kind, in full measure. "Called us to His eternal glory." Grace and glory are closely linked. He will "give grace and glory" (Psa. lxxxiv. 11). Grace tells of what God is, and the manner in which he deals with a sinner for His own Name's sake. He visited Adam in Paradise: He dwelt with Israel in the desert: He came nearer still when "the Word became flesh and pitched His tent among us." But mensent Him away: the world would not have Him. Now He "calls" His own to His eternal glory. His own home. And the pilgrim eyeing the end of the wilderness can say "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psa. xxiii. 6) "After that ye have suffered a while." That uncreated glory must be reached through suffering—which after all is but "light affliction" and "for a moment" in comparison with "the eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17), awaiting us. "Make you perfect, stablish, settle you." Perfect here means "perfectly fitted together;" our sufferings should draw us closer to Christ and to each other. Suffering strengthens and stablishes, like the tree after being stricken in the storm, the roots take firmer hold and the props can be taken away. Peter was told by the Lord, "When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32). In this epistle he fulfils this ministry, and now he casts it back upon the God of all grace.

*Verses 12-14.*—Silvanus or Silas, Paul's companion in labour (Acts xv. 40), the bearer of the letter; in Peter's account a faithful brother. There is no jealousy, no rivalry

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between the Apostles. Peter writes to Paul's spiritual children (chap. i. 1 ; Acts xvi. 6) and it is his aim to magnify "the true grace of God," the common standing of all saints. "She at Babylon"—there is nothing said by Peter about the church. Church truth is Paul's theme ; kingdom truth Peter's. Here some Christian woman sends salutations. "Marcus, my son"—once a fickle servant who left the path (Acts xv. 37-40), but who was evidently restored and made "profitable" through Paul's faithful dealing (2 Tim. iv. 11). There is a time for severity and firmness as well as for grace.



## CHAPTER I.

**S**IMON PETER, a *servant* and an apostle." In the First Epistle he calls himself an apostle only, but here a bond-servant, putting himself alongside of others serving the same Lord amid the apostasy of the last days. There is no clerical assumption here, only a servant getting down to help others (Matt. xx. 27, 28), teaching what a servant should be and do. "Righteousness through our Saviour-God." "Grace and peace multiplied through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." Peter often speaks of our "Lord and Saviour" (see chap. i. 11; ii. 20; iii. 18). Here the titles are divided, and something ascribed to each. "Precious faith in the righteousness of our Saviour-God." It is not that we have got faith, or that we have merely been "made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21): both are true, but they do not exhaust the passage. You have faith that God is a righteous God, and Jesus Christ a righteous Saviour. All that has been done is in righteousness. He has saved us, lifted us up from the gate of hell, made us sons of God and heirs of grace and glory, all in righteousness. His love is in perfect light; John iii. 14, telling God's righteousness, is as true as John iii. 16, telling His love. So also in regard to our standing. In righteousness God has made us sons, put us in association

with Christ, to be with Him and like Him for ever. Higher than that we cannot be ; further it was not possible for God to go. But there is another side. There is *kingdom* truth as well as *church* truth. If Christ is to reign so are we to reign with Him, and there will be such a thing as having "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom" (v. 11). In this also righteousness will appear. In your higher standing as God's child I shall see how He has loved you, and called you by His grace. In your lower standing as the servant of Christ, I shall see by the brightness of your crown, how far you have responded to His call, and in what measure you have been identified with Christ and obedient to Him as Lord, in the world. Much is made of the former among saints, little of the latter, but it is equally true and most solemn. The "crown of righteousness" will tell to all, how far I have been rejected with Christ, and made it my aim here to please Him. If I mix up with what He hates and shirk the cross, it will all come up in the day of His judgment seat. Later on, when He comes to earth "in righteousness He doth judge" (Rev. xix. 11). All is in righteousness and perfect light. "The righteousness of our Saviour-God," "Grace and peace multiplied": both in full measure, in abundance, "through the knowledge of Jesus our Lord." "Saviour" first, "Lord" next. Our first knowledge of Him is as Saviour, but we do not end there, but go on to learn of Him as our Lord.

*Verses 3, 4.*—"According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things." What a cluster of blessings we find

here! Men leaving a small legacy multiply words. God in giving large bequests uses few. Let us consider them well.

“Divine power” implies how we get them. All spiritual blessings are ours in Christ (Eph. i. 3), but only what I draw from Him is actually mine. “Divine power,” as we learn in 1 Peter i. 5, operates through faith grasping what God has given. “All things that pertain unto life and godliness.” Many are satisfied to have eternal life, but this is only the beginning. God would have us take possession of the “all things” He has given us. “Called us to His glory and virtue.” He called us, and is calling us still. Wherever we go, whatever we do, however we are placed, see that you can look up and say, “My God, Thou knowest I am here by Thy call.” If you cannot, then you have no right to be there. Called to two things: “His own glory and bravery”: the latter refers to Christ down here, the former to Christ up there. Our first look at Christ on the Cross suffering for sin gives salvation. Our first look at Christ *on the throne gives peace.* Our second look at the Cross teaches what He suffered for righteousness, in obedience to God (Phil. ii. 8; 1 Peter ii. 21). Our second look to the throne shows what He has received as a recompence (Heb. xii. 2; Phil. ii. 9). Christ on earth was a brave Man. He suffered, yet He stood. The world calls those brave who kill and capture others, but in heaven’s account that man is brave who stands firm for God, even when men despise and hate, fearing neither the world’s threats nor drawn away by its applause. True bravery is to follow Christ. “If any

man serve Me let him follow Me, and where I am, there shall also My servant be ; if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour" (John xii. 26). It is implied that to serve and follow Christ, will bring dishonour in the world. Therefore you must bear it bravely. And to cheer us on He says, " My Father will make up for it, you shall be with Me in honour and glory." It is as we respond to His call, that we get actual possession of the " all things " which God has given us in Christ. " Whereby"—the word is plural, by these things—"are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises." By the Divine call to bravery and glory these are given us. Such is the force of the passage. No promise in particular is mentioned ; the call itself implies that He will supply all we shall need to obey it fully. When the Lord said to His disciples " Let us go to the other side," they ought to have been sure that in spite of storm and waves He would bring them there. When He calls us to follow Him to the Cross, to be brave and stand for God, the promise that He *will* give strength is implied. So also when He says " Where I am there shall My servant be," it is implied that God will bring me through, that everything requisite to bring me there in triumph is mine. " That through these, ye might become partakers of the Divine nature." We would pause over this amazing statement. How wonderful that God should pick us up who were the scum of creation, and beget His own nature in us, fitting us to enter into communion with Himself, to be His companions, to share His thoughts,

and to worship Him. Fishes cannot do that, neither can angels. Unconverted men have two natures—beastly and devilish; the Christian, has three, he has been made partaker of a Divine nature, but the flesh remains. The saint in glory will only have the Divine nature and the human: free from sin, conformed to Christ. To reproduce Himself fully in those by nature so vile, is the greatest work of redeeming grace. By that call and these promises, He is forming His own nature in us. The first spark we receive the moment we believe: “born out of God,” “born of the Spirit,” “born through the Word of God”; but it is capable of development, and grows as we obey His call to bravery here and glory there, and feed on the promises, increasing in the knowledge of God.

“Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through desire.” The moment you got that new life and tasted of the love of God, you were spoiled for the world. If you love the world or the things of the world, the love of the Father is not enjoyed in your soul (1 John ii. 16). When “the lust of other things” (Mark iv. 19), is allowed to creep in, the new nature is hampered and hindered. Do not therefore grasp the world or seek after its pleasures, but “grasp eternal life” (1 Tim. vi. 11-12), that which is real and abiding. Be “a grasping man,” not for the gold that perisheth, but letting all that men esteem go, grasp the life which is real. Each day you live tells upon you for eternity, making you more God-like, or more carnally minded and spiritually lean.

*Verses 5-7.*—These verses show us the path our God would have us tread, and the encouragements to walk in that path. Seven things are to bud out of faith. “Add to your faith virtue”—supply in your faith, bravery, manliness. Faith as it grows is to blossom, and lo! bravery is found in it. If you believe in Christ, you will require the bravery to follow Him. So bravery comes first in the list after faith. There is a list in Gal. v. 22, giving “the fruit of the Spirit” in contrast to “the works of the flesh” (verse 19), so here we have the path of the saints contrasted with the way of the religious world. Peter tells us how we are to be separate from wickedness and gather to Christ, keeping the Chief Shepherd ever before us. To follow Him fully, to cleave to Him closely will require bravery. “And in the bravery, knowledge”—not zeal apart from God’s way, but guided in every step by the Word of God. “In the knowledge, self-control; and in the self-control, endurance.” There are the same tendencies in our flesh to get puffed up as in others, hence the need of self-control (Phil. iv. 5) and endurance to go on (Heb. x. 36) living for, serving and suffering for Christ. “In the endurance, godliness; and in the godliness, brotherly kindness; and in the brotherly kindness, love”—not charity, which is an entirely different thing. Note the place “brotherly love” has in the list. It is not immediately after faith. Bravery that stands true to Christ in separation from evil, and from all that the Word of God calls me out from, even if some of my brethren are still mixed up with it, comes before “brotherly love.” True love will never connive at

sin, or be an accomplice in it, for the sake of showing love or manifesting unity. God's way is separation first, unity next. Two well-known passages tell this order of God. "For both He who sanctifieth (or separateth) and they who are sanctified (or separated) are all of one" (Heb. ii. 11). "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth." "I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John xvii. 20). First, He takes us out of the world—then He sends us back into it. So also the brotherly love springs out of bravery, knowledge and endurance: there is no other way. Briefly, I pass on to the encouragements in this path.

*Verse 8.*—"For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither *idle* nor unfruitful in the knowledge our Lord Jesus Christ." We are left here to be workers, but not to invent ways and multiply agencies of our own to attract the eyes of men. "If these things"—the faith, the bravery, the knowledge, &c., be in you "they make you." The saint who progresses in this path, adding, and steadily going on in the ways of the Lord Jesus, is in God's estimation not "idle." The usual tendency is to shut the eyes to a great deal of evil, in order to do a great deal of good: to keep silent regarding certain kinds of sin, lest the door for service should be closed; whereas God's way is, stand aloof from evil, go on in God's path, and you are not idle. And be it ever remembered, that in the day of Christ, it will be faithfulness not success that will be commended and rewarded (2 Tim. ii. 5, Luke xix. 17). God's way and

the world's are exactly opposed. There are three encouragements. Observe their beautiful order. After the first, there is a glance at those *not* adding, of whom you may almost stand in doubt. After the second, a warning in regard to the flesh in ourselves. Then comes the grand, the gorgeous encouragement at the last. There is no need of warning, then. In verse 9, it is assumed that not to go on, is to go back. In the things of God there can be no standing still. Not to be growing, is to be declining. There may be nothing outwardly wrong, nothing in the conduct to arrest a conscience not sensitive, but inward torpor or non-enjoyment of God. It is assumed that the one here described is born again, really God's child. The allusion is to Lot, who got trammelled in Sodom. He prospered in the world, became a great man, but had leanness in his soul. "He that lacketh these things is blind"; like Samson after he had lain in Delilah's lap. First, the eyes are contracted wilfully to God's truth; evil is condoned, trifled with; then the conscience loses its sensitiveness, and the backslider practically forgets the cleansing "from his old sins." Things he would have shuddered at doing just after his conversion, when the Cross was full in view, and the conscience keen, he can do now, aye, and defend them too; for when one goes wrong in practice, he must alter his doctrine to suit his ways. Only by walking in the fear of God, can we maintain a conscience sensitive to evil, and be saved from becoming blind to God's truth.

Then follows a second encouragement—"Wherefore the

rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Here the word, as in verse 5, "give diligence" is repeated, for the subject there is still before the Apostle. "To make your calling and election sure." How can we do that? Has not God called and chosen His people before the foundation of the world? How then can we make these sure, if God has already done it? We can to ourselves, as a matter of enjoyment; not Godward, but manward and experimental. By adding and progressing in the ways of God, our calling and our hope become dearer, heavenly things become nearer, the glory brighter, the far-off clearer, in striking contrast to the one who closes his eyes, who cannot see afar off, and forgets even what he learned at his conversion. "If ye *do* these things ye shall never trip." What an encouragement! To go on adding, doing, following, is the only way to be preserved from tripping, which all are naturally disposed to, and which the declining, backsliding soul is sure to do. And then the third and final encouragement, "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom." The word "ministered" here, is the same as "add" in verse 5, showing there will be a corresponding reward for each step of advance in the path of faithfulness to God down here. What a solemn thing this makes life to be! How it should nerve us to live for God and make it the business of our life to please Him! The compensation is eternal; not like man's, which is but for a few years at most. "The everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Not in the

family or in the Church; there grace has given us our places, and made us equal, but in the Kingdom our place will be determined by the measure of our identification with Christ, and our faithfulness to Him while here below. And, oh! to remember, that all the honours won in roughing it here, and being sneered at for cleaving to Christ and His truth, will be eternal there. But if the crown is to be worn there, it must be *won* here. Let it be ours to covet this "abundant entrance," and so go on as to have it "ministered" or "added" to us.

*Verses 12 13.*—"Wherefore I shall not be negligent." How intensely in earnest he was, not to teach them something new, but ready always to put them in remembrance of what they knew and were established in, as something they had received from God. He knew well that his day of service was to be short, that he would soon "put off his tabernacle," and cease to serve the saints of the wilderness as the Lord had shewed him. But he would so serve his Master and diligently reiterate the truth among the saints, that after he had died a martyr's death for that truth, they would remember his words, and cleave to the Lord and to His Word. Few are called to die as Peter died, but all are called to hold fast the truth and walk in separation from evil, whether they get the scorner's sneer or the martyr's stake.

The word here used by Peter in speaking of his death is very beautiful: "After my decease"—literally, my exodus. It is the word used by the evangelist in describing the scene

of the Transfiguration, which Peter clearly alludes to here. Moses and Elias "spake of the exodus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 31). Moses did not end his course fully: he died in the wilderness: he "spake unadvisedly with his lips" (Psa. cvi. 33), and was hindered from entering Canaan. Elijah did not finish his course: he dared to accuse the people of God (1 Kings xix. 14, 18), and had to anoint his successor. But Jesus "finished" the work His Father gave Him to do (John xvii. 3), and Peter here looks forward to the end without fear, even though he knew his would be a death of ignominy and pain. Historians say he asked to be crucified with his head downwards, as he was unworthy to die as his Master died. Be that as it may, he could look forward to that death as the "putting off" his tabernacle. He knew it would be to him the sweet release of being "absent from the body" to be "at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 9). The coming of the Lord is the proper hope of the believer, but in Peter's case there was a special revelation that he would die a martyr's death.

*Verses 17-18.*—"We have not followed cunningly devised fables." It is no fable that Christ is coming, that He will reign and His saints with Him: it is a grand reality, the light and glare of which is intended to gladden the heart and shine on the path we tread. "The power and coming"—the kingdom and presence of the Lord Jesus. It is an allusion to the scene on the mount of Transfiguration, which was a prophecy to the eye as well as to the ear of Peter, and those with him. It shows the Son of Man in His glory, with

His heavenly saints around Him, as represented by Moses and Elias; some, like the former, having died and been raised, while others like the latter had been caught up without tasting death. His earthly people, like Peter, James and John, will be under the beams of His glory on earth, yet within sight and hearing of the glory above, High above all in "the excellent glory," God testifying "This is my Beloved Son." God will head up everything in Christ (Eph. i. 10), in whom He is well pleased: so well may we. Is He not enough to fill the heart? What room is there for any other? His love and His glory are ours. How they ought to sway and affect our hearts! Then from this transfiguration scene, this panorama of the coming kingdom, the apostle quickly passes to the "more sure word of prophecy." Why is this? The answer is, because that beloved Son, that coming King is meanwhile to be rejected. The world is to disown Him, and the word of prophecy, which embraces the entire Scriptures, is what tells us of this rejection. The written Word is to be our guide, not the opinions of men. "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." Not only read it, but heed it; let it reach and affect the heart. Prophecy shews the condition of the world, unveils its false religion, marks out its course and end. "As a lamp that shineth in a dark place." The "lamp," the "star," and the "day" are all mentioned here. The lamp is for the night, which set in when Christ was rejected. Especially does "the darkness" (Eph. vi. 13), refer to the religious condition of the world as ruled by Satan its "Prince" (John xii. 31). The

second chapter of this Epistle tells of the ecclesiastical, and the third of the infidel darkness of the world. Let us get our estimation of the world from the "lamp" of God's truth, and not from the high talk of professors, who speak of the world's progress and gradual conversion. The "Star" is Christ's coming for His people, the "Day" His appearing with them to the world. In keeping with this the New Testament ends with Christ presented as the "The Bright and Morning Star" (Rev. xxii. 20), while in the Old it is "The Sun of Righteousness" arising (Mal. iv. 4). Our hope is to see Him before the world, therefore let us "watch and be sober," which two words accord exactly with the "lamp" and the "star." Some would read "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed in your hearts," making the words between a parenthesis, but I believe we have it just as the Holy Ghost designed. The power of the truth of His coming for and with us, is to be so shining in the heart till it is weaned from all around, and occupied with all above. As the light of morning breaks on the mountain top ere yet it shines in the valley, so we, in communion with God, and in separation from the world, will be full of the light and brilliancy of the morning, before it breaks, a joy of which the world in darkness knows nothing.

*Verse 20.*—"Knowing this first, that no prophecy is of any private interpretation." One part must not be separated from another, or from Christ, but taken as part of a whole, the purpose of which is to attest the glory of Christ. The voice of the Father heard on the mount and the testimony

of the Spirit though the prophets, alike bear witness to Christ. Nor can they be isolated, or detached from each other, or from Christ of whom all these holy men of God spake as they were "Borne along by the Holy Ghost," whose delight it ever is to exalt Christ. What a beautiful word! "Borne along by the Holy Ghost." Full of their theme, they were "borne along by the Holy Ghost" in telling it out, yet these inspired words and especially the coming glories of Christ are sneered at and treated as "fables" by many religious professors and preachers of the present day.



## CHAPTER II.

**H**ERE we have traced in solemn words by the Spirit, the decline and corruption of the professing Church, the means by which it is accomplished, and the doom of those who are the chief agents in this Satanic work. More awful picture than is here given, more fearful tones than those in which the doom of such is recorded, are not found in the Word of God.

In Peter's First Epistle, the enemy appears as a roaring lion *persecuting*: in this Second Epistle as a serpent *seducing*. There he is *without*: here we are warned he is *within*.

"There shall be false teachers among *you*." Have we any clue as to where these are to come from, or what class of false teachers they are, to which the Apostle here refers. We submit this can be gathered from a reference to the same Apostle's words in his First Epistle (chap. v. 8.), where he exhorts the elders not to "lord it over God's clergy," as if he would mildly remind them that all God's people are His clergy or inheritance, as well as they, and forbids the attempt which was evidently already being made by certain "presbyters," to regard themselves as a distinct class, far removed from and above the people. Here, in the Second Epistle, this evil has wrought, until through the perversion of their office it clearly appears in definite form, from which as

the germ and bud, all the ecclesiastical distortions and perversions of sacred things followed, until the Popery of the dark ages was reached, when the priest was above the civil ruler.

Three inspired writers unite to tell us that these innovations are *within*. "False teachers *among you*." Jude adds that "they would creep *in unawares*" (v. 4.), and Paul informed the Ephesian elders "that grievous wolves" would "enter *in*" among them, not sparing the flock (Acts xx. 30.) Of course they would not avow that they were such. This would not be in accordance with the craft of Satan, Wolves in wolves' clothing, would never succeed.

The doctrine these false teachers have to inculcate, is said to be "damnable heresies," or "heresies of destruction," which, fully worked out, would destroy the souls of those that embraced them. This term "heresy," refers to some perversion of truth, rather than to groundless error. Such as putting the Church in the place of Christ, or turning the institution of ministry into clerisy or priestcraft.

*Verse 3.*—"Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make *merchandise* of you." The motives of these ambitious men are here unveiled.

In like manner Jude tells us, "that they have men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (v. 16.) This is plain and awful enough. We might have supposed, even had we not been informed, that there must be some worldly incentive to induce worldly men to enter the Church and aspire to the ministerial office. And here we have it—

money. And this "filthy lucre" is, we know, to exercise its malignant influence unto the end, for, when Babylon's guilt is at last uncovered, she is seen to have trafficked in the "bodies and souls of men" (Rev. xviii. 11-13.) That these false teachers will have success, the Word leaves no doubt. "Many shall follow their pernicious ways." This word "many" is more comprehensive than the word "some" employed by Paul in 1 Tim. iv. 1, to set forth the number of followers that Popery would claim, for, although all in Christendom would not be prepared to go the extreme length of Papal error in "forbidding to marry and abstain from meats," many would be found in less advanced stages of apostacy. And a further mark of their success is found in the fact, that by their instrumentality "the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." The perversion of God's truth was now so extensively embraced that darkness soon took the place of light, and all who dared to protest or raise their voice against error, were branded "heretics" and other opprobrious names given them. A third mark of the success of these false teachers, is their presumption and arrogance. They "speak evil of dignities" and "despise government," or as Jude describes them, they "despise dominion and speak evil of dignities" (v. 8.) Popes and prelates ruled in Christendom, usurped the rights of kings, and even gave the dominions of refractory potentates to other rulers. The manner of life of *some* at least of these, is next revealed. "Them that walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness and despise government" (v. 10), as Jude,

referring to the same class, says, "These filthy dreamers defile the flesh." Extreme heights of ambition and depths of degrading lust are here brought together. And as all who are conversant with history too well know, the internal condition of the professing church, and the unclean lives of many of its highest ecclesiastics, were at their worst, when it appeared outwardly most to flourish. Thus would God teach us, that when men are bent on self-exaltation and by daring assumptions would steal away from the glory of Christ to exalt themselves, THEN they are most entirely abandoned to their own lusts and allowed to sink into the lowest depths.

Then, last of all, we have set before us the doom of these false teachers. "They have forsaken the right way, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (v. 15). "Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward" (Jude 11). The mention of Balaam, as an illustration or type of these teachers and their work is full of meaning. Balaam, at the call of Balak, the King of Moab, and with a promise of reward, first sought to curse the people of God, but in this he failed, for the curse was turned into a blessing. But his next attempt, which was by siren blandishments to tempt them to abandon their plea of separation, and form unholy alliance with the daughters of Midian, succeeded, and thus have these false teachers by their introduction of "the doctrine of Balaam" (Rev. ii. 14), brought the Church into an

adulterous alliance with the world (James iv. 4.). What open persecution failed to do, smiles and craft accomplished through the agency of the clerics within the Church's own bosom. Then "great swelling words of vanity," or empty assumptions, drew crowds of empty professors around them, whom they quickly make "merchandise" of, by getting them to become members of their church and thus increase its revenues.

That the world is specially the foe that overcomes these Balaamite teachers, and those whom they seduce, is clear from the words—"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 (subsequently and under pretext of religion); the latter end is *worse* with them than the beginning."

The judgment of such, though awful in the extreme, is not more than we might expect. For if sin itself be hateful to God, what must it be to lead others into sin? And if sin generally be so deadly, how shall He characterise sin committed under the guise of religion, and by its professed teachers too? When the Lord was here upon earth, it was the false religious teachers upon whom He poured His severest invectives. To these He uttered the terrible words—"Ye shall receive the greater damnation (Matt. xxiii. 14). Similarly here—"To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (v. 13). Terrible words! O that some may be warned thereby, to flee while yet they may to Him who is willing to save the chief of sinners.

But the question may be asked—How about the many good and righteous men who have been and are connected with this world-church? Will the Lord make no distinction between them and the guilty system of which they, to all outward appearance, form a part. This chapter supplies the double answer—first, by the very distinct statement, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation” (v. 9), and then by the allusion to Lot, who, although a just man dwelt in Sodom, by his own choice, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by what he saw and heard, and barely escaped the doom of the cities in which he had chosen his dwelling-place. So that in this “scarcely saved” (1 Pet. iv. 17) man, saved as by fire (1 Cor. iii. 17), having lost all but his life, we have the Lord’s own answer to the question, which, while it shows that He will not suffer one of His own to ultimately perish in Christendom’s last and awful judgment, nevertheless discloses His estimate of their sin of continuing in guilty complicity therewith. And as Lot sat in the gate of Sodom, so do good men by compromising what they know to be God’s truth, rise to places of power in Christendom, vexed in soul over what they see, yet failing to obey the call of God—“Come out from among them and be ye separate” (2 Cor. vi. 17).



## CHAPTER III.

**T**HE second epistles abound with instructions for the last days, giving special guidance and warning to God's saints as to how they may keep themselves in separation from the apostasy and please God. In Chapter II. we had the ecclesiastical apostasy with its clerical assumption; here we have the infidel apostasy, the scoffer's sneer and the denial of the truth. To meet this evil and fortify the true saints against it, Peter writes to stir up those whom he knew to be real, whose minds were pure, "sincere" (Phil. i. 10, for the same word), and to call to remembrance the truth which alone can preserve them from the way of the wicked. Such a ministry is increasingly needful, as the days grow darker and the subtleties and errors of the devil increase. Not only is the truth to be taught to those who know it not, but those who once knew it are in danger of letting it slip; then they form an easy prey to the enemy.

*Verses 3-7.*—"In the last days, scoffers." They are everywhere around us—lawless men, mockers of God and His Word. And their scorn is specially directed against "THE promise," as the personal return of the Lord is thrice named in this chapter (verses 4, 9, 13). As these scoffers hear the watching saints speak of their Lord's coming to

take them to be with Himself, they raise the mocker's sneer, saying—"Where is the promise of His coming?" And this taunt is backed up by the contemptuous statement, that all these things have long ago ceased to be heard of, they belonged to bygone ages, and are regarded as myths by the enlightened thinkers of the present time, who also deny the Divinity of Christ, the value of His atoning death, the inspiration of the Bible, and the eternal punishment of the wicked. These scorers are not yet trembling as they will, when they beg to be hidden from the face of the Lamb upon the throne (Rev. vi. 15, 17), around, which He will ere then have already gathered His own (Rev. v. 6), whom now they jibe and mock. But to this sneer God has His answer. As the watchman of old, in answer to the Edomite scoffer's question—"Watchman what of the night?" could reply, "The morning cometh and also the night" (Isa. xxi. 12), so here, a twofold answer is given to the mocker. First, an appeal is made to the day of the deluge, when men scoffed and sneered, while Noah prepared the ark. Yet the deluge came and swept them away. So the heavens and earth now, are by the same word reserved unto fire, and this last judgment will come suddenly, unexpectedly, as the first. No need for God to wait, everything is ready:—saints ready for glory, sinners ready for judgment; the world stored up with fire, only the outer crust to break. Yet men, with all their boasted knowledge, "wilfully forget" all this. God will interfere *when* and *how* He pleases. *Verses 8-9* give the second part of the answer. Days and years count but little

in the reckoning of heaven. The hour is appointed when God's hand will interfere; this is enough for the saint. "Times and seasons" belong to men and earth, he belongs to a land where time is uncounted, and on which the sun never shone. And if "the promise" is yet unfulfilled, if the Lord Jesus has not yet come to receive His own to Himself, it is not because He is "slack concerning His promise as men count slackness," for He is both able and willing to fulfil it. But He is "long-suffering" toward those very scoffers who now sneer at His people and scorn His Word, "not willing that any should perish," for well He knows, that when His own are removed from the scene, like Enoch of old, God's hand will suddenly and heavily fall in judgment upon His foes, and all of them shall perish.

*Verse 10.*—"But the day of the Lord will come, as a thief!" Not His coming for His own, but His coming to the earth, always spoken of as a time of wrath (Isa. ii. 12; Thess. v. 3), not "man's day" (1 Cor. iv. 3), in which He magnifies Himself and tramples God's claim under foot: not "the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2) during which grace reigns and longsuffering lingers over a guilty world. But a day when God will overturn all man's boasted schemes, in which the despised and rejected Son of Man will scatter the forces of evil and go on step by step subduing all things to God. And so unprepared will the infidel world be for its advent, that it will come upon them "as a thief in the night." "When they shall say Peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh" (1 Thess. v. 2). All pleased with themselves and

with each other, when lo! the judgment comes! Thus we have judgment clearing the scene of present corruption to make way for eternal glory. "In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt away with fervent heat." All creation must thus pass away, to make room for a new creation—new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall have its final home, where no sin shall ever defile, but where God shall be "all in all." Does God foretell us this for nought? Does He tell us of the future judgement and glory to make us mere prophecy-mongers. Nay, verily. The five weighty exhortations that follow, show how the light of the near future should fall upon us now, and how in the light of "these things" we should live and act here. First: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?" The manner of our life is to be in keeping with our calling. There is nothing worth grasping at here, all will perish. We are like travellers passing through a bog, and our aim should be, to get along with as few marks of it on us as possible.

Second: "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." By thus living and looking with earnest desire, so completely on God's side, that we can honestly pray, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 22). Such a prayer is according to the Spirit (v. 17), and grateful to the heart of Christ.

Third: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, be diligent that ye may be found in peace, with-

out spot and blameless." Thrice in these exhortations the word "beloved" occurs, just as if our God would remind us that in the midst of our thoughts on these great and eternal realities, we are ever to remember that we are the objects of that eternal love of His, which, whatever changes time may work, remains the same. That here is to be our dwelling place (1 John iv. 16); in it we are to keep ourselves (Jude 21), when apostacy is all around. "Seeing ye look for these things" reminds us of (Rev. xxi. 7). "He that overcometh should inherit *these* things." What things? The all things new; in that regenerated heaven and earth. If the present heavens are not good enough for us, not a fit habitation for God's ransomed people, surely their present ways should be in keeping with their future home. "Without spot and blameless in His sight." It will take diligence and watchfulness on our part, a close walk with God in separation from evil according to the Word, anticipating the judgment seat of Christ by judging our ways by that Word now, which will be the standard by which they will be tested then.

*Verses 16-17.*—The reference to Paul here is exceeding beautiful; so like the Spirit of God. "Our beloved brother, Paul." Once Paul had reproved Peter to his face (Gal. ii. 11), because of his inconsistent conduct. Did Peter harbour hard thoughts concerning Paul because of this? Was he jealous because the Lord called Paul to a larger and higher ministry (see Eph. iii. 13, Col. i. 23-25)? Nay, he calls him his "beloved brother," and here commends his writings, and

claims for them the same reverence and obedience as "the other Scriptures." What a lovely thing grace is; how different from anything the world has to show! Peter wrote to the saints who were in the countries where Paul laboured most (see Acts xv. 6, xix. 10); thus we learn that kingdom truth which is Peter's theme, is not opposed to Church truth which Paul had taught. God's saints need all God's truth well balanced and duly proportioned.

Yet some will wrest and torture the truth to suit their own opinions. These are the "unlearned," who have not got what information they possess in the school of God, or by sitting where Mary sat, at Jesus' feet, and the "unstable," who, like the weather-cock, are always in motion, whirled about with every wind, ever learning, yet never coming to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. iii. 7). Whose end is "destruction." Solemn words! to which let all who handle God's Word deceitfully give heed (2 Cor. iv. 2).

*Verses 17-18.*—"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware." None are too far advanced, none too strong, to live off their guard. Peter himself, was led away and fell; now he warns others. Let us take heed *what* we hear, as well as *how* we hear. Some think they can lend their ears to hear what is false, without being affected. But God knows better, therefore, He tells us to cease to hear the instruction that causeth us to "err from the words of knowledge" (Prov. xix. 27).

*Verse 18.*—"But grow in the grace and knowledge of *our* Lord Jesus Christ." Here is the secret of preservation from

declension of every kind. If "adding" there was to be no barrenness; if "growing" no declining. Growth presupposes life, apart from which there can be none. The allusion is to horticulture; a plant in good soil congenial to it will grow. Thus, the believer rooted in grace, getting more habituated to the knowledge of God, better acquainted with the Lord Jesus, grows. And thus as the Epistle began with grace "multiplied in the knowledge of God, and of Jesus, our Lord," so also it ends, for only thus can the saints be prevented from declension, and go on from strength to strength, until they stand with their Lord in that eternal glory to which He calls them. "To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity." Amen.



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