

The
Apostleship of St. Paul.



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THE book of the Acts of the Apostles is rather the book of the acts of St. Peter and St. Paul, the Apostle of the circumcision, and the Apostle of the Gentiles. In the events recorded in that part of it which gives us St. Peter's ministry (that is, chapters i.—xii.), I judge that we can discern such an order and meaning as prepares us for the Lord's further purposes among the Gentiles by the subsequent ministry of St. Paul. I would thus briefly notice and interpret these events.

I.—While waiting, according to the commandment, for the promised power from on high, the disciples, under the leading of St. Peter (constituted chief in the Jewish ministry, Luke xxii. 32, John xxi. 16), commit it to the Lord to fill up the vacant bishopric of Judas. This was needful, as I shall observe more particularly by-and-by, that the Jewish order of twelve Apostles might stand full and complete; and that this was done with the full intelligence of the mind of God, appears further from this—that the Lord seems at once to undertake what his servants thus commit to him, for he honours the lot (the Jewish form of discovering the divine will in such matters, 1 Chron. xxiv. 5, Numb. xxvi. 55, Jos. xix. 10), and Matthias is numbered with the eleven Apostles; and the Holy Ghost in the next chapter seems to adopt Matthias in his new office, by falling upon him equally with the rest without any rebuke.

II.—VII.—The number being thus filled up, the Holy Ghost is given according to promise; and Peter again takes the lead, and preaches the risen Jesus to the Jews. The enmity of the Jews, however, sets in, and proceeds through these chapters, increasing gradually, just as it had done before against the Lord. The Apostles, however, like their Lord, go on with their testimony undismayed; great grace is upon all—holy discipline keeps them pure—and with great power the Apostles give the testimony to the resurrection. But as the enmity had worked against the Lord till they crucified him, so now does it work against

the Apostles, till they run upon Stephen and stone him. And as the heavens had received the crucified One, so do the heavens open to his fellow-sufferer and witness. And in him the Church receives a living pledge that the heavenly glory was for her as well as for her Lord, for the world had now rejected both.

VIII.—This being so, Jerusalem could no longer receive the sanction of God, for it had fully declared its sin, and for a season must be cast out of his sight. The disciples are therefore now scattered from Jerusalem, and the Jewish order is disturbed : this chapter giving us the acts of one who had not been sent forth, either as from Jerusalem, or by the Apostles at all. Philip goes forth—and at first preaches Christ in Samaria, and is then sent down by the Spirit “to Gaza, which is desert,” to bring into the fold a lost sheep that was still straying there, but known to God before the foundation of the world. But immediately afterwards, he is borne by the Spirit to Azotus (the place next to the desert where men and women could be found), that he might proclaim there, and in all other places, the grace which says, “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life.” Thus by his mission to Gaza, and then by his rapture to Azotus, Philip’s ministry is made to signify the *sovereignty* and the *universality* of that grace which the Lord was to publish.

IX.—The channels for the life and power that is from the Son of God to flow in among the Gentiles were now fully opened ; for the *Jews*, and the *Samaritans*, and the *Proselytes*, had been called. All was ready for the gathering of the first-fruits of the Gentiles. But before this was done, and present judgment upon Israel thus publicly sealed, the Lord gives, in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a sign of the future conversion of Israel (see 1 Tim. i. 16). A sample, no doubt it is, of that long-suffering that saves every sinner. But Israel is to be made the great final witness of that long-suffering, and is principally pointed at by this sign ; and therefore all that accompanies this great event is a foreshewing of the things that are hereafter to mark and accompany the repentance of Israel. Saul’s looking on Him whom he had pierced—his being shut up three days without sight, and neither eating nor drinking—the removal of this judgment, and his baptism, all shews us the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem looking on Him whom they pierced and mourning, every family apart, and their wives apart, and then proving the virtues

of the cleansing fountain opened for their sin and for their uncleanness. Jerusalem will then be the signal witness of sovereign grace, as Saul now is (Zech. xii. xiii). And in further proof of this mystical character of Saul's conversion, we may observe that he tells us himself, that he obtained mercy *because he did it ignorantly in unbelief*; and this is the very ground of final mercy to Israel; as the Lord prayed for them, "Father, forgive them; *for they know not what they do.*" (See also Acts iii. 17.)

X. XI.—A pledge of Israel's future conversion being thus left them, proclamation of present judgment upon them is made by the call from among the Gentiles of a people for God. This is done by the ministry of the Apostle of the circumcision; and most fitly so. For he had received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and was also the representative of Jerusalem, who is (however faithless, and as such divorced for a while) "the mother of us all." But Peter's title to this, as representing Jerusalem, being thus allowed, we find a Church of Gentiles gathered at Antioch by other hands, and Barnabas and Saul, rather than Peter, called to the help and comfort of it.

XII.—And now the Lord had only publicly to dismiss Jerusalem for a season. But as he had before pledged Israel's future *conversion*, so does he, as I judge, now pledge to them their future *restoration*. To me, I confess, this chapter has great beauty and meaning, presenting both the sorrows and the deliverance of the remnant in the latter day, and the full ruinous overthrow of their enemies. James is slain with the sword, as hereafter at Jerusalem the complaint will be this, "their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem" (Ps. lxxix. 2, 3). Peter also, the hope of the circumcision, is cast into prison, the enemy thus all but prevailing against the Israel of God.

But he was to go no further, for Peter is to appear to be the Lord's prisoner, rather than Herod's. He sleeps between his keepers. He lies there "a prisoner of hope." The enemy is strong and mighty, and the remnant have no relief but in God. But that is enough. They make prayer without ceasing for him, till at length this prisoner of the Lord is sent forth out of the pit, as Israel will be in the latter day (Zech. ix. 11, 12). At first he was like one that dreamt, thinking that he saw a vision; and so were his company, saying, "It is his angel." But so

will Israel be hereafter. They will sing, "when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." But in the sudden joy of their heart, they will have to add, "then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; as Peter, coming to himself, now says, "Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."

All this is to me sweetly and strikingly significant. But the sign does not end here. In royal apparel, Herod sits upon his throne, having thought it well to be highly displeased, as though vengeance belonged to him. He makes an oration to the people, and they give a shout for him, saying, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." Thus he takes to himself the glory which was God's, and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, "and he was eaten with worms, and gave up the ghost." So will the lawless one magnify himself above all, and sit upon the mount of the congregation on the sides of the north, saying, "I will be like the Most High." He will do "according to his will;" but he shall come to his end, and none shall help him. "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

Thus is final mercy pledged to Israel. Under these signs of their *conversion* and *restoration*, and of the overthrow of their enemies, they are now left prisoners of hope. The Lord himself gives them a sign, and then hides his face from them; goes his way for awhile, and leaves his sanctuary. All this prepares us for a ministry beyond the bounds of Israel; and accordingly, in the opening of the next chapter, we find the word sent forth to the Gentiles, Jerusalem as the source of grace and ministry forgotten, and the name of Jew and Gentile left without distinction.*

Such I judge to be the course and meaning of the events that occurred, during the ministry of the circumcision,

* In token of this, our Apostle's Jewish name, "Saul," is made to take the Gentile form, "Paul." This was of the Holy Ghost, who would have it further known even by this, small as it may appear, that the distinction of Jew and Gentile was to be lost during that dispensation, the testimony to which was now going forth. Just as before at Antioch (see chap. xi. 26). When the Church became Gentile or mixed, having been drawn out from its strict Jewish character, the disciples for the first time were called "Christians;" the Holy Ghost by this making it known, that a body was now preparing for Christ, which was to be anointed in, with, and through him.

under the hand of St. Peter, as we have them recorded in these chapters. But what, I ask, was the nature of the ministry itself? What were the hopes that it spoke of to Israel? and what was the call that it made upon Israel?—We shall find, in answer to these inquiries, *that the Apostles spoke of the proper national hopes of Israel, calling on them to repent in order that they might attain them, and be blest in the earth.* They declare Israel's sin in crucifying the Prince of Life; God's acceptance of this crucified One, and, upon repentance, the remission of Israel's sins, and the fulfilling of Israel's hopes.

Thus, in Peter's sermon in the 2nd chapter, his testimony to Israel was this—that the resurrection secured the promises made to David's throne; that the ascension was the source of the given Spirit; that Jesus was to abide in the ascended place till his enemies were made his footstool; and upon all this he calls on Israel to repent. But he says nothing about the Church ascending after her head, and her consequent heavenly glory. So in the 3rd chapter (after he and John had recognized God's house at Jerusalem), in his preaching, he calls on Israel to repent in order that the times of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord, when Jesus should return to them, and all things promised by Moses and the prophets be accomplished. But all this in like manner was a testimony to the hopes of Israel and the earth, and not a testimony to the heavenly glory. It was a publication of the acts and promises of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the children of the prophets and the children of the covenant. And so in the 5th chapter we have this—"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins,"—words very strongly marking the value which the Spirit in St. Peter gave to the resurrection of the Lord, applying it merely to Israel as God's nation.

And as the proper fruit of this preaching and of these hopes, we find the conduct and practice of the saints to have been this—they present beautiful order and grace in the way of settling their earthly possession—they get favour with all the people, as Jesus had in his infancy at Nazareth—they continue daily in the temple, as though they knew not how soon the Lord might return to it—and they heal all disease among the people, as the Lord had done when he walked through the cities and villages of

Judea. But beyond all this, perfect as it was in its season, there was something still. The Church had still to take with Jesus her earth-rejected and earth-rejecting character. Citizenship in heaven, death as to the earth, and life hid with Christ in God; a looking forth towards the things within the vail after the glorious forerunner, were great and new things still to be brought out of the treasury. Neither St. Peter's testimony, nor the Church's conduct, were such as exhibited them. The glory within the vail first looks through, when Stephen's face shines as the face of an angel. And this was beautiful in its season also; for Stephen was soon to be made the first witness of the heavenly calling. Martyrdom was the needed ground of the full manifestation of this calling. The Apostles might have suffered shame, and stripes, and imprisonment; but there was still space for repentance to Israel, as there had been during the Lord's ministry (though he in like manner suffered shame and rejection), till his last visit to Jerusalem. The cross, however, had closed the earth upon the Lord: and so did the martyrdom of Stephen close it now upon the Church; and awful separation for a while was made between all who are the Lord's and this present evil world.

Thus till this death of a saint after the resurrection, the time had not come for the bringing out of this new thing (the heavenly calling of the Church) from the treasury of the divine counsels. Types, and the other intimations of it had been from the beginning. Our Lord had given the vision of it on the holy mount, but it was dimness in the eyes even of the Apostles. He hinted at "the heavenly things" which the Son of man alone could speak of (John iii.), but they were not perceived. "The little while" of his abiding with the Father, was as strange to the disciples as to the Jews. His ministry of these things was to them proverbs (John xvi. 25). And so even the ascension of the Lord was not of itself adequate ground for the manifesting of that glory. For it was needed to the Lord's forming the Jewish Church for godly citizenship on the earth, the Holy Ghost being received through the ascension, "for the rebellious," that is, for Israel, "that the Lord God might dwell among them—dwell among them *here*. But on the martyrdom of a believer in the Lord thus risen and ascended, the time had fully come for the manifesting of the heavenly calling, for the shew-

ing out of this mystery, that Christ was to have a body which was to share with him in the glory on high into which he had himself ascended, whose citizenship was not to be in Jerusalem, but in heaven.

"In the regeneration," as the Lord speaks, that is, in the coming kingdom of the Son of man, there will be again a Church that will find her proper place on earth, the Israel of God. And then the twelve Apostles will be manifested in connection with the twelve tribes, and the saints with the world (see Matt. xix. 28, 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3). All this will be the glory and joy of that happy time, and most beautiful and perfect in its season. The Son of man seated on his throne of glory—the Apostles judging the twelve tribes—and the saints, the world. The servants will then share in the kingdom of their Lord, having authority with him and under him over the cities of his dominion. But this time is now delayed, for the earth has refused it. Israel has cast the heir of the vineyard out, and killed them that were sent to them (1 Thess. ii. 16.) Another testimony was therefore now to go forth, a testimony to the loss of Israel's and the earth's hopes for the present, and to the call of an elect people out of earth into heaven. And Saul the persecutor, that is, Paul the Apostle was made the special bearer of it.

And how rich was the grace displayed by the Lord in choosing Saul to be the vessel of this heavenly treasure! At this very time he was in full enmity against God and his anointed. At his feet the witnesses whose hands had been first upon Stephen, laid down their clothes. But this is the man that is to be made God's chosen vessel; and such is the way of the Lord in abounding mercy. Before this, man's fullest enmity had been met by God's fullest love; for the cross was at the same moment the witness of both, as the person of Saul is now. The soldier's spear, as one has observed, drew forth the blood and water—sin has drawn forth grace. And now, as we may say, Saul's journey to Damascus was the spear making its way a second time into the side of Christ; for he was now going with commission and slaughter against the flock of God. But it was on this journey that the light from heaven arrested him. The blood of Jesus thus again met the soldier's cruel spear, and Saul is a pattern of all long-suffering.

The sovereign grace that saves the Church was thus displayed in Saul. But the heavenly glory that is reserved

for the Church, was also displayed to him, for he sees Jesus in it. And by these things his future ministry is formed.

And here I may observe in connection with this, that at the times of calling out new ministries, there have commonly been characteristic exhibitions of Christ. Thus, when Moses was called forth at Horeb, he saw a burning, but yet unconsumed bush, out of the midst of which Jehovah spake to him. And the ministry which he then received was according to this vision, to go and deliver Israel from the affliction of Egypt, in the midst of which God had been with them, preserving them in spite of it all. When he and the people afterwards stood under Sinai, the mountain was altogether in a smoke, so that even Moses himself exceedingly feared and quaked. But all this was so, because there was about to proceed from it, that law which poor fallen man can never answer, and which therefore is but the ministry of death and condemnation to him, though he be such an one as Moses himself. When Moses afterwards drew towards God, standing between him and the people, he receives (in accordance with the mediate place which he thus occupied) his commission to deliver, as the national mediator, the laws and ordinances of the king. But when in the last place, he goes up to the top of the hill, far beyond both the region of horrible fire and the mediate place which he occupied as the mediator of the nation, and where all was calm and the presence of the Lord around him, he receives the tokens of grace, the types of Christ, the Saviour and priest, and is from thence made to minister to Israel, "the shadows of good things to come." In all these we see much that was expressive of the ministry about to be appointed.

So afterwards, though in a more limited way. When Joshua was about to receive a commission to compass Jericho with men of war, the Lord appears to him as a man of war with a sword drawn in his hand. When Isaiah was called to go forth as the prophet of judgment against Israel, the Lord was seen in his temple in such terrible majesty, that the very posts of the door moved at His voice, and the house was filled with smoke (Isaiah vi.) When our Lord stood in the land of Israel the minister of the circumcision, according to this place and character, he appoints twelve to go forth to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But after the resurrection, when he stood on the earth in a larger character, all power in heaven and earth being then

His, He commissions his Apostles accordingly,—“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” And so now,—ascended into heaven, and having there received the Church to himself, He appears to Saul from that glory; and in him appoints a ministry formed upon the principle of this manifestation. Heaven was the birth-place of Paul’s Apostleship; and according to this, he was sent forth to gather out and raise up a people from earth to heaven.

Thus, from the place from whence his call into office came, we at the beginning might be prepared for something new and heavenly. But his Apostleship was out of due time, as well as out of due place (1 Cor. xv. 8). It not only did not come from Jerusalem, but it arose after the Apostleship there had been perfected. Judas’s forfeited bishopric had been filled up by Matthias, and thus the body of twelve, as ordered by the Lord at the beginning, was again complete; and Paul’s Apostleship is thus a thing born “out of due time.”

But though in this respect, “out of due time,” yet not so in every respect. The times and seasons which the Lord has taken for the unfolding of his counsels are, doubtless, all due and rightly ordered; and having “the mind of Christ (the present inheritance, through grace, of every spiritual man), we may seek to know this; remembering first of all, whose counsels we are searching into, and how it becomes us to walk before him with unshod feet. May he keep us, brethren, thus treading his course, and may the haste of inquirers never take us out of the place and attitude of worshippers. Let us remember, that it is in his temple we must inquire (Ps. xxvii. 4).

As then, to these times and seasons, I observe that our Lord marks successive stages in the divine procedure with Israel, when he says, “the *law* and the *prophets* prophesied until *John*.” Here he notices three ministries, the law, the prophets, and John. But these extended only down to our Lord’s own ministry, and therefore now, in the further progress of the divine counsels, we can to these add others.

THE LAW.—This dispensation put Israel under a covenant which exacted obedience as the condition upon which they were to continue in the land, and in the blessings which Jehovah had given them. But we know that they broke it.

THE PROPHETS.—After offence and trespass had come

in, prophets were raised up (among other services) to warn and encourage Israel to return to Him, from whom they and their fathers had revolted, that they might recover their place and blessing under the covenant. But Israel, we know, refused their words, stoning some and killing some.

JOHN.—The baptist is then raised up, not as one of the prophets merely, to call Israel back to the old covenant, and to the obedience which it required, but to be the herald of a kingdom that was then at the doors, the forerunner of One who was coming with the sure blessing of his own presence. He summoned the people to be in readiness for Messiah. But John they beheaded.

THE LORD.—Thus introduced by John to Israel, the Lord accordingly comes forth, and offers the kingdom in his own person to them, and Israel is summoned to own it and worship him. But we know that the heir of the vineyard was cast out by the husbandmen. "His own received him not." The buldiers disallowed the stone. They crucified the Prince of Life; but God raised him from the dead, and seated him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES.—They had accompanied with our Lord all the time that he had gone in and out among them, from the baptism of John to the day that he was taken up from them, and they were now called forth (being endued with the Holy Ghost) to be witnesses to Israel of the resurrection. And these witnesses tell Israel that the times of refreshing, the times of accomplishing all promised good to them, waited only for their repentance; for that Jesus was now exalted to be a prince and Saviour to them. And now the final trial of Israel was come. What could be done more than had now been done? Trespass against the Son of man had been forgiven, at least, the way of escape from the judgment which it called for had now been thrown open to Israel by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the Apostles; but what could provide relief, if this testimony were now despised? (See Matt. xii. 32.) But the Holy Ghost is resisted, the testimony of the twelve is despised by the martyrdom of Stephen, and the Lord's dealings with Israel and the earth are therefore necessarily closed for a season.

ST. PAUL.—The Apostle of the Gentiles then comes forth, fraught with further treasures of divine wisdom,

revealing purposes that had been till now (while God was dealing with Israel and the earth) hid in God. He comes forth with this testimony—that Christ and the Church were one; that heaven was their common inheritance: and the gospel committed to him, was the gospel, as he expresses it, of “Christ in us the hope of glory.” This gospel he had now to preach among the Gentiles (Gal. i. 16, Col. i. 28).

We are thus enabled to see the dulness of the times in which the mysteries of God have been revealed. It must be so we know, for God is God. But through His abounding towards us in all wisdom and prudence, He gives us grace to see something of this that we may adore Him, and love Him, and long for the day when we shall see Him face to face, and know as we are known. For all these His ways are beautiful in their season. Israel was the favoured earthly people, and it was due to them to try whether or not the fountain would be opened in Jerusalem, from whence to water the earth. But this debt of Israel had now been paid by the ministry of the Lord, closed in by that of the twelve; and Stephen’s speech in the 7th of Acts, is God’s conviction of Israel’s rejection of all the ways which his love had taken with them. They had silenced, as he there charges them, the early voice of God in Joseph—they had refused Moses the deliverer—they had persecuted the prophets—slain John and others, who had shewed before of the coming of the Just One—been the betrayers and murderers of that Just One himself, and finally, were then in his person resisting, to the end resisting, as they had ever done, the Holy Ghost. The Lord therefore had only to forsake his sanctuary, and with it the earth, and the martyr sees the Lord in heaven under such a form as gives clear notice that the saints were now to have their citizenship in heaven, and their home in the glory there, and not on the earth.

This martyrdom of Stephen was thus a crisis or time of judgment, and the final one with Israel; and a new witness to God is therefore called out. There had been already such times in the history of Israel. Shiloh had been the scene of the first crisis. The ark that was there was taken into the enemy’s land—the priest and his sons died ingloriously; Ichabod was the character of the system then, and Samuel was called out as Jehovah’s new witness—the help of Israel, the raiser of the stone Ebenezer. Jerusalem

was afterwards the scene of another crisis. The house of David had filled up its sin; the king and the people with all there treasures were taken down to Babylon, and the city laid in heaps; and Jesus (for the interval as to this purpose need not be estimated) is called forth, God's new witness—the sure mercy and hope of Israel. But He was refused, and in judgment turned his back upon Jerusalem, saying, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." That was a season of judgment also—judgment of Israel for the rejection of the Son of man; and another witness is then called out—the twelve Apostles, who testify, as I have been observing, in the Holy Ghost, to the resurrection of the rejected Lord, and that repentance and remission of sins were provided in Him for Israel. But they also are rejected and cast out. Then comes the final crisis.—Stephen is their representative, and he convicts Israel of full resistance of the Holy Ghost; and then a new and heavenly witness is called forth. Such witness is the Church, and of the Church, and of the Church's special calling and glory, Paul is made in an eminent sense the minister.

"It pleased God to reveal his Son in me," says he. This is the ground of the Church's special dignity, and the gospel which Paul preached. It was not the gospel of Messiah, the hope of Israel, nor the gospel of the once crucified One, now exalted "to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins;" but it was the gospel of *the Son of God revealed in him*. The Son had been revealed to the disciples by the Father before (Matt. xvi. 17); but now he is revealed *in* Paul. He had the Spirit of adoption. The Holy Ghost in him was the Spirit of the Son; and anointed with this oil of gladness, he had to go forth and spread the savour of it everywhere. And upon the Son thus revealed within, hangs every thing that is peculiar, as I have observed, to the calling and glory of the Church. Thus we read, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. viii. 16, 17). And again, we read, "that we are predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," that is, as St. Paul here speaks of himself, *to have the Son revealed in us*. And this being the predestinated condition of the Church, there comes

forth, as in the train of this, all the Church's holy prerogatives—acceptance in the Beloved, with forgiveness of sins through His blood—entrance into the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so as to have made known to us the mystery of the will of God—future inheritance in and with Him, in whom all things in heaven and earth are to be gathered—and the present seal and earnest of this inheritance in the Holy Ghost. This bright roll of privileges is inscribed by the Apostle thus—"spiritual blessings in the heavenlies;" and so they are, blessings through the Spirit flowing from and linking us with Him who is the Lord in the heavens (Eph. i. 4—12).

All this follows upon the *Son being revealed in us*, by which the Church puts on Christ, so as to be one with Him in every stage of his wondrous way; dead, quickened, raised, and seated in heaven in Him (Eph. ii. 6). And of this mystery, Paul was especially the steward. The Lord had hinted at it in the parable of the vine and the branches. He had spoken of it as that which the presence of the Comforter was to effect, saying, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." He spoke of it also to his disciples through Mary Magdalene after the resurrection, saying, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God;" thus telling them that they were to be one with him in love and joy before the throne, all through this present dispensation. But this mystery did not fully come forth till St. Paul is sent to declare it. It is a calling of exceeding riches of grace, but nothing less could meet the mind of God towards his elect; for he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, were to be all of one (Heb. ii. 11). Thus stood the covenant of love before the world was. A mediator such as Moses, whose best service was to keep Jehovah and the people asunder (see Deut. v. 5.), could not answer the purpose of this marvellous love of our God; but in the Son the elect are accepted; and while his work and merit are all their title to any thing, they have every thing by their oneness with the Mediator himself (John xvii. 26). Nothing less than this could fulfil the desire of our heavenly Father's heart towards us. The partition wall, whether between God and sinners, or between Jew and Gentile, is broken down; and we sinners stand together on its ruins, triumphing over them in Christ, our heavenly Father rejoicing over them also. This is the

marvellous workmanship of the love of God, and the forming and completing of this union of Christ and the Church, is the husbandry which God is now tending. He is not, as once he was, caring for a land of wheat, and oil, and pomegranates, that his people might eat without scarceness of the increase of the field (Deut. xi. 12); but he is the husbandman of the vine and the branches. He is training the Church in union with the Son of his love, *all* come into the knowledge of him to a perfect man. It is this union which makes us of the same family with the Lord Jesus, and entitles us to hear of him as "*the first-born*" (Rom. viii. 29). It is this union which gives us the same glory with the Lord Jesus, and entitles us to look after him as "*the forerunner*" (Heb. vi. 20). It is this which gives character to that life which we now have, and to that glory in which we shall be manifested, when He who is our life shall appear.

Our life and glory are thus both of a new character. The *life* is a new life. The man in Christ is a new creature; he is a dead and risen man. His powers and affections have acquired a new character. His intelligence is *spiritual understanding*, or "the mind of Christ." His love is "*love in the Spirit*." The power in him is "*glorious power*," the power of Christ's resurrection. And so he knows no man after the flesh, but all things are become new to him. It is not enough that human affections or natural tastes would sanction any thing; for being after the Spirit, he minds the things of the Spirit. He serves in newness of spirit, and the name of the Lord Jesus is the sanction of what he does either in word or deed. He has been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and there he walks, going forth in assurance and liberty to do service from morning till evening, living by faith on Him who loved him and gave himself for him.

The *glory* is also a new glory. It is something above all that was seen in previous ages. Excellent things have been spoken of Adam and of Israel; but not equal to what is told us of the Church. Christ is to present the Church to Himself, as God presented Eve to Adam, to be the companion of his dominion and glory. The saints are to be conformed to the image of the Son. It is "the joy of the Lord" that is prepared for the saints, a share with Christ in the authority of the kingdom, in that which he has received from the Father. They are not so much

brought into the glory as made glorious themselves; as we read, "The glory that shall be revealed *in us*;" and again, "glorified together," that is, "together with Christ;" "fashioned like unto His glorious body." The place of the Son is the scene of their glory. They are not to stand on the footstool, but to sit on the throne. Israel may have the blessings of the earth, but the Church is to know the upper or heavenly glory.

And it is *life* and *glory* that makes us what we are. The life makes us *sons*, the glory makes us *heirs*, and our sonship and inheritance are every thing. And it was the gospel of this life and glory that St. Paul was specially called out to minister. Peter and the others forwarded it we know; but Paul was the distinguished steward of it. And Peter and the others did not forward this gospel as being the twelve at Jerusalem. As the twelve, they had borne their testimony to Israel, and been rejected like their Lord, and now had become witnesses to the heavenly calling of the Church. The vision which instructed Peter in the fact that God had sanctified the Gentiles, might also have told him that God had made heaven, and not earth, the place of their calling, and the scene of their hopes. The vessel with its contents was let down from heaven, and then taken up again into heaven. This was, by a symbol, a revelation of the mystery hid from ages. It denoted that the Church had been of old written in heaven and hid there with God, but now for a little season was manifested here, and in the end was to be hid in heaven again, having her glory and inheritance there. This was signified by the descending and ascending sheet, and such, I judge, is the character of the mystery hid from ages and generations. And according to this, Peter, under the Holy Ghost, speaks to the saints of their inheritance "reserved in heaven;" and exhorts them to wait with girded loins, as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. He presents the Church as having consciously come to the end of all things here, and looking, like Israel in the night of the passover, towards Canaan, having done with this Egypt-world.*

* In Peter, we have many allusions to Jewish circumstances. And the Spirit in him who was the Apostle of the circumcision, would naturally have suggested this. But I will refer to only one instance of this. See chap. ii. 9, 10. The latter verse has Hos. ii. 23, in mind. But the different connection in which the truth there stated stands in the mind of the prophet, and in the mind of the Apostle, is very striking.

Israel is to be made the people of God in the latter day, as the prophet teaches us; but he further teaches us, that when that takes place, Israel shall be sown

But Paul was apprehended in a special manner for this ministry. A dispensation of the gospel was committed to him, and woe to him if he did not preach it (1 Cor. ix. 16, 17). Though, as he speaks, it were even against his will, yet he must preach it. The Son was revealed in him for this very purpose, that he might preach him among the heathen (Gal. i. 16). For when the Lord converted his soul, he sent him out with this gospel, "Rise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."

I do indeed judge that it is very profitable to the saints that they discern rightly, that St. Paul's ministry was thus one stage in the divine process of telling out the purposes of God. That he holds a distinguished place in the Church, the feeling of every saint will at once and without effort bear witness; for there is no name more kept in the recollections of the saints than that of our Apostle, save the name of Him who in the hearts of his people has no fellow.

And his office being thus from heaven, he refuses to confer with flesh and blood—refuses to go up to Jerusalem to them that were Apostles before him. He was not to get himself sanctioned there or by them. Before this, the twelve at Jerusalem had all authority. But the Apostles at Jerusalem are nothing to Paul or his ministry. They had not cast the lot over him, nor are they now to send him forth; but it is the Holy Ghost who says, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." And having thus received grace and Apostleship from the Lord, in the glory, and being now sent forth by the Holy Ghost, in full consistency with all this, he and Barnabas receive recommendation to the grace of God, from the unconsecrated hands of some unnamed brethren at Antioch. All this was a grievous breach upon

unto God in the earth, that is, God will bless Israel with earthly blessing. But the Gentiles have now been made the people of God, as the Apostle teaches us; but he further teaches us, that there is no such blessing as this for them; but that, on the contrary, they should reckon themselves as *strangers and pilgrims on the earth*. How strikingly does the Spirit thus, in these two witnesses, contrast the call and blessing of Israel with the call and blessing of the Church, shewing us that the Church has no place on the earth, but that being a stranger there, she is to look for a heavenly country, a citizenship in heaven; but that as soon as Israel is again acknowledged of the Lord, the Lord will hear the heavens, and the heavens the earth, and the earth, the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they Jezreel (Hosea ii. 23, 1 Pet. ii. 10).

that order that was to establish the earth in righteousness, beginning at Jerusalem.

And not only was Paul's Apostleship and mission thus independent of Jerusalem, and of the twelve; but the gospel which he preached (the nature of which we have before considered), he did not learn either there or from them. He received it not from man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. He goes up, most truly, from Antioch, with Barnabas, to Jerusalem, to confer with the Apostles about circumcision; but before he does so, he withstood some, though they had come from James, and rebuked Peter before them all. And these things were ordered in the provident wisdom of the Spirit; just as our Lord's rebukes of his mother; the Spirit of God foreseeing the boasts in the flesh which would arise from both these sources, from Mary and from Peter; and thus has given the wayfaring man these tokens of his heavenward path. He circulates the decree upon the question of circumcision, for present peace. But when counselling the Gentile Churches afterwards on one of the subjects which this decree determines, viz., *eating meats offered to idols*, he does so on the ground merely of brotherly love. He never refers to this decree. (1 Cor. viii.) He was taught his gospel entirely by revelation (Gal. i. 12), for at his conversion it had been so promised to him (Acts xxvi. 16). And accordingly it was from the Lord himself that he received his knowledge of the death, burial, resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 3), and his knowledge also of the last supper and its meaning (1 Cor. xi. 23); though these things lay within the common acquaintance of those who had companied with the Lord, and he might have received them from them. But, no; he must be taught them all by revelation. The Lord appeared to him in those things of which he was to be a minister and witness. The Lord was jealous that Paul should not confer with flesh and blood—should not be a debtor to any but to himself for his gospel. For as the dispensation was to allow of no confidence in the flesh, neither was Paul's Apostleship. All that might have been gain in the flesh, was to be counted loss. Confidence with those who had seen and heard, eaten and drunk with Jesus, might have been gain; but all this was set aside. Paul would thankfully be refreshed in spirit by the mutual faith of himself and the humblest disciple. Nay, he would have such acknowledged;

all such in whose belly the Spirit had opened the river of God for the refreshing of the saints (Rom. i. 12, 1 Cor. xvi. 18). But he could accept no man's person. The previous pillars of the Church could not be used to support his ministry. The Jewish order was gone. Of old, Jehovah, we know, had respect to that order. It was according to the number of the children of Israel, that at the first he divided the nations (Deut. xxxii. 8). Afterwards he distributed the land of Canaan according to this number also, that is, among the *twelve* tribes (Josh. xiii.—xix.) So David in his day, under the guiding of Jehovah, had respect to the same number, when he settled the ministries of the temple, and the officers of the palace at Jerusalem (1 Chron. xxiii.—xxvii.) And in like manner, the Lord provided for the healing and teaching of Israel, appointed *twelve* Apostles, still having respect to the Jewish order. And this order of twelve Apostles was preserved, as we have seen, under the hand of Peter afterwards; for he was the guardian of the Jewish order, and pastor of the Jewish Church. But Paul's Apostleship is at once an invasion upon all this. It has no respect whatever to Jewish, earthly, or fleshly order. It interferes with it. It is a writing under the hand of the Spirit of God for the revoking of that order. And this was, as was natural, a great trial to the Jewish Christians. They could not easily understand this undue Apostleship, and we find that he was considerate of them under this trial. And, indeed, those who stand with him in the assertion of the sovereignty of the Spirit, and in the rejection of all fleshly authority, should with him likewise be considerate of the difficulties which many now experience from the Jewish feelings and rules of judgment, in which they have been educated. But still, Paul was an Apostle, let them hear, or let them forbear.

And not only was it a trial to Jewish believers, but there were found evil men moved of Satan, who made their use of this state of things. We find it to have been so at Corinth. In Galatia it was not this. In his epistle to the Churches there, he does not speak of his Apostleship, because it had been slandered among them; but because it was the divine sanction of that gospel which he had preached, and from which they had departed. But at Corinth his Apostleship had been questioned, and by what witnesses would he have it approved? why, by his pureness, his knowledge, his armour of righteousness. (2 Cor. vii.)

How does he seek to be received? why, because he had corrupted no man, he had defrauded no man. (2 Cor. vii.) How does he vindicate and establish his ministry? read his proofs in such words as these—"Am I not an Apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are ye not my work in the Lord? If I am not an Apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you, for the seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord." And again, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." Does he not by all this commit the proof of his Apostleship to the manifest presence of the Spirit with him? His children in the faith were the seal of his office (1 Cor. ix. 2); the epistle that ought to commend it to the acceptance of all men. The signs of an Apostle had been wrought by him (2 Cor. xii. 12). And must it not have been so? What office or ministry could now be warranted without the presence and exercise of the gifts received for men? Could the purpose of the ascension be evaded or annulled? Could fleshly authority and order be allowed in despite of the revelation now given, that the ascended Head was the dispenser and Lord of all those ministries that were for "the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ? When the Lord ascended, on his way up, he was a conqueror in triumph, leading captivity captive. But when he reached his heavenly seat, he became a crowned priest,* and sent down coronation gifts to his Church, by the ministry of which he is either forming or strengthening the union between himself and the members here, and their union among themselves. These ministries thus act like the joints and bands in the human body; and all other ministries the Apostle sets aside as "rudiments of the world," fitted to those who are alive in the world, but most unsuited to those who are—as the Church is—dead and risen with Christ (see Eph. iv. 16, Col. ii. 19—23).

We are therefore not true to the ascension of our Head, if we do not look for his ascension-gifts in those who minister in his name. They constitute the hand writing of

* The "glory and honour" that from our Lord's present crown were typified by Aaron's garments, which were said to be to him for "glory and beauty" (Ex. xxviii. 2). And the very same words are used in the Septuagint, for "glory and beauty," as our translators have rendered, "glory and honour" in Heb. ii. 7; so that the Lord's present crown is a *priest's* crown or mitre, and not a *king's*. He has not put on his royal crown yet.

the Lord in the Church's genealogies. The Jews were careful to put from the priesthood those whose genealogy could not be proved. They refused to register them (Ezra ii. 62, Neh. vii. 63). And this too in a day when all was feebleness in Israel. No cloudy pillar had led them on their way home from Babylon—no arm of the Lord had gloriously made a passage for them through the deserts—no rain of angel's food from heaven, nor ark of the covenant was with them. All this, and more than this, was gone. But did they plead their feebleness, and do nothing? Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, do what they can. They cannot recover every thing, but they do what they can: and among other services, they read the genealogies, and do not allow the holy things to be eaten by unproved claimants of the priesthood. And ours, dear brethren, is a day of feebleness like theirs. Much of the former strength and beauty is gone, and we cannot recover every thing. But it is not therefore to be a day of allowed evil; nor are we, in the spirit of slumber, to fold the arms, and say, "There is no hope." We should do what we could, and among other services, we can study the genealogies, when any one seeks their register: and thus they run, "A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre." (1 Tim. iii.)

Thus run the genealogies of the bishops of the flock of God; thus has the Spirit of the ascended head of the Church written in his word. The time for glorying only in the Lord, and in that authority, and in that only, which had been formed by the Holy Ghost had now fully come; and therefore the fact that the Lord had given Paul authority in the Church, was shewn by witnesses to the presence of the Spirit with him. The signs of an Apostle were wrought by him. His authority stood approved by this, that he could "do nothing against the truth, but for the truth;" and because the power used by him was used "to edification, and not to destruction" (2 Cor. xiii. 5—10). He claims no authority, save what was thus verified by the presence of the Spirit with him, and used by him for the furtherance of the truth, and the profit of the Church. For the Holy Ghost had been publicly avouched to be sovereign in the Church, as the Son had been proclaimed head to the Church. The gifts of the Spirit may be

among us in various measures of strength; but the Holy Ghost in us is the title of all present *worship* and *service*. Whatever *worship* is now to be had in the temples of God, it is to be in the Spirit; for "we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit." And the Apostle, speaking of worship, says, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord (that is, no man can call Jesus, Lord, or say, 'Lord Jesus'), but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 2). So whatever *service* is now to be rendered in the Church is with this limitation, "according to the ability which God giveth;" it is by this rule, "the manifestation of the Spirit." Paul might lay hands on Timothy, and Titus might appoint elders; but the presence of the Spirit was in measure according to the authority and service. Timothy was left in Ephesus; but the charge entrusted to him there, was according to the gifts bestowed upon him (1 Tim. i. 18, iv. 14, 2 Tim. i. 6). To assume any ministry beyond this measure, is to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think (Rom. xii. 3). And as every individual saint has title through the indwelling Spirit to "prove all things" (with this condition doubtless, that he "hold fast that which is good"); so the congregations of the saints, or the temples of God, as spiritual, are to judge also (1 Cor. xiv. 29); and if the resources of the flesh, the name, the human advantages, or earthly distinctions of men be gloried in and trusted, the temple is defiled. And the temple of God at Corinth was thus defiled (1 Cor. iii. 16—23). Some had rested in Paul, some in Cephas, some in Apollos. But this was carnal. This was walking as men, and not in the presence and sufficiency of the Spirit, whose temple they were. They became untrue to the Spirit who dwelt in them.

And here let me say, that it is not so much *right* to minister which the New Testament speaks of, as *obligation*. If any man have the gift, he is *debtor* to exercise it, and to wait on his ministry. The habit of looking on ministry as a right, rather than as an obligation, has given the Church its worldly aspect. The "great house" has forgotten that *service on earth is glory*. But our Apostle did not forget it, and he never affected anything that might have its influence in the world, upon the world's principles. He was one whom the world would pass by. He laboured with his own hands, followed his trade, and made tents, just at the time when, in the autho-

rity of the Spirit, he shook his raiment upon the unbelieving Jews. He was among the meanest of his company (mean in the world's judgment) gathering sticks for the fire, when, in the power of Christ, he shook the viper from his hand. Beloved, this is unlike all that which corrupted Christendom has sanctioned in her ministers, as their due and suitable dignities! But Paul was in his own esteem (and would have others esteem him by that rule also), just what the Lord had made him. He would not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ had not wrought by him (Rom xv. 18). He measured himself only by that line which the Lord had distributed to him. (2 Cor. x.) What folly does he count all boasting in the flesh. He was compelled for a little moment thus to be a fool before the Church at Corinth; but with what zeal, with what revenge, with what clearing of himself, does he leave off this "folly," as he calls it? (2 Cor. xi.) Would that the same mind were in us all, the same zeal for the Lord, the same revenge upon the flesh, which is fit, like the offal of a sacrifice, only for the burning outside the camp.

To me, brethren, I confess, these principles are very clear from the New Testament. The Lord knows that naturally, I would rather have all continued and settled in the flesh, that we might the more securely hold on our quiet and even way. But I pray for more faith, for more living and powerful apprehension of this truth, that the earth and its inhabitants are to be dissolved, and that Christ alone is to bear up its pillars. We need the faith that would root us out of that earth in which the cross of the Son of God was once planted, and in which the course of this world, continuing the same as it was then, has fixed that cross only more firmly. We want that faith that would call us to arise and depart from it, and go forth to meet the bridegroom.

But I would now hasten to a close, having extended my paper further than I would have chosen, and take a few short notices of our Apostle in his *person*, *ministry*, and *conduct*; for in these he will be found to illustrate many features of the dispensation, as his Apostleship was the general sign of it.

In his *person* we see much of the dispensation reflected. He could call himself the *chief of sinners*, when he would magnify the *grace* of the dispensation, and shew that it

could reach over all the aboundings of sin. But he could also call himself *blameless as touching the righteousness which is in the law*, when he would make known the character of the *righteousness* of the dispensation, and shew how it sets aside all other as loss and dung (1 Tim. i. 15, Phil. iii. 8). These things are wondrous, and yet perfect. Saul of Tarsus is taken up by the Spirit, in order to present in him the *grace* and the *righteousness* that are now brought to us. Strange, that we should find the first place in the first rank of sinners occupied by him who was thus touching the law blameless. But so it was. A fair, bright, and full sample of the workmanship of the dispensation is given to us in him who was made the representative minister of it. The *grace* of God and the *righteousness* of God are displayed in his person.

So in his person we see the "thorn in flesh." And let this particularly be what it may, it was in the judgment of the world a blot. The comeliness that a world could estimate was tarnished by this. In the Spirit, he had wondrous revelations, and the secret of God was blessedly with him; but before men there was a stain upon him. But all this is in character with the dispensation. The saints, exalted in Christ, before men are to be humbled. The world is not to know them. The dispensation admits of no confidence in the flesh. In it God has set the flesh aside as profitless. The right eye is gone, and the right hand is gone; things after the external appearance are not to be looked after; there is to be no measuring or comparing of things by any such rule. And according to this, Paul had a temptation in the flesh. There was put upon him something that tempted the scorn of men. As when Jacob became Israel, he halted across the plain of Peniel. The flesh was marred, when before God he got a new and honourable name. But the shrinking of his thigh was in the same love as his victory over the divine stranger. And so the thorn in Paul's flesh, was in the same love as his rapture into paradise. Hezekiah, in the day when he was exalted, had been left alone, that God might prove him (2 Chron. xxxii. 31). But the Lord was gracious to Paul, and would not leave him alone, but put a thorn in his flesh. And if he had stood in the full intelligence of the Spirit, he would not have prayed for its removal; for he had soon to recall his prayer, and to glory rather in his infirmities. Thus there is none perfect, dear brethren,

but the master himself. Favoured and honoured as Paul and others may have been, there is none perfect but the Lord. This is comfort to our souls. God rests well pleased in him for ever, but in him only. He never had a desire to recall, never a prayer to summon back from the Father's ear. "He was heard." But Paul had to learn that he had mistaken the rule of blessing and of glory; he had to learn, as every saint has, that when he was weak, then he was strong. And thus with the thorn in his flesh, but the power of Christ resting on him, he shews forth the saints in this dispensation.

In his *ministry*, we see something of the dispensation also. "The foolishness of God," and "the weakness of God," (that is, the testimony to Christ crucified, which the world judges "mean and slight,") were now dispensed, and according to this was Paul's ministry. It was weak and foolish in the judgment of the Greeks of this world. He came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom. His preaching was not with enticing words, but he was among the saints in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. (1 Cor. ii.)

But further, extended as his preaching was over the world, it set forth the *comprehensiveness* of the grace of God in this dispensation. In principle the sound of this grace was to go to the ends of the earth; and so St. Paul speaks of his ministry as stretching itself on the right hand and on the left, from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum. He had received "Apostleship for the obedience to the faith among all nations," and he felt himself debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. He spake to the Jews, and to the devout persons, to the common people as many as he met with, and then with the philosophers. (Acts xvii.) His purpose was to compass the whole earth. And thus he speaks continually to the Churches of passing from place to place, by Corinth into Macedonia, returning from thence to Corinth again, and so being brought into Judea. And again, he speaks of going to Rome, as he takes his journey into Spain. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and the Spirit that was in this Apostle of God, therefore thus reached the ends of the world. He was calling on men every where to repent, as did the dispensation. And when he could no longer go about with the gospel, being the prisoner of Jesus Christ for the

Gentiles, "he received *all* that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xxviii. 30). All this was expressive of the comprehensiveness of the grace that was now calling in "bad and good, that the wedding might be furnished with guests." In the Jewish times, the ordinances of God were all at Jerusalem. It was there that men ought to worship. The priest abode in the temple, for the dispensation was one that refused converse with men, but in righteousness kept the flock of God folded in the land of Judea. But now the dispensation is one of grace, going forth in the activities of love, to gather home the lost sheep that have gone astray upon the mountains; and preaching is therefore the great ordinance of God now. Preaching is the new appointment of God, something that is beyond the mere services of a secluded temple; and of this new ordinance Paul was made the most distinguished minister.

Then in his *conduct*, I may say, that in a very general way it was made to exhibit the dispensation. In his conduct, as he says, there was "a manifestation of the truth." And this is what faith always in measure does. Faith in a living form reflects the truth dispensed. The *conduct* of faith, as one has observed, is always according to the *principle* of God's present dealings. As St. John says,— "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." And as St. Peter says,— "not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, *blessing*; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a *blessing*" (1 Pet. iii. 9). That is, *blessing* being bestowed on us, *blessing* is required of us. And so in St. Paul's conduct, we trace the great principles of God's present dealing with the Church. The Son of God emptied himself of the glory that he had before the world was; and while on earth ever refused himself. With title to call for legions of angels, he was dumb as a sheep before his shearers; being free as the Son, he submitted to the exactions of others (Matt. xvii. 27). So St. Paul, though free from all, made himself the servant of all, becoming all things to all men for their good (1 Cor. xi. 1, 2 Cor. xi. 29). And mark his words to the Ephesian elders, when he takes leave not only of them but of his ministry, ready to go into prison or unto death, for his master—Jesus (Acts xx. 17—35). Mark what he there declares his conduct in

his ministry had been, and how he testifies of himself that "he had shewed them all things;" thus telling them that he had been made to take the honoured place of reflecting the actings of God in the gospel, letting the Churches see in him the blessedness of dealing in grace, which is (as we to our salvation know,) the way of the Son of God in the gospel. "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive." This was a holy testimony which the Spirit enabled him to bear. And in a certain sense I would say, that he even surpassed the gospel; not the *spirit* of it (that was impossible), but the *mere conditions* of it. The Lord had ordained that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel; but he had not used this his power in the gospel (1 Cor. ix. 12). He might have been burdensome to the disciples as an Apostle of Christ, but he was desirous to impart to them, not the gospel of God only, but his own soul, because they were dear to him (1 Thess. ii. 9). But what does this reflect but the unmeasured and untiring love of God, which has visited us in the gospel? So effectually had he learnt Christ—so blessedly was he, through grace, enabled to exhibit the dispensation—and beside, so fully was he a pattern of that conversation to which the dispensation calls us, that he could say, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample; for our conversation is in heaven." He lived on earth as a citizen of the heavenly city, and was (as the Spirit allowed him strikingly to express it) "unto God a sweet savour of Christ.

But however honoured he might thus have been as the Apostle of the Gentiles, and in his Apostleship, person, ministry, and conduct, the witness of the dispensation; yet he was not sent, as he tells us, to baptize, but to preach the gospel. For there was now to be no gathering point on earth. If any such, this Apostle would have been it. But, no; Christ was the centre of all renewed souls, and he was in heaven. The Lord was not now setting up one visible point, as he had once done at Jerusalem. The dispensation was heavenly: its source of power and its place of gathering was the upper sanctuary. It was "a citizenship in heaven" that was now enrolling; for not yet was it to be said *of Zion*—"this and that man was born in

her." All that in every place called on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ were now recorded on high, as in the Lamb's book.

Such was our Apostle; and far more might be added of the same character; but I will not further speak of them. I would now notice only one other thing that was peculiar to him also; I mean, his rapture into Paradise. In this he stands also as the representative of the dispensation, inasmuch as it was as "a man in Christ," that he was favoured with this rapture. In it he knows himself only as such, and therefore this paradise is the portion of all such. I judge it assuredly to have been *the place of the spirit of the saint while absent from the body*, and to which the pardoned thief went on the day of his crucifixion. Paul was *actually** caught up to it for a season, but no other man has ever had the same joy. He calls it "paradise"—"the third heaven," the place of abundant visions and revelations. Whether in or out of the body, he knew not, but there he was. He has not been allowed to tell us much about it, and scripture is generally silent on the nature of it. But there he was, and in this rapture of our Apostle, as by the teaching of scripture, it is witnessed to us, that it is better to depart and be with Christ, and that the place of the delivered spirit is a place of abundant revelation, and a paradise of visions of Christ.

The actual being of such a place was opened fully to the faith of the Church (though it might have been apprehended before), when the head of the Church said—"Father, into thy hands I commend *my spirit*." And again was it verified to our faith when Stephen, "a man in Christ," said, "Lord Jesus, receive *my spirit*." But still this is not the Church's perfection. The Spirit given to us of God, is but the earnest of the house "eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. v.) The throne of the Son of man is the inheritance of the saints, and the glory for which the

* Ezekiel had been caught away to Jerusalem and other places, as a prophet to Israel, that he might in the visions of God, understand and declare the divine counsels. And so St. John was taken away to various scenes, as prophet to the Church, that he might testify in like manner of the divine purposes. But these were only raptures in the Spirit. Philip had been *actually*, and not merely in Spirit, caught away to Azotus from the desert of Gaza, that as an evangelist, he might pursue his ministry among the habitation of men. So Paul is *actually* caught up into paradise, but this was not as a prophet, nor as an evangelist, nor as an Apostle, but "as a man in Christ," that all "in Christ" might know their portion in that blessing and honour which awaits them after this life, and which was so great that our Apostle, returning to the flesh and to the earth, was in danger of being exalted by it above measure.

Church waits. But that place of glory is not yet prepared, as the place of the spirit of them that depart in the Lord is. There may have been visions of it, as on the holy mount, but it rests still only on vision; it is the hope still long deferred. Christ waits at the right hand for it, and the Spirit and the bride say, Come. The whole creation groaneth for it. But it still tarries. However, beloved, the word is, wait for it—it will surely come, and will not tarry.

Many whom I love much in the Lord, may not judge with me in these things. And surely I know that we know now but in part, and therefore can but prophesy in part. But we may be helpers of each other's joy, and so has the Lord appointed it. Nevertheless, let us take heed, brethren, that we be not taught the fear of God by the commandment of men. Let us take heed of obedience in the flesh; but watch that we do what we do in the power of communion with the Lord. And in whatever of enlarged knowledge we are instructed through others, let us have grace to try it all by a conscience exercised before our God, and inquire after truth as in his presence. Be it so with thy saints, blessed Lord, more and more! Amen.

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