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NOT I BUT CHRIST

OR,

LAW AND GRACE

AS REVIEWED

IN THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

BY

J. L. HARRIS,

Author of "Jewish Bondage and Christian Freedom," &c.

New Edition—Revised.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following pages are the substance of Notes taken of Six Expository Lectures on the Epistle to the Galatians. They have been revised, and in some parts enlarged, with the hope that they may "help them which have believed through grace."

J. L. H.

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NOTES ON GALATIANS.



LECTURE I.

GAL. I.

THE epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians both treat of the same great subject, namely, the way of a sinner's justification before God. There is, however, an important difference between the two epistles. In the epistle to the Romans, the apostle states what the gospel really is—the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, because therein is the righteousness of God revealed in the way of faith. But in the epistle to the Galatians, he had to do with those who, having received the gospel of the grace of God, had attempted to unite with the gospel the works of the law, and by this very means to nullify the gospel. Hence we find much sternness in this epistle; and on no other occasion does St. Paul so strongly assert his apostolical authority.

“Paul, an apostle, (not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead ;) and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia; grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1-3.)

The apostle was not sent forth from men, neither did he receive his commission from men. He here insists on the speciality of his apostleship. Unlike the twelve, his commission was direct from the *risen* Jesus. It came fresh from heaven after Jesus had finished His work; as the apostle himself states to the elders of Ephesus, “That I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which *I have received of the Lord Jesus*, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” God seems to have anticipated the fiction of the present day, by breaking any semblance of apostolic succession, in His manner of choosing the apostle Paul.

Fellowship in labour, and especially labour in the truth of the gospel, was very precious to the apostle; he therefore associates the brethren with himself, as sharing their perfect sympathy and concurrence with him in what he here states. Galatia was a large province, in which there were several congregations of Christians, and he directs his epistle to the *churches* of Galatia. In Acts xvi. 6, the first mention is made of

the apostle visiting Galatia, and in Acts xviii. 23, we find him going through Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. Peter also addresses "the strangers scattered throughout Galatia." This is the only instance in which the apostle addresses the several churches of a province; his other epistles, except those to individuals, are addressed to the one church in a particular city. The mode of apostolic address in the several epistles, and the manner in which the apostle asserts his office, are well worthy of consideration. In the epistle to the Philippians, he does not assert his apostleship at all, taking, as I believe, the higher title, in his estimation, of servant of Jesus Christ.

"Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (4.)

This verse really contains the whole subject of the epistle. Such is the way of Paul's teaching; he introduces the subject in a very summary manner, and amplifies it afterwards. What has law to do with those for whom Jesus has given Himself to rescue them out of this present evil world? For believers to have recourse to the law is to go back into the world,

out of which Christ gave Himself to deliver them. This is of practical importance. There are many who need quite as much now to be rescued out of traditional Christianity, as the Galatians needed to be rescued out of idolatry. How many things have we all received from tradition, and not from the Word of God. We cannot hold to the Scriptures and tradition; the authority of the one will necessarily supersede the authority of the other. Adherence to the Scriptures will make us relinquish tradition; a clinging to tradition will make the Word of God of none effect. "Christ gave Himself for our sins." If I believe in substitution, I see that the Lord Jesus has stood in my place, and that I am thereby, according to the will of our God and Father, "delivered [or rescued] out of this present world."

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." (6, 7.)

The apostle ministered the gospel of the grace of God; and arduous was his labour, and sore his trials, in seeking to preserve its purity. Under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, he could see the truth of the gospel imperilled, where

others could see no harm. If we put devotedness in service, or the best of good works, as supplementary to the work of Christ, it is no gospel at all. It was certain men *that believed* which said "it was needful to circumcise the Gentiles, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." (Compare Acts xi. and xv.) It was peril not from without, but rising up in the very bosom of the Church. The fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles may well be called the Christian's Magna Charta. These teachers said, "*Except* ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." The gospel is independent of these 'ifs' and 'excepts.' If they are introduced, they subvert the gospel of the grace of God. The apostle James, in this chapter of the Acts, teaches the same truth as Paul in this epistle, namely, that the attempt to add any thing to the finished work of Christ, as the ground of acceptance with God, is to "trouble the brethren," and to "subvert their souls." It is God who tells us how precious the work of Christ is to Him. He knows its value as we know it not. God sets forth the gospel as meeting all the need of the sinner; for if the omniscient God searches the heart and trieth the reins, the same God knows also the preciousness of the blood of

Christ, and testifies of it to us. How easily may even a believer in Christ turn the gospel into no gospel, to the misery of himself as well as of others. The religion of Christendom is but the Galatian error in full manifestation; it has perverted the gospel of the grace of God, and substituted in its place a modified covenant of works.

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” (8-10.)

It is a solemn thought, that the apostle should speak thus of an angel. Angels heralded the birth of Jesus. Angels ministered to Him in the wilderness. An angel strengthened Him in His agony in Gethsemane. Angels were at His grave on the resurrection-morn, and announced the glad tidings, “He is risen.” Angels relieved the bewildered men of Galilee, by the announcement, that the Jesus they had lost sight of should so come again, as they had seen Him go away. Jesus was *seen* of angels; but angels never *tasted* of His grace in redemption.

They can see the virtue of His blood, and say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." But they cannot say, "Thou hast redeemed *us* to God by thy blood." It is thus that a lost and ruined sinner is brought by redemption into greater nearness to God than an unfallen angel. And it is the experience of such amazing grace that makes one, comparatively ignorant in other respects, more sensitive as to the truth of the gospel, than the man of vast parts, or even than an angel, who has never tasted that grace. Is there such a sense among us of the value of the gospel? Is there such a jealousy for the truth of the gospel in our day? The jealousy of the apostle for the gospel was such, that he could say, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Will such faithfulness be pleasing to men? What says the apostle? "Do I now persuade men, or God?" that is, in using this language, am I seeking to approve myself to God or to men? The gospel cuts from under men every possible assumption. The denial of self must be the denial of self in every form—bad self, good self, religious self. This displeases

men. Herein is the offence of the Cross. There is no occasion to affect singularity in preaching the gospel. Let it be preached simply and earnestly, and it is of itself sufficiently offensive, because it sweeps away all refuges of lies. It is a solemn word, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (11, 12.)

We have had abundant experience, from the days of the apostle to the present day, of what the gospel would be "according to man." It would entirely 'frustrate' the grace of God. The gospel is the expression of God's thoughts and ways to man as a convicted sinner, and His thoughts and ways are higher than our thoughts and ways. The most experienced Christians find it a constant battle and struggle to beat down their carnal thoughts, and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The thoughts of God toward us are thoughts of grace, love, and peace; but we often think of Him as a hard master and austere man. The apostle is exceedingly jealous on the point of having received his gospel directly from the

glorified Jesus. When the Lord appeared to him in the way, He thus gave his commission, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But 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." (Acts xxvi. 15, 16.) It was by direct revelation from the Lord that the apostle received his gospel; and we, too, need "the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Jesus." Even now God is pleased to "reveal to babes that which is hidden from the wise and prudent." And he who knows in his own case, that "where sin has abounded, grace has superabounded," is in possession of the highest wisdom, even the wisdom of God.

"For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." (13, 14.)

In these verses Paul shows us that it must have been an extraordinary power which delivered him from his traditional religion, which made him think that he "ought to do many things

contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He who had been so studiously instructed in Judaism needed the manifestation of something much more excellent to deliver him from his religion, "received by tradition from his fathers," and to show him its vanity and powerlessness. This is important. We often regard the gospel as a remedy to which perforce we must have recourse; but Paul regarded it in comparison with a previous revelation of God, which indeed had its glory, but which faded away before the excelling glory of which he was a minister—"the glorious gospel of the blessed God." The most accomplished and zealous religionist, and the chief of sinners, found their identity in Saul of Tarsus, when he saw himself in the light of the glory of Jesus. And so it ever must be. However sincere we may have been in our religious convictions, if they have not been according to God, but according to tradition, we are awakened to the discovery, in the light of God's truth, that in the very thing on which we most prided ourselves, we were most contrary to God. "Men," says the Lord Himself, "will think they are doing God service, by putting you to death." The greatest opposers of the doctrines of grace are those who receive their religion from tradition, and not from the Word of God.

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.” (15-17.)

In the 15th verse, the apostle seems to allude to Jeremiah i. 5: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto *the nations*.” Paul was made an apostle of the Gentiles by as distinct an act of God’s sovereign power, as Jeremiah was appointed a prophet to the Gentiles. God called both one and the other, without any previous training, to their respective ministries; the one denouncing God’s wrath on the Gentiles, the other preaching peace to them through Jesus Christ. But the call of the apostle by the grace of God was accompanied by an inward revelation of the glory of the Son to his soul. There was indeed an outward revelation which affected others as well as himself: his companions “fell to the earth” (Acts xxvi. 4), as well as himself; they were “speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.” But however they might be affected and astonished; whatever might have been wrought in them

subsequently, at that time it pleased God to reveal His Son in Paul alone. It is one of the cravings of men's hearts, "to see signs and wonders;" but there is nothing saving in such manifestations; yea, rather the revelation of the Lord Jesus in glory, without any inward revelation to the soul, will be the world's judgment. But now the Lord Jesus Christ is manifested to some in the world, without being manifested unto the world. "The world seeth Him no more, but they see Him." This is an essential distinction between the Church and the world. The Church, by the presence of the Holy Ghost, now delights in an unseen object, even Jesus, and loves His appearing, that she may see Him as He is, and be with Him for ever. The world indeed shall see Him, but only to hear its own doom from His lips.

The traditional religion of Saul the Pharisee gave way before this inward revelation. He saw its profitlessness, and, instead of being gain, he could only regard it as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. He did not "confer with flesh and blood;" for he had the witness in himself, in the blessed suitability of Jesus the crucified, but now risen and glorified one, to his need. It is ever dangerous to confer with flesh

and blood concerning that which God has revealed. This we see to be the case in another apostle. The Father, not flesh and blood, had revealed to Peter the glory of the Person of Jesus; but Peter conferred with flesh and blood, and reasoned against so glorious a Person as the Son of the living God having to suffer. How differently does he speak when, led of the Holy Ghost, he says, "Christ has also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God." The first thoughts of faith are right. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; he conferred with flesh and blood, but what sorrow and trouble he brought on himself in the matter of Hagar. And so with regard to ourselves; we receive God's testimony concerning His Son Jesus Christ, and find peace with God as our portion; but we are tempted to confer with flesh and blood; we demand, as it were, evidences from ourselves, which prove not satisfactory to ourselves, instead of resting on the evidence of God to us in the gift and work of His Son, in all its suitability to meet our need. No evidence we can produce from ourselves can ever be satisfactory, because it must ever be accompanied with the consciousness of imperfection, and the soul can find refuge only in that

which is perfect, and complete, and finished. Such is the work of Christ on the Cross; and on this God Himself calls us to repose with confidence. The moment we confer with our intellect, we get darkness to our souls.

Paul did not go up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before him, to get either confirmation to the truth of the gospel, or their authority for preaching it; he had received both directly from the risen Jesus; but he went into Arabia, into the desert. He needed privacy, to be alone with God, in order to digest the wonderful truth he had received. This is worthy of note for us all, but especially for young converts who may be tempted to court publicity when they need retirement. From the wilderness Paul goes not to Jerusalem, but returns again to Damascus—the place of His wonderful conversion.

“Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judæa which were in Christ: but they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.” (18–24.)

The more we trace Paul's steps, after the Lord appeared to him in the way, the more shall we understand the gospel of that grace which he preached, and delighted to preach. And sad indeed is it for those who preach the gospel to others, if they taste not its grace as often as they preach it. The glorious gospel of the blessed God, the more it is known, the more must it be delighted in.

Now these personal incidents in Paul's history, brought so solemnly before us in verse 20, are certainly intended to teach us the nature of the gospel which he preached. Paul, a proficient disciple, both of the law and the traditions men had added to it, shows us in his person that the grace of God, in the revelation of His Son in him, had delivered him from that which was his former boast. How entirely, therefore, must law and gospel be opposed to each other.

Again, he studiously kept away for some years from Jerusalem, which might be regarded as the great religious centre, to show that he got nothing from thence. And when he did go to Jerusalem to visit Peter, it was not to get authority from the apostles, but to have fellowship in labour with them. The marked manner in which Paul speaks of himself, as having persecuted the church, tends to show us himself

as a specimen or pattern man of what the grace of the gospel could effect. If he preached the gospel of the grace of God to others, he could ever point to himself as the roaring lion, changed, by the revelation of the Lord Jesus in him, into a lamb. And he saw in others who received his gospel what others saw in him—an elect vessel of mercy, and gave the glory to God of their conversion, as others glorified God in him.

LECTURE II.

GAL. ii.

THE apostle still refers to his own personal history, as affording the most decisive evidence that he himself did not in any wise look to the law for righteousness.

“Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.” (1, 2.)

In the brief and rapid notice of Paul's history after his conversion, in the Acts of the Apostles, Titus is not mentioned as being in company with the apostle, although Barnabas is named (Acts ix. 26-28) as the one who introduced him to the other apostles, and “declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way.” The apostle “went up by revelation.” God's time had now come for him to go up there. Had he gone up at the instant of his conversion, it might have been argued that he went there to receive authority from them which were “apostles

before him." God has not only His ways with His servants, but "our times are in His hands." That which may be right and fitting at one time would be unseasonable at another. Paul went up to Jerusalem with confidence, because he went up under direct Divine guidance; and he went as an equal to them which were apostles before him, not to receive any thing from them, save their hearty fellowship, which he prized; but to communicate to them that gospel which he had received "by revelation," and which he preached among the Gentiles, lest there should be even the semblance that there were two gospels, and so his labour would be in vain. When God teaches, and by His teaching leads a sinner to Jesus, He wants no confirmation from others. "He that believeth on Jesus sets to his seal that God is true." Taught by the Holy Ghost Himself, that he is ruined, lost, and undone, and that his only refuge is in Jesus, he has the witness in himself. He finds the suitability of Christ's work to his actual condition as a sinner, and wants no confirmation from others.

"But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus,

that they might bring us into bondage : to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour ; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." (3-5.)

Titus did not accompany the apostle by chance to Jerusalem ; but under the ordering of God. He was led there to furnish a convincing proof, that nothing must be added to faith in Christ Jesus in order to salvation. The apostle resisted the circumcision of Titus, and yet he allowed the circumcision of Timothy. (Acts xvi. 1-3.) The cases of these two individuals are apparently similar, yet the apostle's conduct in relation to them is very different. In this difference of action is involved a principle, the violation of which has been the fruitful source of division in the Church of God, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing;" it is a matter indifferent in itself ; but the moment an attempt is made to *impose* it, peremptory resistance must be made, lest the liberty of the gospel be infringed, or conscience towards God be wounded. In the present case it was "false brethren," not unbelieving Jews, who sought to impose circumcision, and thus to Judaize the gospel. How successful the efforts of false brethren have been in this direction since the eagle eye of the apostle to discern the real principle at work, and the direct au-

thority of God to crush the attempt has been removed, the present state of Christendom plainly declares. Even in this very land, it is the violation of this principle, two hundred years ago, which has rent the Church into various denominations. Paul resisted the false brethren, because "the truth of the gospel" was imperilled. Had he yielded, the way would have been opened for one condition upon another, till often the poor believer would come to regard the gospel of liberty as if it were a heavy yoke. For the sake of avoiding needless offence to the Jews, Paul circumcised Timothy; but to preserve the liberty of the gospel, he sternly resisted the efforts of "false brethren" to have Titus circumcised. "There were," as Peter says, "false prophets among the people," there shall be false teachers among you; and it is "false teachers" who have corrupted the gospel, and "false brethren" brought into bondage by them, which have produced that which passes under the name of Christianity, and which effectually obscures the gospel of the grace of God. If any attempt to impose upon us a matter of indifference as necessary to salvation, or, as a term of communion, it must be resisted, in order that the authority of man may not supersede the authority of Christ; but gracious

yielding, even in matters of our own liberty, is a part of that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. (1 Cor. viii. 13.)

There were *false brethren* in the apostle's days. What must it be now? Then it was the exception to find among the guests a man without a wedding garment on. The tares and the wheat have grown on together, and they are so alike, that only one eye can accurately discern the difference. The world has become a great tare-field; false brethren predominate, persons not true to the Lord Jesus, though bearing His name. In the days of the apostle, such false brethren allowed that Jesus was the Messiah, but acknowledged Him in a carnal way; and sanctioned their Judaism by His name. And now they have their temples, priest, sacrifices, and offerings, all which have the tendency to undermine the truth of the gospel, and to take believers off from the security they have in Christ Jesus, against which the powers of hell cannot prevail. This blessed doctrine is unpalatable, because, if salvation be certain, it must be independent of man, and wholly of God. Assurance is the property of the believer in the Lord Jesus; it is God's certainty, not ours.

“But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God

accepteth no man's person :) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: but contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles :) and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do." (6-10.)

"God accepteth no man's person:" a hard saying. Who can hear it? Peter had to learn it by a distinct revelation from heaven (see Acts x.); Paul, by kicking against the pricks till subdued by the grace of God. And we have to learn the same lesson under God's hand. It is neither personal qualification, nor the things we do, nor official character, which God regards; but that which His own grace makes any to be in Christ, and the gift He of His sovereign will confers on any. "A man can receive [take unto himself] nothing, except it be given him from heaven." Nothing could be added to this. Paul had received a commission directly from heaven, and however it might be the joy of Peter, James, and John to

acknowledge the grace and the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ to this elect vessel of mercy, they dared not attempt to add any thing unto it, or to come in between the Master and His servant. Let a man have all the credentials which human authority can confer, if he has not received grace and ability from God to preach His gospel, he is not to be accredited as a minister of Christ. He cannot preach that which he does not know himself. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Cor. v. 18.) Those who were apostles before Paul readily and gladly recognized, that the same God who so effectually wrought in the ministry of Peter unto the Jews, now wrought as effectually in the ministry of Paul to the Gentiles; and those who were esteemed pillars cheerfully gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas; thus testifying that, though in different lines, they were serving one common master—fellow-builders in God's building—fellow-labourers in God's husbandry. Nothing was more dear to him, who had learnt at his conversion that Christ and His Church were one, than to bring about a practical exhibition of this oneness in the happy fellowship of believers among the Jews and among the Gen-

tiles; and for this the apostle of the Gentiles himself thought it not beneath his office to be the bearer, in conjunction with others, of a certain contribution made among the richer Gentile believers for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.” (11-13.)

The truth of the gospel was not only imperilled by “false brethren,” who would fain undermine its liberty, but likewise by the conduct of that apostle, to whom it had been distinctly revealed, that he was not to consider a Jew more clean than a Gentile. When God is the cleanser, and the blood of Jesus the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, all therein washed are equally clean before God. Peter’s walk, in the instance here mentioned, was not upright according to the truth of the gospel. Paul withstood him to the face, because in this respect he was blameworthy. Regard for persons, and for his traditionary religion, furnished the occasion for Peter’s characteristic weakness

to show itself. He had, in freely associating with the Gentile believers, shown how entirely he recognized that God was no respecter of persons, and what God had cleansed he dared not call unclean. But when some brethren came from Jerusalem, with their thoughts full of Jewish privileges, Peter must either, for the sake of their company, turn his back on the Gentiles, or be content to bear their sneers by continuing to associate with the Gentiles. It needed twenty-five years for Abraham to get at the bottom of the unbelief lurking in his heart (Gen. xx.) ; and it needed also much discipline to teach Peter where his danger lay. And so of us all. "The fear of man bringeth a snare;" and those who in one company have faithfully confessed Christ, have in another, through fear of man, denied Him. That great truth, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," is strikingly illustrated in our day, by the moral impossibility of fellowship between the truth of the gospel and traditionary religion. How many, too, as Barnabas, honest believers in heart in the truth of the gospel, are yet, because they seek honour of men, afraid to avow it. Grace is indeed a mighty leveller; it assumes that there is no difference, because all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; neither is

there any difference, as to standing before God, between those who, through His grace, are justified freely through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. How many who shrink from hypocrisy, by pretending to be what they are not, still fall into it in another way, by not avowing what the grace of God has made them to be according to the truth of the gospel. Such was the dissembling of Barnabas, "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost." And let none of us, after reading such instances, think ourselves proof against failure; but rather take to ourselves the word, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

"But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor" (14-18.)

It may appear to us very strange, that the

act of taking a meal with certain persons should invalidate the truth of the gospel. But the most important principles often hinge on an act very insignificant in itself. And it was so here. Had the blood of Jesus cleansed the Gentile believers with a cleansing which all the Jewish rites might shadow forth, but could not effect? Had God put upon them a righteousness, to the dignity of which legal righteousness could not pretend? Then to refuse intercourse with these Gentiles on the ground of ceremonial uncleanness, in order to please the Jews, was verily to undermine the truth of the gospel. But the apostle adduces what both Peter and himself had been by God's grace compelled to do, to show the wrongness of Peter's then course. "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles." This again is a hard saying. No one is a Christian by nature. He may be born of Christian parents, brought up under Christian discipline, and adhere to Christian ordinances; but unless he be born of God, all such external privileges avail him nought. Here is the real point: how few ask themselves—Am I in Christ? Now the Jew had natural hereditary privileges. He was born a Jew, and the Jews were "children of the kingdom," "children of the prophets," "children of the cove-

nant;" but they were cast out. "A Jew by nature" had, therefore, a certain privileged standing above a Gentile by nature. The Gentile was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel; his only title, "sinner of the Gentiles." How hard it is to take our place as those who can prefer no claim on God, and can adoringly rejoice that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. But the argument of the apostle is very cogent. "We, the children of the kingdom and of the prophets, have been forced to cast ourselves on Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; because by the works of law shall no flesh be justified." No flesh; it is a very comprehensive term, and may be taken either morally, intellectually, or religiously. The case in point is the religious Jew, under God's own law, forced to seek deliverance from under it by faith in Christ. Peter himself takes precisely the same line of argument in the memorable council (Acts xv.) as Paul does here. "But we (*i. e.* Jews by nature) believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (sinners of the Gentiles). At Antioch Peter was acting as though Gentiles were to be saved by Judaizing. At Jerusalem, his testimony is, that Jew and Gentile stand on one common level. Both

Peter and Paul must be condemned as transgressors, if, after preaching faith in Christ, because the law could not justify, they built it up again in order to justification. They must have been wrong at the outset in preaching Christ at all, if the law could justify. If Christ had not done all that was needful to put away sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness, so that the believer can stand in holy confidence in God's presence, what has He done at all? Dare we make the law supplementary to Christ, and thus take from the glory of Christ being the only salvation of God? The language of the apostle is very strong; but so also is the legal tendency of all our hearts. We shudder at the thought of making Christ the minister of sin; yet what are we doing, if we build again the very thing from which we fled, viz, the law, in order to be saved or helped by it? We are, by our own act in so doing, constituted transgressors; for we ought never to have left it at all. Grace and law, as the ground of our salvation, cannot stand together; the resting on the one must be the giving up of the other.

“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for

me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (19-21.)

The apostle in this passage, as he does also in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, turns from 'we' to 'I.' This change is not without its significance. The greatest proficient under the law was taught by the strong hand of God Himself, that all the law could do for him was to kill him. In that singular and strange passage in the life of the apostle, when "he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink;" convinced of the glory of Jesus, yet not having received forgiveness of sin in His name, it may be, his whole previous life passed before him. And what was the law in which he boasted, and the righteousness which he vainly thought he had thereby, now that he knew the law in its spirituality—now that "the commandment came" to his conscience in its true light? It was "a ministration of death." The very law to which he looked for life, struck him dead as to all expectations from it; and unless that law was removed out of the way, he could not live unto God. All his past life he had lived unto himself. And such is the spirit of legalism, if in conscience we get under law, we live to ourselves,

and not unto God. In the true doctrine of the Cross, we learn the double lesson, that all are "become dead to the law by the body of Christ;" and "that we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we are held." The law kept men away from God, instead of bringing them near to God. And what are the questions of the day, about altars and priests, but a return to the law, and an attempt to keep sinners from drawing near to God, upon the assumption, that some have a standing of nearness to God which others have not. All believers are brought equally near to God by the blood of Christ. In this respect, there is no difference between Paul and the most ignorant of his disciples.

But such questions are only satisfactorily settled by the true doctrine of the Cross of Christ. The more we enter into that doctrine, the more trivial and childish do such questions appear. The apostle Paul adduces his own experimental acquaintance with the doctrine of the Cross, as the most complete answer to the legalist: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." The doctrine, which the apostle Paul teaches so lucidly in the sixth chapter of the Romans, he here shows to be the life of his own soul. He regards himself to have judicially died, when Christ was crucified. That act was

perfect and complete ; so that he could say, "I am crucified with Christ ;" just as he taught in the epistle to the Romans : "Our old man is crucified with Him." The doctrine of the apostle Peter is essentially the same : "Forasmuch as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind : for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin ; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." The great point is, to fully recognize the judicial act of God in the death of Christ. Faith recognizes that which God hath wrought ; and the sinner, looking unto Jesus on the Cross as his surety, sees death, as the wages of sin, inflicted by the hand of God on his Divine Surety ; so that death in its penal character is to him abolished. Yea, he can regard himself as having already passed through it, saying with the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." Is then Saul the Pharisee alive from the dead ? Not so. "Our old man is crucified with Him." Saul the Pharisee, with all his religious accomplishments, as well as with all his sins, has come to his end in the Cross of Christ, and a new man is risen up in his stead. "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." "Not I." How deeply had Paul learned to set

self aside, because he realized that God had set it aside in the Cross. But "whatever God doeth, He doeth for ever; nothing can be added to it, nothing taken from it." "His work is perfect." This is our rest. God has done it. But for ourselves while down here, it must be a continuous effort to set self aside; and this is our trial. To know Christ's finished work for us is one thing, and when that is well realized, it follows almost as a necessary consequence, that we must take up the Cross and deny self. "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." Paul had made a blessed exchange—self for Christ. Christ was his substitute on the Cross; and now he says, "Christ liveth in me." It is, therefore, a life which is death-proof—a life communicated from the risen Jesus, which death cannot touch. As this life has its source from above, so also its tendencies are to things in heaven. It is a *new life*, in the strictest sense of the word; not the old improved. Its struggles here are against the old life, in whatever form it may appear. It is spiritual life, in opposition to natural life. Hence the apostle adds, "The life which I *now* live in the flesh." It is lived in the flesh *now*, in a poor, groaning, earthy tabernacle; but it will not always be so lived. It will be lived in heaven, in a spiritual and

glorified body, perfectly suited to it. Whilst in the flesh, this life has every thing to contradict it; but when in its own native home, it will indeed spring up, without hindrance, as a well of water, unto everlasting life. Even now, all its own tendencies are upward; it is only nourished by that which comes from heaven. Its meat and drink are heavenly; its worship, its priest, its temple, are in heaven; while the old life is occupied beneath with its worldly sanctuary and successional priesthood. Nothing so much hinders the tendencies of this life as the Jewish ritual, and Christian copies of it. "I live by the faith of the Son of God." "When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall we be manifested with Him in glory," but meanwhile, before we see Him as He is, we live by *the faith* of the Son of God. In His own emphatic words—"We eat Him, and live because of Him." And, as he that eateth, eateth for the nourishment of himself, and not another; so the believer appropriates Christ to himself. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." How blessedly does the apostle bring us to this great cardinal point; and if He has loved me, and given Himself for me, it is not assuredly for me to add the law to His perfect work, and thus to dim my perception of His perfect love.

What strength is in the expression, "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by law, then Christ has died in vain." And yet, if we look round and see what the Christian religion actually is, it falls under the heavy censure of frustrating the grace of God, and of making Christ to have died in vain. The thoughts of most Christians dwell only on forgiveness of sins; but, according to the gospel of the grace of God, however in theory we may divide them, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life are so essentially linked together, that he who has one has all. Christ on the Cross has not only made an end of sin, but brought in also everlasting righteousness. The great central point of attraction, set forth by God to a sinner, is Christ crucified. There He meets him at once, to supply all his need—forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life; so that any attempt to add the law to Christ is as dishonouring to the grace of God and the work of Christ, as it is discouraging to the soul under the sense of sin. The gospel is not a system of negation, but of positive blessing. It brings to us every thing in the way of gift, and faith receives the gift which God gives. Every other gift is comprehended in the unspeakable gift of God—His own Son. How many, even

real Christians, who would heartily repudiate the thought of any confidence in their own works, do not see their danger of frustrating the grace of God, by hesitating to receive what God is pleased to give.

“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.”

LECTURE III.

GAL. iii. 1-20.

“O FOOLISH Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (1-5.)

There is scarcely a more interesting portion in St. Paul's writings than this, because it shews the peculiar fascination of the law on real believers. One form of the corruption of the gospel of the grace of God is the reducing it to a system of ordinances: this tendency shewed itself in the Galatian churches, and the correction of it forms the subject of this part of the epistle. The apostle addresses the Galatians, as 'foolish,' just as our Lord did His disciples, “O *fools*, and slow of heart to believe.”

There was folly in looking to the law for righteousness after they had known the grace of the gospel. The grace of the gospel had been presented to them most conspicuously in the doctrine of the Cross of Christ, but there was a 'bewitching' power which drew them off from the Cross, and made them turn to the law for righteousness. It was as though the law had set its eyes on them, like the snake on its victims, so that they were utterly powerless to get away from it. No language can more forcibly present to us what the law really is; whether moral or ceremonial, we need not enquire, for the Scripture regards the law as a whole. Some would fain add their own moral righteousness as a make-weight in the scale of their justification; others have recourse to a system of ordinances, to make up for the defect of moral righteousness; but, in either case, it is the fascinating power of law which prevents them from looking to Jesus Christ, as the object which God proposes for righteousness to every one that believeth. Again, how strong is the expression, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you." The publicity and prominence which the apostle gave to the doctrine of the Cross, was that of a proclamation set forth by authority in the most

frequented parts of the city. Such appears to be the force of 'set forth.' Had the eye of the Galatians been fixed on the cross of Christ, they would not have turned to law for righteousness. When the doctrine of the Cross is set forth in all its stern truth, it is God's verdict against man's pretensions to wisdom, or righteousness, or strength; and it is this which makes that doctrine still offensive. But at the same time, the doctrine is full of comfort to those who know it; for it is the "making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness."

Did you, says the apostle, receive the Spirit, because you kept the law? or because you believed the testimony to the finished work of Christ? The Holy Ghost is the seal of God set on that perfectly finished work, that we may know the value which God has set on it. God will not set such a seal on any imperfect work or righteousness. But if He gave the Holy Ghost to them, it was in consequence of their complete cleansing by the blood of Jesus, and the perfect righteousness in which they stood before God in Him. Beginning in such a blessed standing in the Spirit, they were so foolish as to think to better their standing by some works of their own. This is very instructive,

because it so often characterizes a stage in the career of a believer. Ignorantly and unconsciously, it may be, after his first joy in the knowledge of Christ has been blunted, and he has lapsed into worldliness or carelessness, he seeks to recover the sense of security by some energies of his own, instead of seeing that the sense of security can only be had by standing in grace. He begins in the Spirit, acknowledges the true doctrine of the Cross, not only as that in which he finds remission of sins, but as that which has also taught him his own worthlessness; nevertheless, such is the fascinating power of law, he would fain be made perfect by the flesh, as the Galatians were attempting to do.

Again, they had been sufferers; but had they suffered because of their attempts to keep the law? No; but on account of their confession of Christ. Their heathen friends and relatives did not persecute them because they asserted that duties were to be regarded, but because of the exclusiveness of the doctrine of Christ, which would allow no goodness, strength, righteousness, or wisdom, but in His name.

As to the apostle himself, had he been putting them under the law? did he minister the Spirit to them upon the ground of legal obedience, or of faith in Christ? He then refers to Abraham.

“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” (6-9.)

In the epistle to the Romans, as well as in this epistle, the apostle refers to the history of Abraham. His history is given us at large in the Scriptures, as God's portrait of a believer. If the history of all believers were written by the Spirit of truth, we should find the same general outline as in the history of Abraham. “They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” Abraham stood before God not as a doer, but as a recipient of blessings, and depositary of promises. And thus Abraham becomes the head and pattern of the family of faith. The language which the apostle uses is very remarkable,—“the Scripture foreseeing.” He here invests the Scriptures of the Old Testament as with an attribute of God; and this shews the place which these Scriptures have in unfolding the counsels of God. “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all

• nations be blessed.” A sinner of the Gentiles is justified before God, just in the same way as Abraham was, undertaking nothing, doing nothing, but receiving the testimony of God to what God Himself has done. It was indeed in the case of Abraham as to what God *would* do ; but “the promise which God made to the fathers, He has fulfilled the same, in that he has raised up Christ from the dead.” Abraham believed God, and we believe the same God, who now testifies to what He has done in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The more simply we take God at His word, the more we resemble Abraham. “So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful [that is, with believing] Abraham.”

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (10-14.)

But if, instead of taking God at His word,

by believing on His Son, and thus setting to our seal that God is true, we have recourse to legal works or legal ordinances for our justification, we immediately get off the ground of blessing, as being recipients of what God gives to us in Christ, as freely as He gave promises to Abraham, and we bring ourselves under the curse. This is a solemn thought; that after hearing of the grace of Christ, any should be so fascinated by law as to bring themselves in so terrible a position. But so it is. That same Scripture which so blessedly preached the gospel to Abraham, as sternly says to all who put themselves under the law, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." This Scripture cannot be broken. But the great professing body have so modified the grace of the gospel of God, so fettered it with conditions, and at the same time so pared down God's law to the level of human convenience, that they have become almost identified with the Galatian error, and, therefore, under the sentence of these solemn words. The law knows nothing of mercy. It takes its course. It is of no use to say, I believe that God gave the law, or even to approve of it. Have you *continued* in it? If not, you are under the curse. But the gospel

pronounces this great oracle, "The just shall live by faith." As the apostle himself had said, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." Those who live on their own graces get into an unhealthy state of soul. Neither our good works nor our graces are Christ. We cannot have faith in them. They may be evidences to others, but not to ourselves, who have the certain evidence of God's testimony to Christ. "The law is not of faith;" it is not answered by believing, but by doing. But you do answer God's testimony to the finished work of His Son; and rest your soul upon it by faith. It is well to notice the 'we,' 'ye,' 'us,' in this epistle. It was not Gentiles, but Israel, who were brought under law at Mount Sinai; and those who were under it needed Christ's work on the Cross to redeem them from under it; and yet these Gentiles were virtually putting themselves under the law. Paul knew what it was to be under the law, and knew the blessedness of deliverance from it. "Christ has redeemed *us* from the curse of the law, being made a curse for *us*: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Those who were under the law must needs be rescued from such a position, or they never could have confidence in God. Christ magnified the law, and made it honour-

able ; not to impose it on sinners of the Gentiles, to bar their access to God, but to make a clear way for the outflowing of the riches of God's grace to them, "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." God now meets sinners, not in the way of requirement, as under the law, but in the way of setting forth Christ "as a propitiation through faith in His blood." God Himself is preaching peace by Jesus Christ ; so that the blessing comes as freely to those who believe, as it did to Abraham. There was no promise of the Spirit to those who were under the law ; that promise was connected with faith, and was made good in consequence of Christ having glorified the Father, and finished the work He had given Him to do ; for the Holy Spirit came down in consequence of the exaltation of Jesus. It was not because they had kept the law, that Paul and other believing Jews received the Spirit, but because they believed in Jesus ; they received "the promise of the Spirit through faith."

"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men ; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many ; but as of one, And to thy seed,

which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise : but God gave it to Abraham by promise." (15-18.)

The apostle proceeds to illustrate his doctrine by reference to an ordinary practice among men. If a man makes a will, and bequeaths certain legacies, absolutely and unconditionally, no one would allow an executor afterwards to impose conditions. "Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto." We usually attach a legal sense to the word covenant; but it was no legal covenant that God made with Abraham, but absolute, unconditional promises, which God Himself covenanted to perform. But God's covenant had respect to Christ, Abraham's special Seed, in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen, unto the glory of God by those who believe. Receiving Christ by faith, therefore, we receive all the promises as absolutely and unconditionally as they were made to Abraham. Now, says the apostle, the law, which was given so long a time after the promises made to Abraham, cannot invalidate these promises: such a thing would not be allowed

in a parallel case among men. The legacy, bequeathed absolutely and unconditionally, cannot be disturbed by any thoughts of the executor as to the fitness of the person to receive it. Just so, the New Testament may be regarded as the Will of the Lord Jesus. He gives a legacy, and is the Executor of His own Will, when He says, "Peace be unto you; and He shewed the disciples His hands and His feet." He will not allow that which He has freely given to be disturbed by conditions afterwards imposed; because it would nullify promise altogether. "For if the inheritance be of law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." The word 'gave' in the original implies the idea of grace. The blessing, therefore, depends, not on the competence of man, but on the faithfulness of God. Will He who has promised revoke His promise? No; that is impossible. Abraham believed God, and so we, through Christ, believing on God, our faith and hope are in God.

"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." (19-20).

The question necessarily suggests itself,—

“Wherefore then the law?” “It was added because of transgressions;” literally, for the sake of transgressions—that is, to make manifest to man himself what the sin was which God knew to be in him (see Rom. v. 20); and to shew man, if he had not a faithful promiser to undertake for him, and to fulfil all that was needed, he never could attain to blessing. The law itself proved, that man could not stand under it, and was necessary in order to vindicate the wisdom of God in promising blessing in Abraham’s Seed; and was to continue till that “Seed should come to whom the promise was made.” Thus, the law, instead of invalidating or superseding, tended to confirm the way of promise made known to Abraham, as the only possible way in which a sinner was or is capable of being blessed by God. The apostle adds—“It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.” This is a passage of confessed difficulty, yet I think the leading thought may be gathered from it, and a blessed thought it is. God used the ministry of angels in giving the law, putting them between Himself and Israel, as Stephen testified, “who have received the law by the disposition of angels.” This was a kind of mediation of distance; and distance

from God characterized the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai. All the circumstances were those of terror, and the people were alarmed, and dared not hear the voice of God, but would have Moses receive the words direct from God which he might rehearse to them. There was Moses the mediator, as he tells them: "I stood between the Lord and you that time, to shew you the word of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount." (Deut. v. 5.) The mediation of Moses was to keep the Lord and the people apart—a mediator is not a mediator of one. The people were one party at Mount Sinai, and the Lord the other, and Moses stood between them. Such was the mediator of the law, the very opposite to the Mediator of the New Testament, which is to bring near and bring together, instead of keeping apart. Corrupt Christendom has followed the pattern of Moses, and, by a system of false mediation, whether the Virgin Mary, or angels, or an earthly priesthood, bars nearness of access to God; setting God and man in the same relative distance in which the law set them. Mediation connected with law, and mediation resulting from grace, are as opposite as possible,—distance characterizing the one, and reconciliation the other. There was no terror

when the word of the Lord came to Abraham—no terror in the gracious words which proceeded from the lips of Jesus—no terror when the apostles went forth on the ministry of reconciliation, based on the mediation and finished work of Jesus. God is one. It is no longer two parties to be kept at a distance one from the other, lest destruction should ensue; but God preaching peace, God testifying to what He has done in the death and resurrection of Jesus, God Himself in the New Testament writing His laws in the heart, putting them in the mind, saying, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest; for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." God is one; and therefore there is not a people in the new covenant undertaking to answer the requirements of God. But to turn from the gospel back to the law is to undertake, on our own responsibility, that which God promises to perform according to His own grace and faithfulness. Distance from God must be the necessary consequence. If you look for salvation to anything yet to be done on your part, instead of rejoicing in Christ Jesus and His

finished work, you will become as these 'foolish' and 'bewitched' Galatians. In the old covenant, the people undertook; in the new covenant, God Himself hath undertaken. "God is one;" and therefore there can be no failure.

LECTURE IV.

GAL. iii. 21-29; iv. 1-20.

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (21, 22.)

The apostle having shown that there was no second party to the covenant into which God entered with Abraham, but that that covenant was an absolute and unconditional covenant, of the same character with the covenant which God made with Noah, and "his seed, and every living creature," and under which we now sow and reap; the question arises, "Is the law then against the promises of God?" Not so, says the apostle. Righteousness and life are inseparably connected together, both in the law and in the gospel. The law pointed to righteousness as the way to life. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." "This do, and thou shalt live." But the law could neither *give* life, nor righteousness. Such was the condition

of man, that the holy, just, and good law of God, instead of being to man the ministry of righteousness, became the ministry of condemnation; instead of the ministry of life, it was the ministry of death. The fault was not in the law, but in man. It could show man his sinfulness, impotence, and hopelessness; but it could do nothing for his deliverance. The law helped to force man out of the place of a doer, into that of a receiver. The law was *given* by Moses, but it could not give; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; and of that 'fulness' do we 'receive.' It is a hard lesson to learn, that from beginning to end we are only receivers. We become Christians by that which we receive, not by any thing we do. We receive in the way of gift, and of the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, eternal life, even Christ Himself. The language of the apostle is remarkably strong as to the hopeless misery of man, whether without law or under law: "The Scripture hath concluded *all* under sin." Here sin is represented as a tyrant, keeping men in such bondage, that the very effort to deliver themselves only rivets their chains more firmly. But it is when this is really acknowledged to be man's condition, even that he is emphatically 'lost,' that light bursts in

upon him; even that that which is "impossible with men, is possible with God;" that which is impossible in the way of man's works, is possible in the way of faith. All are shut up hopelessly under sin, in order that the promise faith-wise in Christ Jesus might be given to them that believe. Those who thus were shut up under sin are now, by faith in Christ Jesus, made free from sin.

"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children [*i.e. sons*] of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (23-26.)

If all are shut up in hopelessness under sin, the very law itself, to which men look for deliverance, takes the place of a jailor, as the very strength of sin, in order to make men conscious how entirely they were under the dominion of sin. They are alike 'shut up' under sin, and under the law. This verse remarkably shows to us the necessary spirit of one quickened by the Holy Ghost, yet in his conscience under law. His spirit is and must be the spirit of bondage. He is "a prisoner of hope," craving liberty, yet not knowing how to

get it. "Before faith came," means evidently that new and wondrous way of righteousness in the way of faith, and not in the way of works, now so clearly and fully manifested. The law kept even the saints who were under it, as it were, in jail. Look at Hezekiah. He was in bondage under fear of death, shut up in prison unto the faith that was afterwards to be revealed. It is in reference to saints of old in the condition of Hezekiah, that the Lord says to His disciples, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

The apostle having regarded the law as a jailor, imprisoning those who are under it, in verse 24 changes the figure, and presents the law as a schoolmaster, or rather as the confidential servant of the house, who conducted the youths to and from school, and watched over them in their games; and this, too, till they were emancipated from school, and were able themselves to take the place of men. This place the law had till Christ. It so strictly controlled those who were real saints, that they

had no more liberty than the youth under the vigilant and strict care of a tutor. Just in proportion as saints dispensationally under the law rose above the law, looking to the faith, or the object of faith to be revealed, did they know liberty. Such there were even in the worst times: those who, "fearing the Lord, spake often one to another, and thought upon His name." Such there were, a faithful remnant, "when the fulness of time was come, and God sent forth His Son"—a Simeon or an Anna—
—waiting for the consolation of Israel, looking for redemption in Jerusalem. The Lord's own personal disciples never stood in conscious liberty till fully emancipated from the law. How different the state of the same disciples before and after Pentecost. When the Holy Ghost came down from heaven as the witness of Jesus in glory, and the witness of the preciousness of His blood as known in heaven, then they were free; they acted as those who were not servants, but sons. They were justified by faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and were no longer under the rigid or even suspecting care of the tutor. They were grown up, come to man's estate, had attained their majority, and could enter into the enjoyment of their rich inheritance. It would have been

more forcible, and more in keeping with the illustration, had the word rendered 'children' (verse 26) been rendered 'sons,' not infants, but sons; those who had come into possession, and not merely into the title, of all their privileges. Now, after attaining to this standing and condition, to turn back to the law, would be to turn from the liberty of sons, who have access to the Father through Jesus, to the rigorous and irritating control of a tutor. How clearly does this illustrate the condition of many real Christians; still in their conscience they are under law, and not standing and acting in the liberty of sons of God. They make salvation a future object, instead of enjoying it as a present reality. And while this is the case, there will ever be the tendency to serve God and mammon, instead of walking in the happy consciousness of an emancipated people.

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise.” (27-29.)

How important is the doctrine of baptism, but how little understood or realized. The believer in Christ is regarded by God to have

died in Christ, to have been buried with Christ, to be raised up with Christ, and to have put on Christ. Surely, if we have put on Christ, we need neither our works nor our service to commend us to God. The believer appears before God in that which he has put on—even Christ. This is the doctrine taught by baptism. All the differences and distinctions which exist in the human family are merged and lost in the one grand characteristic of the family of faith; they have put on Christ, and therefore are all one in Christ. In this marvellous distinction, difference of nation, Jew and Greek; difference of social condition, bond and free; difference even of sex, male and female, are lost in the paramount distinction—“all one in Christ Jesus.” How full of comfort is this doctrine. The weak believer appears before God as the strong; the one who tremblingly touches the hem of the garment of Jesus has the same standing before God as the apostle Paul—“all one in Christ Jesus,” They have alike “put on Christ,” the grand and essential distinction before God.

But there is a difficulty to be met; the promises were to Abraham and his seed. How then shall a sinner of the Gentiles get connected with Abraham, so as to be interested in

these promises? Here the Judaizer might presume that he was on strong ground, and might use it to teach the disciples. "Except ye be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved." It seems not unreasonable to insist on any hereditary title to which we can lay claim. On this the Jews insisted in their controversy with the Lord. (John viii.) The Lord allows their hereditary claim to be the seed of Abraham; but they lacked faith, and therefore were not the children of Abraham, as the father of the faithful. Hereditary claim, however valid, must be set aside, because it is of the flesh. The Lord struck at the root of their confidence by showing them what they were in relation to God. They were about to kill Him, because He had spoken to them the truth which He had heard of God; this did not Abraham. The Lord allowed they were the natural children of the kingdom, but only to be cast out. (Matt. viii. 12.) Peter addressed them as "children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with Abraham." (Acts iii. 25.) Paul gave the Jews the place of hereditary title. "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

The Jews, resting in their hereditary privileges, "much every way," despised and rejected Him who was Abraham's seed, and the sum and substance of all promises. "Their table became their snare;" a solemn word of warning to ourselves. The Gentile, who had no hereditary claim on God, by believing on Christ (Abraham's seed), became connected through Christ with Abraham himself. He had the faith of Abraham, who saw Christ's day and rejoiced. It was not, therefore, by means of proselytism, or by means of the law, that the Gentile became connected with Abraham, but by means of Christ. The Gentile became Abraham's seed, not in the legal but the promise order. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise."

"Now I say, That the heir, so long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (1-5.)

Having mentioned "heirs according to promise," he contrasts that condition with the

condition of heirs under the law. The heir under the law is like an infant under guardians, until either, according to the law of the country, or the arbitrary will of his father, he is of age and competent to act for himself. Now all this while he differs nothing from a servant. Though he is in title possessor of all the estate, he cannot act even on his own property without the permission of his guardians. This, says the apostle, aptly represents the condition of those who were heirs under the law. The elements of the world, their much-boasted ritual and ordinances, acted the same part toward them as the guardian towards the minor. The ordinances of the law kept the very heirs of God in a state of pupillage and bondage, until God's set time came for sending forth His Son, the promised seed of the woman, to which the eye of faith had been directed from the moment of the fall; yet "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." "Fulness of time" is a remarkable expression. Many preparatory steps were needed to show to man that he could only stand in blessing in redemption. Redemption was the original thought of God, but this thought was only brought out in full relief at Pentecost. Man stood not in innocence; man stood not under law. Those

who, being under the law, were quickened by the Spirit, were waiting for redemption. At length the time came, and God sent forth His Son, made under the law: magnifying it by His implicit obedience, He magnified it further by bearing its curse, and thus redeeming from under it even the very heirs, that they might come into their proper place as sons, which they could not do so long as they were under the law; for the law kept them in the position of servants, and they could only have the spirit of servants.

“And because *ye* are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” (6, 7.)

The apostle here contrasts the state of the Gentile believer, standing in the full liberty of the gospel, with that of the saint of old under the law. He thus points out to the Gentile believer the folly of putting himself into that condition from which the saint of old needed the work of Christ on the cross to redeem him, in order to take the place and have the spirit of a son. They *were* sons, not servants—heirs who had attained their majority, and had liberty of access with all confidence to the Father. Would they again go back to a state of pupilage, and

only think and act as a child in that state? The argument is very cogent; there is an intended contrast between, "that *we* might receive the adoption of sons" (verse 5), and "because *ye* are sons" (verse 6). The Spirit of adoption was not the portion of Old Testament saints; it is the blessed fruit of accomplished redemption, for which even the disciples of the Lord Jesus had to wait till after His ascension. (See Acts i. 4-8.) The Gentile had never been under law, but had been "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" on his believing the testimony to forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. (Compare Acts x. 43, 44, xi. 15-17, with Eph. i. 13.) The Spirit of adoption may not be realized by Gentile Christians, because of their Galatian state; but where it is realized, it makes the believer say, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." And this *is* the portion of him who knows the Father, and has the Spirit of adoption. Little cares, little trials, little perplexities, make up the sum and substance of our little lives. To meet these, we need to have the Spirit of adoption; for we need a parent's care, and a parent's heart, and it alone "sufficeth us" to be shown "the Father." We lose much holy joy, because we so little know the Father. How would the

thought, My heavenly Father knoweth what things I have need of, deliver us from being cumbered with many things. Rarely do we find Christians going as children to their Father, telling Him the little things that try and vex them, sure of finding a Father's heart into which they may cast their cares. We may be strict and busy in public acts of worship; but it is in the closet where we specially have to do with the Father, and to tell Him our own private necessities in secret. Legality obscures our sense of relationship with God, as the Father. It makes us think of *legal* adoption, instead of real relationship. Legal adoption must needs be accompanied with the spirit of a servant. Such was Israel under the law, legally adopted, yet turned out (John viii. 35, 36); but if the Son makes free, then are we free indeed. It is well to dwell on the confidential nearness into which grace brings us through Jesus. We have access through Jesus by one Spirit to the Father. Legalism effectually bars this access. We need not wonder, therefore, at the strength of the apostle's language, when he saw God's own children debasing themselves as the Galatians were, by putting themselves under law.

“Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after

that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." (8-11.)

The Galatians had been before their conversion idolaters, and were now in much danger of again lapsing into the principles of idolatry, if not into its more gross form. The prescient eye of the apostle—prescient, because he was under the guidance of the Spirit—looked at that which might have been thought harmless or indifferent as necessarily leading back to idolatry, as it assuredly has done and is doing. Hence his very determined language. What a happy turn does the apostle give from their knowledge of God to God's knowledge of them—"rather are known of God." At the best, our knowledge of God is imperfect, but He thoroughly knows us; and He who knows the worst of us is the very God who has "justified us freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Omniscience, if we regard ourselves as under law, is arrayed against us, but in the gospel, God is for us; and the blood of Jesus Christ not only cleanseth us from all the sin which we know, but

from all that which the light of Omniscience can detect. It is well solemnly to mark the strength of the language which the apostle uses. God's own legal ordinances are here said to be "weak and beggarly elements." Beautiful and excellent in their time and place, as shadows of good things to come, they sink into weakness and beggary before Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the one grand ordinance of God. They are not only profitless, they are actual hindrances. Yea, says the apostle to these bewitched Galatians, you are going back *again* to your old idolatrous ways, by observing days, months, and years, and are dealing with the *living* God as you did with your dumb idols. And all my labour in preaching to you the gospel of the grace of God appears to be thrown away. How painfully applicable is all this to much of the Christianity of the present day. There are now principles at work which are essentially idolatrous. Men still think that God is served by men's hands, as though He needed something. They know not God in His blessed character of 'Giver,' and therefore come not unto Him as receivers. It is truly distressing to see those who once seemed to love evangelical truth bowed down under a system of ordinances, observing days and

months, to the obscuring of their own vision of the one object which God sets before us, even His blessed Son, in the glory of His humiliation, and the glory of His exaltation.

“Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am ; for I am as ye are : ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected ; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of ? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth ? They zealously affect you, but not well ; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice ; for I stand in doubt of you.” (12-20.)

The apostle here, as at the beginning, argues from his own case. “I am as ye are.” I take no vantage ground over you, because I was an Israelite, “touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.” No, I come down from this my legal standing to your level, and take the same ground as a sinner of the Gentiles. The apostle Peter does the same. “We [Jews]

believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." "There is no difference; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It is not for Gentiles to take Jewish ground, but for Jews to take the place of 'no difference.' The apostle reminds the Galatians that he held out no attractiveness to them, but the attractiveness of the Cross of Christ to the really awakened sinner. (John xii. 32.) They had overlooked his personal infirmity in receiving the blessed message of which he was the bearer; and, as the bearer of such a message, they had received him as "an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ." But what was the blessedness they spake of and gloried in? Did it make them happy to hear Paul propound to them the works of the law as the ground of their acceptance with God, or a system of ordinances as the ground of their approach to God? He knew and they knew that had this been the substance of his preaching, it would have been no blessedness to them. He had set forth before them the Cross of Christ, and, through that, death abolished, sin made an end of, everlasting righteousness brought in, and the law no longer able to keep in prison. (See Rom. vii 6.) And as a blessed consequence, such nearness to God as may be known

in the loving confidence of a child toward an affectionate parent. Was the apostle their enemy in afresh pressing upon their hearts and consciences that truth which he had formerly preached to them, and by means of which they had been made free? False teachers were trying to set the Galatians against the apostle, as though he were an enemy to their blessing, whilst these teachers were themselves diligently trying to undermine the very groundwork of their blessing. And they did not try in vain; for hardly had the apostle left them, when their professed love for the apostle, and zeal for the truth he preached, vanished away. How different the Philippians: they had obeyed the truth, not only in his presence, but "much more in his absence;" but the actual presence of the apostle could alone keep the Galatians in the strait path. He travailed anxiously for them in spirit, and desired to be present with them, that he might change the stern voice of reprobation for mild encouragement to persist in the truth; for he was in great perplexity about their state. And it was this constant pressure—the care of all the churches—which weighed more on the apostle than all his outward hardships.

We ought not to be surprised, however

sorrowful the fact, at seeing a return to ordinances among Christians. It is to be traced up to the legality which is in all our hearts. The reason that real Christians know so little of present joy is that they are legal; and when they are so they try to make others as miserable as themselves; judging alike those who are above and those who are below their standard. The only antidote to legality is to have "Christ formed in us." This is the special office of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, who glorifies Christ, taking us away from the law unto its real end and object, even righteousness; for "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

LECTURE V.

GAL. iv. 21; v. 1-13.

“TELL me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?” (21.)

When once we recognize that God has a purpose, and that, too, an eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, we are prepared to find in the earliest part of God's word those great principles which He intends to illustrate. Among these we find two remarkably connected together; the one, that no flesh shall glory in the presence of the Lord; the other, that he that glorieth must glory only in the Lord. These great principles are copiously illustrated in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. God will shew Himself to be God, and it is necessary not only to shew that the creature is not God, but, also, that the only proper place of the creature, and his only possible happiness is dependance on God. This great truth is illustriously brought out in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. God and His creature man are thereby set in their proper relation

one to the other—God the giver, man the recipient—God, not man, the actor—the creature redeemed, supremely blessed, because God is glorified. This is God's eternal purpose. But how many are the foreshowings and foreactings of this, before it is either fully revealed or will be fully displayed. The book of Genesis, besides being the most ancient historical record extant, has this deep interest—it is a book of great principles. It is to this book that the Lord and His apostles so frequently refer to illustrate their teaching. The Lord Himself refers back to God's original creation of a male and a female, to show the sanctity of the marriage tie in the mind of God. He points to Abel as the righteous sufferer. He refers to the days of Noah and Lot, as illustrative of the unpreparedness of men for the day of the Son of man. He refers to Abraham as rejoicing to see His day, at the same time asserting His own essential Deity in these memorable words, "Before Abraham was, I am." We need not, therefore, be surprised that the apostle, led of the Spirit, (for known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world,) should find "the law" in the earlier chapters of Genesis, four hundred years before it was actually given from Mount Sinai. "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the

law, do ye not hear the law?" The apostle finds the law in the history of the father of the faithful. He had before illustrated, by Abraham and his faith in God, his great argument, that blessing from God can only come in the way of faith. He now illustrates, by the failure of Abraham, how insidiously the principle of law had entered in to mar the blessing of the father of the faithful himself, and so disturbed the peace of the family of faith, that there was no rest to Abraham of his family till the law was cast out. How important is it for us to regard the Scriptures in the light in which God has set them forth, even as a revelation of Himself, of His thoughts, and counsels, and intentions. What an immense difference it makes between one man and another as to the place the Bible occupies in their respective estimation! One man regards the Scriptures as a mass of ancient records, out of which he may gather what light he can; as though man, and not God, was both the beginning and end of these various writings. The spiritual man, redeemed to God by the blood of Jesus, finds himself let into the counsels and thoughts of God (Eph. i. 7-9); and able to trace throughout the marvellous volume the counsel and design of God; so that the great point openly discussed by the apostle in

this epistle, he finds remarkably illustrated in the history of Abraham.

“For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.” (22, 23.)

In the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, the word of the Lord comes to Abraham in a vision; and for the first time is that heaven-born word heard by a sinful man, “Fear not, Abram;” and how strong the ground afforded for taking away all fear: “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.¶ All that which is subsequently unfolded to Abraham is wrapt up in this comprehensive blessing. But how can such a blessing come to Abraham, seeing the circumstances in which he is? “Behold,” says Abram, in answer to the announcement thus made, “to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in mine house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.” Abraham believed that God could do that which

Abraham could not do. It is this which the gospel presents to us, "That which is impossible with men is possible with God." It is possible for God to make a sinner perfectly righteous, and the way in which He does this, and the ground of His doing it, is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; so that no question ought to agitate the mind of the believer as to his complete justification. But there is a kind of hereditary disease in the family of faith, even the disease of unbelief; and we see, in the history of Abraham before us, an early exhibition of it. Faith and patience are necessarily connected together; but unbelief is restless and impatient, and would take things out of God's hands into its own. Abraham had left his country and kindred at the call of God. This act of faith is recorded by the apostle in another place: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went forth, not knowing whither he went." We get deep instruction, not only from the faith, but even from the very failures, of the father of the faithful. After so decided an act of faith on the part of Abraham, even his renouncing every thing at the call of God, we are hardly prepared for signal failure. But so it is. The failure of the

believer is usually manifested in some instance where it would seem more easy to trust in God, than in instances in which we had previously trusted Him. But habitual dependance on God is always contrary to nature. Abraham and Sarah became impatient, and thought to get, by their own wisdom and strength, that very blessing which God had promised to bestow by His power and grace. Hence the giving of Hagar to Abraham by Sarah. (Gen. xvi.) This was, in reality, an attempt to get the promised blessing *in the way of law*; and it issued, as all such attempts must issue, in signal and sorrowful failure. The immediate result was, that Sarah was 'despised' by Hagar. The Pharisees, proud of their own righteousness, 'despised' Him by whom came grace and truth. So with respect to ourselves; when we become legal, grace becomes contemptible in our eyes. Hagar bore a son, but he was born after the flesh. The word 'flesh' is here used to denote man's power. If you bring in man's power, and attempt to add it to God's power, there is confusion and trouble. 'Flesh,' the power of man, is here contrasted with promise—with that which God Himself had undertaken to do. Flesh and promise cannot stand together; salvation must be either by the power of man,

or by the power of God; and if we refer it to the power of God, we must not bring in the power of man as helping it. God will show Himself to be "the Almighty"—the all-sufficient God—for effectuating His own promises in the case of all the family of faith, as well as in the case of the father of the faithful. (Gen. xvii. 1.)

"Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not: break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband." (24-27.)

We are here taught by the apostle, that these facts in the history of Abraham are intended to teach us a great moral lesson. The Lord Himself has ruled, that "the Scriptures cannot be broken,"—meaning the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and that these "Scriptures testify of Him." The apostle in another place lays it down as a general rule, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning." What deep spiritual truth is often couched under an historical fact very

simply narrated. When we look back to the garden of Eden, we find the deepest truth (which has only been brought clearly out since the coming down of the Holy Ghost) foreshadowed, when Adam said, "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." "*We* are members of Christ's body, we are of His flesh and of His bones." And so in this episode in Abraham's history, we find deep spiritual instruction.

Hagar represents Mount Sinai and its covenant, under which Jerusalem was at the time of the apostle's writing, and from which she refused to be delivered by the gospel of grace. To this covenant of bondage the Galatians were being turned—"they desired to be under law." Hagar, in the presence of Sarah, could never forget that she was a bondswoman. And the law in its spirit must always guide unto bondage. It was, as Peter says, "a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." The Galatians were tempted to exchange "the easy yoke" of Jesus for the heavy yoke of the law. How strange, yet how true, that we should prefer spiritual bondage to spiritual freedom. But the reason is plain; if set free, it must be entirely owing to the grace of God; and our proud hearts refuse to submit to this.

Yes ; men refuse to be saved as lost and ruined sinners, from first to last, by the grace of God, through the precious blood of Christ. They will not "submit to the righteousness of God ;" but, like Jerusalem in the text, bind their chains more closely round them ; and, not content with this, seek to bring others into bondage with themselves. When Christians lost their sense of their heavenly and unworldly calling, as the keen eye of the apostle saw the Galatians beginning to do, they looked to Hagar, not to Sarah. They took as their pattern "the Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." And the result would be, and actually is, a religious system as truly bondage as Judaism itself. Christ did not come into the world to institute a religion, but to save sinners, and so to save them as to "deliver them out of this present evil world," and to make them citizens of a heavenly Jerusalem, even Jerusalem which is above, and which is free. And where do we find freedom, but by being introduced into the presence of the Father through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus ? Worldly religion hinders access with confidence through the faith of Jesus to the Father. The law—Jerusalem which now is—could never lead any under it to cry, Abba, Father. This is

the result of accomplished redemption, and one of the richest gifts that comes down from above—even from the Jerusalem which is above, and is free. True, we take our place as servants now; but still it is as sons, even as the Son of God Himself took His place as servant here; and, hence, our very service is liberty. The whole Jewish system was necessarily one of bondage; Jerusalem that now is—Jerusalem not knowing redemption. But, through faith, “we are come to the Mount Zion, and to the heavenly Jerusalem;” and, therefore, have “the garment of praise, instead of the spirit of heaviness.”

The apostle quotes Isa. liv. 1, in illustration of the Jerusalem above being the happy mother of free-born children. Hagar, when she conceived, despised her mistress; but laughter from God was not to be connected with her son; but with Isaac, the son of Sarah. “Rejoice, thou barren (Sarah, not Hagar) that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.” How blessedly does this follow immediately on the details of Christ’s suffering for us in the previous chapter of the prophet. We should read the chapters together, to see even the present glory following those sufferings, in

enabling "the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children." This is a true type of grace. The law knew nothing of praise. Hagar's son was born of the flesh. Sarah's child was the child of God's grace and power. So it was with Hannah subsequently. The barren woman bearing can only find utterance in praise. Outward greatness and glory may be connected with bondage; for men are either slaves of sin, or of the law, or of the world, till they know redemption. Ishmael was great in the presence of his brethren, while Isaac was in obscurity; so it was with Esau while Jacob was serving; and so now professing Christians may be great and glorious, because they are lovers of their own selves. But they know not the liberty of truth; they know not grace, and praise cannot burst forth. When the work of Christ was finished on the Cross, and presented as the object to faith; to those who saw it and believed in it, nothing remained but praise. "Rejoice, O barren, that bearest not." "Rejoice, in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." "As sorrowful, yet *always* rejoicing."

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even

so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman." (28-30.)

How constantly are we reminded, that all error is to be traced up to the departure from a very few fundamental principles. What was the Galatian error? What is Christendom of the present day but the practical denial "that a man must be born again"? Was Isaac the child of natural or supernatural power? We all say that after God had stamped death, both upon Abraham and Sarah (see Rom. iv. 19), as to all expectation of having a child, then God, according to His promise and power, gave them Isaac. "Now we, brethren," says the apostle, "as Isaac was, are the children of promise;" "born of the Spirit;" born of the incorruptible seed of the Word;" of God's "own will, begotten by the word of truth;" "born of God." And if there be faith in our hearts, it is the result of the like mighty power of God which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead. (See Eph. i. 19.) Now, it is against such a power as this being needed by man, to enable him to "see" and "enter into the kingdom of God," so as to have to do with God in mercy and salvation, that man frets and

kicks. And the professing body have ignored the truth, some one way and some another, that "*we must be born again.*" }

Ishmael and Isaac cannot live in the same house, or go on peaceably together. When Isaac, Sarah's son, is weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the occasion, Ishmael, Hagar's son, 'mocks.' He looks at Isaac as despicable and insignificant; mocks at the old age of Sarah, compared with the vigour and comeliness of Hagar. "Even so it is now." There is nothing man more instinctively dislikes than grace. He cannot endure the thought that God should make one to differ from another, and that the difference is not made by man himself. Man naturally frets more against the grace, than he does against the holiness of God. He presumes that he can, by some means or other of his own devising, meet the holiness of God; but grace is God's ability to meet man in his utmost need, and unspeakably to bless him. The oft-repeated story of religious persecution is but the story of Ishmael and Isaac here pointed out by the apostle. And the peculiar form of Ishmael's opposition to Isaac, even mocking, is very characteristic of the day in which we live; for the more man comes to glory in the greatness of his own powers, the

greater will be his antagonism to "the gospel of the grace of God."

The unrelenting word comes to Abraham, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." 'Grievous' indeed was it to Abraham to cast them out; it went against his feelings and affections to do so; but it was not more 'grievous' to Abraham to do so, than it is for us to turn the law out of doors. It cleaves so fast to us. It seems so grievous to us to give up the works of our own hands, and to renounce that on which we have most prided ourselves. But until Hagar is gone, there is and can be no peace in the house of Abraham. Until the law, and all expectation from it, is thoroughly renounced, there is no peace in the soul. "Being justified by faith, we *have* peace."

How little do even real Christians apprehend their present dignity, "Sons and heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ." And so long as they cleave to the law, it is impossible for them to realize their title to "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in heaven." The realizing of this title necessarily puts those who do so into the place of pilgrims and strangers here. To

be an heir of all that God can give can never be earned by any thing a man can do. The law made those under it servants, not sons; and to be an heir, it is necessary to be a son, even to be born to an inheritance. How impossible is it, until we enter into God's thoughts in giving to us the Scriptures, to read, in what was apparently but a passionate speech of an angry woman, a most profound spiritual truth. "The son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." And so it was historically. "And Abraham *gave all* that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son." Isaac was 'heir' according to God's original promise. (Gen. xv. 4.) Others might have gifts, and flourish; but nothing would satisfy Sarah but the heirship for her son. It is even so now. Men are content with an outward knowledge of Christ, and the many gifts which they get thereby; but they stand entirely apart from the true heirs of God. Born of Him, they can be satisfied with nothing less than God is pleased to give; and if He has given them now the unspeakable gift of Christ, and they have received Him by faith, how will not God with Christ freely give them all things? The chil-

dren of the concubines receive their gifts, and go their way. So now ; all connected with the false Church receive their gifts, and think not of the inheritance, yea, despise it. The present engrosses their minds ; and the spirit of the age is strongly set on present blessings, by the development of human powers. Thus, like Esau, they despise the birthright ; for what good does it do ? They may, indeed, desire the inheritance, when about to be removed from the present scene. But God has inseparably joined together the birthright and the inheritance ; and those who despise the birthright will never be heirs. Men despise being born of God ; they direct their malice and their wit against those who prize the birthright, and thus despising, as Esau, the birthright, can never possess the inheritance.

“So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” (31, ch. v. 1.)

If born of God, we are not children of Hagar, but of Sarah—free-born children of the free-woman, set free by the Son Himself, and therefore free indeed. It is into the liberty of sons that Christ has brought us ; and although the glorious liberty of sons be that for which we

wait, even to be manifested with Christ *the* Son in glory ; yet, even now, it is a glorious liberty to have access unto the Father with confidence by the Spirit of adoption, instead of having a yoke of bondage imposed on us by those who would tempt God by forcing the law on us. (See Acts xv.) The only one who is free from law, is he who can look at it in all its condemning power, and yet knows deliverance from it by the Cross of Christ. (Rom. vii. 4-6.) And he alone who is thus delivered from it upholds the law in all its integrity, as "holy, just, and good." What a marvellous liberty is that wherewith Christ has made us free. It is the liberty of truth. (John viii. 32.) We dare to look at things as they really are—to look at the very worst of our condition—to see fully our guilt and helplessness as sinners, and appalling as this is, it is amply met by seeing the grace of God in truth, and the reality of Christ's propitiatory work on the Cross. And what a blessed reality it is, that Christ is "of God made unto us righteousness!" What liberty to be delivered from the vain attempt to find some ground of confidence in ourselves toward God! What liberty to be occupied, not with ourselves, but with the worthiness of the Lamb slain. The apostle's word of command is, "Stand fast in

the liberty." And how needed the word; for there are many 'entanglements' to which we are liable, and by means of which we exchange the liberty of Christ for a yoke of bondage. One of the readiest entanglements is a system of ordinances: this was the danger of the Galatians. But we have our special danger of entanglement from the traditional religion by which we are surrounded. The yoke of traditional religions is grievously galling to the consciences of many real Christians. We all need the word, "Stand fast in the liberty of Christ,"—freedom from all condemnation, freedom of nearness to God, freedom of holiness, freedom of service. Bring in the law, and all this freedom is gone, and in its place a heavy yoke placed upon us.

"Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." (2-6.)

This is very stern language, but the honour of Christ, as well as the salvation of sinners, was at stake. Christ will not take the place of

a helper, to the detriment of His place as a Saviour. Any dependance on legal righteousness, moral or ceremonial, renders Christ 'profitless' unto us. Nothing but salvation meets our need. How often do we hear the phrase, "I know I can do nothing by myself." But this only puts Christ in the place of a helper, and helper indeed He is to thousands who are never saved. The ten lepers were alike helped by Christ, but one only had faith to throw himself at His feet, and thus to get salvation. If you look partly to yourself, and partly to Christ, "Christ shall profit you nothing." What *profit* is Christ Himself to thousands who bear His name? Well might the apostle, who gave up every advantage for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, ask this question. Christ was truly *all* to him. Well might he reiterate the testimony, "He that is circumcised is a debtor to do the whole law." The holy majesty of the law, the rich grace of the gospel, and the glory of Christ, alike forbid the vain and senseless attempt to make our own partial obedience, together with Christ, the ground of our salvation. Such an attempt is, in the language of the apostle, to nullify the work of Christ on the Cross, as though it were a needless work, and to fall from grace—to abandon the

firm rock of God's grace in Christ Jesus, for the sandy foundation of our own righteousness. It is, indeed, a fearful thing for a Christian to fall into sin; but even for such a one there is provision in the rich grace of the gospel. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins." But to fall from grace is to reassert confidence in the flesh, and to give up confidence in Christ; it is to turn the gospel into a mere remedial law; so as to produce a religion, which leaves man in his native distance from God, without purging his conscience, or giving him peace with God. Man, as a sinner, needs salvation, and this the grace of God brings to him. To fall from grace is to undermine the certainty of salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, and to leave salvation as a grand uncertainty, to be determined at the day of judgment, instead of receiving it now as of God, and on the ground of it rejoicing in peace with God, and nearness to God.

But those who thus 'fall from grace,' not only abandon the truth of the gospel as to present justification before God by faith in Christ, but they surrender also the true Christian hope, by making the attainment of right-

eousness their hope, instead of making present righteousness, through faith in Jesus, the sure warrant for expecting glory. "We," says the apostle, in the name of all believers, "*wait* not for righteousness, but the hope to which righteousness is entitled." If we tamper with the truth of present acceptance in the Beloved, we undermine the blessed hope for which, through the Spirit, we are entitled to wait—even glory. We find many Christians looking to justification, as something in prospect, instead of seeing that they possess it now, and on that ground rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. The Lord Himself is our 'righteousness,' and our hope is grounded on that righteousness; and what a glorious hope it is, even that those who are thus "righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

All distinctions in the flesh become lost where there is faith in Christ. Circumcision, the badge in the flesh of God's earthly people, 'availeth' no more than uncircumcision. It is a new living principle which is needed. Such is faith wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God. And such faith is an energetic principle; it "worketh by love." The law could give neither life nor righteousness; it might command love to God and man, but was powerless

to enforce its own enactment; but faith 'worketh' by love to God and man.

"Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (7-9.)

It is "obedience to the truth" which is now God's test of obedience. It is not man's competence to present himself in moral righteousness to God which is in question; that has been decided already in the negative. * But the question is, Will man accept righteousness as a gift from God? will he accept Christ as the righteousness of God, by faith in His name? This is the test. On this turns the judgment; as it is written, "The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." How many are now making, as the Galatians did, their very imperfect and partial obedience to the law a positive hindrance to obeying the gospel. It might appear a little matter; but the apostle discovered in this legal tendency that leaven which would corrupt the whole gospel, and deprive it of its glory. When the truth of the gospel is at stake, the apostle speaks with stern decision. It is a bad sign when there is not stern contention for the truth

of the gospel—when there is more sensitiveness about our own honour than the honour of Christ—the honour of His cross, and His spotless righteousness.

“I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded; but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. I would they were even cut off which trouble you.” (10-12.)

The apostle knew that ‘the truth’ he set forth would be responded to by the heart and conscience of those who had been quickened by the grace of God, however for the moment that truth had been overlaid by legalism. This was his confidence in them through the Lord. How earnestly and constantly do real Christians need to be “persuaded to continue in the grace of God.” (Acts xiii. 43.) It is remarkable to find the concurrent testimony of the apostles to the real character of legalism. It presents itself in such a fair form,—moral, philanthropical, or religious,—that it seems hard to characterize it as the great disturber and troubler. Such was the united testimony of the apostles in their one memorable council recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: “Forasmuch as we have heard,

that certain which went out from us have *troubled* you with words, *subverting* your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law." And so the apostle here characterizes the legal teacher as a *troubler*; and whilst such 'trouble' by their 'words' and teaching, how many Christians are self-tormentors because they look to themselves, instead of looking to Christ. The Apostle will not spare the legal teacher; be he who he may, he shall bear his judgment. Yes, hard as it may appear—uncharitable, as men in our days would say—the apostle hesitates not to say, "I would they were even cut off that trouble you." The glory of God and His Christ are in question; and such being the case, soft words are not in season.

The apostle knew that the preaching of a modified gospel, so as to mingle God's grace and man's work together, and to give much more prominence to man's work than the work of Christ on the cross, would take away the offence of the cross. And so it has done. Men may preach, and men may say that Christ "died for our sins;" but they hesitate as to the true conclusion, "then are we saved." The real offence of the cross is, that while it takes away from man every possible ground of confidence in himself, it gives to him, as a known and

proved sinner, such a ground of confidence with God, that he can have peace with Him on the ground of His holiness, as well as of His grace. The offence of the Cross still exists, when the Cross is set forth as the verdict of God against man's righteousness, wisdom, and goodness, and the introduction of a new order of things, even Christ and Him crucified, "the wisdom and power of God" to those who are "called of God, and saved by His grace." (1 Cor. i. 18-24.)

LECTURE VI.

GAL. v. 13-vi. 18.

“FOR, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” (13-15.)

There is ever a strong tendency in us to “savour the things of men” in the things of God. We put our construction and draw our own inferences from the thoughts of God, which are not like our thoughts, but infinitely higher and more blessed (see Isaiah lv. 8, 9), and thus debase them. Look, for example, at liberty; how wide the distinction between the human and divine thought on this very point. Liberty, according to man, is wilfulness—every check taken off from the human will, issuing in the very worst form of corruption and apostasy. The Jews in their worst state of bondage, both temporal and spiritual, had the hardihood to say, “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?” How solemn the reply

of Jesus to these boasters of their freedom. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant [slave] of sin." (John viii. 34, 35.) The apostle Peter very plainly shows, that in the days in which we live, the loudest boasters of liberty were themselves miserable slaves of corruption. (2 Pet. ii. 18, 19.) We are 'called unto liberty,' but not a liberty for the flesh to act, but for us to serve. Christians are often led to connect their worship and their service with their salvation. But the truth is, they are made free by Christ in order to worship, to serve God, and serve their brethren; yea, and to serve all men, so far as they can. The gospel is the law of liberty, the law of love. And how easy and blessed is the law of love: love has 'a constraining' power—the law, rather a restraining power. The law of liberty is not "Thou shalt not," but its language is, "I will *run* the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Until the question of our individual acceptance is settled, the heart is not 'enlarged' to serve God. We are made free from sin by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, in order to become servants of God. Real liberty and true holiness are inseparably connected together. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus *sets free* from the

law of sin and death." When really free ourselves, instead of judging others, we are free to intercede for them, knowing the grace in which we ourselves stand. A legal spirit is ever a fault-finding spirit. If we were more in the region of grace, we should be less in the region of judgment. But the moment we become legal, we bite and devour one another, instead of ministering grace one to another, cheering one another onward, so as to enable us to tread with a lighter step this weary wilderness.

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." (16.)

How important it is for us to have the thoughts of God with respect to 'the Spirit,' as contrasted with 'the flesh,' The true doctrine of the cross, and life in the Spirit, are intimately connected together; so that we cannot truthfully hold the one apart from the other. God's judgment has been passed on 'the flesh' in the cross of Christ, where God "made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." In consequence of this, life in the Spirit flows forth from the risen and glorified Jesus. The spiritual man is a new order of man, coming forth after death and judgment have passed on the old man. (See chap. ii. 21.)

It is according to this new order of man that we should walk. The Spirit makes us alive to new thoughts, new affections, new interests. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." The spiritual man finds every thing of the world antagonistic to him. He cannot feel at home in the world. His interests are in another sphere. He worships in an unseen temple, and has an unseen altar and priesthood—all is spiritual, and it is only by walking according to this order that we shall be kept from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. If we would avoid bad company, the best way is to keep good company. And it requires but a small amount of Christian experience to trace our most grievous failures to walking in the flesh; we forget from what we have been redeemed, and at what a price. If we walk not in the Spirit, having our desires, thoughts, and interests in heaven, we shall often fall even below the world's standard of righteousness; because we have not the restraints which the world is forced to put on the flesh, to conceal its real character. When Israel ceased to regard their peculiar privilege of having Jehovah for their king, and desired to be as the nations among whom they were 'not to be reckoned,' they speedily became worse than the nations.

If Christians settle down into conventional righteousness, they make the cross only a safeguard from punishment, and know it not as a mighty separating power, even as that which separates between oneself and oneself, and as that which delivers from the world. Hence lowness of walk ; because the only real safeguard against fulfilling the lusts of the flesh is to walk in the Spirit.

“ For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh : and these are contrary the one to the other : so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” (17, 18.)

A great truth is here brought out in strong relief. There is hardly a Christian who has not practically attempted to contradict the assertion, that the flesh and the Spirit are contrary the one to the other. The doctrine of ‘ progressive sanctification ’ virtually denies this truth. We are “ sanctified unto *the obedience*, as well as the sprinkling, of the blood of Jesus Christ ; ” but the flesh, even in the believer, is unchangeably the same, and he is made very experimentally to know that ‘ the flesh ’ is enmity against God, and to find his power against it in the cross of Christ. It is the presence of the Spirit which makes us know

the evil of the flesh. We become disappointed in ourselves and in others; but this should teach us the unchangeable character of the flesh, whether regarded morally, intellectually, or religiously. We are surrounded by religious flesh—flesh in its most dangerous form, because it uses the name of Christ to sanction itself. But still the word remains unrepealed: "All flesh is grass." But the apostle does not make a one-sided statement, so as to allow us to use the knowledge of what the flesh really is, to sanction its workings. The flesh is hindered by the counter working of the Spirit, so that it cannot carry out its own tendencies. It is still flesh, ever the same, so that the most advanced Christian cannot put off his armour as though it were subdued. He knows it better, and is more watchful against its subtle wiles, and understands how to meet it by looking to the cross of Christ. And when the flesh would say, 'Spare thyself,' it is met by the word of the Master, 'Take up thy cross.'

It is an important thing to be *led* of the Spirit. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And the Spirit leads us also into conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil; but the Spirit also leads us unto Jesus, and guides us into all truth,

and shows us where our strength is—not in legal endeavours, but in receiving out of the fulness of Jesus. “If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these : Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like : of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (19-21.)

What a dark catalogue of the works of the flesh which are *manifest*. There are other workings of the flesh which are not open and palpable, and which can only be judged by those who are spiritual. There is ‘the fleshly mind’ (Col. ii. 18), and ‘the flesh’ in its religious aspect, in which Paul could have no confidence. (Phil. iii. 3, 4.) But even in the works of the flesh which *are manifest*, while some are morally offensive to us, others are not so, but are equally offensive to God. We draw distinctions between these works which the apostle classes together. While outward sensuality and libertinism is reprobated as fearfully evil and injurious to human society ; ‘variance, emulations, wrath, strife, heresies,’ are not regarded in so dark a light ; and yet they prove

equally, that there is no fear of God as an influential principle, and they equally exclude from 'the kingdom of God.' 'Emulation' is the work of the flesh. It is the principle on which most of us have been educated; but it is in its spirit the most opposite to the Spirit of Him "who did not *strive*, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." 'Emulation,' as rivalry, or competition, is the life of the world; it is honoured and respected; but it is but "the potsherd striving with the potsherd of the earth," to the utter forgetfulness of the real condition of man before God, as a lost and ruined sinner, and real greatness in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. xviii. 1-7.) 'Envyings and murders' are grouped together, even as they came into the world together in Cain. 'Drunkenness and revellings' are found together; and 'such like' comprises all those exciting and refined amusements, for which men are content to pay so dearly. The world is glad to restrain some of the more gross works of the flesh for its own sake, whilst they encourage, as necessary and even advantageous, 'emulations,' 'revellings, and such like.' Herod heard John gladly up to a certain point; but when John plainly touched his conscience, by saying, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," he put John in prison. 'Seditious

and heresies,' party-spirit in the State, and party-spirit in the Church, for such is heresy, may often be found combined together against the truth of God. In this epistle, whilst the apostle presents us with a rich exhibition of the grace of God, he comes in with a most unsparing hand against the flesh, its lusts, its affections, and its works. Stern as the apostle is against the corrupters of the grace of the gospel, he is no less stern in his denunciation of practical ungodliness. "I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (22-24.)

There is a happy contrast between "*the works* of the flesh" and "*the fruit* of the Spirit." The flesh works, as it were, independently; but the Spirit produces fruit by our abiding in Christ. "From me is thy fruit found." And so we have the connection in this passage between the fruit of the Spirit, and the doctrine of the cross. God, in the Cross of Christ, has passed sentence and executed judgment on the flesh and its works. And so those who are in the Spirit

recognize the Cross, and use it practically as their power against the flesh, and its affections and lusts. If the apostle brings in the Cross as a mighty separating power between himself and himself; "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless *I* live; yet not *I*, but Christ liveth in me;" he here brings it to bear in moral power on the affections and lusts of the flesh. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." The fruit of the Spirit is but a single cluster, but of beautiful variety; but if we count up the varieties of which the cluster is formed, how they fall numerically below the works of the flesh. Sorrowful truth, but too plain, that which we witness and which make up the outward manifestation of human life, are the works of the flesh, against which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against which there is law. Many of the samples of the fruit of the Spirit are so unobtrusive, that if we were walking in the Spirit we should be "unknown, yet well known;" passing as pilgrims and strangers through the world, without joining in its restless interest. "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is of great price in the sight of God." "Against such there is no law." May those who know the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, so "abide in Him as

to bring forth much fruit, that the Father may be glorified."

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (25, 26, ch. vi. 1.)

How little of real spiritual joy is known by most of us. Yet surely "the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places," "the Holy Spirit being the earnest of our inheritance." We do not *live* in the Spirit as we might do. Christ is the object and source of our life; and, as risen with Him, we are called upon to set our affections on things above. If our conversation be not in heaven our walk will not be in the Spirit. It is a present heaven which is now our portion, because Christ is there; "as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly;" We are partakers of a heavenly calling. If we only look forward to the enjoyment of heaven at some future time, we shall have no spiritual joy now. And our walk will be according to our condition—a vain attempt to serve God and mammon. If we *live* in the Spirit, we enter on eternal life *now*; 'we have eternal life,' and our walk should correspond to that which we have. A Chris-

tian should not only walk before God and with God, but be so occupied with those joys which are spiritual and eternal as to be able to help and gladden others vainly struggling with the many forms of human misery. We are not walking in the Spirit when we are desirous of vain glory. We are come down to a lower level, and draw the comparison between ourselves and others, instead of living in the enjoyment of the heavenly realities which are ours in Christ. He who lives in the Spirit lives near to God, and has need to be severe in judging himself, so that he has little heart to judge another; but a legal spirit always binds us down to the world, and sets us on the judgment-seat, instead of bringing us before the mercy-seat.

There is a restoring power in the grace of the gospel of which the law is incapable. The law can condemn, but it has no power to restore. In nothing do Christians show themselves more legal than in dealing with 'a brother overtaken in a fault.' They judge as they are bound in faithfulness to Christ to do; but is it with a view to restoration? The spiritual man knows how to restore; the natural may convict and pride himself on another's fall, but he cannot restore. And how low are Christians fallen; how do they walk as men in judging others,

instead of considering themselves, lest they be also tempted. How wonderfully consistent is the doctrine of Scripture; 'considering thyself.' Let no Christian consider himself as proof against a fall, however faithful he may be. It is dangerous to presume on our faithfulness, but safe when considering ourselves; because of our sense of the unchanging evil of the flesh to rest humbly, yet confidently, in the faithfulness of God. We all know our personal need of restoring grace, and to that same grace should we look for the restoration of a fallen brother.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden." (2-5.)

It is Christ Himself who invites 'the heavy-laden' to come to Him, and that He will give them rest. And He would have us learn of Him in this respect, that we might bear one another's burdens. The Lord of glory Himself, who had no burden of His own to bear, was pleased to put Himself even under our heavy burden of sin, and "to bear it in His own body on the tree; that we, being dead to sins, should live

unto righteousness: by whose stripes we are healed." How shall we answer this amazing instance of love but by His own new commandment, "that ye love one another, even *as* I have loved you." We should go before God and make our brother's sins our own in confession, even as Daniel did, identifying himself, though separate from it personally, with the sin of Israel. "*We* have sinned, *we* have committed iniquity." It is in this way that we come into the apprehension of the restoring grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The very fall of another, which would naturally lead us to thank God that we are not as other men, should lead us to see that we only stand by faith, and if we become high-minded we shall fall. The moment we think ourselves to be something, we only deceive ourselves; we forget that grace alone maketh us to differ, and like Jerusalem, instead of regarding the perfect comeliness which God has put upon us, we trust in our own beauty. (Ezek. xvi. 14, 15.) When this is the case, the real dignity of our standing becomes lost to our apprehension; for our 'nothingness' and Christ's all-sufficiency are necessarily connected together. We cannot hold the one without holding the other. It is both common and easy to glory with respect to another, by drawing a comparison

between ourselves and another. But this is to take a low standard. We must look to the perfect example of Christ Himself, and that never fails to cast us on His unfailing grace and His finished work. (See 1 Peter ii. 21–25.) We are called upon to prove our own work, not our brother's; to give an account of ourselves to God, and not of others. "Every man shall bear his own burden;" therefore, "let him prove his own work."

"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." (6.)

It had been said of old, "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Prov. xxiii. 23); but it has ever been found, that few attach much value to 'the truth.' The Lord Himself, 'the truth,' was valued at thirty pieces of silver, a goodly price—the price of a slave; and therefore we must not be surprised to find, that the most inestimable treasure, 'the word of salvation,' is prized at but a low rate. Men of the world pay highly for their pleasures and amusements; and men will also pay for outward religion. But 'the truth,' that which comes from God to show to man his real condition in reference to God, and the way of reconciliation with God, man values not. But the apostle found, that even real Christians did not estimate the value of the

ministry of the word at all adequately. And he exhorts the Galatians to prove that they appreciated the value of the gospel, and had as much delight in it as the men of the world appreciate and value their pleasures.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” (7, 8.)

This is a very solemn word to Christians. It is connected with the word which immediately precedes it; “God is not mocked.” He regards our objects, our interests, our very tastes. What are they? Is it our object to know so much of Christ only as we think needful for our salvation, and then to sink down into decent worldliness; so that the very men of the world can perceive that we are as eager in the pursuit of this world as they themselves are? Let us not be deceived; for God is not mocked. And the wisdom of God has laid down the rule, that where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. ‘The flesh’ in a Christian, although it be his privilege to recognize its judgment in the cross, will be found putting forth its claims, and craving to be satisfied. It is specially spoken to the Christian: “He that soweth to *his* flesh.” It is easy

to see that those who are in the flesh can only sow to the flesh. But there is in the Christian another principle, 'the Spirit.' The contrast is not without meaning, '*his* flesh,' *the* Spirit. There is a way of avoiding the keen edge of the Word of God—the sword of the Spirit—by turning it against the unconverted, instead of allowing us to probe our own consciences. Therefore, says the apostle to us, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." If the Christian sow to *his* flesh, he shall reap what he sows, even corruption. Nor does it require any very lengthened experience to prove to the Christian how every result of sowing to the flesh has issued in disappointment, if not in deadness of soul, or positive corruption. But there is a peculiar form of 'the flesh' to which the Christian is liable to sow, and that is to religious flesh, in some shape or other. There is the same tendency in us as in the Galatians, to turn aside from the true doctrine of the cross to ordinances, or to seek to please the imagination, or puff up the intellect; and where this kind of sowing takes place, what a harvest of corruption do Christians reap. And, oh! what a mercy, however smart the discipline, if all their works are now burnt up, and they, stript of every thing, are led to the Cross of Christ to be saved

by that, and nothing else. There is another contrast here, in the respective harvests to be reaped—'corruption'—'everlasting life.' There is an everlastingness in all that is sown to the Spirit. When the Lord speaks of fruit resulting from abiding in Him, it is fruit which should remain. Where the gospel is received, it is everlasting in its effects. There will be no forgetfulness, when in heaven, as to how we came there. That way will be had in everlasting remembrance, in the never-tiring new song, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Nothing done in reference to Christ, His cause, His people, will be forgotten, be it small or great; the cup of cold water given in the name of Christ, will have an everlastingness in it. It is well for us now to look to this our sowing time; for our harvest will be as our sowing is, whether to *our* flesh, or to the Spirit.

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them which are of the household of faith." (9, 10.)

There was such a blessedness in the gospel, when the Galatians first heard it (iv. 15), that no self-sacrifice was thought too great, so that they might testify their value for it. But when

they listened to those who would pervert the gospel, and dim their perception of its rich grace, weariness supervened. They became busied about ordinances and their own salvation, and thus became weary in well-doing. They needed to have the great doctrines of grace again ministered to them to stir up their earlier zeal. Scripture and experience alike show the tendency in the believer to "leave his first love." When first the light of the gospel bursts on the soul, it is so blessed that hardly any thing appears a sacrifice. Little does he know the deadening influence of all around him, or the deceitfulness of his own heart; and weariness in well-doing ensues. Our apostle, in another place, shows us the need of the reiterated application of the doctrines of grace to the heart and conscience, in order to "maintain good works." (Titus iii. 4-8.) We may be disappointed in our expectations for the present; "but in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." The Lord's own ministry *seemed* to be 'in vain' (Is. xlix. 4); but it only seemed. He was not discouraged; and now that 'the due season' has come, what an abundant harvest is gathered in from that one "corn of wheat which fell into the ground and died." The ministry of Paul seemed to end in failure (2 Tim. i. 15);

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but we are witnesses this day that his labour in the Lord was not in vain ; while we get strength, comfort, and refreshment from his writings. "Let *us*, then, not be weary in well-doing." This is our time of 'opportunity.' In heaven we shall have no sick to visit, no widows and fatherless to comfort, no backslider to reclaim. Our hearts should be enlarged to all human suffering, "for *our* heavenly Father is kind to the unthankful and the evil ;" but the "household of faith" has claims on our highest sympathies. And we know, that for the most part it is a tried, tempted, and suffering household. Alas ! on a retrospect, how many lost opportunities present themselves to our view.

"Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised ; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law ; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh." (11-13.)

The epistle to the Galatians appears to be the only one which the apostle wrote with his own hand. Tertius wrote the epistle to the Romans, and the apostle closed it with his benediction and signature. The apostle's spirit was stirred ; for the truth of the gospel was at

stake, and hence the urgency of the case. He wrote to them with his own hand. Circumcision was the point in the apostle's days, because it was the badge of adherence to that which was established and formal. It served to accredit the flesh, and nothing does the flesh affect more than to invest itself with all the privileges of the Church of God, and at the same time avoid the offence of the cross. How ready a way to this was opened by a system of ordinances. Men were taught that they became Christians, not by living faith in the accomplished work of Christ on the cross, so as to bring them with a purged conscience to serve the living God, but by submitting to an ordinance. And when once this ground was assumed, one ordinance was imposed on another, so that peace with God was rendered impossible. Peace can only be in one way, the divine way. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And the assertion of this truth has in all ages called forth opposition, if not persecution, from that which is established and ordered, and where man and his works, and not Christ and His cross, are prominent. It is no question of real practical godliness. They who insisted on circumcision did not keep the law; but they would impose it, in order that

others might recognize an authority which is not of God. When once the soul has laid hold on Christ and Him crucified on the testimony of God, it dare not allow any other authority to come in between itself and God. Various are the desires to supersede or overlay the doctrine of the cross. In our day a busy activity in social improvement is used to conceal the glory of the gospel, as being the only power to set man in a right and happy relation to God.

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be unto them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.” (14-18.)

Others might desire to glory in fleshly distinctions, but the apostle would only glory in the Cross of Christ, the great leveller of all fleshly distinctions. What was it that had brought the apostle down from his supposed superiority over his co-religionist? (i. 14.) The doctrine of the Cross. What had taught him to take the place of the chief of sinners, seeing he had thought it a religious “duty to do many

things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth"? (Acts xxvi. 9.) It was seeing the glory which God had given to Him whom men, religious men, had rejected and crucified. What had taught the apostle the doctrine he so insisted on to others, that where sin had abounded grace had superabounded? The Cross of Christ. What had delivered the apostle from the galling yoke of ordinances? The Cross of Christ. (See Col. ii. 14, 15.) But the Cross of Christ had done more for him; it had showed him the world in its true character, as that which could not bear the presence of God in it. It had proved that the world's civilization and religion were alike opposed to God; for all the leading authorities in the world, whether those in political power, or the leaders in religion, or the leading minds of the age, had conspired together in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. (1 Cor. ii. 8.) Then, through the Cross, the world was to the apostle a crucified thing. He could not look on it with complacency, because he saw its real enmity against goodness itself in the person of the Son of God. Is the world so seen by us through the same medium, even the Cross of Christ? "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Bring the leading authorities of the age in which we live to this

unchangeable test, and it is the same world still—the world which crucified the Lord of glory. But the apostle knew not the Cross apart from the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore, associated with Him risen, he could look down on the world as that out of which he had been delivered. We must know the power of Christ's resurrection, in order to form a right estimate of the world. (1 John v. 19.) And what was the apostle in the world's estimate? 'A pestilent fellow,' 'a babbler,' against whom the wise men of the day directed their wit. (Acts xvii. 32.) He was, in fact, a crucified thing—one whom the world could easily spare, and would be glad to be rid of. Paul had left the world behind him, as to its interests and pursuits, and was crucified unto it.

The real power of the doctrine of the Cross is, to show the world in its true light as a judged world, out of which the believer has, in God's amazing grace, been rescued. (i. 4.) So that if he be true to the doctrine of the Cross, he must be crucified unto the world—not only one who cannot help on its interests and objects, but one who stands in the way of its interests and objects. It may be said, that "Christians are not so; the world both accepts their help, and gives them help in return." And why? Be-

cause Christians are not true to the Cross of Christ. They do not look at the world through the medium of the Cross; they do not see it, and all that is in it, to be 'not of the Father;' and, consequently, as much arrayed against Jesus as Judas, when he betrayed Him with a kiss. Let us be honest, and test ourselves. Is the world to us a crucified thing, because we glory in the Cross of Christ, and from the Cross see into a glory which makes all the glory of this world fall into the shade?

A new creation bursts upon us when we take our stand by the Cross, and see in it the judgment of God on the old creation. He that hanged on the Cross said, "It is finished." And the same blessed One says from the throne, "Behold, I make all things new." "These words are faithful and true." "It is done." The old creation is passed away, the new one introduced, in which "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." This is the new creation which bursts upon us; and we are to walk according to the rule of it. They only who see the end of the old creation in the Cross, and Jesus as the head of the new creation in resurrection, can take the place of the Israel of God.

They have power with God and man, because the flesh is broken and set aside; and they have life in the Spirit meeting its supplies out of the fulness which is in Christ Jesus. "They walk after the Spirit." Peace and mercy be on them.

The false teachers insisted much on the outward mark of circumcision; but, says the apostle, I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Scourgings, imprisonments, cold and nakedness, sufferings in preaching the gospel of the grace of God to sinners had left their marks on the body of the apostle. With these marks of suffering for Christ and for the gospel's sake, it was an impertinence to trouble him with the question of circumcision, or other things equally indifferent in themselves.

The apostle knew one remedy to meet their case, and answer, as it were, all their questionings, and this he expresses in his earnest prayer for them: "Brethren, *the grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

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