SALVATION:

The Way made Plain.

BY THE REV.
JAMES H. BROOKES, D.D.,
Author of "Life through the Living One," etc., etc.

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MAN'S NEED OF SALVATION.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."—ROMANS x. 1.

MAN'S NEED OF SALVATION.

IN the great work of delivering lost men from the ruin in which they are involved, the Holy Ghost produces the conviction that they need to be saved. Without this conviction "they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely" (Ps. lviii. 4, 5).

There are multitudes of our race of whom it can be truthfully said that "they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. iii. 18, 19); and yet they go their downward way profoundly indifferent to their guilt and their doom. They eat and drink, they awake and sleep, they give their thoughts and time entirely to the pursuits of the world, and run their round of business or of pleasure, without one correct conception of the Being who made them, or of their responsibility to Him.

Their ignorance of their real character and their insensibility to their eternal interests furnish conclusive evidence both of their sinfulness and of their deplorable unconsciousness

of sin. Hence the first practical step towards their recovery is taken when the Divine Spirit, whose office it is to "reprove [or rather, to convince] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John xvi. 8), leads them to see that they are undone, and need an almighty Arm to rescue them from impending destruction.

If, therefore, we would inquire whether man, as such, and as born into the world, is in urgent need of salvation, we must surely consult the testimony of the "word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23). Remember, it is the word of *God*, and He is too wise to err, too holy to lie, too just to bring false accusations against His creatures, and too kind to heap upon them undeserved reproaches. Let those who claim that they are entitled to His favour on the ground of their own merits make good their claim, and most gladly will He recognize it and bestow upon them the full reward of their virtue. Not only His name, but His very nature, is "Love" (1 John iv. 8); and it is certain that His testimony concerning man, and His sentence in view of that testimony, are in perfect harmony with His boundless benevolence and His inexhaustible patience.

If, then, it can be shown that a uniform testimony is borne by the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation touching man's pressing need of salvation, we are compelled to conclude that by nature we are fallen, lost, and ruined;

or, as the only alternative, we are forced to deny that God has spoken the truth in His blessed Word.

Let us now turn to what the Apostle Paul says concerning the Jews, who, as a people, were highly favoured above all the nations of the earth, yet were not delivered from the curse and dominion of sin; for he writes, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. x. 1). Again in the previous chapter he exclaims, with the greatest emotion, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. ix. 1–5).

The great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart expressed in this touching assurance, and the astounding declaration that he could wish that himself were accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, are wholly unaccountable except on the supposition that they were lost! in the very

face of their exalted privileges and their high religious character in the estimation of men. To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, and the fathers, and national connection with the Messiah; but still they needed to be saved. Many of them could say, as did Paul describing his own state previous to his new birth by faith in Jesus, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. iii. 5, 6); but still they needed to be saved.

Many of them, like the Pharisee of whom our Saviour speaks, could stand in the temple and pray by themselves, and say, "God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke xviii. 11, 12); but still they needed to be saved. Many of them made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments, and offered long prayers, and scrupulously observed the Sabbath, and compassed sea and land to gain one proselyte, and added to the burdensome requirements of the ceremonial law by self-imposed regulations, and in the ardour of their devotion outstripped the demands of Divine

ordinances by keeping pace with the numerous traditions of the elders; but still they needed to be saved.

And if *they* needed to be saved, what must be said of the rest of mankind? If they were lost, notwithstanding their favourable circumstances, their peculiar advantages, their distinguishing mercies, their strict morality, their religious fervour, their illustrious ancestry, and their wonderful history,—radiant with the glory of Jehovah's presence,—how is it possible that "sinners of the Gentiles" have no need of a gracious and mighty hand to pluck them as brands from the burning?

But the greatest testimony to man's universal need of salvation is to be found in the cross of Christ! That such a refuge should have been provided in the immeasurable grace and unsearchable wisdom of God affords overwhelming demonstration of the fact that the entire human race was in extremest need: "for God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16).

The preciousness of the gift proves the vastness of the want it was designed to meet, and the costliness of the sacrifice reveals the depth of the woe it was intended to reach. Oh! if man did not need salvation, Jesus had not died; for it is inconceivable that the Father could have sent Him forth from His bosom,

and emptied Him of His Divine and eternal glory, and humbled Him to be made of a woman, made under the law, and laid upon Him the crushing burden of our iniquities, and looked upon His prostrate form in Gethsemane, and witnessed the blows that bruised His face, and heard His disconsolate cry on Calvary, unless a stern necessity had demanded this profound condescension and mysterious suffering.

But according to the abundant testimony of God, man's nature is essentially corrupt. In the beginning of the inspired word we are told, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. vi. 5). The words *every* and *only* and *evil* and *continually* are exceedingly significant in this connection, for they show that the whole fabrication or formation which distinguished him from the brute creation, including all the imaginations, desires, and purposes of the soul, were sinful, and sinful unceasingly.

Again, we read: "God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. vi. 12). Again, hundreds of years later, it is said: "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one"

(Ps. xiv. 2, 3). Again, Jehovah says, by the prophet Isaiah: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isa. i. 5, 6). Again, He declares, by the prophet Jeremiah, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9.)

Passing by other testimony in the old covenant Scriptures which could be gathered from every book, and in some form from nearly every chapter, we hear our Lord saying, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John iii. 6), and, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark vii. 21-23).

Glancing forward a little farther, we find the inspired apostle writing: "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. iii. 9–12).

Without quoting other declarations of the same import, enough has been said to show that, according to the infallible testimony of God, man is utterly ruined. Whenever, wherever, and however tried, he has proved a miserable failure. He was tried in Eden, and failed; for having believed the devil's lie, and plucked the forbidden fruit, conscious guilt took the place of original innocence, "and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden" (Gen. iii. 8).

He was tried before the giving of the law, and failed, for "until the law sin was in the world" (Rom. v. 13); and the Holy Ghost deduces from the universal prevalence of death the universal supremacy of sin; leading us to hear in every dying groan the thrilling announcement and to see in every new-made grave the visible demonstration of Jehovah's righteous abhorrence of iniquity. He was tried under the law, and failed; for it is written: "We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 19, 20). He was tried under grace, and failed; for "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather

than light, because their deeds were evil" (John iii. 19).

We cannot be surprised at this repeated failure under the most favourable circumstances, when we learn that after Adam fell from the high estate in which he was created, in the image and likeness of God, he "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen. v. 3). "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (Job xiv. 4). "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. li. 5). We discover, therefore, that there is an evil lying back of mere outward transgressions; for God, who knows all about us, declares that we are *by nature* children of wrath, or exposed to punishment, and hence by nature we are corrupt.

Out of this corrupt nature necessarily spring those evil deeds which are plainly contrary to the law of God, and therefore promptly recognized by an enlightened conscience as sinful. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matt. vii. 16–18). Do what you will with a tree in cultivating, pruning, or transplanting it, you can never so change its nature that thorns will bring forth grapes and thistles will produce figs. So, do what

you will with man by all the appliances of the highest culture and the most refined civilization, you cannot so change his nature that it will become holy. God can—and, blessed be His name! He does—impart a new nature by the power of the Holy Ghost, through faith in Jesus Christ, as revealed in His word; but the nature which we derive by birth from our parents is evil, and only evil, continually.

After what has been said, it is hardly necessary to dwell upon the words of our Lord when He exclaimed, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). When He made this statement He was speaking with Nicodemus, who was a master of Israel, a ruler of the Jews, and blameless, as we would say, in all his character and conduct. Even he was informed that, Except a man (or, as it is in the original, Except any one, Except every one) be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. The best, therefore, can do with nothing less than this, whatever may be their standing in their own estimation or in that of others. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John iii. 7). I do not deny for a moment the possession of amiable traits of character and virtuous principles of conduct by thousands who know nothing of Christ as their Saviour; but still I dare not go back upon His own explicit declaration, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and

of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5).

The last argument I advance to prove this fact, which it is absolutely essential that my readers should receive with an intelligent and fixed conviction of its truth, is derived from the oft-repeated declarations of God, threatening the most terrible punishment against those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ in His Divine person and atoning work. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36). "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 15, 16). "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. xxv. 46). "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. xxi. 8).

Every careful reader of the Holy Scriptures knows that such passages are constantly found in the sacred pages; and if any are disposed to call them in question, they should remember that their controversy is not with the author of this book, but with the Author of the Bible. God Himself, "the Father of mercies" (2 Cor.

i. 3), who "doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men" (Lam. iii. 33), has distinctly warned us that if we die in unbelief, eternal and intolerable sufferings await us in the future world. Dear dying reader, heed the warning, I beseech you, and "flee from the wrath to come" (Matt. iii. 7). I have shown you, upon the testimony of One who cannot lie, that all men, without a single exception, as they are born into the world, need salvation, and I pray God that you will not slight this testimony. Your unbelief will not affect its truth for an instant, but as the Lord liveth, your unbelief, if persisted in, will seal your "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (2 Thess. i. 9, 10).

SINCERITY CANNOT SAVE YOU.

"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."—ROMANS x. 2.

SINCERITY CANNOT SAVE YOU.

IT is a common opinion that it matters little what a man's religious views may be, provided He is sincere in his belief.

We often hear even Christians apply the term "good" to those who embrace and propagate fatal heresies, simply because they appear to be honest in their convictions and labour for the advancement of various humanitarian and philanthropic schemes. Nay, in some of the most popular pulpits of the day preachers are found sneering at "creeds," and journals professedly conducted in the interest of Christ's suffering cause pour contempt through their columns upon what they are pleased to call "a dry orthodoxy." It seems to be taken for granted that the time has come to do away with "doctrinal differences," as belonging to a former and darker age, and to substitute a polite education, a benevolent disposition, and refined manners in place of regeneration by the Holy Ghost, faith in the Son of God, and holiness of life.

The question, then, is simply this: Does God hold man responsible for his belief as well as for his conduct? or will mere sincerity, although

we may sincerely believe an error, entitle us to His favour? The former I affirm, the latter I deny; and I appeal at once to the inspired Book which contains the authentic decision of "the Lord of all the earth."

We gather from the words of the apostle (Rom. x. 1) that the Jews were not only sincere in their religious convictions, but zealous, and zealous for God; and yet they were lost, for he writes: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

"I bear them record," says the apostle, "that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge;" hence the most intense sincerity in maintaining their religious opinions, and the most fervent devotion in seeking to spread them abroad, could not deliver them from guilt.

So the Apostle Peter, after boldly telling the people that they had "killed the Prince of life" (Acts iii. 15), says: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts iii. 17). But did their ignorance of Christ's true character as the anointed One, or their sincere belief that He was an impious blasphemer, atone for their stupendous crime in putting Him to death? Not at all; for the same apostle earnestly exhorts them to repent of that crime, declaring that with wicked hands they had crucified and slain Him. The Apostle Paul also, referring to

the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, writes, "Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8): but their want of knowledge did not release them from responsibility, however sincere their convictions, because God has again and again announced that He will bring them into judgment for the murder of His Son.

No one will question this in matters concerning the physical laws of his being. He sees, for example, a white powder which he sincerely believes to be harmless; but if it is arsenic, and he is rash enough to act upon his belief by swallowing it, his sincerity will not prevent excruciating pain, and probably death.

An intelligent and conscientious physician may inform him that his continued dissipation will result in disease and drag him down prematurely to the grave; and although he may sincerely believe that his medical adviser is mistaken, his sincerity cannot avert the consequences of his folly and crime. He may be correctly told that a remedy has been discovered for some fearful plague which has laid its grasp upon him; but sincerely believing that his informant is mistaken, and preferring to follow the counsels of his own judgment, he may decline to act upon the testimony he has received: and yet his sincerity will not stay for a single moment the approach of the fell destroyer.

He may be warned by friends that a vessel in which he intends to make a voyage is not seaworthy; but sincerely believing that the warning is the expression of unreasonable prejudice or unmanly fear, he may confidently set sail: and yet his sincerity cannot deliver him from going down with a shriek into the yawning depths when the storm is let loose in its fury upon his frail craft.

It may be asked why a merciful God does not respect the sincerity of His creatures in such cases, and save them from the sufferings which they bring upon themselves. If it be replied that they violate certain fixed laws, and therefore receive the merited penalty, I answer that they also violate a certain and fixed law who refuse to believe the testimony of the Son of God; and we have already proved that the Almighty will no more interfere to arrest the penalty in one instance than in the other.

If any of the Hebrews on that terrible night of the passover in Egypt had sincerely believed that the blood of a slain lamb sprinkled on the door-posts of their houses could not save them from the stroke of the destroying angel, or that the Almighty was too merciful to inflict the threatened vengeance, their belief would have certainly manifested itself in their conduct, and they would have certainly perished with their enemies. If any of them, when bitten of the fiery serpents in the wilderness had argued that there was no remedial or restorative power

in looking at a piece of brass, and hence had sincerely believed that there was more wisdom in expecting help from some other source, they would have refused, of course, to obey the Divine direction; and of course they would have miserably perished because of their unbelief, however sincere they might have been.

It is a remarkable fact, that while so many are saying, It is of no consequence what a man believes, provided he is sincere, the "LORD God of truth" is solemnly saying, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life." Such men assert that it is not necessary to believe the very doctrine which our Maker declares to be essential to the deliverance of the soul from endless death! They say, He that believeth not shall be saved, if he is sincere in his unbelief; God says, He that believeth not shall be damned. Judge ye which of these two witnesses is entitled to our confidence. "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. iii. 4). "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" (1 John ii. 22.) "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar" (1 John v. 10). It comes, then, to this: either the common notion that man is not responsible for his belief is false, or the eternal Creator of heaven and earth has not spoken the truth in the Bible; for the former is a flat contradiction of the latter. The word of the Lord, the work of Christ, and the way of redemption from first to last, all hold forth

the necessity not only of a sincere belief, but of a belief according to knowledge; and there is no meaning nor reality in anything that is written in the sacred Scriptures if a sinner can be saved by believing an error, although he may believe it with all his heart. Of the saved our Lord says in His prayer to the Father, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). Of the lost it is said, they have "the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. iv. 18); "and the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i. 7, 8).

And now, dear reader, I leave what is here written to your reflections; praying that the Lord will lead you to see the hollowness of Satan's crafty device when he would persuade you that man is not responsible for his belief. Depend upon it, this is the devil's lie and not God's truth. Even under the Levitical law an offering was provided for sins of ignorance; and in the gospel of the grace of God it is written, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. ii. 3) although we may be perfectly sincere in our neglect.

YOUR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS CANNOT SAVE YOU.

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."—ROMANS x. 3.

YOUR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS CANNOT SAVE YOU.

THE first question to be settled here is the meaning of the term *righteousness*. Some idea of the importance of the question may be gathered from the fact that the word occurs ninety-two times in the New Testament, and is found thirty-six times in the Epistle to the Romans. Many inquirers after the way of eternal life are kept in darkness and uncertainty from a failure to see the signification of the language employed by the Holy Ghost in the sacred Scriptures. They might often be spared weary months of struggling, and feebleness in all their subsequent walk, if distinctly taught at the very beginning of their religious experience the precise meaning of such expressions as redemption, regeneration, repentance, faith, grace, justification, adoption, sanctification, and righteousness.

The phrase "righteousness of God," which frequently occurs in the inspired epistles, demands our earnest consideration. We find the apostle writing to the Romans, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: . . . for therein is the righteousness of God revealed

from faith to faith" (Rom. i. 16, 17). Again, "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe" (Rom. iii. 21, 22). Again, "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). Again, he expresses an earnest desire to be found in Christ; not having, he says, "mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. iii. 9). Simon Peter also sends his salutation "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. i. 1).

The term righteousness, when applied to God, does not so much refer to any one attribute as it denotes the perfection of His nature, and sets forth the fact that He is most holy in Himself and most just in all His dealings with His creatures. Some writers tell us that the expression means "the righteousness which God gives and which He approves;" but while this is the truth, as far as it goes, it is not the whole truth. God might give and approve a creature-righteousness such as Adam had in the garden of Eden, and such as angels possess in the paradise of heaven; but there is some-

thing better and nobler than this in store for the redeemed sinner.

"The righteous LORD loveth righteousness" (Ps. xi. 7); and His love for it is so great that when He saw our utter destitution and extreme wretchedness, in His infinite kindness and amazing condescension He gave us His own. He gave Christ, His co-equal, co-eternal, and only-begotten Son, who was and is for evermore the true God in our nature, and who not only furnished the most illustrious exhibition of His Father's righteousness the universe has ever seen, but by His perfect obedience to all the demands of the Divine law, and by His endurance of its penalty in the room and for the justification of His people, becomes their righteousness; and this righteousness is the righteousness of God Himself.

It is that kind of righteousness which is worthy of admittance into His presence; and He imputes to believers the righteousness of His Son, which is only another name for His own righteousness. Hence we read such astonishing language as this: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. vi. 2.) "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. vi. 3.) "He that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father" (Rev. ii. 26,

27). "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God; and I will write upon him My new name" (Rev. iii. 12). "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. iii. 21). In other words, the righteousness of God gives a title to those who are saved to be associated with "the Prince of the kings of the earth" (Rev. i. 5) in the most endeared intimacy and in places of highest dignity, which would be impossible if they did not stand upon the ground of a perfect righteousness before the Father, arrayed as it were in the robe of His own unsullied perfections.

The righteousness of God, then, is an expression which has a broader and deeper significance than that given to it by those who explain it to mean simply God's method of justification or the righteousness of which God is the author and approver. The law demands righteousness; and as we cannot meet the high demand, grace gives righteousness; and as it is a gift, it is bestowed in a manner worthy of God, who gives us His own righteousness. Nothing less than this could satisfy the desires of His loving heart, and nothing less than this could suffice

to admit us into His blessed presence. If the soul has upon it the faintest stain of sin, it must be excluded for ever from His glorious dwelling-place; for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth" (Rev. xxi. 27), and only those who are righteous in the sense that God Himself is righteous can appear for a moment in the dazzling splendour of His holiness.

Hence, amid the untold wonders of His creation and providence, the most wonderful thing He has ever done is to impute a Divine righteousness to the believing sinner who can say, with perfect confidence: "Holy Father! there is no difference now between Thy righteousness and mine; for I am made the very righteousness of God in Christ." I need not add that this righteousness is no less enduring and immutable than is the self-existent and unchangeable nature of the Almighty; and never, never can it be torn from those to whom it has been reckoned as the ground of their justification until the eternal Jehovah shall cease to exist or be hurled from His throne.

It has been the great purpose of Jehovah from the beginning, I may say, to teach this foundation truth to mankind; for He stated and rehearsed it as distinctly before the coming of the Saviour into the world as He did afterwards. Thus when our first parents plucked the forbidden fruit, we are told, "the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they

were naked, and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Gen. iii. 7). The violated law instantly thundered its curse against them, "Thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17); but grace sweetly spoke in the promise of the conquering Seed, and then it is added, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins and clothed them" (Gen. iii. 21).

What have we here but the insufficiency of man's righteousness as well as the precious truth of Divine righteousness taught in symbol? The attempt which Adam made with his apron of fig-leaves to cover his nakedness utterly failed, and hence he and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden; but the robe which Jehovah provided, and which told the story of the shedding of blood (as the appointed victim had to be slain before it could be presented), was Divinely perfect in its way; and when once received we read no longer of the sinner hiding from the view and voice of his Father.

Again, in the next chapter, we learn that "in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth,

and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well [that is, If thou offerest properly], shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well [offerest not properly], sin lieth at the door" (Gen. iv. 3–7).

Here we have two altars, the one laden with beautiful fruits and fragrant flowers, the product of the worshipper's honourable toil, and the expression, no doubt, of his grateful and sincere homage, while the other is dripping with the blood of a dead lamb. The difference between the two brothers did not consist in the superiority of either by nature, but in the sacrifices which they presented. The one occupied the ground of man's righteousness in his worship, and hence was rejected: the other occupied the ground of Divine righteousness, and consequently was accepted; for the Holy Ghost informs us that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gift" (Heb. xi. 4). The offerer and the offering were identified, and stood or fell together, God regarding the former in the light of the latter, and proclaiming, even in that early age that man's righteousness cannot save him.

But above all things the work of Christ shows conclusively that we need a better righteousness than we ourselves can render; "for if there had

been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Gal. iii. 21); and "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. ii. 21). Yes; he who relies for salvation upon his own works defiantly sets his opinion in opposition to the eternal counsel of Jehovah, and boldly declares that the awful scene on Calvary, when the tender heart of the immaculate and incarnate One was broken by reproach upon the cross, was altogether unnecessary.

Every one must see, then, at a glance, the gross inconsistency of professing to believe the Bible, and at the same time, denying the necessity of the atonement; for Christ and His cross form the key to unlock the meaning of the Scriptures, and constitute the all-pervading theme of its sacred pages. They exhibit in every possible form of expression the Divine person and mediatorial work of Christ Jesus, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under

the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 6–11). Whoever, in proud or ignorant dependence upon his good character and conduct, refuses to confess that most worthy Name which raises the anthems of heaven to their highest notes will certainly find his boasted righteousness a foundation of sand when the Lord "ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Isa. ii. 19).

Dear reader, be persuaded, "before that great and notable day of the Lord come" (Acts ii. 20), to accept the perfect and proffered righteousness of Christ, which alone can stand the inspection of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire. I do not ask you to "give your heart to God," or to "enter into covenant with God that you will serve Him," as the means of obtaining His favour; for this is wretched advice, although you often hear it urged. God is already favourable, and in His infinite love is holding out to your immediate acceptance a Divine righteousness—yea, His own righteousness—as the ground of your instant, complete, and eternal justification.

Without this you may unite with any Church, or with all the Churches, on the face of the earth; you may be baptized in any mode, or in all the modes ever practised; you may regularly partake of the Lord's Supper; you may bestow all your goods to feed the poor, and give your body to be burned: and after all remain the

same condemned and ruined sinner you are at present. But now the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all, that is, it is offered to all, and it is actually upon all them that believe.

The righteousness of God! What a wonderful truth! Blessed be His name! the worst need nothing better than this, but the best can do with nothing less. While such a righteousness is so generously pressed upon dying men, sad indeed it is to think of the vast multitudes who, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." I would not undervalue in the slightest degree the real worth of morality in its relation to human society, but do not, I beseech you, put it in the place of righteousness; for the former may shine in its brightest glory without receiving one ray from the latter to mingle with its radiance.

NO HOPE FOR THE SINNER IN THE LAW.

"For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them."—ROMANS x. 5.

NO HOPE FOR THE SINNER IN THE LAW.

THERE are only two ways by which men expect to enter heaven. One is by *doing*, the other is by *believing*. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them."

If then a man expects to obtain righteousness by the law or by the principle of doing, he must do the things required by the law. It is not enough that he tries to do them, or that he promises to do them, or that he is sorry because he has not done them, or that he does some of them; but he must actually do, and do without faltering, and do all the things demanded by the law, or a voice breaks like thunder above his head, saying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all things* which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10). God, who gave the law and knows why He gave it, has also said, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jas. ii. 10).

Even the incarnate One, who came on a

mission of love and salvation to our lost race, solemnly declared, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. v. 18).

The law, therefore, cannot lower its demands to humour the caprices or to suit the necessities of the sinner, for then it would be no law at all. It is an unalterable expression of the will of God concerning the duty of man, and it remains for ever the same in its holy precepts and in its dread penalty, whatever may be our state. Human laws are often repealed, or changed in some of their principal features, or suffered to lie on the statute book as a dead letter, because the legislators and the executive are frequently ignorant, passionate, fickle, and powerless to enforce their decrees; but the Divine law, as we have already seen, is perfect, and the Divine Lawgiver has all the resources of the universe at His command to do His bidding. Hence it is written, "If the word [that is the law] spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. ii. 2, 3.)

The law, we here learn, is stedfast, stable, firmly established; and every transgression—not only some gross and enormous transgressions, but *every* transgression and disobedience—is sure to receive a just recompense of reward; "for the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). What hope, then, can the *sinner* derive

from the law or from reliance upon his own doing to be saved? None whatever. The righteousness which Moses describeth, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them, most clearly can be of no avail to the man who has not done them. The promise is only to him who doeth them, and not to him who fails to do them. If any can be found who have perfectly obeyed the requirements of the law in thought, emotion, word, and deed, they may begin to speak of winning heaven on the principle of doing; but if it can be proved that all, without exception, have disobeyed these requirements, it follows, so far as the law is concerned, that it condemns the entire human family, and demands that the threatened penalty shall be inflicted.

How many sincere souls might be spared months and years of gloomy despondency and harassing fears if taught at the beginning of their religious experience the utter uselessness and worthlessness of their own doing! You remember that when our blessed Lord was on the earth, "there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Observe that, like sinners now, he wanted to *do* something, and the Saviour met him on his own ground. It is as if He had said, You ask what you must *do;* and since you are determined to seek salvation by doing, "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do

not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother."

You will notice that Christ takes him only to that part of the ten commandments which requires us to love our neighbours as ourselves, and does not refer to that higher part which requires us to love God with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; because the former was sufficient to disclose to the inquirer the deceitfulness of his heart. "And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

If he really loved his neighbour as himself, why did he wish to retain his immense wealth and leave others around him wretchedly poor, when, if he had been poor and they rich, he would have desired to share in their abundance? "And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." (Mark x. 17–22.) Alas! with all his doing, that made him so amiable and attractive, he had not complied with the spirit of the second table of the Decalogue, to say nothing of the first.

My reader, if you really insist upon trying to be saved by trying to keep the law, you will discover that it will baffle your best efforts,

and outstrip your most arduous pursuit of holiness, and more and more reveal the abyss of ruin in which you are plunged, and drag from their secret lurking-places in your soul sins of whose existence you have probably been ignorant.

What, then, will you do? Will going to church save you? Poor sinner! how can that save you, when the Church of itself is nothing but, as its name implies, an assembly of saved sinners called out from the world to be the witness of the grace that has plucked them as brands from the burning? And he who expects to be saved in virtue of his connection with any body of professing Christians will feel the ground on which he stands give way as with the throes of an earthquake, and no resting-place shall be found for his soul. The Church is composed of sinners who, believing in Jesus, "are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 23); and it would be a strange thing indeed if the saved could become the Saviour in any other sense than to testify of His redeeming love and of the infinite merit of His atoning blood.

Mere outward connection then with the Church of Christ is of no avail, even if your life moreover were blameless in the sight of man.

My authority for this declaration is found in the oft-repeated testimony of the word of God that our *very nature is sinful*, and hence our

Lord, as if addressing each person belonging to our race, distinctly affirms, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee"—I who can neither deceive nor be deceived, I who came down from heaven to die in the room and stead of lost men—"I say unto thee, Except a man [except any one, every one] be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3).

Those who reject the finished work of Christ as the only ground of their hope may cavil as much as they please at these words; but there they stand for ever in the sacred Scriptures, and no impious hand can tear them from the Bible, and no ingenious criticism can force them to signify mere reformation or the reception of rites and sacraments. When the blessed Saviour said, "Ye must be born again" (John iii. 7), He obviously meant just what He said, and not something He did not say. We have been born once—born of our earthly parents,—and now we must be born again, or we cannot see the kingdom of God. The way in which we are born again is very simple, and the Lord states it in language that cannot be misunderstood when He says, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John iii. 14, 15).

Whosoever believeth, then, has eternal life, and whosoever has eternal life surely sees and enters the kingdom of God: so that whosoever

believeth is born again. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). God *loved* and *gave*, and we *believe* and *have;* and this is all of it in order to attain life and experience the new birth. To the same effect we read, "As many as received Him [Christ], to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 12, 13). "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John v. 1). "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26). "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature" (2 Cor. v. 17), or, as it might be rendered, he is an unimpaired, uncontaminated creation. In other words, he is born again; and no one has the right to say that we can be born only once.

Indeed, unless we are born a second time, born from above, born of God, it is certain that we can never see heaven; for the old nature which we inherit from fallen Adam cannot be admitted into the presence of the Holy One of whom it is written, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. i. 13). "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," says Jesus; "and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii. 6).

The birth, then, is real and literal in the one case as in the other, and the one is no more mysterious than the other.

The nature we inherit from fallen Adam remains depraved and sinful to the end of life. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and do what you will with it, you can never make anything of it but flesh. Adorn it with all the charms of the most attractive morality, beautify it with all the graces of the most refined culture, and still it remains flesh. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt. vii. 16). Can you by any amount of care and industry cause thorns to produce grapes, or thistles to bring forth figs? This may be done just as soon as flesh can be turned into spirit, or that which is inherently and essentially sinful can be changed into holiness. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then," says the Lord, "may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. xiii. 23). In other words, neither in the case of the Ethiopian nor the leopard nor the sinner can the nature be changed into another nature. A new nature may be imparted or a new creation wrought by the power of the Almighty, but the old nature will be the old nature still.

Hence the Bible, in describing the way of salvation, does not represent it as due to certain moral influences which God brings to bear upon the soul, but to "the exceeding greatness

of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power [or the energy of the might of His power], which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. i. 19, 20). Nothing short of the highest exercise of Divine power can avail to raise us out of the profound abyss of our misery, because our nature is helplessly sinful and hopelessly ruined. God's judgment of our state by nature is contained in His own solemn declaration, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. xvii. 9); and it will give the full force of this declaration to remember that the word translated "desperately" is rendered "incurable" and "fatal" when applied to a disease or a wound. Man's nature then is *incurably* wicked, it is *fatally* injured; and, therefore, in the promise of salvation which the Lord addresses to Israel, he says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26).

In the light of these clear statements, and of many others like them that could be quoted if necessary, we are compelled to see that the nature we have inherited from fallen Adam is totally ruined. There is not, according to the vain thought of many, a little good in man as he is born into the world, "for I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. vii. 18), and in God's sight,

"every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. vi. 5). He is not like a ship whose sails have been split by a storm and whose masts have been splintered by the lightning, so that it needs repair; but like a shattered wreck upon the shore. A new vessel must be built. He is not like a musical instrument whose strings have become discordant by the violence of some rude clashing hand, but like one broken to pieces. A new instrument must be constructed. He is not like a temple whose altar is desecrated, whose walls are defaced, and whose pillars have been dismantled of their beauty; but the magnificent edifice that once reflected the glory of the Godhead now lies a shapeless mass of worthless rubbish, the fit abode of unclean birds and venomous reptiles, and a new building must be reared.

Our nature is like a human body full of "wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isa. i. 6); and the Holy Ghost did not come down in witness of the ascension of Christ, to inhabit such a thing as this, and seek its improvement. It has been cast out as vile; and not only has the righteous sentence of its doom been pronounced, but it has been executed: for "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3). Blessed be His name! He struck

at the very root of the evil, at sin in the flesh or in our nature; and yet, in His adorable grace, the blow fell not upon us, but upon His own Son: "for He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21).

Sin, then, in its broadest and deepest sense, including both actual transgressions and the depravity of our nature, has already been judged and condemned and punished, so far as the believer is concerned, in the person of Jesus Christ, "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24); who "appeared to put away sin [not sins only, but sin, the poisonous root down in our nature] by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26); and on the ground of that ample and atoning sacrifice, the Holy Ghost proceeds to impart a new nature, to give a new life, to form a new creation in Christ through faith in His name as He is made known to us in the gospel.

But, dear reader, you are laying up for yourself much sorrow and trouble if you fail to remember that the "flesh" in a Christian is no better than the "flesh" in an infidel. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and on becoming "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" we do not cease to be the children of Adam. It is true that "ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Rom. viii. 9); but it is equally true that the flesh is in you, and you

will find it to be the same flesh that it was before you believed the testimony of the gospel, and were thus "born again."

Forgetfulness or ignorance of this fact has cast many young believers, and many old ones too, into the depths of despondency, and made them all their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death. They have been taught to expect a gradual change and increasing sanctification of the old nature until, as I have heard eminent ministers express it, the Spirit puts the finishing touch on the Christian in his dying hour, who is thus made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Now the fact is, he was made meet the moment he was in Christ by faith; for the apostle, in behalf of all Christians alike, gives "thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. i. 12): and as to the gradual change and improvement of the old nature, I boldly challenge the experience of every intelligent, thoughtful believer to testify whether it is not the merest delusion. Does he find that it is a whit better after ten, twenty, or forty years than it was the day he confessed Christ? Nay; does he not find that it is precisely the same, except that there is a growing conviction of its exceeding sinfulness? True, he may be enabled through the indwelling Spirit to subdue it more thoroughly; but unless it is constantly "mortified" and "kept under," it will spring

up in all its original deformity, and obscure the shining of the new nature.

Careful observation also will convince you that a Christian carries with him, along the whole progress of his earthly journey, the same characteristics, the same peculiarities, the same nature he had previous to his conversion; and though it is now hated and held down, ever and anon it rises into view, and, when faith falters, extorts the cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24.) If it is the fact that the old nature of the Christian must undergo this gradual and progressive change for the better, it is unaccountable that the most abandoned sinners, like the dying thief, sometimes pass in an hour from the lowest depths of iniquity into the paradise of God, and that the most devoted saints, like David, are guilty of fearful falls, that leave a dark stain on the record of their lives; since, according to the theory that the old nature ceases to be what it was, there should not be found in it any power to lust, or to plan a murder, or to commit any other heinous sin.

It is astonishing, therefore, that so many persist in speaking of regeneration as a change wrought in the old nature until it reaches perfection at the moment of death, when their views are not only directly in the face of the Scriptures, but flatly contradicted by the experience and observation of their hearers.

The preachers of a former age, when a sounder theology prevailed, spoke far otherwise, as did Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester, in the seventeenth century, who wrote, "In an unconverted person there is but one nature: in a real Christian there are two natures; the one is called the flesh; the other the Spirit." This I think expresses the precise difference between the unbeliever and the believer: the former has but one nature, while the latter has two natures; but of course I do not mean to say he has two souls. The second Man, the Lord from heaven, has two natures in one person, dwelling together without admixture, change, or confusion, yet He has but one soul.

Webster defines the word *nature* as "the essence, essential qualities, or attributes of a thing, which constitute it what it is:" and I affirm that "the essence, essential qualities, or attributes" which belong to man when he is born into the world continue with him unchanged to the end; and that when he is born again another thing is communicated to him, "the essence, essential qualities, or attributes" of which link him to God and constitute Him truly a child of God. Of the one nature it is written, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning" (1 John iii. 8). Of the other nature it is written, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of

God" (1 John iii. 9). Of the one it is written, "The old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. iv. 22). Of the other it is written, "The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. iv. 24). Of the one it is written, "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them" (1 John iv. 5). Of the other it is written, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John v. 4).

The sharp and unchanged contrast between the two natures as presented in the Bible might be continued at great length, but enough, probably, has been said to convince you that if you are looking for the gradual sanctification of the old nature, instead of trusting in the accomplished sacrifice of Christ, you will be woefully disappointed. You will find that the old nature remains the old nature in spite of all your struggles and tears and vows. "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved" (Matt. ix. 16, 17).

If men are not guilty of the folly described here by the Saviour, neither is the Lord; for He just casts aside the old garment, the old

bottles, the old nature, as condemned and worthless, and gives unto us "exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4), and "in Christ a new creation." It is all in Christ, for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24). "Knowing this, that our old man is [was] crucified with Him" (Rom. vi. 6). "I am [have been] crucified with Christ" (Gal. ii. 20). The scene of this crucifixion is not in ourselves—as so many imagine, to their own perpetual discomfort and sorrow,—but it was on Calvary: for when Christ was crucified the believer was crucified; when Christ died the believer died; when Christ was buried the believer was buried; when Christ was quickened the believer was quickened; when Christ arose the believer arose; when Christ was seated in the heavenly places the believer was seated together with Him, for ever past condemnation and judgment and death, and standing in the light and glory of the new creation, an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ, saved now and saved for ever.

NOTHING BETWEEN THE SINNER AND THE SAVIOUR.

"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach."—ROMANS x. 6–8.

NOTHING BETWEEN THE SINNER AND THE SAVIOUR.

"THE law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John i. 17). The law says, Do and be saved; grace says, Believe and be saved. The law says, Do and live; grace says, Live and do. The law says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. xviii. 4); grace says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom" (Job xxxiii. 24). The law says, "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put away evil from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear" (Deut. xxi. 18-21). Grace says, concerning the wretched prodigal,

although "stubborn and rebellious," a "glutton and a drunkard," that "when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke xv. 20). The law says, "Lay hold on him;" grace says, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him" (Luke xv. 22). The law says, "Stone him;" grace says, "Put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet" (Luke xv. 22). The law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10); grace, speaking of believers, says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13).

This shows us precisely how we are delivered from the curse of the law, for it is said, "Christ hath redeemed us, being made a curse for us." He was "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. iv. 4, 5). The law therefore has not been set aside, but satisfied. It has not been trampled under foot, but it has triumphed in the infliction of the threatened penalty against sin; only the penalty has, in amazing grace, fallen upon the person of the sinner's Divine Substitute. He endured the penalty in the fullest and truest sense, because penalty is what the law exacts in order to vindicate its insulted majesty and meet its righteous

claims; and this is what Christ did when He suffered on the cross.

If a man were put in prison for debt, and a friend should pay the full amount to the creditor, it would be impossible in strict justice to retain the debtor in confinement, because the law would be satisfied—not by anything the prisoner could do, but by what his friend does as his representative and in his place. His further detention in prison after the discharge of the debt would be grossly illegal and tyrannical. If a monarch should condemn one of his subjects to death for treason, and then permit his own son to suffer instead of the insurgent, it would be impossible in strict justice to execute the threatened sentence upon the person of the traitor. His death under such circumstances would shake the very foundations of the government and destroy all confidence in the integrity of the ruler.

These illustrations come far short of presenting fully the work of Christ in our behalf, because in the cases of the debtor and the traitor there was a mere escape from punishment, without peace of conscience, without refuge from fears of the future, without restoration to their good standing, while, as we have already seen, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." But they serve at least to clear the point we are now considering, that Christ having been "made a curse for us," it is impossible for God, who

is "faithful and just," to inflict the penalty of His satisfied law upon those in whose stead it has once been endured by His only begotten and well-beloved Son. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 6–8). If the phrase, to die *for* a righteous man and *for* a good man, means to die in the place, room, and stead of a righteous or good man so as to keep him from dying, then, beyond question, the distinct statement of the Holy Ghost, declaring that Christ died *for* the ungodly and *for* us, means that He died in the place, room, and stead of the ungodly and the "us" who are believers.

The stupendous difficulty in the way of the sinner's salvation was the claim of God's violated law, demanding by all the perfections of the Divine Being, and by all the necessities of His government, that sin should be punished; but when Jehovah, of whom the prophets sang, "He will magnify the law and make it honourable" (Isa. xlii. 21), descended from the throne of universal sovereignty, and shrouded His divinity in human flesh, and bowed His head in the shameful death of the cross, the law has no further claim upon believers for whom this death was endured, but, sheathing its

flaming sword, it joins with mercy in the sweet invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. lv. 1).

It is most important to keep in mind that the sacrificial death of Christ has already been endured, and His atoning work already accomplished. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. liii. 5, 6). "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3). God "hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26). "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Heb. ix. 28). "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24). "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18).

You will observe that in these texts not only

is the death of Christ directly connected with our sins, and described as vicarious, or endured in our stead, and represented as furnishing the only ground upon which we can be saved, but the past tense is used in every passage, to indicate that the great transaction has already taken place. The Saviour in His adorable love and pity did not wait for man to seek Him, but came unasked to our lost world and undeserving race. He did not come that God *might* love us, but because God *did* love us, and love us while we were "ungodly," and "sinners," and "enemies," and so love us that He gave His only begotten Son to take our place under His dishonoured law, and endure its dreadful penalty in our stead. God in the unsullied holiness of the Divine nature, and the inviolable majesty of the Divine law, and the unspeakable interests of the Divine government, met the Son at Calvary bearing upon Him the mighty load of our iniquities; and there, the question of sin and salvation was once and for ever settled.

Since that event occurred, and even since it was announced in the first promise made to our fallen parents concerning the Seed of the woman, and in the first type of the coats of skins with which God's own hand clothed them, no other atonement has been demanded, no other sacrifice has been possible, no other righteousness has been accepted; but the gracious Redeemer says in His blessed word, "I bring near My righteousness; it shall not be far off, and

My salvation shall not tarry" (Isa. xlvi. 13). When the dying Jesus said, "It is finished" (John xix. 30), and bowed His head and gave up the ghost, He joyfully announced that all His sacrificial sufferings were past; that all the types of the law were answered; that all its rites were abolished; that all its claims were met; that all its demands were satisfied; that all its purposes were secured; and that nothing more remained to be done but for the whole world, if it will, to rest upon this *finished* work with the calmness of an unfaltering confidence and in the sure anticipation of eternal glory. There is nothing, then, and there can be nothing in the nature of the case, between the sinner and the Saviour—no, not so much as the thickness of the thinnest tissue-paper or the most delicate gold-leaf.

I know how common, alas! it is for the anxious soul to be put upon a course of presumptuous and profitless *doing* in order to be saved; as when urged to enter into covenant with God to serve Him; or to draw up a form of solemn self-surrender and self-dedication; or to be baptized; or to join the membership of a Church; or to seek religion; or to give the heart unto the Lord as the means of inclining Him to be gracious; or to keep on praying until He will be merciful and answer fervent and frequent supplications. My reader, be persuaded that such advice is not the gospel, but the law, and you will never, never obtain an intelligent

and assured hope in this way. Under this law-preaching, as I do not hesitate to call it, it has come to pass that many a one who is awakened to consider the interests of eternity thinks of the blessed God as an unfeeling Governor whose compliance with a request is to be won by the force of importunity, or as a stern Judge whose favour is to be gained by eloquent appeals and tearful entreaties.

Oh, if the inquirer who reads these lines only knew how nigh salvation is to him this very moment, surely he would eagerly lay hold of it without the slightest delay! Nay, he has not even to lay hold of it; he has just to receive it in all its completeness. It is nigher to you, my friend than the door, than any article of furniture in the room where you are sitting, than any object within your reach, for it is as nigh as your mouth and your heart.

There is no need to plead with God to be merciful, for He is already merciful, and has given the most convincing exhibition of His mercy in the wonderful provisions He has made for your recovery from the dominion and ruinous consequences of sin. There is no need to beseech Him to love you, for He already loves you, and has furnished the most touching manifestation of that love of which the mind of man or of an angel can conceive. "Some years ago two gentlemen were riding together, and as they were about to separate, one addressed the other thus: 'Do you ever read your

Bible?' 'Yes; but I get no benefit from it, because, to tell you the truth, I feel I do not love God.' 'No more did I,' replied the other; 'but God loved me.' This answer produced such an effect upon his friend that, to use his own words, it was as if one had lifted him off the saddle into the skies. It opened up to his soul at once the great truth that it is not how much I love God, but how much God loves me."

This is indeed the great truth, "for God so loved the world [the guilty, sinful, ruined world], that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 9, 10). "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John iv. 19); and if you attempt to reverse this Divine order so as to love Him first that He may love you in return, you will soon be involved in hopeless confusion and darkness.

The devil would like to persuade you that God cannot love you as you are, and hence he is constantly suggesting to parents to tell their little children that God will not love them if they are naughty; but "he is a liar, and the father of it" (John viii. 44). And when he

whispers to your soul that you must do something, or get to be something, different from what you now are before God can love you, he is whispering a lie; for God loves you at this very instant, and sees you afar off, and yearns over you with unutterable tenderness, and longs to take you to His heart of love and make you happy for ever.

Who, then, puts the slightest barrier between the sinner and the Saviour? Not the Saviour Himself; for His language is: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me" (Matt. xi. 28, 29). But you will observe that He does not bid us take His yoke until we first come, labouring and heavy laden with our sins or sorrows, nor does He expect us to learn until He first gives us rest.

You will find upon examination that this is the order always laid down in the word of God. Salvation is first bestowed as a free gift, and then service follows; privilege is first granted, and then responsibility ensues; relationship with God as our Father is first established by grace, and then the affections of children are expected; our standing in Christ is first secured through faith in His blood, and then obligation is imposed. There is no telling the amount of evil that has followed man's attempt to reverse this order, and I beg you to remember that as a sinner you have nothing, *nothing* to do but to come to Christ

as you are; by which I mean, you have nothing to do but to believe, upon the sure testimony of God's word, that He is able and willing to save your soul, and to save it without delay. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink" (John vii. 37). In the eagerness of His desire to save, He arose from the sitting posture usual with Jewish teachers, and stood, that His voice might ring like a trumpet above the crowd, crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me"—come, thirsty and needy, and not because he has done something to quench his thirst and satisfy his need.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him;
This He gives you—
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

What then should be done with the preaching that puts the smallest obstacle, though it be nothing more than a straw, between the sinner and the Saviour? Why, toss it overboard as an accursed thing, and make haste to believe, because God has said it, that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7).

But let us glance at the testimony of the apostles who received from their Master the great commission, "Go ye into all the world,

and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15); or, in other words, Preach the good news, the glad tidings of the boundless love of God and the finished work of Christ. We learn that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost came down in witness of our Lord's ascension to the right hand of the Father, and wonderful results followed His manifested presence among the disciples. There were at that time in Jerusalem "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians" (Acts ii. 9-11).

To this mixed multitude, together with many of the inhabitants of the city, Peter and the rest of the apostles proclaimed Jesus and the resurrection. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . . And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved" (Acts ii. 41, 42, 46, 47). There was no

delay here; no waiting to get better; no striving to be fit to come; no probing into their hearts to test their feelings, whether they had repented enough, and whether they loved God enough, and whether they believed aright: but immediately upon receiving the word as true, *the same day* there were added to the Church about three thousand rejoicing converts.

We look a little farther, and find that "a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet" (Acts viii. 27, 28). He was an anxious inquirer, as we say in these days, for, having become utterly dissatisfied with heathenism, he had gone to the city of David to bow before the true God, and was still diligently seeking the way of life. Philip, one of the seven deacons elected by the Church to look after the poor, was commanded by the Holy Ghost to join himself to the chariot of the officer. Having promptly obeyed the direction, although it took him from great crowds that attended his ministry in Samaria, to preach to a single sinner, he asked him whether he understood what he was reading. "How can I," was the reply, "except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him."

The place he was reading was the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which so clearly and beau-

tifully sets forth the atoning work of Christ for the certain and complete salvation of His people, and "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." Having shown that the prophet predicted the death of Him who was crucified between two thieves, he may have dwelt a little upon the sixth verse of that remarkable chapter, which has brought relief to many troubled souls. He may have slowly read the first clause, "All we like sheep have gone astray," and fixing the attention of his interested hearer, pointedly asked, "Do you believe that?" "Oh yes," would be the reply; "that describes my condition precisely, for like a silly sheep I have wandered from the path of duty and of safety." He may then have read the second clause, "We have turned every one to his own way," and asked, "Do you believe that?" "Indeed I do," would be the answer; "for I have followed the counsels of my own heart and trusted in my own righteousness." He may then have read the last clause, "And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," and solemnly said, "Do you believe *that?* You believe you have gone astray like a lost sheep; you believe you have turned to your own way; and now do you believe, because God hath said it, that He has laid your iniquities upon Christ the Sin-bearer? If so, they cannot be upon you, and therefore you are a saved man."

At all events, however Philip may have

talked to him, he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," and was immediately baptized, and "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts viii. 39). *Just so soon* as Jesus was preached he received the testimony concerning Him as true, and hence pursued his journey filled with peace and gladness, because his thoughts were not occupied about himself, but about Christ and His finished work.

Once more, we are told that Paul and Silas were preaching in the city of Philippi, where a great uproar occurred as the result of a miracle wrought on "a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination." The preachers were seized, dragged before the magistrates, savagely beaten, and committed to prison, with a command to the jailer to keep them safely; "who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." But the hand of violence could not touch the resurrection life they had received from the Saviour, nor could the stroke of suffering mar its happiness; and therefore at midnight they "prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." He who had sent them to Europe determined to plant the banner of the Cross on this new continent, whether men would hear or forbear, "and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed."

The jailer, awakened by the tumult, naturally inferred that the prisoners had fled, and, knowing that he would be held accountable for their escape, was on the point of committing suicide, when Paul arrested his uplifted hand by calling with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here." Then conviction seems to have fastened on the man's conscience, and he was persuaded by the extraordinary events he had witnessed that the poor girl had unconsciously uttered the truth when she followed Paul and his companions for many days through the streets, crying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Accordingly, "he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" This is a very earnest, but very plain and simple, question, and the answer is equally plain and simple. *Do?* Why do you ask about doing? You must *do* nothing but "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

As he was an ignorant heathen who probably had never heard before of Jesus Christ, of course he needed instruction; "and they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house,

he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (Acts xvi. 32–34).

In considering these examples of instantaneous conversion it is useless to reply that the times have changed since Christ and the apostles preached. It is true the times have changed, but the word of God has not changed, and man's need has not changed, and human nature has not changed, and the way of salvation has not changed. It is true that most of the conversions in our day occur only at the close of a protracted period of darkness, and effort, and prayer, and reading, and reflection, and repentance; but this only goes to show how far we have departed from the simplicity and blessedness of the gospel as at first proclaimed, when the disciples went abroad telling the good news of Christ's death on the cross for sinners, and as many as believed the glad tidings to be true, and true for themselves, straightway entered into life.

If a friend of undoubted veracity were to enter your house or meet you on the street and tell you good news that greatly concerned your welfare, how long a time must elapse before you would believe him? A day, a week, a month, a year? Would you say to him, "I wish I could believe you; I am trying to believe you; I must wait until I *feel* that I believe you; I cannot *realize* that what you tell me is true"? or would you just believe him and rejoice? "Wherefore as the Holy

Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. iii. 7, 8); and the way to harden the heart, as we learn from the chapter in which this text is found, is to continue in unbelief. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2), and the *now* refers, not only to the gospel age as distinguished from the dispensation of the law, but to this passing moment.

The way some men set forth what they call the gospel would require their hearers to spend about four years in college and three in a theological seminary in order to be saved, and even then they could not be certain of their salvation. But God the Father says, "Now!" and God the Son says, "Now!" and God the Spirit says, "Now!" and the Bible says, "Now!" and the very depths of the sinner's guilty and ruined nature echo the cry, "Now." If he stays away from Christ trying to do something until he is as old as Methuselah, could such a thing be, at the close of nine hundred and sixty-nine years he will not be a step or a hair's breadth nearer salvation than he was the moment of conviction; and on the other hand, the moment he is in Christ by believing on Him he is as certainly and completely saved as he will be a thousand years afterwards.

If the dying thief, after receiving from the dying Saviour the assurance of salvation, had been permitted to descend to the earth and to

remain among men preaching and praying for a hundred years, at the end of this time he would not have been more certainly and completely saved than he was when hanging on the cross, nor would he have had any other ground of comfort than he had then, even the sure word of the Son of God. The certainty of salvation, therefore, cannot be increased by delay, but while the sinner is delaying, suppose he should die; what then? He has not the slightest assurance that he will live an hour longer, and hence God does not deal with him on the ground that he has years to study and struggle before he is saved, but says, in all the urgency of His love, "*Now*, NOW, NOW!"

Inquirers meet with obstacles in trying to find peace simply because they persist in thinking of themselves instead of directing their thoughts to Christ, and to the object of His mission to earth, and to His finished work. They complain that they are not good enough to come. No, and they never will be in themselves; but they forget that Jesus has said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. ix. 13). "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). "This is a faithful saying," says Paul, "and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15). Who was Paul, and what was he doing when Christ Jesus saved him? He himself

tells us he was "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious" (1 Tim. i. 13), and "I verily thought with myself," he writes, "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities" (Acts xxvi. 9–11). Truly, Paul did nothing to make himself fit or good enough to come, but he was "a brand plucked out of the fire" (Zech. iii. 2), just as every other sinner is; for all of us are far worse than we think ourselves to be, even when most deeply humbled under a sense of our guilt.

The fact is that *out of* Christ we have no worth or worthiness at all, do what we may; but *in* Christ the vilest of the vile are infinitely worthy, for they are clothed with the righteousness of God. A wicked, swearing teamster, who had been the terror of the neighbourhood, was led by the Spirit to believe in Jesus, and it was announced that he would openly confess the Saviour before men and partake of the Lord's Supper. Driving through a town where he was well known, he was met by an old woman with the question, "They tell me, Thomas, that you be going to take the Sacrament on Sunday;

is it true that you be?" "By the grace of Christ my Saviour," he replied, "I expect to have the privilege of showing His death with others who believe in Him, if that is what you call taking the Sacrament." "But, Thomas, do you think that you be worthy?" said the old woman. "I don't mean to reflect on ye, but you know what kind of man you have been, and what kind of life you have led; and do you think, Thomas, that you be worthy?" "As worthy as any man in Coalford," was the reply; "for I am a poor worthless sinner saved by the grace of God through the precious blood of Christ. I trust in Him alone." Such is ever the language of faith, leading the sinner to lose sight of self in the believing, adoring contemplation of Christ, who so graciously and sweetly says, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37).

"But I am a great sinner, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ,
But I am an old sinner, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
But I am a hard-hearted sinner, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
I have served Satan all my days, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
But I have sinned against light, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
But I have sinned against mercy, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
I have no good thing to bring, sayest thou?
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.

"But," says the sinner, "must I not be born

again before I can rejoice in hope of the glory of God?" I reply, You *are* born again the moment you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as has been previously shown. Faith is the first throb of life, so to speak, in the new-created man, the first cry of the new-born child. "Ye are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26). "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John i. 12). "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John v. 1). "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23). "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (Jas. i. 18).

These passages are sufficient to show that the Holy Ghost uses the word of God, or the word of truth, or the gospel, to set forth Christ in His Divine person and atoning work; and when we believe on Him as there revealed, we are born again. We are not called upon to be worrying ourselves about regeneration, nor to be looking for its fruits, but to believe in Christ, knowing then, according to His own teaching, that we are assuredly born of water (the scriptural symbol of the word) and of the Spirit. Regeneration, therefore, does not stand between the sinner and the Saviour; for the new life is imparted, the new nature is implanted, the new man is formed, by the power

of the Spirit through faith in Jesus made known in the gospel.

"But," says another, "must I not repent before coming to Christ?" If you mean as a condition upon which God will be merciful, or as the means of winning His favour, or as a preliminary work to fit you to approach Him, I reply, most emphatically, No, you must not. There are thousands who try to make a Saviour out of their repentance, but this is contrary to the Scriptures. True repentance, as described in the Bible, always implies faith in Christ, and the two cannot be separated. No man really repents unless he believes in Jesus, and, on the other hand, no man really believes in Jesus unless he repents, for repentance is the tear which the believing sinner drops when by faith he sees the Son of God extended on the cross.

The word in the Greek, however, which is translated "repentance" in our English Bible, does not necessarily imply emotion of any kind, but simply means an "after-thought" or "after-mind," and hence "a change of mind;" but whether this change of mind is accompanied with joy or sorrow depends wholly upon the cause or occasion which gives rise to it. About what, then, is the sinner called to change his mind? Obviously, about God and His character, for he has had wrong thoughts of the Almighty all his life; and hence it is written, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts" (Isa. lv. 7). But surely he

can never change his mind about his Creator until he sees "God in Christ" hating sin and yet putting sin away, judging evil and yet forgiving the evil-doer! Repentance, therefore, does not stand between the sinner and the Saviour, but it always accompanies and flows from faith in Christ. Unless, then, by faith you behold the atoning sacrifice on the cross, it is impossible to repent, for it is said, "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. ii. 4). It is not thy badness, but God's *goodness*, that leadeth thee to repentance, and until you believe in that goodness as manifested in the gift of His well-beloved Son, you might as soon expect to obtain light by looking at darkness, or to receive life by looking at a corpse, as to repent by working at your poor, dead soul.

No, sinner! Nothing but your own unbelief stands between you and an instant, complete salvation. The word is nigh thee, so nigh that, without waiting an hour or a minute, without thinking of the past or the future, without stopping to look into the exercises of your mind, without tarrying to understand this doctrine or that doctrine, without pausing at regeneration, or repentance, or anything else, you may immediately enter into life, eternal life, if you truly believe that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He arose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor.

xv. 3, 4). What a glorious salvation, and what a precious Saviour! It is not by what we do, but by what He has done, we are saved, and hence in answer to your question, "What must I do?" let the sweet hymn answer:

"Nothing, either great or small,
Nothing, sinner, no!
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.

"When He from His lofty throne
Stoop'd to do and die,
Everything was fully done—
Hearken to His cry—

"'IT IS FINISHED:' yes, indeed—
Finished every jot.
Sinner, this is all you need;
Tell me, is it not?

"Weary, working, plodding one,
Wherefore toil you so?
Cease your doing; all was done
Long, long ago.

"Till to JESUS' work you cling
By a simple faith,
'Doing' is a deadly thing—
'Doing' ends in death.

"Cast your deadly 'doing' down,
Down at Jesus' feet;
Stand IN HIM, in Him alone,
Gloriously COMPLETE."

BELIEF AND CONFESSION.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."—ROMANS X. 9, 10.

BELIEF AND CONFESSION,

NOT THE CONDITION BUT THE CHANNEL OF SALVATION.

IT is said that soon after the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, a French lady who had been in her service attempted to assassinate Elizabeth Queen of England. Having been arrested while hanging about the court, she boldly announced her name and design, expressing regret that she had failed to accomplish her purpose. She was brought into the presence of Elizabeth, who said to her, "What, think you, is my duty upon the hearing of such a case?" "Do you put the question to me as a queen or a judge?" asked the prisoner. "As a queen," was the reply. "Then you should grant me a pardon," she answered. "But," inquired the queen, "what assurance can you give me that you will not abuse my mercy and attempt my life again? Should I pardon, it should be based upon conditions to be safe from your murderous revenge in future." "Grace fettered by precautions—grace that hath conditions—is no grace," exclaimed the woman; and history states that the remark so charmed Elizabeth that she immediately ordered her release, and bound her to

her royal person ever afterwards by the ties of fervent gratitude and devoted affection.

Whether this incident occurred precisely as here related may be called in question, but it admits of no doubt that "grace fettered by precautions—grace that hath conditions—is no grace." Now, God has not promised or stipulated to give eternal life to the sinner *on account of* his belief and confession, but solely on account of the finished work of Christ, for "grace fettered by precautions—grace that hath conditions—is no grace." Very often have I known anxious sinners to keep themselves in darkness and distress because they feared their faith was not of the right kind, and not strong enough, as they express it, or because they were solicitous to confess Christ in a proper form.

Thus do they unconsciously strive to find a Saviour, not in Christ, but in their belief and confession; and owing to the deep-seated legalism of the human heart, they pervert the very purpose of God in ordaining salvation by faith. Satan, with his practised cunning, succeeds in turning away their attention from Christ to themselves; and thus, if he cannot destroy he keeps them uncertain in their hopes, feeble in their spiritual growth, and "all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 15), instead of going forth the emancipated and rejoicing children of light, and of liberty, and of God.

Belief and confession, then, are not to be re-

garded as conditions of salvation, but rather as the means or channel through which salvation, devised in grace, accomplished in grace, and bestowed in grace, is received by the sinner. God intends to have the whole glory of our salvation, to the praise of His dear Son, through the mighty power of His Spirit; and consequently the way of life revealed in His gospel is precisely suited to attain His object and precisely suited to our need as guilty, helpless sinners. Blessed be His name! He proclaims with heavenly sweetness and simplicity "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

It is possible that some one may be perplexed by the fact that in the first of these two verses confession is mentioned before belief, and hence it is important to observe that in the second verse belief is placed before confession; and evidently, if confession is anything more than the grossest hypocrisy or the merest mockery, it is only the result or expression of the belief already exercised. It must be apparent upon a moment's reflection that we cannot honestly and intelligently confess Jesus to be our Lord until we first believe in the heart that God has raised Him from the dead. Confession, therefore, is mentioned before belief in the former verse, just

to mark the character of genuine faith, and this having been done, the mode of statement is changed in the latter verse, and the natural order is given. Both are necessary, but they are necessary for a very different reason. Belief is necessary before we are saved, and confession is necessary after we are saved. Confession sustains to belief the same kind of relation which works do to faith; and as the apostle argues, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith [that is, such faith, his *saying* he hath faith] save him?" (Jas. ii. 14) so what doth it profit, my brethren, though a man *say* he believes in his heart that God hath raised Christ from the dead, and yet refuses to confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus? Can his *saying* he believes this save him while he gives no outward manifestation of the reality of his belief?

Confession, then, forms no part of the meritorious cause or reason of our salvation, but it is equally true that real belief will be sure to result or express itself in confession. Lazarus was not made alive because he came forth from the grave and appeared among men, but he came forth and appeared because he was made alive. Neither do we confess Christ with the mouth that we may have life, but because through faith we already have life. Nay, I will go further, and assert that where the belief is intelligent and sincere it will manifest itself in

confession as surely as the healthful life of a child will manifest itself in constant activity and joyous gambols. If a true believer were cast on an uninhabited island, I think his songs of praise would echo along the lonely shore and the voice of his thanksgiving would daily break the silence of nature. If he were dumb, the soul-stirring belief that he "is passed from death unto life" and become a "joint heir with Christ" would sparkle in his eye, and give shape to his gestures, and regulate his gait, and lead him by the powerful instincts of the "new man" to seek the society and fellowship of those who, like himself, are "born again."

But you will notice that confession is a personal thing: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus." It is not enough that you confess Jesus to be Lord, or the Lord of others, but *thy* Lord, thus acknowledging your individual obligation to Him, and His Divine sovereignty and rightful authority over *you* as redeemed by His blood and the object of His love. Confession, then, is the necessary result and external evidence of your personal faith in Christ, who came down from heaven to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and is now exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. i. 21). Hence it is written, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3);

for no man can say this intelligently, and as the expression of his firm conviction, until he believes in Jesus as his Divine and almighty Saviour. There can be no difficulty, then, in understanding what is meant by confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus, since it implies a readiness on your part on all suitable occasions to own Him in His true character and relation to yourself as your Lord and Saviour.

Neither can there be any trouble in understanding what is meant by believing in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, unless the expression, to believe *in thine heart*, may cause some perplexity. There are multitudes, doubtless, among the worldly and ungodly, who profess to believe that Christ rose from the dead, or at least they can claim that they do not dispute it. But there is a vast difference between not disputing a truth and believing a truth. They may not dispute it because they never had sufficient interest to investigate the question; or they may make a careless, unthinking avowal of their faith in this important teaching of God's word, not upon His testimony, but because it seems to be generally accepted by the better class of persons among whom they live; or they may be convinced it is true without the slightest personal concern in its momentous consequences. Absorbed in the business and the pleasures of the world, they receive it as they receive any other well-established historical statement, and

it produces no more marked effect upon them. It is to guard us against the fatal mistake of supposing that such a faith as this can be of any real value we find it written "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Now, when you say that you believe God raised Christ from the dead, the question is not whether you believe it as you believe that Oliver Cromwell was once Lord Protector of England, or that George Washington was the first President of the United States, but are you glad that God raised Him from the dead? Do you see in His resurrection the crowning proof and overwhelming demonstration of the fact that He is indeed the Saviour of lost men, and *your* Saviour? If you were on trial for your life, you would not listen with quiet unconcern to the verdict of the jury that swept the dreadful gallows from your view, but your heart would give a great throb of joy on hearing words which could give you back freedom, and home, and friends. The belief of religious truth also is sure to be attended by the exercise of the affections; and hence Christian faith is the *heartfelt* reception of what God says in His word concerning the person, the death, and the resurrection of Christ.

This will plainly appear as we proceed to inquire out of the sacred Scriptures precisely what is to be believed in order to salvation. I beg

your careful, undivided attention to what follows, because *belief* is the turning-point in the destiny of your soul. I shall quote passages with which you are probably familiar, but nevertheless I ask you to read them, and to read them again and again, until their full meaning is received "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. ii. 4). It will give you some idea of the importance of the truth we are now to consider when you are informed that the words *believe* and *faith* occur about *five hundred times* in the New Testament.

When the Lord spoke so kindly to the fallen woman at the well of Samaria, seeking in matchless grace and wisdom to draw her to Himself, she said at length, perhaps with a dim consciousness of the truth stealing like the gray dawn into her opening mind, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He" (John iv. 25, 26). No further conversation ensued between them; but instantly receiving as true His own word that He was the Messias, or Christ, she left her waterpot, and in the joy of her heart announced to every one she met that she had found the Saviour.

Another instance of salvation through belief of the same truth occurs in the account of the man who was born blind, to whom our Lord gave sight. Although the person of Christ was unknown to him, yet he boldly defended His

character against the sneers of the Pharisees, and accordingly was cast out of the synagogue, or excommunicated. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him" (John ix. 35–38). It is perfectly obvious that the truth here believed in order to salvation was nothing more than this, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, and therefore the proper object of worship.

In like manner, we hear the confession of the eunuch who said to Philip, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts viii. 37, 38). The cordial belief of this truth was the way, simple as it is, by which the troubled sinner immediately entered into rest, and joy, and life everlasting.

How certain it is from this that if any man sincerely believes Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, the truth is revealed to him by the Father, and is the channel or means through which the blessing of salvation is bestowed! Hence, the Saviour says, "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting

life" (John vi. 47); and, "if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John viii. 24). "These are written," says John, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (John xx. 31).

But you at once perceive that no one can really believe this without also believing that He died in the manner and for the objects set forth in the sacred Scriptures. It would be absurd and self-contradictory to believe upon the testimony of these Scriptures that He is the Son of God, and at the same time to deny, in the face of the same testimony, that He died upon the cross, and died as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). "This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28). "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3). "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). "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" (Gal. i. 4). "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3). "When He had by Himself purged our

sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 3). "Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26). "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24). "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). "He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John ii. 2). "Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins" (1 John iii. 5). "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. i. 5, 6).

The Bible is full of such texts, for its great design from the third chapter of Genesis onward to the close is to proclaim our deliverance from sin and its dreadful consequences through the death of God's only begotten and well-beloved Son. It is impossible, therefore, to believe in the heart that He is the Son of God without also believing that He died, not by accident, not by the uncontrolled vindictiveness of His enemies, not as an example, for then His example were thrown away, since none of us are called to die upon the cross under the hidings of God's face, but that He died as the *sin-bearer* and divinely appointed substitute of His people, who was made to be sin for them in that fearful hour when from His breaking heart and pallid lips ascended the mournful cry of desertion.

And now what renders assurance doubly sure is the fact that Jesus, who was crucified, rose again, and was thus "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). If God Himself had not connected the forgiveness of your sins and eternal life with your belief of what He says in the Bible concerning the person, the death, and the resurrection of His Son, you could not be blamed for remaining in anxiety and fear as to your salvation. But after He has so distinctly stated that if you believe in your heart that He raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, you shall be—not may be, nor hope to be, no, *shall be—saved*, a moment's doubt of your pardon and acceptance is a grievous dishonour to Him who is too holy to tell a lie, too good to trifle with your eternal interests.

This is still the plain and only way by which sinners are saved; for "to him that worketh not, but believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5), and "therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Rom. iv. 16). Yes, it is sure, and there are no "ifs" nor "ands" nor "buts" about it. God does not say to him that believeth, "if" he feels good; to him that believeth "and" does something else; to him that believeth "but" feareth: no! He says, To him that believeth, his faith is

counted for righteousness. Luther used to say the devil would sometimes come to him with the question, "Martin, do you feel that you are saved?" "No," the man taught of the Spirit would reply; "I do not *feel* it, but I *know* it."

It is said that towards the close of the first Napoleon's career he was one day reviewing his troops in Paris, when having inadvertently dropped the bridle-reins of the horse he was riding, the spirited animal gave a bound and came near dashing the emperor to the earth. A young soldier standing in the lines sprang forward, and, seizing the bit, saved the chieftain from a fall. Napoleon, glancing at him, said, in his quick, curt way, "Thank you, captain." The soldier, knowing his peculiarities, looked up with a smile, and inquired, "Of what regiment, sire?" "Of my guards," replied the emperor, and galloped away. The soldier had no epaulettes on his shoulders and no sword at his side to prove his rank, but instantly laying his musket on the ground, with the remark, "Let whoever will carry it; I am done with it," he proceeded to join a group of staff officers standing at a little distance. One of them, seeing him approach, said, "What is this insolent fellow doing here?" "This insolent fellow," responded the soldier, looking the other steadily in the eye—"this insolent fellow is a captain of the guards." "Why, man," replied the officer, "you are deranged; why do you speak thus?" "*He* said it," shouted the

soldier, pointing to the emperor, far down the lines. "I beg your pardon, captain," responded the officer; "I was not aware of your promotion."

And now, my friend, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;" and if the world, the flesh, or the devil asks you how you know you are saved, reply by looking up to Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, and boldly exclaim, "He said it." Surely He *has* said it in the "word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23), and who shall gainsay it? You are authorized to believe this very moment that He bare your sins in His own body on the tree; and if He bare them in His own body, they cannot be found on you. You are commanded to believe that He put away sin, root and branch, by the sacrifice of Himself; and if He put it away, it can no longer be upon your conscience. You are entreated to accept as true the testimony of God that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures—not according to our feelings, or deservings, but according to the Scriptures—and he who believes this may *know* upon that same testimony that he is saved.

Oh that you may believe God as Abraham did when "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; [for it glorifies

and pleases God to have us believe Him;] and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith [not by feelings or works], we have [not hope to have, nor try to have] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. iv. 20–25; v. 1, 2).

"Faith is a very simple thing,
Though little understood;
It frees the soul from death's dread sting
By *resting* in the blood.

"Faith is not what we *feel* or see,
It is a simple *trust*
In what the God of love has said
Of Jesus as 'the Just.'

"What Jesus is, and that alone,
Is faith's delightful plea;
It never deals with *sinful* self,
Nor *righteous* self IN ME.

"It tells me I am counted '*dead*'
By God, in His own word;
It tells me I am '*born again*'
In Christ, my RISEN LORD.

"If He is free, then I am free
From *all* unrighteousness;
If He is just, then I am just,
He is my righteousness."

THE BELIEVER'S SAFETY.

"For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed."—ROMANS x. 11.

THE BELIEVER'S SAFETY.

A YOUNG minister was in the habit of visiting an aged Scotch woman in his congregation who was familiarly called "Old Nanny." She was bed-ridden and rapidly approaching the end of her "long and weary pilgrimage," but she rested with undisturbed composure and full assurance of faith upon the finished work of Christ. One day he said to her, "Now, Nanny, what if, after all your confidence in the Saviour, and all your watching and waiting, God should suffer your soul to be lost!" Raising herself on her elbow, and turning to him with a look of grief and pain, she laid her hand on the open Bible before her, and quietly replied, "Ah, dearie me, is that a' the length you hae got yet, man? God," she continued earnestly, "would hae the greatest loss. Poor Nannie would but lose her soul, and that would be a great loss indeed, but God would lose His *honour* and His *character*. Haven't I hung my soul upon His 'exceeding great and precious promises'? and if He brak' His word, He would make Himself a liar, AND A' THE UNIVERSE WOULD RUSH INTO CONFUSION."

This anecdote reveals the true ground of the

believer's safety. It is high as the honour of God; it is as trustworthy as His character; it is as immutable as His promises; it is as broad as the infinite merits of His Son's atoning blood.

"The Scripture saith," or, in other words, God saith in the Scripture, "whosoever believeth on Him [that is, on Christ] shall not be ashamed." Mark the vast extent of this blessed declaration, "whosoever believeth." The word "whosoever" goes like the light over the entire surface of our globe, and includes within the ample and urgent invitations of the gospel every member of the human race.

There are many who fear that they do not belong to the elect, or that they are not embraced in the plan of redemption, and hence they long to have some direct and personal evidence of the willingness of God to forgive and save *them;* but surely there is here full warrant for the faith of every sinner. The most illiterate, the most degraded, and the most friendless, as well as the intelligent, the virtuous, and the honoured, among the sons of men, are invited and exhorted and commanded to believe on Jesus Christ, for "whosoever believeth shall not be ashamed." This Divine proclamation is not only a good way, but unquestionably the best way that could be devised, to encourage the doubting and hesitating sinner to trust in the promises of God; for if there had been a better way, certainly it would have been adopted.

If you were travelling on a railroad with a number of passengers, and the conductor should announce that *whosoever* is going to the place you are anxious to reach must leave the train at the next station, you would not retain your seat and be carried away from your destination because he did not call out your name. If you were in a city besieged by a powerful army, and the commanding officers of the opposing forces should order a suspension of hostilities that *whosoever* among the inhabitants desired to remove to a place of safety might withdraw before the assault was made, you would not complain because your name did not occur in the order. In such cases a class is specified, and if you belong to the class you need no other warrant to act.

In like manner you have abundant authority for acting without a moment's delay upon the broad statements and general invitations of the gospel. Jesus says, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17). Surely you cannot ask or desire anything more earnest, more tender, more definite than this; and if it fails to convince you that *you* are authorized to believe on Christ, there is no

conceivable mode by which you can be assured of God's willingness to save you.

But to make this point still clearer you will observe it is said, "Whosoever believeth in Him." There is a difference between believing a person and believing *in* or *on* a person. The former implies that we accept his statements as true without going further, but the latter implies that we trust *in* or rely *on* him. If a man of undoubted veracity were to inform us of something which he had witnessed, but of which we ourselves had no personal knowledge, we would believe him; but if he should promise to confer upon us a favour which we greatly desired to receive, we would confide *in* him or depend *on* him to fulfil his promise. Now, the salvation held out to us in the gospel does not consist merely in the belief of certain doctrines, but belief in a Person. Peter and the other apostles, in defending themselves before the Jewish council, said, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts v. 30, 31). It is not, therefore, a dead but a living Christ who speaks to us in His word, and in whom we are urged to trust. From His exalted seat at the right hand of the Father He sees you now while reading these lines, and if it were best, He would instantly descend from heaven and stand

before you in personal, visible form, so full of sympathy is His heart of love, and so deep His concern for your salvation.

Suppose He should appear at this moment in your presence, and with His own voice promise to give you the crown of eternal life before asking you to *do* anything or to *feel* anything: would you trust in Him? would you depend on Him to make good His promise? If you would, remember He speaks to you as truly and directly in His word as He could possibly do were He to reveal Himself bodily, so that your eyes could see Him and your ears could hear Him. It is the peculiarity of His word that, unlike any other word, it "liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23), so that it is as fresh, and sweet, and powerful to-day as if it had just fallen from His lips. But there is this immense advantage in the written word over the spoken —that having once received assurance of salvation in the former you can always receive it there, for "the word of the Lord endureth for ever: and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. i. 25).

It is an unspeakable relief to the troubled sinner to find that this word which by the gospel is preached unto you does not say, Whosoever believeth and is good; Whosoever believeth and feeleth happy; Whosoever believeth and prayeth well; Whosoever believeth and loveth God fervently; but, "Whosoever believeth on Him," or, in other words, "Who-

soever trusteth in Christ shall not be ashamed." Of course I am far from saying that the sincere believer will not follow holiness; or that he will not be happy; or that he will not hold communion with God; or that he will not love the Saviour and confess Him before men: but the sinner is not to be occupied with these first, for he needs first to be saved, and he is saved by believing, simply and only believing in Jesus. Nor does the word intimate whether our belief must be strong or weak. It is not, Whosoever believeth strongly, but, Whosoever believeth. It is Jesus Christ who saves us, and not our belief; and hence, you may come creeping, if you cannot walk, to that compassionate and gentle Saviour of whom it is written, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench" (Matt. xii. 20).

The foundation of the believer's safety is laid on the finished work of Christ, and is guarded by the infinite power, the eternal purpose, and the immutable promise of Jehovah. Nothing, therefore, in this world or in the world to come can blight his hopes or defeat his aspirations. "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea

rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 31–34).

In this most interesting and comforting passage the Holy Ghost first gives us to understand that God is for us, and hence triumphantly asks, Who can be against us? He then asserts that God's love for us is so great that He spared not His own Son, though He must endure the sorrow and shame, the deep humiliation and terrible agonies, of Gethsemane and Calvary, and makes this the proof of our Father's willingness to bestow upon us freely all things necessary to secure the end of so much suffering, since the greater gift includes the less. He then challenges the universe to bring the slightest charge against those whom God Himself has justified. He then mentions the death of Christ, which was in the room and place of our death, because of our offences; and, as if this were not enough, He tells us of His resurrection, which is the unanswerable demonstration of our complete justification; and, as if this were not enough, He points to Him at the right hand of God, Head over all things to the Church, and swaying the sceptre of supreme sovereignty; and, as if this were not enough, He bids us listen to the ever prevalent intercession of One who could say even upon the earth, although despised and rejected of men: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest

Me always" (John xi. 41, 42). "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (John xvii. 24).

There are thousands of Christians who, on the pretence of humility, make a merit of doubting their salvation; but in the light of such statements as you have just read the faintest shadow of doubt is seen to be a grievous dishonour to God. If doubts are becoming to those who are believers, God is a liar; but if God speaks the truth, how should we look upon our doubts, and how should we regard ourselves for calling in question His clear and oft-repeated testimony? But, you may reply, your difficulty does not lie in this direction. You firmly believe, you say, that God speaks the truth, but you doubt your acceptance, you doubt whether you are saved, because your faith is so weak, and your love is so cold, and your feelings are so variable, and there is so much evil in you, and you make so little progress, or none at all that you can perceive, in holiness. Now, it is not for man to decide whether you are or are not a believer in Christ, but I do confidently affirm that these things have nothing whatever to do with the ground upon which God makes peace with the sinner, though they may have much to do with our enjoyment of peace.

The Scriptures declare that it is the precious blood of Christ alone that forms the ground of the believer's safety. It is not the blood and something else—the blood and our esti-

mate of it, the blood and our thoughts about it, the blood and our feelings—but the blood by itself which was poured out upon the cross more than eighteen hundred years ago; and if you believe that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth you from all sin, according to the testimony of God's word, you are saved. God is infinitely satisfied with it; and if you are satisfied, there can be no further cause of controversy between you and Him. His own dear Son, who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He took our place under the law with all its dreadful consequences that we might be exalted to His place in heaven with all its unspeakable blessedness. He was cast out of His Father's presence as evil that we might stand in His Father's presence without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. He bore the curse which we merited that we might receive the blessing which He merited. He drank the cup of wrath which was pressed to our lips that we might drink of the fountain of the water of life freely. He endured the condemnation which was due to us that we might obtain the justification which was due to Him. He went down into the jaws of death that were ready to devour us that we might rise to a rapturous immortality. He was regarded and treated as sin that we might be regarded and treated as righteousness, and that the righteousness of God. Blessed

Saviour! eternity will be too short to speak Thy praise.

When I say that the believer is regarded and treated as righteousness, I do not mean to affirm that he is merely regarded and treated as *righteous*, for he *is* righteous. God Himself declares him righteous, and "we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth" (Rom. ii. 2). He cannot declare a thing to be true which is really untrue. If the believer is not righteous, God cannot treat him as righteous; but he *is* righteous, perfectly righteous, in Christ, for "by Him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 39). Christ's standing, then, is the believer's standing. The measure of Christ's acceptableness in the sight of the Father is the precise measure of the acceptableness of the believer; and if you ask me to define the position of a believer, I reply in the one word, Christ. We are "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6). "We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John v. 20). "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 12); and hence the oneness between the two is so entire that the whole body is called Christ, "and ye are complete in Him" (Col. ii. 10). The fact is, whatever Christ did in achieving redemption He did "for us," and, if I may so say, *as us*. He stood as we were, under the

law, that we might stand, as He is, before the Father. God, therefore, sees us *as Christ* in His presence, for He "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 6). He no longer views us as on the earth, but in heaven, and we appear to Him as Christ does. He sees us through the perfect righteousness of Christ, and "as He is, so are we."

Such, then, is the believer's standing, and if so, where are his sins? Let Hezekiah answer, who said to God in his prayer, "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isa. xxxviii. 17)—not only some of them, but *all* of them, were cast behind God's back, and therefore could no longer be seen by Him. Let the prophet reply who, predicting the future restoration and conversion of Israel, exclaims, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic. vii. 19). Here, then, are *all* the sins of the believer drowned in the deep waters of oblivion, and not a ripple is left on the surface to indicate where they are buried. There is one thing which God is pleased to forget, and if you wish to know what this is, you read in the Old Testament and twice in the New Testament, that, speaking of those who believe on His Son, He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. viii. 12; x. 17).

But in addition to all that has been said, it is well to consider for a moment the believer's new nature as another proof of his perfect safety. The Saviour says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3); and the Spirit says: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John v. 1). "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26). "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). Of such passages I can only repeat what was said about the believer being called "righteous" in the Bible. God does not treat him merely *as if* righteous, but he *is* righteous. So God does not speak of him *as if* born again, but he *is* born again. He is as truly "born of God," "born of the Spirit," and made a "partaker of the Divine nature," as he is born of man, born of the flesh, and made a partaker of the nature of his earthly parents. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 4–6).

No man can say to God, "Abba, Father," unless he is born again by believing that Jesus is the Christ; and when the unregenerate utter the words, "Our Father which art in heaven," they offer a worship not a whit more intelligent or acceptable than the prostration of the native African before his fetich. "Be not

deceived; God is not mocked" (Gal. vi. 7); for "he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him" (John v. 23). Those who pray without faith in the Son of the Father's love may be very religious in mere outward form, as the Athenians were, who reared an altar TO THE UNKNOWN GOD; but surely they are not Christians, and the difference between being a Christian and being religious merely is just the difference there is between light and darkness, between heaven and hell.

On the other hand, whosoever believeth on Christ is surely born of God; and the thought that God can suffer His own child—a part of Himself, if I may so speak—to be eternally lost, is too monstrous to be entertained for a moment. If you are a father or mother, you know what it is to love a little child, although the helpless babe may be nothing but an expense to you, and may not at all respond to your love. Your death would not disturb its happiness, nor would it retain the slightest recollection of you, and yet you hang over it with unutterable affection and tenderness. What, then, must be the love of God for His children, redeemed by the blood of His only begotten Son, although they do so little in His service and feel so faintly His claims upon their gratitude! "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget,

yet will I not forget thee" (Isa. xlix. 15). This language was addressed to the Israelites as such, but it may be applied without the slightest strain to every one who is born again in the present or Church dispensation. I will go further, and state that God loves you, if you are a believer, as He loves His "well-beloved Son." Do not be staggered at such an assertion, but open wide your heart to receive the blessed truth; for the Saviour says in His touching prayer for all His disciples, "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me" (John xvii. 23).

To this must be added the work of the Holy Spirit; and in glancing at it you need to be guarded at the outset against two errors into which many sincere believers are led to their own disquietude and distress. The first arises from the common mistake of seeking amid the fruits of the Spirit for the ground of peace. It can never be found there. It is not the Spirit's work *in* us, but Christ's work *for us*, that delivers us from condemnation and places us on the heavenward side of the Cross beyond judgment; and it is only by looking at Christ's finished work instead of the Spirit's unfinished work that we can find perfect repose of conscience and heart. The second error arises from the still more common mistake of thinking, or, at least, of practically acting, about the

Spirit as if He came on occasional and uncertain visits to the believer, in place of knowing that He abides with us for ever.

When our Lord was about to take His departure from the earth, He said to His disciples, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John xiv. 16, 17). "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.) "In whom [Christ] also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13). The sealing, then, with the Holy Spirit, not only marks the believer as God's property, but renders him perfectly secure, and is the "earnest of our inheritance," part of the inheritance already bestowed, as a Divine guarantee that all the rest will be given in due time, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29). The Spirit, who abideth with us for ever, who is in us, and who seals us unto the day of redemption, is never taken from us.

That Spirit never withdraws from true believers, and His permanent abode in their hearts becomes therefore the sure pledge of their salvation.

But it may be asked whether the consciousness of indwelling sin and the slow and irregular growth of most Christians in sanctification are not arguments against the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, and hence against the believer's perfect safety? That they are not will be apparent if you will keep in mind who and what the believer is. As shown in a previous chapter, he is a child of man and at the same time a child of God. He has two natures, one born of the flesh, and the other of the Spirit; one called the "old man," and the other the "new man." "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. v. 17). As long, therefore, as the flesh is in him he will have a consciousness of sin in him; but if he is an intelligent believer, he will not have a conscience of sins *on him*, "because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Heb. x. 2). Christ hath "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26); and if it is put away, it can no longer be on the believer. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24); and if He bare them in His own body, surely they cannot be on us. The condemning power of sin, therefore, or its power to destroy, is for ever gone, even while its presence in the old nature is still a source of annoyance.

Suppose an enormous serpent should spring

upon you from its covert and fold you in its horrid embrace, but as it was preparing, with glittering eye and darting tongue, to inflict the fatal sting, a friend standing near, by a well-directed blow, severed its head from the body, and it fell dead around your neck and arms. If you could not get rid of it immediately, but were compelled to carry it about for a while, its presence would doubtless distress and disgust you, and sometimes wring from you the anxious cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24;) but you would know that it could no longer kill or injure you. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin" (Rom. vi. 11); "knowing this, that our old man is [*was*] crucified with Him [Christ], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. vi. 6); "for sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. vi. 14). The consciousness of indwelling sin, therefore, cannot shake the security of the believer, because the Holy Spirit also dwells in him, the author and upholder of the "new creature" in Christ Jesus, and sweetly whispers to his troubled heart, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. xvi. 20).

In close connection with this, it may be useful to call your attention for a moment to the feeble and varying progress in sanctification

which is a source of grief and dread to so many true Christians. They are perplexed and pained when they think of this important doctrine, because they view it only on one side, not remembering that, like almost every other truth of God's word, it has two sides, each of which must be carefully considered. If you look at justification, for example, you will find Paul arguing that on the Divine side, or in God's sight, it is by faith alone, while James argues that on the human side, or in man's sight, it is by works also. So on the Divine side, or in God's sight, our sanctification is by the blood of Christ, and complete as soon as we believe on Him, while on the human side, or in man's sight, it is progressive and carried on by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and enabling us "more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness."

The fundamental idea, as well as the object, of Sanctification, is *fitness for the Divine presence and service*, and it is in this sense the word is used when I affirm that such fitness we have the moment we are in Christ by faith. Now, if you will turn to the Epistle to the Corinthians, you will see that the apostle addresses "the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. i. 2). He is about to rebuke them for erroneous doctrines and evil practices, but still he does not hesitate to write to them as those that *are* sanctified. We look a little further

and read, "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). Christ, then, is as much our sanctification as He is our wisdom, righteousness, and redemption. Many separate these words most unwarrantably, referring righteousness to Christ, but sanctification to ourselves, admitting that we must depend on Christ for righteousness, but supposing that we must depend upon our own exertions for sanctification; seeing clearly that we are justified by faith, but not seeing that we are sanctified by faith.

When our risen Lord appeared to Saul of Tarsus, on the road to Damascus, and converted him from the error of his way, He directed the regenerated persecutor to preach to the Gentiles, "that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me" (Acts xxvi. 18). It is not surprising, then, that this apostle, in writing to certain Christians, some of whom, he declares, had been fornicators, and idolaters, and adulterers, and thieves, and drunkards, should so boldly add, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 11). They were as truly and completely sanctified as they were washed and justified. Accordingly, it is said that the Saviour came to do the

will of God, "by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. x. 10). "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14). "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. xiii. 12). Hence the word of God places our justification and our sanctification on precisely the same Divine and immutable foundation, even the precious blood of Jesus. We are not partly justified, neither are we partly sanctified, and you have no better right to put the word "partly" before the word "sanctified," as it applies to the believer, than you have to put it before the word "justified."

The moment we are in Christ by believing on Him, God says we are sanctified—not shall be, nor try to be, nor hope to be, but "Ye are sanctified." Not only is it true that the justice of the satisfied law brings no accusation against us, but the holiness of the law finds no spot nor stain upon us; no, not the slightest. We are "clean every whit"—as clean as the blood of Christ and the will of God can make us. When we receive the Saviour by faith we do not receive a divided Saviour, but "Christ is all, and in all" (Col. iii. 11). He is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and sanctification no less than everything else the soul needs. It is forgetfulness or ignorance of this blessed truth that leads so many sincere

believers to doubt their safety, and opens the way for Satan to cast the shadows of a deep gloom along the path of their pilgrimage. They are seeking for comfort in a gradual sanctification instead of an offered sacrifice—in a progressive work of holiness in them instead of an accomplished work of redemption already done for them. They will never find it thus. On the other hand, they will surely discover that the "flesh" is always the "flesh," and that the "old man" will be deceitful and desperately wicked to the end of the journey. But when we put on the "new man" our place and portion are in the heavenlies, and our position before God is perfect in every respect, for "we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John v. 20). The practical results of this perfect sanctification will be more and more perfectly developed in the sight of men, and shine more and more unto the perfect day; but it is the happy privilege of the Christian to know that by the one offering of Christ he is perfected for ever as already sanctified, and therefore, whatever conflicts and defeats he may meet on the way, it is still true that "whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed."

"I hear the words of love,
I gaze upon the blood,
I see the mighty Sacrifice,
And I have peace with God.

"'Tis everlasting peace,
Sure as Jehovah's name;

'Tis stable as His steadfast throne;
For evermore the same.

"The clouds may go and come,
And storms may sweep the sky:
This blood-sealed friendship changes not;
The Cross is ever nigh.

"My love is ofttimes low,
My joy still ebbs and flows;
But peace with Him remains the same,
No change Jehovah knows.

"That which can shake the Cross
May shake the peace it gave,
Which tells me Christ has never died,
Or never left the grave.

"I change, He changes not;
The Christ can never die;
His love, not mine, the resting-place;
His truth, not mine, the tie."

THE PRAYER OF FAITH;

OR,

THE BELIEVER CALLING UPON THE LORD.

"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him."—ROMANS x. 12.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH; OR, THE BELIEVER CALLING UPON THE LORD.

THE "exceeding great and precious promises," which are the inheritance of every believer, are to be taken in their plain, obvious sense, and they are not to be fettered by human doubt nor explained away by human criticism. The Sacred Scriptures are full of striking illustrations which prove that God means precisely what He says when He declares that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. v. 16), "for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." He is rich in all the plenitude of the Divine perfections; rich in the absolute control of His boundless empire, that in all its shining suns and countless systems, in all its loftiest intelligences and minutest forms of life, is subject to His imperial command; and rich in the inexhaustible fulness of His love to believers of every race and rank. He possesses omnipotence, and is able therefore to help His people who call on Him: "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they

be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Col. i. 16, 17). "All power," He says, "is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18); and He proclaims Himself to be the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. i. 8).

He possesses omniscience, and can therefore foresee and guard against all the schemes of devils and all the contingencies of human events that may threaten to arrest the bestowal of His purposed and promised blessings upon His disciples. "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Luke xii. 7), He says; and, "I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts" (Rev. ii. 23), He declares. "Lord," exclaimed Peter, "Thou knowest all things" (John xxi. 17); and hence it is evident that His mind is perfectly familiar with all that has occurred in the past, and all that shall occur in the future; and takes knowledge not only of the march of tempests, the revolution of planets, and the rise and fall of empires, but also of the silent budding of a rose and the noiseless flight of an insect. Like the ocean,

> "Vast as it is, it answers as it flows
> The breathing of the lightest air that blows."

He possesses unchangeable faithfulness, and

therefore we may rely upon His word with implicit confidence. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. v. 24), writes the apostle. "The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil" (2 Thess. iii. 3). "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful that promised)" (Heb. x. 23). "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True" (Rev. xix. 11).

He possesses infinite love for those who have been redeemed with His precious blood, and therefore cannot deny them any petition which it is best for them to receive. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John xiii. 1). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John xiv. 21). "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you" (John xv. 9). "The life which I now live in the flesh," says Paul, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). "Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it" (Eph. v. 25).

Oh how rich He is in His own eternal and immeasurable resources to all that call on Him! There is no possible condition in which we can be placed that may deprive us of the

privilege of prayer; and quick as thought can ascend to our Lord at the right hand of the Father, His eye is turned towards our longing glance and His heart responds to our trustful desire. "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John v. 14, 15). He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. iii. 20), for the name by which He introduced Himself to Moses in the solitudes of Horeb, and the name that is still appropriate to Him, is the I AM. As another has beautifully said, in taking this title He was "furnishing His people with a blank cheque to be filled up to any amount. He calls Himself I AM, and faith has but to write over against that ineffably precious name whatever we want." Do we want pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification, support in weakness, consolation in sorrow, guidance in perplexity, deliverance from temptation, victory over death, full redemption, and unfading glory? I AM all this, says Christ, and all that you desire.

In the light of this precious truth every believer may be addressed in the language of Elisha to "a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets," who was reduced to the last pot of oil, and whose sons were about to be taken by the creditor as bondmen.

"Go," he said, "borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few" (2 Kings iv. 3). With faith in the word of God spoken by His servant, she obeyed the direction, and it was only when there was not a vessel more that the oil stayed. So, when we can go to the Lord emptied of self and the world, and relying with implicit confidence upon His promises, we shall receive from His inexhaustible resources "above all that we ask or think," and never until faith fails will the supplies which it commands cease.

We are never straitened in God, but only in ourselves; for when temptations assail, or troubles arise, we too often fail to put Christ, by faith, between them and us, and too often through unbelief put them between Christ and us, so that we lose courage and power. Ten of the twelve spies who were sent from all the tribes of Israel to search out the land of Canaan returned in great fear, saying, "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. . . . And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Num. xiii. 31–33). But Caleb endeavoured to quiet the alarmed congregation with the bold language, "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it," and Joshua and Caleb thus warned and encouraged their brethren; "Only rebel not ye

against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not" (Num. xiii. 30; xiv. 9). The ten fixed their minds upon the giants, not the Lord, and therefore could think of nothing but disaster, defeat, and death, while the two believers fixed their minds upon the Lord, not the giants, and therefore could think of nothing but deliverance, and success, and victory. The former were already unmanned because they looked not to the hills whence cometh our help, but the latter cared not whether their conflict lay with giants or grasshoppers, because they could confidently say, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings vi. 16).

So when David was sent by his father, from attending a "few sheep in the wilderness," with parched corn and loaves of bread to his brothers in the Hebrew army, he found the host of Israel trembling at the boastful challenge of Goliath of Gath. Having obtained permission to meet the monster in mortal combat, he threw off the armour of Saul, in which faith could not freely move, and taking with him five smooth stones out of the brook and his sling in his hand, he went forth without the slightest trepidation. Saul and his soldiers thought only of Goliath, and were afraid, but David thought only of Jehovah, and hence could calmly reply to his mail-clad

foe, "I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" (1 Sam. xvii. 45); and the next instant a stone from his sling was buried in the forehead of the uncircumcised Philistine, and "he fell upon his face to the earth."

Whenever Satan can divert our minds from the Lord to ourselves or to our circumstances, we are sure to lose heart and hope, and our prayers will be wanting in the essential elements of faith and fervour. Look, for example, at Moses, who "was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. xii. 3), and see how his meekness became weakness, and how his fortitude gave way to fear, and how he yielded to discouragement, despondency, and despair the moment he took his eyes from the Lord to view himself and his difficulties. "I am not able," he cried, "to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. [The Lord had not asked him to do it.] And if Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in Thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness" (Num. xi. 14, 15).

Look at Job, of whom the Lord said unto Satan, "Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" (Job i. 8.) "After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day. And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein

I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it" (Job iii. 1–4). Look at Elijah, who, as Moses was the meekest man and Job the most patient, may be called the bravest man on the earth, and yet, terrified at the threat of a woman whose powerful husband he had withstood to the face and humbled into the dust, "he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings xix. 3, 4).

Look at Jeremiah, who was sanctified before he came out of the womb and ordained to be a prophet unto the nations, and yet, after all his experience of the goodness of God, he bitterly exclaimed, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide; because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been

my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?" (Jer. xx. 14–18).

All this shows that Moses was not meek, and that Job was not patient, and that Elijah was not brave, and that Jeremiah was not submissive, except as their thoughts rested on the Lord. The moment their minds were occupied with themselves or with their circumstances, the first became irritable, and the second gave way to self-righteous complaints, and the third was panic-stricken, and the fourth fell into the depths of despair. Thus do the distinguished men whose names have been given furnish a striking illustration, not only of the truth previously stated, that the "flesh" in a believer is no better than the "flesh" in an unbeliever, but of the importance of keeping the eye steadily fixed on the Lord if we would retain perfect composure of spirit amid our sharpest trials. Contrast their hasty and intemperate language with the calm and joyful words of the Son of man at a period in His earthly ministry darker than any known to the saints who had longed for His appearing. The generation that heard his tender messages of love heaped cruel slanders upon Him, saying, "Behold a man gluttonous and a winebibber." Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, that had listened to His marvellous discourses and witnessed

His mighty works, rejected with contempt His gentle entreaties and repelled with anger His solemn admonitions. He stood alone in the world He came to save, but "at that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth. . . . Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. xi. 25, 26), and then immediately followed the sweetest invitation ever addressed to the weary and sorrowful: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). Blessed example! He kept His gaze constantly directed to His Father, and therefore nothing could disturb His peace or arrest the stream of grace that flowed from His loving heart.

We see, then, that we can never know in our own experience the riches of the Lord unto all that call upon Him unless our souls have formed the habit, so to speak, of looking to Him continually. It is the privilege of every child of God to *abide* in the Saviour; to walk in the light as He is in the light; to have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; and to maintain a communion with the Holy Spirit so intimate and so endearing that prayer will become as natural as breathing, and almost as constant. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1). "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. v. 17). "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Eph. vi. 18). "In

everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. iv. 6).

A Christian servant-girl overheard a number of ministers discussing the text, "Pray without ceasing," and found that at length they appointed one of their number to prepare an essay upon the subject to be read at their next meeting. She modestly expressed surprise to a fellow-servant that they should take so much time about a passage of Scripture so plain and simple; and her remark having reached the ears of one of the ministers, he asked her why she thought it easy to understand the text. She replied with humility that it seemed to her believers were compelled to pray without ceasing, for everything they did reminded them of the Saviour and salvation. "When, for example," she went on to say, "I open my eyes in the morning, I praise God who hath shined into my heart to give me the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. When I dress, I bless Him for having clothed me in the spotless robe of His dear Son's righteousness. When I wash my face, I thank Him for the precious blood that cleanseth from all sin. When I kindle the fire, I think of the cloven tongues like as of fire, and the Holy Ghost who came down on the day of Pentecost to dwell with the disciples of Jesus for ever. When I sweep the room, I ask that the Holy Spirit may remove from me all defilement, and

keep me clean through the word. When I eat my breakfast, I turn my mind to the Bread of heaven that daily nourishes my soul; and thus in all my little duties there is something that brings Christ before me and causes me to pray without ceasing."

If there were more Christians living, like the poor girl, in close and constant communion with Jesus, there would be few to exclaim, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" (Isa. xxiv. 16). The trouble with too many is that they have learned to "*say* their prayers," as it is significantly called, and to be contented with a parrot-like repetition of words, without understanding or feeling their real import. Our supplications will always be but formal and feeble utterances until the Holy Spirit leads us into real fellowship with God, when prayer becomes the delight of the soul and establishes it in a posture of unceasing worship before the throne. Then we can pray continually, even in the midst of our ordinary pursuits, in walking the streets, in turning the leaves of a book, in the pauses of a conversation. Then we can know how it was Nehemiah found time to pray when the king asked him a question, and when it was necessary that he should immediately answer. He was the cupbearer of Artaxerxes, and as he took up the wine to give it unto the monarch on a certain occasion, the latter noticed the sad expression of his face, and said to him, "Why is thy coun-

tenance sad?" It would not do to be sorrowful in the presence of royalty, and he was forced to confess that he mourned because, as he writes, "The city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire. Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it" (Neh. ii. 2–5).

He certainly did not go aside to pray, and he certainly had very little time to call upon the Lord, for the haughty Persian despot would not brook delay in response to a question; and yet between the question and the reply which promptly followed the Hebrew captive prayed to the God of heaven. He offered what is termed ejaculatory prayer, and as the word *ejaculatory* comes from a Latin word signifying a dart or javelin, his prayer darted up instantly to the throne of Jehovah, and as instantly gained the blessing he sought. So when our souls are in habitual communion with God we can flash forth our petitions, as it were, wherever we may be, and they are born faster than by electric wires to the loving heart of the Saviour who said, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv. 7).

But it is important in this connection for the believer to inquire what motive leads him to pray or what object he hopes to attain. The Holy Ghost directed the apostle to write, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" [or desires] (Jas. iv. 3). There is reason to fear that through the deceitfulness of the old nature many Christians often pray merely that their wishes may be gratified and their comfort promoted, without a becoming submission to the will of God, and without a proper regard for His glory. I do not say that it is wrong, when under the burden of heavy affliction, to exclaim with the Master in Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" but surely it is right to add with the Master, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). Still, let us not be too much troubled about our motive in praying when there is a sincere desire to honour God; because we have the sweet assurance in His word that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Ps. ciii. 13, 14). I only desire to put you on your guard "against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. vi. 11), and then to encourage you to continue in prayer with the confident expectation that it will be answered, even though you may not live to see the evidence of it in this world. No doubt one of the most

delightful surprises in store for us in heaven will be the glorious demonstration of the truth that "praying breath was never spent in vain."

I have the authority of a devoted and well-known minister and author for the following: A Christian father and mother had a son whom they sought to bring up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. vi. 4), and for whom they made continual supplication at the throne of grace. As he advanced, however, in years, he became more and more profligate, until he completed his disgrace and well nigh broke the hearts of his parents by running away from home and going to sea as a common sailor. On his first voyage he was standing upon the bulwarks of the ship, uttering the most horrible blasphemies, when by a lurch of the vessel he was tossed into the waves. Rescued with difficulty, he was brought back apparently lifeless, and every one around his prostrate body believed that he was dead, except the surgeon, who was moved by some unaccountable impulse to persevere in efforts to resuscitate him, although all hope seemed to be gone. His persistent purpose was at length rewarded by seeing a faint spark of life, which he carefully nourished, and at length the young man, opening his eyes, slowly and deliberately said, "Jesus Christ has saved my soul." After he had fully recovered the power of speech, he stated that as he fell into the great ocean he felt that he was lost for ever, and his multiplied sins came trooping about

him like demons to drag him down into hell; but suddenly a text which his father had taught him in his childhood came to his remembrance: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15); and while sinking, as he thought, into perdition, he cast himself upon a gracious Redeemer. His subsequent life proved that he was really born again in that dreadful moment when the sea closed over his head, for he returned home to become a faithful and useful minister of the gospel, although his salvation was not more complete after years of service in the cause of the Saviour than it was the instant he believed on Him who came to save the chief of sinners.

If he had perished in the water, doubtless his parents would have gone down to the grave fearing that he had made shipwreck of his soul; and yet at the second coming of Jesus they would have been caught up with him in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good" (Eccles. xi. 6). Remember for your comfort that in prayer you are not coming to an unjust Judge or an unfeeling Governor, from whose unwilling hand a favour has to be wrung by the force of importunity, but you are approaching a kind and

loving Father, who is far more willing to bestow upon you things that are for your good than you are to confer a pleasure upon your child or the dearest friend you have on earth. It dishonours and grieves Him when His people act as did the priests of Baal to whom Elijah said, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked" (1 Kings xviii. 27). Why not believe these precious promises? "He that keepeth thee will not slumber" (Ps. cxxi. 3). "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous [that is, those who are righteous by faith in Christ], and His ears are open to their cry" (Ps. xxxiv. 15). "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper" (Heb. xiii. 5, 6).

If, therefore, you are troubled in your prayers by the consciousness of your own sinfulness as well as by the cares and sorrows arising from other sources, you know the remedy. Go to Him who never slumbers, whose ear is always open to your cry, and who is a mighty Helper, and frankly confess your iniquities; for "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9). Our relationship to God as His dear children can never be destroyed, blessed be His name! but our communion with Him may often be disturbed, and the method which He reveals to restore that

communion is an honest and sincere confession of our faults.

God has solemnly declared that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins," and "he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar" (1 John v. 10). He uses the words faithful and just rather than the words gracious and merciful, because He is addressing those who are already accepted in the Beloved, of whom the Saviour says, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John xiii. 10). Here we have *washed* and *wash*, but in the original they are entirely different words. The former was employed by the Greeks to imply the bathing of the entire person, but the latter denoted the washing of a part of the person, as the hands, the face, or the feet. Among the ancients sandals were worn instead of shoes, and hence that portion of the feet which was exposed would soon become defiled with the dust of the earth. So he who believes upon the sure testimony of God's word that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth him from all sin is bathed as to his entire person, and yet he cannot travel far in this sinful world without getting his feet, his walk, his ways polluted by coming into contact with that which is evil. Let him, then, judge himself in the light of the inspired word, and discovering thus what is wrong about him, let him frankly confess his sins, and arise from the confession *knowing* that he is "clean every whit."

It only remains to say a word about wandering thoughts in prayer, of which every Christian, perhaps, has reason to complain.

A hymn on this subject by Faber has brought comfort to many souls; and without adding anything of my own, which the limits of the present chapter forbid, I will here transcribe it for the benefit of the reader.

"Ah! dearest Lord, I cannot pray,
My fancy is not free;
Unmannerly distractions come,
And force my thoughts from Thee.

"The world that looks so dull all day
Glows bright on me at prayer,
And plans that ask no thought but then,
Wake up and meet me there.

"All nature one full fountain seems
Of dreamy sight and sound,
Which, when I kneel, breaks up its deeds,
And makes a deluge round.

"Old voices murmur in my ear,
New hopes start into life,
And past and future gayly blend
In one bewitching strife.

"My very flesh has restless fits;
My changeful limbs conspire
With all these phantoms of the mind
My inner self to tire.

"I cannot pray; yet, Lord, Thou know'st
The pain it is to me
To have my vainly struggling thoughts
Thus turn away from Thee.

"Had I, dear Lord, no pleasure found
But in the thought of Thee,
Prayer would have come unsought, and been
A truer liberty.

"Yet Thou art oft most present, Lord,
In weak, distracted prayer;
A sinner out of heart with self
Most often finds Thee there.

"And prayer that humbles sets the soul
From all illusions free,
And teaches it how utterly,
Dear Lord, it hangs on Thee.

"Ah, Jesus, why should I complain,
And why fear aught but sin?
Distractions are but outward things;
Thy peace dwells far within.

"These surface-troubles come and go
Like rufflings of the sea;
The deeper depth is out of reach
To all, my God, but Thee."

ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."—ROMANS x. 13.

ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

NEXT to the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts xvi. 30), perhaps the most important question is, "How may I know I am saved?"

Visiting a member of the Church recently who is rapidly approaching the eternal world, she told me that her distressing cough had deprived her of sleep during the previous night, and that she was suffering greatly. My reply was, "Cheer up! for you will soon be where 'there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain'" (Rev. xxi. 4). "Oh," she exclaimed, with touching anxiety depicted on her face, "if I only knew that! How can I know it?" "Suppose," I answered, "when I leave your house, I meet an acquaintance who asks, 'How is Mrs. S—— to-day?' I tell her that you coughed nearly all night and feel very badly. She then says, 'How can I know that?' What should I reply?" "You would inform her," she answered, "that I told you." "Precisely so, and God tells you in His word that if you believe on His dear Son you shall certainly be saved. If I can believe you without a moment's

hesitation, will you not believe the blessed God?"

It is in this way the believer *knows* he is saved. He knows it upon the sure testimony of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, and who, "willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast" (Heb. vi. 17–19).

The testimony of the eternal Jehovah is more worthy of credit than the testimony of the entire human race of all generations combined, and He has given both His promise and His oath to save with an everlasting salvation every soul that trusts in Jesus Christ. "How, then, does the believer *know* that he is saved?" He knows it because God has said and sworn that we shall come off "more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 37). "For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself" (Heb. vi. 13); and—glory to His name!—He still lives to swear by Himself, "to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all" (Rom.

iv. 16). Observe, the promise might be *sure* to all the seed.

Ponder a few of the words of Jesus, and then decide whether a believer may know upon such testimony that he is saved beyond the shadow of a doubt. "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 39, 40). "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one" (John x. 27–30). "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John iii. 36)—not life for a few weeks, or months, or years—not life to be bestowed and taken away, to be gained and lost—but everlasting life, and he has it now and has it for ever. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment] but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24). "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). "Father, I will that they also, whom

Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24).

Do you still ask how you may *know* that you are saved? I still reply, By believing the sure testimony of God's word. You know you were a condemned and ruined sinner by believing that word; you know Christ came to die for a lost world by believing that word; and you may know you are saved, if you trust in Jesus Christ, by believing the same word.

Let me ask a few plain questions that may present this important subject in a clearer light to your mind. How do you know that the law of God has pronounced a curse against every one who continues not in the strict performance of all the Divine commandments in all their extent, reaching to the most secret emotions of the soul? You know it only by believing His word. How do you know that He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, emptied Himself of His visible glory, and was born of the Virgin Mary, and performed many wonderful miracles, and preached many sublime and sweet truths, and died upon the cross, and rose from the tomb and ascended up to heaven? You know it, only by believing His word. How do you know that He is to come again to judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and kingdom? You know it only by believing His word. How do

you know that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin? You know it only by believing His word. How then, do you know that, not relying upon yourself, nor upon forms and ceremonies, but upon Christ alone, you shall certainly be saved? Obviously, in the same way—only by believing His word.

You cannot *feel* that the Saviour was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, and that He suffered on Calvary, for this occurred more than eighteen hundred years ago; but you can *know* it upon the unimpeachable testimony of God. And so you are not called to *feel* that you can be saved in order to obtain assurance of salvation, but to *know* it upon the sworn testimony of God revealed in His word; or, to put it in another shape, you cannot know that you are saved because you feel it, but you will feel it because you know it. If you hear good news, you do not first feel that it is true and then believe it, but you first believe it, and then feel happy.

In like manner, if you would know that you are saved, you must fix your gaze upon Christ, and listen to His precious declarations in the gospel, instead of seeking for comfort amid the darkness and disease that not only belong by nature to the "old man," but will continue to cling to it until it is laid down at the grave, or left behind at the second coming of the Lord. The Westminster Confession of Faith well says, "This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and

although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself and all the motions thereof are truly and properly sin."

It is my earnest desire and effort to turn your thoughts entirely away from yourself to the Saviour, for it is the most melancholy business that can engage even a redeemed sinner to be probing into his own soul to find some assurance that he is saved. You can never find it there, but only in the word; and, thank God! having once seen it in the word, you can see it every day and every hour, simply as you read and believe what Jesus says.

Nor is this assurance the privilege exclusively of a favoured few who have made higher attainments in holiness than the common crowd can ever hope to reach, but it is the privilege of every one without exception who believes the testimony of God's word addressed alike to all. The merchant plunged in the noisy whirl of trade; the mechanic working at his bench; the professional man in the wearisome routine of his daily duties; the wife and mother harassed with the anxieties and cares of her household; the child of affliction bowed under the burden of a well-nigh insupportable sorrow,—may all rejoice in this cheering assurance, and *know* by simply and sincerely believing God that they are for ever saved. Christ died for one as much as another of His people, and "he that believeth on Him is not condemned" (John iii. 18), no matter what may be his cir-

cumstances in life. To believe this is to know that we are saved.

Many regard it as impious presumption when they hear Christians say they *know* they are saved, but they do not regard it as impious presumption to make God a liar, as they do by their doubts and fears; for "he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (1 John v. 10). They seem to think that it is only a pre-eminently holy walk that can secure assurance of faith; whereas it is only assurance of faith that can secure a pre-eminently holy walk. They seem to think that to obtain this priceless boon they must struggle hard and long, and refer as an illustration to Jacob wrestling all night with the Lord; whereas a glance at the passage in Genesis would show them that it was the Lord who wrestled with Jacob, just as He is now wrestling with their ungenerous and unworthy unbelief, seeking to cast it down by the precious word of His grace.

A young lady teaching her class in Sunday school found the lesson for a certain day embracing the Saviour's declaration, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in Me hath everlasting life" (John vi. 47). A little girl inquired, "Is that true—is it surely true?" "Oh yes!" replied the teacher; "it is surely true, for Christ says so, and whatever He says is true." "It must be very nice," said the child, "to have everlasting life, and to know

that whatever comes you are saved, and saved even now." "Yes," answered the teacher; "it is a great blessing indeed." "Then you are saved, are you not?" asked the interested scholar. "I hope so," was the reply. "Hope so!" exclaimed the child; "why, I thought you told me just now it was sure enough?" The conversation is said to have led the young lady to see her folly, and to cast herself with undoubting confidence upon Christ for a present, complete, and assured salvation. So it would be with numbers of professed Christians who seek to lead souls to the Saviour, if they would reflect for a moment upon the absurdity of telling the inquiring sinner, upon the infinitely trustworthy testimony of Jehovah, that through faith in Jesus he shall certainly be saved, while they themselves, although saying they believe, are filled with doubt and fear concerning their own state and standing before God.

The objection, however, may be here raised that the real point of the difficulty is not yet reached. It will be admitted, some are ready to reply, that the true believer may know he is saved, but the question is, How can he know he is a true believer? Is he not compelled, in the nature of the case, to look at his own heart and life before he can be assured of his interest in the blood of Christ? Now, I am bold to say that assurance can never, never be obtained in this manner; for in proportion as a child of God is conscientious and painstaking in his

walk, so is he made aware of the evils of his nature and his deficiencies in meeting the full measure of his obligations. The holiest saints on earth are invariably those who most clearly perceive and most promptly confess the vileness of their hearts and their failures in duty; and they would be the first to confess that if assurance is derived from anything found in them or done by them, it is a privilege entirely beyond the reach of their experience.

The fact is, assurance does not depend upon our conduct, but our conduct greatly depends upon our assurance. Let no one infer from this that it matters not how a Christian lives; for whatever gives the slightest encouragement to sin, whatever leads any to suppose that the least iniquity in the soul or life is a little thing, whatever tends to dampen the ardour of a fervent aspiration to be perfectly conformed to the will of God, is utterly contrary both to the letter and the spirit of the gospel. Its solemn language is, "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. i. 15, 16).

But the calling here does not depend upon the holiness, although the holiness depends upon the calling. The divine order is, first faith and then works; first grace and then government; first privilege and then responsibility; first life and then activity; first salvation and then holiness. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear chil-

dren" (Eph. v. 1); but mark, *as dear children;* and the exhortation is based upon the fact stated in the preceding verse—that "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. iv. 32). So you will find that all the exhortations addressed to the disciples of Jesus in the New Testament take it for granted that faith is already exercised; that grace is already received; that privilege is already enjoyed; that relationship with God as the Father of believers is already established; that life is already bestowed; that salvation is already secured. They are not asked to pray, and work, and give, and be holy, in order to be saved, but because they *are* saved; and salvation is not made to hang upon their discernment of themselves as true believers, but upon their discernment of Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour.

It is nowhere written in the Bible, Believe that thou art a believer, and thou shalt be saved, but, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31). It is nowhere said, He that believeth himself to be a believer hath everlasting life, but, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John iii. 36). Do you ask, then, how you may know that you are a believer? I reply, You cannot know it by looking at yourself, but only at the Saviour who speaks to you in His word. If a friend of undoubted veracity were to tell you of something that had occurred within his

personal knowledge, you would not think of your own heart and life to find out whether you believed him, but only of his unspotted reputation for truthfulness. If you were dangerously ill, and your physician, who, through long years of practice had never been known to deceive a patient, should at length declare that the crisis of the disease had been safely passed, that all your symptoms were encouraging, and that you were on the way to speedy recovery, you would not be occupied with thoughts about yourself to learn whether you believed him, but your attention would be instantly turned from self to think of his skill, his integrity, and his cheering words. You would not think you must first feel glad, before you could believe him, but you would first believe him, and then feel glad. You would not say, "Doctor, I wish I could believe you; I am trying to believe you; how can I believe you? how can I know that I believe you?" but immediately upon the announcement of the good news you would believe him, and straightway rejoice.

So it was with those who became the disciples of Jesus in the earliest and best days of the Christian Church. They heard the good news of the love of God for a lost world, and of the death of Christ for sin, and of His resurrection for the justification of His people, and without any delay they believed, and at once were made happy in the assurance of salvation. Among them were physicians, and lawyers, and mer-

chants, and mechanics, and farmers, and priests who gave up their office, and women, composing a great company, having the same sinful nature with which we are born into the world, and bearing on their weary souls the same cares that burden us. Some of them had been idolaters, and adulterers, and thieves, and covetous, and drunkards, and revilers, and extortioners; and yet it could be said of them, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 11). This wondrous change from the deepest degradation to the highest blessedness was brought about by simply believing the testimony of God; and there is not the slightest evidence that they doubted their acceptance, or that they worried themselves in trying to discover whether their faith was of the right kind, and whether it was sufficiently strong, or that they ever asked how they might know that they were true believers and thus obtain full assurance of faith.

On the other hand, there is abundant proof that they were strangers to the fear and uncertainty that make up the gloomy experience of at least nine-tenths of the people of God in modern times. Whoever they were, whatever they had been, wherever they lived, they had an assurance of salvation which must have formed at once an unfailing fountain of joy to their hearts and an effective instrument for achieving an easy victory over the world. Thus

in writing to the Romans the apostle says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 1, 2). "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. vi. 1, 2.) "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. vi. 6). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1). "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 34). "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. xiv. 8). "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. xvi. 20). Is it possible that those to whom such language was addressed could doubt their safety, or need anything else to give them perfect assurance?

"Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in

you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16.) "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 21–23). "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. vi. 20).

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. xii. 27). "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. xv. 58).

Turning to the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, we find the apostle saying, "Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. i. 21, 22). "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God" (2 Cor. iii. 3). "For we know [not suppose, nor hope, but know] that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1). "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. v. 18). "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;

that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). To the Galatians he says, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26). To the Ephesians he says, "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through His blood" (Eph. i. 6, 7); "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13). To the Philippians he says, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6). To the Colossians he says, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. i. 12, 13). "And ye are complete in Him" (Col. ii. 10). To the Thessalonians he says, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us [mark the past tense] from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i. 9, 10). To Timothy he says, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. i. 7). To Titus he says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the

Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit. iii. 5-7). To the Hebrews he says, "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii. 11). "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28).

Having thus hurriedly passed through the epistles which the Holy Ghost dictated to Paul, it only remains to glance at the testimony given by the other inspired apostles. James says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (Jas. i. 17, 18). Peter, writing to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, blesses "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. i. 3); "whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your

souls" (1 Pet. i. 8, 9). John writes not only to the fathers and the young men who were strong, but to "little children, because," he says, "your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake;" and again, "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 John ii. 12, 13). "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him" (1 John iii. 2). "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John v. 13). "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness [or the wicked one]. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John v. 19, 20). Jude addresses "them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called" (Jude 1); and the beloved disciple raises an ascription of praise, in behalf of all his brethren, "unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father" (Rev. i. 5, 6).

It is plain from these passages that the Holy Ghost sent His communications to the early disciples as to those who were already

saved and who knew they were saved. Indeed, He manifestly designed to give them assurance of this fact; and they could obtain assurance only by believing His word. When it is said, "The Spirit Itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii. 16), and, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John v. 10), we are to remember that the witness-bearing of the Holy Ghost is not apart from the word, but that it consists in leading the soul to rest with unwavering confidence upon the testimony of that word. When our Lord said to those who received Him as their Saviour, "Rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke x. 20), and, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32), how were they assured of salvation? Clearly, by believing His word; and if they did sincerely believe Him, they not only hoped, but they knew, that their names were written in heaven, and that they would at length reign in the kingdom. They could not know it in any other way. Suppose Christ should now descend from heaven in visible form and say the same thing to you; would you believe Him? Suppose He should send an angel to you as He did to Cornelius to announce the same thing; would you believe Him? Suppose He should write the same thing in a letter and convey it to your mind in that form; would you believe

Him? Why not believe Him, then, when He says the same thing in a book, and says it to you no less personally and directly than He did to those who received Him, while He was on the earth, as the Son of God?

You *know* whether you are trusting in Him alone for salvation, or whether you expect to enter heaven on any other ground; and if you can truthfully say that your trust is in Jesus, and in none but Jesus, you may *know* that you have passed out of death into life, because it is written, "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (John vi. 47).

The question here is not whether you are a sinner, for it is certain that you are a sinner, and that you will remain a sinner as long as you live; but it is simply this, Do you believe in Christ as your Saviour? If you do, although the flesh is still in you, "ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 9). In other words, although you are a sinner, you are not a sinner; and if you say this is a contradiction in terms, so it is a contradiction in terms to say that you are mortal and at the same time immortal, and yet both statements are strictly true.

As the great Bacon has described the believer in one of his striking Christian "paradoxes and seeming contradictions," "He hath within him both flesh and Spirit, yet he is not a double-minded man; he is often led captive by the law of sin, yet it never gets dominion

over him; he cannot sin, yet can do nothing without sin." Or, as saith the Holy Spirit by John, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John i. 8); but the same apostle says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John iii. 9). "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." If the Christian had not leaven in him, he could not be told to purge it out; and yet the very reason assigned for purging it out is that he has not leaven.

The truth is, our "old man" is essentially corrupt, but our "new man" which is created in Christ Jesus is essentially holy; and the moment we are in Him by faith alone, twenty things are said of our sins. First, they are *blotted out* (Isa. xliii. 25); second, they are *borne by another* (1 Pet. ii. 24); third, they are *cast behind God's back* (Isa. xxxviii. 17); fourth, they are *cast into the depths of the sea* (Mic. vii. 19); fifth, they are *washed away with cleansing blood* (1 John i. 7); sixth, they are *covered* (Rom. iv. 7); seventh, they are *finished* (Dan. ix. 24); eighth, they are *forgiven* (Col. ii. 13); ninth, they are *not beheld* (Num. xxiii. 21); tenth, they are *not imputed* (Rom. iv. 8); eleventh, they are *not remembered* (Heb. viii. 12); twelfth, they are *pardoned* (Mic. vii. 18); thirteenth, they are *passed away* (Zech. iii. 4);

fourteenth, they are *purged* (Heb. i. 3); fifteenth, they are *put away* (Heb. ix. 26); sixteenth, they are *remitted* (Acts x. 43); seventeenth, they are *removed* (Ps. ciii. 12); eighteenth, they are *subdued* (Mic. vii. 19); nineteenth, they are *sought for and not found* (Jer. i. 20); twentieth, they are *taken away* (Isa. vi. 7). The believer in Christ may *know* upon the sure testimony of God that all this is true as it respects both the sin of his nature and the sins of his life; and hence the believer may *know* in the same way that he is saved.

But it may be asked whether there are not certain evidences of conversion found in the Scriptures. Undoubtedly there are, but they are not given that we might derive from *them* the assurance of salvation. It was never intended that we should receive assurance by believing ourselves to be Christians, but by believing that Christ is our all-sufficient Saviour. Look at any of the evidences of regeneration mentioned in the Bible, and a moment's reflection will convince you that they were not designed to furnish assurance, for which so many sad hearts are longing and striving. Take, for example, the text, "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John iv. 7). This cannot give assurance, for there is not a Christian in the world whose love does not fall far below the measure of his desire and his duty.

Take the text, "We know that we have

passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John iii. 14). This cannot give assurance, for there is no test to decide who are the brethren, and no standard to determine how fervent our love must be, or how far it must extend in covering the faults of those who claim to be Christians. Take the text, "He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him" (1 John iii. 24). This cannot give assurance; for every true Christian, unless deluded by Satan, will confess that he fails to observe them in many particulars; that when he would do good evil is present with him; and that "no mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them, in thought, word, and deed." Whatever purpose, therefore, these evidences may serve, it is a self-righteous and fruitless task to look to them for assurance.

Still, it may be urged that we are commanded to examine ourselves. But not, I reply, to discover whether we are Christians. Self-examination is right enough, and daily should we consider our ways: not, however, to find a ground of assurance, but to confess and forsake all that is evil as judged by the word of God.

It may, however, occur to the reader that there are numerous passages in the Scriptures which warn us against the danger and deception of apostasy. Want of space forbids an

examination of these passages, but without going into details, it is sufficient to state that Scripture cannot contradict itself; and having already shown by the abundant testimony of the Holy Ghost the safety of the believer in Jesus, it is certain that the same Spirit cannot teach a directly contrary doctrine. Such passages are sometimes given to expose hypocrites, and sometimes to put true Christians on their guard "against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. vi. 11), but never to shake the confidence of the believer. "To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi" (Phil. i. 1) [the home of the redeemed and rejoicing jailer], the inspired apostle writes, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 12, 13). In other words, God had worked salvation *in* them, and now they were commanded to work it *out*—to work, not *for* salvation, but *from* salvation already received; to work, not *for* life, but *from* life already bestowed. And if anything can arouse us to ceaseless activity, to sustained enthusiasm, to practical holiness, and to personal love in the service of our Divine Master, it is the knowledge of the fact that through His pitying grace and precious blood He has freely, fully, and for ever saved us. Then we will understand the deep meaning of the words,

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
And Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Then we can say, in the confidence and joy of a simple faith. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Tim. i. 12).

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 24, 25).

"Can it be right for me to go
On in this dark, uncertain way?
Say 'I believe,' and yet not know
Whether my sins are put away?

"Not know my trespasses forgiven,
Until I meet Him in the air!
Not know that I shall get to heaven,
Until I wake and find me there!

"Not know my state till on my brow
Beams the celestial diadem!
Why, surely all the world will know
That I'm a pardoned sinner then.

"Must clouds and darkness veil my brow,
Until I dwell with saints in light?
And must I walk in darkness now,
Because I cannot walk by sight?

"And shall I just begin to say,
'Father, Thine every word is true,'
And cast my doubts and fears away,
When all the world will own it too?

"Is this the way to treat the God
Who bids me love and trust Him now?
Is this the way to use the word
Given to guide me here below?

"How can I forth to sinners go,
And tell of grace so rich and free,
If all the while I do not know
Whether that grace has smiled on me?

"How can it be my joy to dwell
On the rich power of Jesus' blood,
If all the while I cannot tell
That it has sealed my peace with God?

"How can I be like Christ below,
How like my Lord in witness shine,
Unless with conscious joy I know
His Father and His God as mine?

"Oh, crush this cruel unbelief;
These needless, shameful doubts remove;
And suffer me no more to grieve
The God whom I do really love."

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