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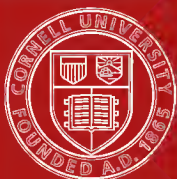
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A

# COMMENTARY,

EXPLANATORY, DOCTRINAL, AND PRACTICAL, , , ,

ON THE

## EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

BY

R. E. PATTISON, D. D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF WATERVILLE COLLEGE.

Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.

JOHN 17:17.

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## P R E F A C E .

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THE motive for selecting this portion of the word of God for commentary has been, that in no equally limited portion are so plainly expressed or significantly interwoven, the three essential elements of religion—doctrine, experience, and practical duties. The work is not designed for the *learned*. Nor is this the great need of the church at this day. That there is, in fact, an excess of this kind of instruction, we have no idea. But there is *relatively*. The great want of the church, at this period of her history and efforts, is the nourishment of the “inner man”—the illumination of the *heart*, by a clear and rich acquaintance, not with verbal or historical criticism, but with the scope and moral force of the word of God. However imperfectly the means of this are furnished in these notes,—and of their imperfections no reader can be more sensible than the writer himself,—an honest and somewhat laborious effort has been made to instruct the plain Christian, who hungers for the “bread of life,” and to inspire him with a stronger desire for it. The eye of the writer has been kept steadily on one class of readers—intelligent, experienced Christians. “Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil:” including Bible-class teachers and adult Christians, who, earnest inquirers

after truth, associate for the study of the Lively Oracles. Though the pulpit is a divinely appointed agency in the conversion of the world, and, as I verily believe, a *learned* ministry is unspeakably important, and to furnish it, much more should be done than is doing; yet, it is not the exclusive one. It is by the *church*, including the ministry, that “the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known.” If the world is ever saved, it will be by this city set on a hill — by believers generally “holding forth the word of life” — “shining as lights in the world.”

These notes were commenced several years since, while giving instruction in Theology, to furnish myself with suitable proof-texts in elucidating the scheme of mercy. Within the last year they have been rewritten with special reference to the class of Christians alluded to above; — with what degree of skill will be judged of by the reader. My prayer is that to read understandingly he may have an “Unction from the Holy One;” and that he may read with a sincere love of the inspired teachings, whatever judgments he may pass on my efforts to elucidate them.

That the Apostle Paul was the author of the Epistle has never been denied: that it was written while in prison at Rome, is shown in the Epistle. It was probably a circular, a copy of which was sent the church at Ephesus.

# DIVISION OF THE EPISTLE INTO LESSONS.

---

## LESSON I.

SALUTATION. CH. I. 1, 2, . . . . . 11

## LESSON II.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE SCHEME OF MERCY. CH I. 3-14, . . . . . 17

## LESSON III.

EXECUTION OF THE SCHEME OF MERCY. CH. I. 3-14, . . . . . 29

## LESSON IV.

THE APOSTLE GIVES THANKS THAT THIS SCHEME OF MERCY HAD BEEN RENDERED EFFECTUAL IN THEIR FAITH; AND PRAYS FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL ILLUMINATION. CH. I. 15-23, . . . . . 38

## LESSON V.

THE MORAL CONDITION OF THOSE ADDRESSED, AND OF ALL MEN, BY NATURE. CH. II. 1-3, . . . . . 53

## LESSON VI.

THE MORAL CHANGE EFFECTED, THROUGH THE QUICKENING INFLUENCE OF THE GOSPEL, THROUGH FAITH. CH. II. 4-10, . . . . . 62

## LESSON VII.

JEWES AND GENTILES ARE CHANGED IN THEIR RELATIONS TO EACH OTHER — THROUGH THE GOSPEL MADE ONE — AND BOTH ARE RECONCILED TO GOD. CH. II. 11-22, . . . . . 69

## LESSON VIII.

THIS MYSTERY, INCLUDING BOTH THE GENERAL SCHEME OF MERCY AND ITS EXTENSION TO THE GENTILES, MADE KNOWN TO THE APOSTLE BY REVELATION. CH. III. 1-6, . . . . . 88

## LESSON IX.

PAUL CALLED BY GRACE TO BE A MINISTER OF THIS DISPENSATION OF MERCY TO THE GENTILES. CH. III. 7-13, . . . . . 100

LESSON X.

SECOND PRAYER AND DOXOLOGY. CH. III. 14—21, . . . . 108

LESSON XI.

EXHORTATION TO UNITY. CH. IV. 1—6, . . . . 118

LESSON XII.

THIS UNITY IS CONSISTENT WITH A DIVERSITY OF GIFTS,—ALL RESULTING IN THE SAME END,—“A PERFECT MAN.” CH. IV. 7—16, 130

LESSON XIII.

EXHORTATION NOT TO WALK AS OTHER GENTILES DO — WHOSE MORAL CHARACTER IS DESCRIBED. CH. IV. 17—24, . . . . 147

LESSON XIV.

SPECIFIED SINS TO BE AVOIDED—AS LYING, ANGER, THEFT, ETC. CH. IV. 25—32, . . . . 157

LESSON XV.

OTHER SINS SPECIFIED, WITH THE ADMONITION THAT SUCH EXCLUDE THE OFFENDER FROM THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. CH. V. 8—7, . . . . 171

## LESSON XVI.

EXHORTATION TO WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT, SO AS TO REPROVE THE WICKED. CH. V. 8-20, . . . . .	181
--	-----

## LESSON XVII.

DUTIES OF WIVES AND HUSBANDS. CH. V. 21-33, . . . . .	195
---	-----

## LESSON XVIII.

DUTIES OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS. CH. VI. 1-4, . . . . .	207
--	-----

## LESSON XIX.

DUTIES OF SERVANTS AND MASTERS. CH. VI. 5-9, . . . . .	211
--	-----

## LESSON XX.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOR. CH. VI. 10-18, . . . . .	217
---	-----

## LESSON XXI.

A REQUEST FOR PRAYER, AND BENECTION. CH. VI. 18-22, . . . . .	226
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# EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

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## GENERAL ANALYSIS.

THE Epistle is nearly equally divided between doctrines and practical duties. The first three chapters are mainly occupied with a profound exposition of the scheme of mercy through Jesus Christ; followed in the remaining three chapters with a persuasive to sincere and earnest piety, as the proper fruit of God's rich grace, and to the duties it involves. While it is perhaps the most complete exhibition of the method of divine love in the salvation of sinners, given in so few words, inspired or uninspired, it is also replete with much that is experimental and devotional. Though much of the doctrinal portion of the Epistle treats of the "Common Salvation," being addressed to the Gentile believ-

ers, it contains much that is peculiar to them and to their condition, who had been brought by the Gospel into union and favor with God; and into fellowship with all His children as fellow heirs.

The Epistle begins with the usual apostolic salutation, and closes with a benediction on all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.



# COMMENTARY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### SALUTATION.

Verses 1, 2. Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and 2 to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

### ANALYSIS.

*Paul, an Apostle by divine authority — The character of those addressed — The matter of the salutation.*

I. An apostle is one sent forth by the authority of a superior — one commissioned to discharge some trust. It is the common idea of a messenger. In this sense, several of the disciples of Christ are called apostles; as Barnabas,<sup>1</sup> Andronicus, and Junia.<sup>2</sup> These two are said to be “of note among the apostles” — not probably in comparison with the twelve, but with Barnabas, Timothy, Titus, and Epaphroditus.<sup>3</sup> These were *messengers* of the churches,

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiv. 4—14.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xvi. 7.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 23; Phil. ii. 25.

sent out in company with some of the twelve apostles, or alone.

Christ is called an apostle,<sup>1</sup> sent forth from heaven, to be the light of the world, to make expiation of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness. My doctrine is not mine, but His that *sent* me.<sup>2</sup> I must work the works of Him that *sent* me.<sup>3</sup> Though in His preëxistent and divine nature Christ was in all respects equal with the Father, yet He voluntarily humbled Himself to become a messenger. Not only was Christ's human nature under law, but His divine nature *voluntarily* assumed this position — a subordinated relation to the Father.<sup>4</sup> He humbled *Himself*. The connection of the Eternal Spirit with the rational soul of Jesus, was not that of mere divine influence, as in sanctification, or in inspiration, or in enabling the soul of the Son of man to endure under its awful weight of responsibilities and trials. It was a personal, mysterious union, such that the divine was humbled (not changed) to the human. This and the doctrine of the Trinity, Turretin considers the two great mysteries of religion; and this union of the divine and human natures of Christ, Paul calls the mystery of godliness.<sup>5</sup> It was not the human alone in Christ that was subject to authority; but the God-man, Christ, the Son of God, became an *apostle*.

In a sense somewhat like, yet peculiarly modified, was Paul an apostle. He was one of the last of the thirteen apostles, so designated in the New Testament, and specifically distinguished from any other of the apostles, or prophets, or evangelists. The object of the apostolic office was to constitute leaders in carrying forward what Christ had commenced: 1, specially to be witnesses of

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> John vii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> John ix. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. ii. 5—8.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

his resurrection.<sup>1</sup> That Paul might be fully qualified to be a witness of Christ's resurrection, the Saviour, *after his death*, appeared to him on his way to Damascus.<sup>2</sup> Paul asserts that he had seen Jesus after His resurrection, as a ground of competency to be a witness of the fact of this keystone of miracles. 2. This class of leading apostles were permanently inspired — *habitually so*. They were, therefore, not only infallible when inspired, but *always* infallible, because always inspired. Hence they were fitted to establish the *truth* in the earth in Christ's stead, and as His ambassadors. Others, specially the New Testament prophets, were *occasionally* inspired. 3. These apostles were endowed with the power of working miracles, the facts of which are abundantly recorded in the historical portions of the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> Paul vindicates his apostolical rank by referring to his miracles, wrought among his brethren. Not only by his self-denying piety, but by "signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."<sup>4</sup> 4. This class of apostles had power to communicate the gifts of the Holy Ghost to whom they would.<sup>5</sup>

Paul was an apostle of this select class, and was equally qualified with the other twelve, first chosen. He had seen Jesus; he was inspired, and so made an infallible teacher of the gospel. He was enabled to perform miracles, and to impart to others the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

He was an apostle of *Christ Jesus*; that is, sent forth by Christ as *His* messenger, to preach His gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, specially to the latter.

His appointment was divine — *by the will of God*. He did not intrude himself into this office, but was *called* to be

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 22; ii. 32; iii. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ix. 3, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Acts v. 12.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 12; Acts xix. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Acts viii. 15, 17; xix. 6.

an apostle, *separated* unto the gospel of God,<sup>1</sup> not by the authority of the other apostles, or by any man,<sup>2</sup> but by the authority of God. In this appointment, God acted as a sovereign, self-moved. His ordination was internal and external, and both of God. First, God working in him mightily,<sup>3</sup> and secondly by the appearance of Christ to him on the way to Damascus. On account of the peculiar manner in which Paul was externally inducted into his apostleship, and the frequent efforts made by his enemies to weaken his authority, he found it necessary repeatedly to assert the high authority of his commission. As the infallibility of his teaching depended on his apostolical appointment, he never suffered it to be lightly thought of.

II. The epistle is addressed, *To the saints which are at Ephesus*. Believers are called *saints*, not because they are perfect in holiness, but because they have *begun* a life of holiness;—pardoned and regenerated, cleansed by the blood of Christ and by the Holy Spirit. They desire perfect holiness.<sup>4</sup> They shall ultimately attain to it.<sup>5</sup> Holiness and glory will be inseparable in eternity.<sup>6</sup> No moral defilement or falsehood can enter heaven, while the path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.<sup>7</sup> To this end, that they should be holy, etc., Christians were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.<sup>8</sup> To this end Christ died, to redeem them, not only from the curse of the law, but also from the power of sin. He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people.<sup>9</sup> To execute this eternal purpose of God, and that Christ may see the fruits of His sufferings,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. i. 1; ii. 2, 6—9.

<sup>3</sup> Col. i. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. v. 6; Phil. iii. 7—14.

<sup>5</sup> Phil. i. 6; Col. iii. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. xxi. 26, 27.

<sup>7</sup> Prov. iv. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Ep. i. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Titus ii. 11—14.

all things are made to work together for good to them that love God. Everything concerning the believer tends to the day of his redemption. Christians are called *saints*, not because already perfect, but because in the divine purpose, and in the fulness of Christ's grace, they are foreseen without spot.<sup>1</sup> Paul uses the terms "spiritual" and "perfect" interchangeably.<sup>2</sup> This shows not only what believers are destined to become, but what they have begun to be, and distinguishes them from the unrenewed.

*And to the faithful in Christ Jesus.* — Even to the faithful. True saints are faithful as the followers and servants of Christ. *In Christ Jesus*, means either simply Christians, or those who are in Christ by faith, as the branch is in the vine; \*and so are faithful, through the efficacy of His grace.

III. *Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* It is probable that there never have been a people on earth who, on meeting and at parting, did not employ some expression of good wishes. That sin has rendered the race criminally selfish, needs no proof. But that there is in human nature some natural, instinctive benevolence, which sin has not wholly destroyed, is seen in this universal practice of expressing good wishes. It is, doubtless, often a mere form; sometimes basely hypocritical — showing, nevertheless, that a desire for the happiness of others, when it does not conflict with our own, is constitutional. It is not piety, nor is it even virtuous or meritorious; but it is amiable and lovely, when sincere. Sin has wholly destroyed the love of God in the heart. Until renewed by grace, the natural heart has not one emotion of true piety towards God, and depravity sadly enfeebles our instinctive benevolence. Yet it has not wholly destroyed it. Its existence in the constitu-

1 1 Cor. ii. 6, 14.

2 1 Cor. ii. 6, 15.

tion is indispensable to the existence of society, when grace is wanting.

The general expression is one of mere good-will. "Peace be unto thee," or "upon thee," or "with thee:" "Prosperous be thou:" "Joy to thee." These are the usual modes of salutation among the heathen. The Jews, and such other nations as have shared with them in a divine revelation, including the Mohammedans, have made it a mere formal *invocation* — "God bless thee!" "The mercy of God be upon thee!" Christian salutations are frequently, specially in writing, distinguished by a recognition of Christ as the medium, and often as the source of the blessings invoked — "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all;" or, as in this passage, "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Pious men not only wish their fellow-men well, but understand that every good and every perfect gift comes from the Father of lights, and not only through the mediation of His Son, but directly from Him as the Source. God in Christ is the giver, and the gift is everything needful for this life and that which is to come. Holiness, as well as happiness, is the prayer of the Christian for his fellow-men. That Christ is the divine Source of these blessings, as well as God the Father, is evident, not only from the fact that, as in this salutation, His name is *associated* with that of the Father, but several times, in the salutations and benedictions found in the Epistles, His name alone is used — "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. This is explicable only on the supposition of His equality and oneness with the Father — a doctrine which everywhere pervades the New Testament. *Grace* means all unmerited favors; *peace*, the blessed state of the soul in the enjoyment of these favors.

## GRATITUDE FOR THE PROVISIONS OF MERCY.

Verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

*Blessed.* — To bless signifies both to reverence, and to make or wish happy. Both ideas are included in this word. God is worthy of praise and adoration. He is a Being of absolute goodness — glorious in holiness and unbounded in love — and therefore should be adored. This grateful praise is emphatically due from beings for whom He has made such rich provisions of salvation. God is already, and in Himself, infinitely happy. This we cannot augment. Our piety and gratitude, therefore, consist in the pleasure we experience in knowing that He is thus happy.

The object of praise is *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Christ calls God His God. “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?”<sup>1</sup> This language was employed during His agony on the cross. After His resurrection, in conversation with Mary at the sepulchre, He calls God both His God and His Father, as well as Mary’s. “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.”<sup>2</sup> As a human being, Christ is as much a creature of God as any man. To Him, in His lower nature, God stands, and will eternally stand, in the relation of Creator, Protector, and Benefactor. To Him God will be an eternal object of worship. God was also His lawgiver. As human, Christ was made of a woman — made *under the law*;<sup>3</sup> as divine, He *voluntarily* placed himself under law. Divinity was voluntarily humbled. God made *requirements*

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvii. 46; Mark xv. 34.

<sup>2</sup> John xx. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. iv. 4.

of Him. Mysterious as the doctrine is, He obeyed. "Lo, I come. I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart" [a spirit of obedience].<sup>1</sup> It was by keeping the moral law, and by being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (which was God's will), that He made expiation of sin. By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.<sup>2</sup> The entire, complex will of Christ, human and divine, was obedient. God was *His* God.

The apostles also speak of God both as God and Father of Christ.<sup>3</sup> In 1 Peter 1:3, the same designations are given. Blessed be 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.

In what sense God is the Father of Christ, there has been much theological controversy. As to the relation of Father and Son, three views have been entertained: 1. That Christ, having only one nature, and that human, holds to God the relation of Son, the same as all the children of God, only higher in His endowments and piety. 2. Another class, believing in His divinity as well as humanity, view Him to be a Son in this complex nature, and only in that. He is a Son from the time, and in consequence of, His incarnation. 3. A third class consider the relation of Father and Son to have been eternal. As Christ was always *with God*, He was so as a Son, not created, nor derived, nor dependent, but equal and self-existent, eternally. Christ is called the Son of God and the Son of Man. This diversity is founded on His complex nature, divine and human. As Son of Man, He was the offspring

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xl. 7, 8. See, also, Hebrews x. 6, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xv. 6; 2 Cor. i. 3; xi. 31.



of Mary, the son of David, of the seed of Abraham. He had a Jewish ancestry. *Of the fathers* Christ came. The evidences are abundant and obvious.

But why is He called the Son of God? Why is God called His Father? As Christ and all believers are in a peculiar (mysterious) sense one, and all are the children of God, God is His Father as He is theirs. He is their elder brother. But Christ was a son in a higher sense. He was not the natural offspring of human parents. Mary was His actual mother; but He had no human father. His human nature was an immediate creation by God — a creation in distinction from generation. His relation to God is, therefore, peculiar, resembling that of no other individual of our race. Though not wholly resembling it, yet as truly a creation as that of Adam. But, perhaps, the fact that Christ was born of a virgin, and had no human father, was rather a *proof* that God was His Father, than the *reason* of it; or both the proof and the reason why. Having no finite father, and as His conception and birth of a virgin were in fulfilment of an explicit prophecy, it was a confirmation of the fact that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. As testimony, it resembles His resurrection, which declared Him to be the Son of God, *with power*, or emphatically. This He claimed to be; and God would not have raised an impostor. His resurrection was the first-fruits of His exaltation to the right hand of God.

But was God eternally His Father? or was Christ an eternal Son? The eternity of Christ's existence — that is, that He never *began* to exist, but was always one with God — we shall assume as believed by the reader. When God began the work of creation, the Word was already *with God*. He was not a creature, but the Creator — the beginning of the creation; that is, the source, or author of it.

As He was not dependent on God for His being, it cannot be on this account God is called His Father. All we know is that He was God, and was with God, in some way identical, in another distinct, or He could not be said to be *with* God; and as there is but one God, He could not be said to be God unless He and the Father were one. This He claimed. I and my Father are one.<sup>1</sup> I and the Father are the same being, the one living and true God.

The question still recurs: Though eternal in His divine nature, as distinct from the Father, was He an eternal *Son*? The apostle, in Rom. 1: 3, 4, in which He distinguishes the human from the divine nature of Christ, refers His Sonship to His divinity most clearly. His resurrection proved Him to be the Son of God *according to the spirit of holiness*, in His divine nature, in distinction from His human, which *was made of the seed of David according to the flesh*. It is as a divine being that He is here declared to be the Son of God.

It is difficult to read the seventeenth chapter of John, and not feel that the relation of Father and Son subsisted in some mysterious manner prior to Christ's incarnation. This is specially felt in the fifth verse: "And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was,"—that is, from eternity. The conception seems to be, that, in His previous existence, He had shared, *as a son*, with His Father, divine glory, which, since His incarnation, had been veiled. To this He prays to be restored, that His human as well as divine nature might be honored with the glory belonging to His preëxistent nature as the divine Son—the Son of God.

If it be asked, in what did this relation consist—in what

<sup>1</sup> John x. 30.

sense was God His Father? we are obliged to confess we do not know. This, God has not revealed. He has revealed, we think, that He was an eternal Son, as He was the eternal God. We not only believe the distinction between the Father and the Son was an eternal one, but such an one as to constitute the reason why He, of the three persons of the Godhead, should be *sent* as a messenger of mercy to guilty men.

One reason, though not the original one, nor the highest, why Christ, in his complex, human and divine nature, is called the Son of God, may be His humiliation and piety on earth. God loved Him as an only begotten Son. He was a well-beloved Son, and heir of all things. Even in His *human* nature, He was made heir of divine glory.

*Who hath blessed us.*—In the first part of this verse, *to bless* means grateful veneration exercised by men toward God. Here it means the favor of God to man. This distinction pervades the New Testament. *With all spiritual blessings.*—These blessings are called spiritual, because they are benefits to the soul; its redemption from sin, in distinction from temporal favors; grace, rather than material comforts. They are also called spiritual, because the fruits of the Spirit. *In heavenly places.*—If the translator is correct in inserting *places* after *heavenly*, which is not in the Greek, then the idea is that the place of communion with God on earth is the house of God, and the gate of heaven.<sup>1</sup> It is heavenly, because God is present, and is worshipped *as in heaven*. But another idea, analogous to the tenor of Scripture, is that the blessings are heavenly in their origin and nature. *In Christ.*—Through the mediation of Christ, spiritual blessings were purposed in Christ, and bestowed on his account, and by his hand. This will receive a fuller consideration in the subsequent verses.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxviii. 17.

## SCHEME OF MERCY.

What these spiritual blessings in Christ are, the Apostle unfolds in the following paragraph. It is one of the most remarkable portions of the inspired word. He pours forth, from a deeply penetrated and earnest heart, thoughts and feelings full of mystery, and redolent with devotion. The whole scheme of mercy lies spread out before his own mind, which he exhibits to the minds of his brethren as a glorious whole, without analysis or rhetorical embellishment. We are able, however, to give to it such an arrangement as shall, we hope, make it clear, without impairing its truth.

Verses 4—14. According as he hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: 5 having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the 6 good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in 7 the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the 8 riches of His grace: wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times 10 He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; 11 even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise 12 of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom 13

ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation : in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.

## ANALYSIS.

*God is the author of these provisions of mercy. — The plan of mercy was antecedent to the event — from eternity. — To what believers are chosen. — The reasons which moved God to such acts of grace.*

I. *God is the author of these provisions of mercy.* — The doctrine that it is to God we owe our grateful praise for the provisions of salvation, according to the good pleasure of His will (1—5 ; also, 9—11), pervades this passage, and the whole New Testament. As I live, saith the Lord God (the absolute Jehovah, without distinction of persons), I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.<sup>1</sup> God is love.<sup>2</sup> Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.<sup>3</sup> God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, etc.<sup>4</sup> The Gospel had its origin in the *divine will*. It was *after the counsel of His own will*. The scheme is *according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself* (5, 9, 11).

II. *The plan of man's redemption was antecedent to the events — from eternity.* 1. Several of the terms indicate its antecedency. Having *predestinated* them (verse 5). To predestinate, is to limit in, to bound, or to define *before-hand* ; to settle *in advance* that the event shall occur, and

1 Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

2 1 John iv. 8.

3 1 John iii. 1.

4 John iii. 16.

how it shall occur. When spoken of as an act of God, it means that some future event is made certain by the divine decree. In the ninth verse, in the Greek, as well as in the translation, another term is employed, having substantially the same meaning, Which He hath *purposed* in Himself. The plan was conceived, and resolved on, or *laid down*, in His own mind, prior to its execution. It is a mental determination of a future event. In the eleventh verse both terms are employed—*being predestinated* according to the *purpose* of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.

2. Our knowledge of the attributes of God requires us to believe that this plan was not laid in the process of duration; at some limited period antecedent to the event of our actual faith in Christ. There never could have been a point of duration when God had not chosen those to be saved. If given to His Son as the reward of His yet future sufferings, they *must* have been eternally given. This interprets the indefinite expression in the fourth verse, *according as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world.*

III. *To what are believers chosen?* What are these spiritual blessings of which those chosen are to be made partakers? In general terms they are salvation, eternal life. But the apostle in this paragraph specifies particular aspects of salvation. 1. *That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love*; verse 4. 2. *Redemption*; which is explained to be the *forgiveness of sins* by the blood of Christ; verse 7. 3. *That we should be accepted in the beloved*; verse 6. That is, God looks upon Christ, who is lovely, and for His sake treats us, though vile and unlovely, *as if lovely*. This includes all the blessings of Nos. 1 and 2. We are virtually clothed with His love-

liness, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ—the righteousness which is of God by faith.<sup>1</sup> 4. That we should be heirs—*having predestinated us unto the adoption of children*; verse 5.<sup>2</sup> 5. The last object specified in this paragraph, and one which was deeply interesting to the Gentile portion of the Ephesian church, was that He might gather together in one, all things in Christ (all which being in Christ are thus His), both which are in heaven and which are on earth; verse 10. All believers, whether they have finished their course and now sleep in Jesus, or are yet to finish it, are to be gathered into one fold.

Such are some of those spiritual blessings the contemplation of which so enraptured the apostle's mind. They are not a specification of all the blessings flowing to lost sinners through Christ, but they are elementary truths, and some of them comprehend the whole scheme of mercy. No wonder that the apostle should call them the riches of His grace, verse 7; or that he should say that the Spirit searcheth the deep things of God.<sup>3</sup>

IV. *What moved God to such acts of grace?* Why did God purpose in Christ, and in the fulness of time execute His purpose, to bless us with such spiritual blessings? There was no necessity in the case. It was a free, voluntary act. He was coerced by no foreign power. Nor was He morally urged by a sense of justice. God purposed *in Himself*, according to the good pleasure of His will; verses 5, 9. He was self-moved. This general principle is taught in the eleventh verse: *Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will*. David recognizes this prin-

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 17; Gal. iii. 29; iv. 7; Eph. iii. 6; Titus iii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 10.

ciple of the divine government in His providences. *According to thine own heart* hast thou done all these things.<sup>1</sup> In the solitude of His past eternity He purposed *in Himself*. In the silent depths of His own infinite thoughts and feelings, He foresaw our fallen race, and out of them chose a seed to serve Him, those whom He would make holy in love. It was an *election of grace*.<sup>2</sup>

But this purpose was not an arbitrary plan, without reason. In it was infinite *wisdom*, and to it God was moved by motives. The depths of this wisdom, and the goodness of these motives, entitle Him to eternal adoration and gratitude. To determine without a reason or a feeling, is not the act of a moral agent, created or uncreated. Two of these motives are specified in the passage before us.

1. *One was His own glory*. It was to the praise of the glory of His grace; verse 5. That we should be to the praise of His glory; verse 12. It was His design to make such a display of His perfections, specially of His grace in raising from the degradation and condemnation of sin all who believe, as would call forth the adoring wonder of all. If I be lifted up, says the Saviour,<sup>3</sup> I will draw all unto me; that is, will attract universal admiration. To make sinful creatures holy, is a glorious display of power. To make such eternally happy, is an equally glorious exhibition of grace. It makes His grace glorious.

2. *The other motive specified is His benevolence*. This is explicitly taught in this paragraph. Our redemption is according to the *riches of His grace*, which he hath made to *abound* toward us; verses 7, 8. This term grace (favor to the undeserving) is frequently employed in the New Testament. The idea is, that God was moved by love, both in planning and executing the scheme of redemp-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. vii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xi. 5.

<sup>3</sup> John xii. 32.



tion. God gave His Son because He loved the world; not with the love of complacency, or approbation, but of benevolence, or pity.

3. A love of holiness was a motive. Hence He chose us to be holy and without blame before Him in love; verse 4.

Assuming that there must be some *supreme* motive, to which all others are secondary and subordinate, the inquiry is often proposed, what is God's *ultimate* end in the redemption of men? President Edwards advances the doctrine that the "last end," or final motive, to which all others are subordinate, is the *divine glory*. The argument, though lucid, is not satisfactory to all minds. God is infinite in His perfections, both natural and moral. All created beings, taken together, are finite. Compared with Him, therefore, they are as the light dust of the balance, of which He that weigheth taketh no notice. Therefore, the inference is, that to regard Himself—His own glory—is right and reasonable. To this view, certainly, no moral objection can be offered. It is not low, unworthy, selfish. That it is *a motive*, none can reasonably doubt. But is it one to which all others are subordinate, or only tributary?

Some have supposed *benevolence or pity* was the ultimate motive to which all others were subordinate. That He was actuated by a supreme desire for the happiness of His sentient creatures. That God so *loved* the world that He provided these spiritual blessings.

Another class deem God's love of *holiness* the final motive. That to secure this He makes the holy happy, as a reward and inducement.

To us it does not seem indispensable that any one of these motives should be ultimate, to which the others are only means to an end. Why may not all coëxist in the mind of Jehovah—one as ultimate as another; not neces-

sarily all equally important, but alike final? As a perfect being, God cannot be indifferent to His own glory, or fail to appreciate its relative claim, infinitely outweighing that of all creatures. God is also love, rich in mercy. Again, He is not only Himself holy, but delights to see holiness in His creatures. He is pleased with their moral piety for its own sake, as intrinsically lovely.

Now, all these principles of action may coëxist, each alike ultimate, and though united, yet not one dependent on any other; and they may together, as a complex motive, have moved the mind of the adorable Jehovah to send His Son to redeem the world. The human mind (which is an image of the divine) is constantly acted upon by complex motives of unequal strength, but when combined, constituting a union of powers in the same direction. The vessel is moved by the combined forces of wind and steam, acting in harmony, though in no way *dependent* on each other. Any one of these motives is perhaps sufficient singly to have moved God to give these spiritual blessings.

It is a significant fact, not to be overlooked, that no intimation is made that a motive was found in the foreseen goodness of the future believers. They were *to be made* holy, but were not chosen because disposed of themselves to be holy. Here the apostle does not *deny* that God foresaw the future piety of the elect as a ground of choice, but he is *silent*, attributing all to God's saving grace. Other portions of Scripture do expressly deny this as a reason: Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, *not according to our works*, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 9.

## EXECUTION OF THIS SCHEME OF REDEMPTION.

## ANALYSIS.

*It is executed by Christ. — God's grace in Christ is dispensed wisely. — But the certainty that this scheme shall not be a failure does not arise from the efficacy of the means, but from the energy of God. — The Spirit also seals the believer unto himself as a possession.*

Thus far we have considered the condition of the divine mind, antecedent to any *acts* of mercy. The apostle gives as full and as clear a view of the acts of God in redemption, as of His predestinations. It remains to consider what God has *done* to save us. Having chosen a seed to serve Him, what methods has He employed to effect this moral result? Having predestinated some unto the adoption of children, how does He secure to them the inheritance, and them to Himself as a purchased possession?

I. *It is by Christ.* Perhaps no one portion of the New Testament gives a clearer view of this truth than 2 Cor. 5:17, 21, the spirit of which is expressed in the passage, *God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.* The whole transaction, its conception, purpose, and execution, was in Christ: God in Christ, making His rich grace to abound unto sinners.

But any one who has not had his attention specially drawn to the fact, will be surprised to see how often, and in what a variety of ways, Christ is brought forward by the apostle in the scripture under present consideration. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings *in Christ*; verse 3. He hath chosen us in *Him* (in Christ); verse 4. He has predestinated us unto the adoption of children *by Jesus Christ*; verse 5. He hath made us accepted in the *beloved* (Christ); verse 6. *In whom* (Christ) we have re-

demption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins; verse 7. He purposed in the dispensation of the fulness of time, to gather together in one, all (that are) *in Christ*; verse 10. *In whom* (Christ) we have obtained an inheritance; verse 11. Who first (that is the Jews) trusted *in Christ*; verse 12. *In whom* (Christ) ye (Gentile Ephesians) also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth — *in whom* (Christ) also after that ye believed, ye were sealed, etc.; verse 13.

If all this is without special intention on the part of the apostle, it shows how deeply imbued his mind was with the doctrine of Christ's mediation. If intended, either on his part or that of the dictating Spirit, it exhibits to us the importance of this truth, — there is but one mediator between God and man. His character and office call forth questions deeper and more vital than mere metaphysics. The Spirit did, without doubt, intend to set forth the Son of God, the propitiating lamb, as the great theme of the gospel ministry; and Paul's spirit was deeply penetrated with the truth. In view of it he counted all things but loss; — inspired by it, he determined, in his ministry, to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.<sup>1</sup> The whole Bible, Old and New Testament, is replete with the doctrine that God is *in Christ*, reconciling the world unto Himself.

II. *God's grace in Christ is dispensed wisely.* God not only makes His rich grace in Christ to abound toward us, but the *manner* in which it is communicated and made effectual, is an exhibition of His infinite wisdom. It is with all *wisdom* and *prudence* (verse 8). This is seen, not only in the scheme of mercy, but in its execution.

1. The *conditions* of salvation are wise. These are, repentance, love, submission to the terms prescribed, a

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 2.

spirit of obedience, a renunciation of all personal merit, and an implicit reliance on the merits of Christ for acceptance with God. All these are designated in the Scriptures by the term *faith*, which, in its generic sense, comprehends them all. It is a filial spirit, with the concomitant feeling of trust in Christ as an expiatory sacrifice. Although there is no merit in these affections which can cancel past deficiencies, they are pious, and *fit* states of mind on which God can look with complacency. In the exercise of faith, the guilt of past sin, and the depravity of the heart, are alike nailed to the cross. The cross not only takes away the penalty of sin to the believer, but it condemns sin in the flesh,<sup>1</sup> that is, executes or destroys it.

2. The *means* employed by God, in securing the fulfilment of these conditions, are *wisely chosen*. They are the truths of His word — the gospel ministry — the organization and ordinances of the church — and His providences — all having for their object to bring men to Christ as a Saviour, and to promote the piety of each believer, that the man of God may be perfect.<sup>2</sup> Volumes could be written on the fitness of these means of salvation. Revealed truth, especially the truth as it is in Jesus, is pure, full of energy, and adapted to man's mental and moral nature. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.<sup>3</sup> The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.<sup>4</sup> God's word shall not return unto Him void.<sup>5</sup> The preaching of the gospel is a *wise* agency. It is the best method of public *teaching*, and *persuasive* in its influences; when speaking from the heart, the heart is

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xix. 7, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah lv. 11—13.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 17.

<sup>4</sup> John vi. 63; Hebrews iv. 12, 13.

reached. The organic church, when animated by the Spirit of Christ, is not only a school for the pious discipline of believers, but is eminently fitted to extend the Redeemer's kingdom. The ordinances strengthen the love, the discipline forms the character and controls the life. What a combination of holy influences proceed from the Christian church. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God! Of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her. God says of her, All my springs are in thee.<sup>1</sup> God has put in the church a spirit of holy, benevolent enterprise, whose influences are to bless the world, like streams which, issuing from springs in the hillside, fertilize the plains below.

God is wise in the choice of means, and prudent in their application—skilful in the use of them, foreseeing and preventing all hindrances to their successful result. Many good enterprises fail for want of skill in their prosecution.

The whole plan of redemption is a deep mystery, founded in the wisdom of God. The reasons why He has chosen those He has, and left others to perish in their guilt, though not found in the desert of the elect, are, we are confident, *wise* as well as holy; and when He draws His chosen to Christ it is an act of wisdom, as well as of love and power. The *providences* of God wonderfully conspire with His word, and with the efforts of His people, both to the conversion of sinners and to the sanctification of believers. Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out. . . For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen.<sup>2</sup>

III. *But the certainty that the scheme of mercy shall not*

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxxvii.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xi. 33, 36.

*be a failure*, does not arise from the efficiency of the means, but from the *energy of God*. By His Spirit He converts and sanctifies those chosen. Christ has not only paid the price of our ransom, and made it consistent for God to grant us the *means of salvation*, but He has also merited for us the special grace of the Spirit's influences—the Holy Spirit of promise. This Jesus hath God raised up, . . . therefore, being at the right hand of God, exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.<sup>1</sup> This divine agent is promised in the Old Testament, Joel 2:28 etc.; also in the New Testament, John 14:15—18; 16:7—15. His office is not mere inspiration, or spiritual *illumination*, but to *renovate*, and, as we shall soon see, to seal the believer, and to make effectual the gospel. The influences of the Spirit are not only procured by Christ, so that God can, as a righteous lawgiver, grant them, but this is according to His *purpose* of grace. It is a part of His doings, *who worketh all things after the counsel of His will* (verse 11). Having chosen some to be holy, He works in them to will and to do according to His good pleasure.<sup>2</sup> There is a sense in which repentance is a gift.<sup>3</sup> So is faith.<sup>4</sup> Not only was Christ a gift, but His spirit is equally so.<sup>5</sup> It is also a sovereign and determined gift. It is *according to the counsel of His own will*. On this principle, Christ encouraged Himself. Though many rejected Him, yet, He says, all that the Father giveth me shall come unto me.<sup>6</sup> The effectual working of God's agency on and in the human mind, to make the effect *as certain* as in brute matter, and not to impair or in any manner affect the agency; and freedom, and accountability, of the finite agent Himself, is,

1 Acts ii. 32, 33.

3 Acts v. 31; xi. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 25.

5 Matt. ix. 11.

2 Phil. ii. 13.

4 Eph. ii. 8.

6 John vi. 37.

as yet, a mystery,—inexplicable and inconceivable,—a *fact* to be received by faith. *How* this is, is not the question. But is it *revealed*? No one, with a particle of true philosophy, can deny the possibility, for no one can pretend to know what free agency is. He has positive evidence that he and his race are free agents, and, as such, accountable; but how God is an underlying and all-comprehending cause of man's derived, causative, energy, he does not understand. No one refuses to bud or graft his fruit-trees till he can understand *how* such an act can change the nature of the future fruit. He is satisfied of the fact, and acts accordingly. So a reasonable man, not to say one of a filial spirit, will do in religion. He will believe that He who raised up Christ's dead body, can quicken and raise to spiritual life his own soul, dead in sins. Instead of caviling, he will adore the power, and gratefully seek the energy which can reovate his moral nature and make him holy. God not only dwells in the believer's heart, as in a temple, to be worshipped, but, by His gracious energy, He fills the temple with light and adoring love. Salvation is both a *gift* and an *acquisition*. All pious affections and holy purposes are the fruit of the Spirit,<sup>1</sup> while the believer works out his own salvation with fear and trembling.<sup>2</sup> The divine and human agency are beautifully combined in 2 Thess. 1: 11. Wherefore, also, we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and *fulfill* all the good pleasure of His goodness, and *the work of faith with power*. These two agencies, human and divine, are found everywhere in the Bible; sometimes separately, at others combined, but never explained. They are always given in a way which implies their reception without doubt or question.

IV. *The Spirit seals.* The agency of God is not confined

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. ii. 12.



to the mere work of exciting holy dispositions in the heart, either in the event of regeneration, or in our progressive sanctification. The primary fruits of the Spirit, it is true, are holiness; the *new man* is created in righteousness and true holiness. But often, and in addition to these primary effects, the Spirit *seals* the believing soul for heaven. This is a distinct work of the Spirit,—not sanctification, but a concomitant of it,—or sanctification *is the seal*, the existence of which is an *earnest*, or *pledge*, of final redemption. This doctrine we find in verses 13, 14: *In whom, also, after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.*

The use of the seal is for several purposes. We shall consider only its import in this and kindred passages. It sometimes means to shut up, so as to conceal or hide. It is so used in the Apocalypse. But such is not its meaning here. It means a voucher, or pledge, attached to a document, that all within is true, and that all promised shall be fulfilled. Its value to the receiver is as the veracity and ability of Him who has affixed the seal.

It entitles again the receiver to the possession of something valuable, either of present or future delivery. The author gives it as surety that a full right has been conveyed. It is a promise to the receiver of a defence from an invasion of this right, and according to his authority a prohibition to all others. The seal is attached to conveyances of property, to wills, and to acts and commissions of civil authority. It frequently, though not always, bears upon its face a device, an indelible stamp, significant of its character and pledge; or the image of the author, if he be one in authority.

The grounds of assurance in this passage are of two kinds. 1. The first *inferential*. The present effects of the Spirit are an *earnest* — a kind of first fruits — of the future and final salvation. Gesenius, speaking of the term *earnest* both in Hebrew and Greek, says “it is a *mercantile* term which the Greeks and Romans appear to have adopted from the Phenicians.” Webster gives, as one of its meanings, “First fruits, that which is in advance and gives promise of something to come. Early fruit may be an *earnest* of fruit to follow. The Christian’s peace of mind in this life is an earnest of future peace and happiness. The earnest of the Spirit is given to the saints as the assurance of their future enjoyment of God’s favor and presence.” He adds: “In a wider sense, a pledge or assurance of more to come hereafter.” The believer gathers from his present piety, of which he is conscious, not only the assurance that he shall persevere in a life of godliness, but that it shall be more and more. His present attainments in holiness and bliss are only the first sheaves of a richer harvest.

2. But this *earnest* is not confined to a mere act of the judgment, *inferring* the future attainment because of present piety, which God has promised, if begun shall be perfected. But there is attending these gracious exercises a *full assurance of hope*.<sup>1</sup> The foundation of this, though in some respects inexplicable, is laid in that filial spirit, that *spirit of adoption* which the apostle describes in Rom. 8:14–17. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit,

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vi. 11.

that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs." This hope, arising from the tokens of God's love communicated to the soul by the Spirit, is brought to view in Rom. 5:6. "And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us;" as the infant, gazing into the smiling, benignant face of its mother, reads the love of her soul, and blissfully confides in her affection and care. From such love it feels nothing but good can come. The Spirit not only affixes the seal on the soul, but interprets it to the consciousness of the believer, which He sanctifies. He is a *witnessing Spirit*.

This seal shall remain unbroken *until the redemption of the purchased possession*,—till heaven, holiness, and perfect bliss shall be possessed. This is the glorious liberty of the children of God.<sup>1</sup>

God created Adam in His own image, but permitted the image to be effaced. But when restored *in Christ*, a pledge is given, both to Christ and to the believer, that it shall not again be broken.<sup>2</sup>

This is a sublime exhibition both of the plan of redemption and its execution. It is a system of gospel divinity, in which are seen the love, the wisdom and the power of the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The *Father*, our Father and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in love chooses us—chooses us *in Christ*, and redeems us by His blood; and we are sanctified and sealed by *the Holy Spirit*. Nothing can make more manifest than this portion of the epistle, the unity and yet the personal distinction of the Godhead; a doctrine

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 21; Eph. iv. 30.

<sup>2</sup> John x. 26—30.

which underlies and wonderfully modifies the whole gospel revelation.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
 Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
 Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;  
 Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

THE APOSTLE'S GRATITUDE FOR GOD'S EFFICACIOUS GRACE  
 IN THEIR FAITH AND LOVE. -

Verses 15, 16. Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all 16 saints, cease not to give thanks for you.

*Wherefore.*—The apostle gives thanks *because* the purposes of God's grace had been realized in the members of the Church at Ephesus. Not only were they chosen, but had actually become Christians; the praise of which is due not to themselves, but to Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. *I also*, as well as yourselves and as all Christians who know and rejoice in your spiritual blessings, and in this efficacious grace. *After I heard*, as he was doubtless frequently hearing while long absent and distant from them, *of your faith in the Lord Jesus*;—their trust in Him as the Redeemer, and their acceptance of Him as their Lord and Saviour. Jesus is called *Lord*, without reasonable doubt, because He is the Supreme Jehovah of the Old Testament; Lord Jesus, or God manifest in the flesh, the head over all to the Church. *And love to all the saints*: Not only implying general good-will, which Christians exercise towards all men—true benevolence which grace puri-

fies and strengthens—but holy love, love because of the purity and loveliness of the saints themselves. If the Ephesian Christians loved Christ they must love those who are in His image, and exhibit His spirit, which is the character of saints. Faith in Christ and brotherly love are characteristics of the true Christian. Strictly understood, they are not the whole spiritual frame of the renewed soul. They include and represent, however, all true godliness. Faith and love imply and reciprocally promote each other.<sup>1</sup> He who believes in Christ has set to his seal that God is true, which is piety; while he who loves the saints has a heart which necessarily yearns over a sinful, wretched world. Peter recognizes this relation—add to *brotherly kindness, charity*, that is, *universal benevolence*.<sup>2</sup> All the Christian graces group around any one grace in lively exercise.

*I cease not to give thanks.* His gratitude was habitual. The blessings of which these Christians at Ephesus had been made partakers were unspeakably important; which deeply and constantly affected the mind of the apostle. True piety implies a susceptibility of mind—one easily impressed with any religious consideration. The apostle was grateful not only for personal blessings, but for those bestowed on his brethren.

#### GRATITUDE IS ACCOMPANIED WITH PRAYER.

Verse 16. Making mention of you in my prayers.

He prays for the continuance and increase of these gracious influences. Doubtless his prayer was as habitual as

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 6; 1 Tim. i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter i. 7.

his gratitude. The occasions for prayer both for ourselves and others are constantly occurring, and urgent. Grace gives to the soul an instinctive tendency to prayer. The thoughts are replete with reasons for it; and the heart is susceptible to every reason. Habitual prayer is no hindrance to the diligence of one who is fervent in spirit. There are minds to which prayer is a burthen. But to the soul thoroughly imbued with religious sentiments it is like food to the hungry, or cold water to the thirsty.

This prayer of Paul gives us a view not only of his confidence in prayer, and of his comprehensive appreciation of the blessings of the gospel, but of a heart of genuine benevolence and sympathy, such as grace only awakens. He was anxious that his brethren should go on unto perfection.<sup>1</sup> Their spiritual progress was an object of intense desire, as seen in Phil. 1:8-11. God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that love may abound more and more in knowledge and all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. This desire was not in behalf of the Church at Philippi alone; but of that at Ephesus, and of all Christians.

#### THE OBJECT OF HIS PRAYER — SPIRITUAL ILLUMINATION.

Verses 17—23. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 14; Heb. vi. 1.

18 Him : the eyes of your understanding being enlight-  
 ened ; that ye may know what is the hope of His  
 calling, and what the riches of the glory of His in-  
 19 heritance in the saints ; and what is the exceeding  
 greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, ac-  
 20 cording to the working of His mighty power ; which  
 He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the  
 dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the  
 21 heavenly places, 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  
 22 is to come ; and hath put all things under His feet,  
 and gave Him to be the head over all things to the  
 23 church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that  
 filleth all in all.

## ANALYSIS.

*The apostle prays : — That they may know and appreciate God — His perfections. — That they may have a lively apprehension of that future blessedness to which they were called, and for which they hoped ; that is, future glory and eternal life, in which they are to be God's inheritance. — And finally of the exceeding power exerted in their renovation and exaltation ; resembling that exerted in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ.*

I. Verse 17. *The God of our Lord Jesus Christ* (see notes on verse third), *the Father of glory.* — The Hebrew, by which the Greek of the New Testament is frequently modified, would allow us to render this *the glorious Father.* It may also be rendered, as the order of the words indicates, *the Father of glory ;* that is, the Source of glory. Both

are true; and the expression may intentionally convey both ideas. The infinite excellence of God is glorious. He is glorious in holiness. God is light, and in Him is no darkness.<sup>1</sup> This is the glory of holiness. This city had no need of the sun, etc., to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it.<sup>2</sup> This glory is displayed in creation, in God's moral government, and, emphatically, in His grace. It was this last thought, doubtless, which called forth here the expression. There is nothing, again, glorious in the universe, of which He is not the author, and which is not a reflection of Him. All other glory is secondary — originated by Him. God is, in this sense, the *Father* of glory. The meaning is thus full and comprehensive. Christ is said to *sit on a throne of glory*.<sup>3</sup> A designation of divinity. In the expression, *may give unto you the spirit of wisdom*, the object prayed for is an improved power of knowing God, or of so apprehending His perfections as to appreciate them, as what follows shows. The *spirit* of wisdom means a mind disposed to know God — to have not only an intellectual perception, but a proper feeling, or an appreciating power. To have a sense of our weakness, is something more than to *know* that we are weak. To have a sense of our sinfulness, is something more than to *know* we have done wrong. It includes a sense of God's goodness, which penetrates deeper than mere intelligence. Thus, to have a *spirit of wisdom*, gives a replete idea. A work of genius in the fine arts, to be observed justly, so as to be appreciated, needs, in the observer, the spirit of its author. Wisdom frequently means practical knowledge, in distinction from mere perception, or science. Here reference is had to that insight, or deep knowledge of divine things which the Holy Spirit alone can give, and which is fre-

1 1 John i. 5.

2 Rev. xxi. 23.

3 Matt. xix. 28; xxv. 31.



quently called *spiritual illumination*. By those thus enlightened, God and the Gospel are *spiritually discerned*.<sup>1</sup> Such have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.<sup>2</sup> The apostle adds, *and revelation*; that is, in the same manner, the *spirit* of revelation. This term, ordinarily, has reference to divine communications, of religious knowledge, given, by inspiration or otherwise, by the Holy Spirit. It here, however, has reference to the power to understand, or so to receive as to appreciate the communications already made; and, ordinarily, those made through others. As teachers, this was specially needed; and hence God often gave not only *sudden* revelations to the New Testament prophets, but also He gave them an *insight* into revelations already received from others, by which they were enabled to *interpret* infallibly and profoundly. This general illumination was shared, in some degree, by all believers as sanctified. For a distinction between these two kinds of revelation, inspiration and illumination, see 1 Cor. 2; specially tenth and thirteenth verses compared with the fourteenth verse. *God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit*.—They are words which the *Holy Ghost teacheth*. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them; *for they are spiritually discerned*. This is spiritual illumination—the *revelation* which Paul prays may be given not only to religious teachers, but to all Christians. This is being taught of God.<sup>3</sup>

*In the knowledge of Him*; that is, of *God*. It cannot be that Paul prays that these Christians should know merely that God is a Spirit; that He is the Creator of all things; or that He is a sinless Being; or that, in love, He had given

1 1 Cor. ii. 14.

3 Isaiah liv. 13; John vi. 45; 1 John ii. 27.

2 1 John ii. 20, 27.

His Son to die. All this knowledge is implied in their having assumed the name of Christians. The knowledge here prayed for must be intenser; knowledge *inwrought* by the Spirit, and which fertilizes the affections.

II. Verse 18. *The eyes of your understanding (heart) being enlightened.*—The apostle prays that the Father of glory may give to those already believers a spirit of wisdom and revelation, by enlightening *the eyes of their hearts*. The word translated, in our version, “understanding,” though frequently it has reference to the intellect exclusively, does occasionally include, also, the feelings. But the best authorities give, in the original text, the term, which should be translated *heart*, and not, as in our version, *understanding*. Though that translated *understanding* may refer to an exercise of the intellect only, and that which is translated *heart*, to the feelings only, still each term often includes both ideas. This usage, indicating a complex mental state of knowledge and feeling, is the most common; and is intended by the apostle in this instance, whichever term may have been employed. That the perception, or discerning power of the soul, is the prominent thought, is obvious. It is the *eye* of the heart, and it is to be supplied with *light*; but, through the affections, sin has diseased the eye of the soul; to see clearly, it must be anointed with eye-salve. This God does by His Spirit.<sup>1</sup> All sanctification is attended with illumination. All increase of holiness is, therefore, an increase of knowledge. This is a doctrine which unbelievers often deem fanaticism, but which is clearly taught in Scripture, and is the experience of Christians. Believers are translated out of darkness into light. Not only the eyes of those physically blind were opened by Christ, when on earth, but His

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iii. 18; 1 John ii. 20, 27.

Spirit now opens the eye of the soul. This is true at conversion. The light of the Christian, also, in his onward progress, shines more and more unto the perfect day. Not only the light of his own piety shines increasingly as he ripens in knowledge and Christian experience, but God shines more and more in upon his heart, in the face of Jesus Christ. The effect is, that he has clearer views of divine truth generally; that is, *of God*; and specially of the objects of his hopes, the nature and riches of that glory which God regards even as his inheritance, and a clearer and more practical sense of the power of God in his own religious experience. These subjects open to his vision wider and richer, and with a living reality.

The enlightening of the eyes of the heart, is only another expression for a spirit of wisdom and revelation. Its object is, in general, to know *God*, but specifically carried out, and more experimentally, in what follows: *that ye may know what is the hope of His calling*; that is, that you may be able to appreciate that eternal life which is the object of your hope, and to which God has called you. Believers, as these Ephesian Christians were, must have already considered the hopes of the gospel as the pearl of great price, or they would not have left all for it, counting them but loss. But as Christians advance in spiritual life, and are filled with the fulness of Christ, heaven will be, both here and hereafter, increasingly lovely and attractive. The Christian, specially during seasons of religious declension, fails in a painful degree to appreciate the objects of his heavenly hopes. They are to his obscured vision like objects seen in a dusky horizon. Heaven, in this state of the affections, draws upward the soul with fuller force. The earth presents its treasures with a nearness and attractiveness which fixes the eyes of the soul to earth, like

Bunyan's "man with the muck-rake." But, let the eyes of the heart be enlightened by grace, and vanity is stamped on every earthly interest, and heaven is alone worthy of aspiration. His treasure is there, and his heart is there.

*Of His calling.*—To which God invites, and *effectually* calls. God calls all by His invitations. He effectually calls only those whom He has chosen to be holy, etc.<sup>1</sup> The calling of God cannot be said to be without repentance; that is, without change of purpose, if mere invitation is meant; for if one refuse when called in that sense, he is rejected, and often ceases to be called even before death.<sup>2</sup> It cannot be said, not many noble, etc., are called, if it mean mere invitation, for great and small are called; but the mighty frequently scorn the invitation, and are thus not *effectually called*; that is, God does not give them repentance nor faith. This is a calling which is without repentance on the part of God. Though not many, yet *some* mighty, and some noble, are so called as to obey; they are made willing in the day of God's power.

*And what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.*—To whom does this inheritance belong? Are heaven and God the saints' inheritance, or the saints God's inheritance? Both doctrines are true, and abundantly taught in the Scripture. But which is the idea here? 1. The saints have such an inheritance. The land of Canaan, which is a type of heaven, was an inheritance of Israel. This is too familiar to need references as proof. The New Testament is replete with the idea of a future; heavenly inheritance. It is the great inspiring theme of the gospel. The saints are the adopted children of God, and if children, then heirs. According to His abundant mercy, hath He begotten us again unto a lively hope by the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 29; 1 Cor. i. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxiii. 37—39.

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven.<sup>1</sup> The other view, however, is equally analogous to the teachings of Scripture, and we think is easily shown to be its meaning in this place. It is analogous to other Scripture. Moses prayed that God would take the Israelites as His inheritance. If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray Thee, go among us and pardon our iniquity and our sin, *and take us for Thine inheritance.*<sup>2</sup> Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the *mountain of Thine inheritance*, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in.<sup>3</sup> The Lord hath taken you and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, *to be unto Him a people of inheritance.*<sup>4</sup> The *people* are here *God's* inheritance. In the next verse, the *land* is said to be given to this people for an inheritance. Both are a type of heaven. Heaven shall be given to the saints as an inheritance, and the *saints* are God's inheritance. Compare Deut. 9:26; 32:9, where it is said: The Lord's portion is *his people*; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. Also 1 Sam. 10:1; 1 Kings 8:51; Psalm 28:9; 33:12; 79:1; 94:14. These are but a few of the instances which show that to interpret the inheritance here spoken of, as God's, is analogous to large portions of the Bible. To the Son was promised the heathen, when converted, as an inheritance.<sup>5</sup> The saints are God's treasure. They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up *my jewels.*<sup>6</sup> In the eighteenth verse, God is said to have an inheritance in the saints. Some have their treasure in perishable riches, in land and gold; God has

1 1 Peter i. 3, 4.

3 Exodus xv. 17.

5 Psalm ii. 8.

2 Exodus xxxiv. 9.

4 Deut. iv. 20.

6 Malachi iii. 17.

His *in saints*. They are also *His* inheritance, which makes it explicit. Sinners—ore, and dross, and miry clay—converted into jewels! which God condescends not only to regard as a possession, an inheritance, but a *rich* inheritance—a *gloriously rich* inheritance. No wonder that, to inspire their hopes, Paul should beseech God to quicken their spiritual perceptions, and give intensity to their appreciation of what they are to become in the estimation of God. “This glory is incomprehensible to the natural man; the enlightened eyes of the heart alone can conceive it.” It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him,<sup>1</sup> and therefore God will love us.

It might be added, in proof, that this inheritance is God’s, and not ours; that if it be the saints’ inheritance, it adds no new idea to the preceding part of the passage—the *hope* of the saints. It would only give a new phase to the same object of the apostle’s prayer. Our interpretation makes it a distinct object.

III. Verse 19. The third specific object of the apostle’s prayer is, that they may be able to appreciate the exceeding power exerted in their renovation and exaltation. *And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe.*—Faith is here an effect of divine power; great, *exceeding* great. Here is again brought to view the mysterious doctrine of divine agency, in connection with derived human agency. To believe’ is an act of the creature, and yet it is the result of God’s power. “I live,” says the apostle; “yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”<sup>2</sup> In conversion, and in all subsequent holy exercises, the divine agency underlies ours—a cause of a cause, a fountain of a fountain. Though our exercises, as in faith

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

and love, etc., are effects from the causative energy of our minds, both these exercises and our causative energy are the effects of the divine causative energy, which “worketh all things.” Our piety is not composed of two streams, one human and the other divine, but all holy desires and acts are to be traced up to God, *through our own free agency*. The nature of these effects of divine power is unlike that exerted on brute matter. Our rational, moral agency, makes us accountable—the subjects of praise or blame. The saints are to receive rewards of grace, but it is to be a crown of *righteousness*.

No one, except his eyes have been enlightened, can appreciate the power which purifies his affections and energizes his will. He must understand the power of the depravity, to be overcome by grace; the nature and peculiar spiritual character of those affections which flow from the heart whose susceptibility has been quickened by the Holy Spirit. This is experimental knowledge. In it the illiterate believer may surpass the most sagacious unbeliever.

The measure of the power exerted in renewing the sinner, is that exerted in raising to life the dead body of Christ, and in His subsequent exaltation.

Verses 19, 20. *According to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.*—*According to*, that is, equal in degree, though not like it in character. One was exclusively a physical effort, the other purely moral; but alike requiring divine energy. *Working*, or, as it might have been translated, the *energy*, which is to be distinguished from *power*, which is here the mere idea of potentiality—which, developed and in exercise, becomes energy, or is working. It is power put forth, as in the act of raising Him from the

dead. *Mighty power*, is emphatic. The accumulation of terms in this paragraph is to give intensity to the idea. The thought is incomprehensible — infinite power and infinite exaltation! Nothing short of that energy which raised Christ from the dead, and exalted Him, can make a sinner holy. They who think it the result of the mere agency of truth, *according* to the agency of the human will, not only overlook the teachings of the gospel generally,<sup>1</sup> but take a very partial view of the explicit teachings of this remarkable passage. The enlightened heart sees and feels a deeper and more experimental sense. Not a hidden sense, except to those who believe not.<sup>2</sup>

Verse 20. *And set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.* — To be seated *at the right hand*, teaches that God has exalted His Son, in His human as well as His divine nature, to share with Him in the administration of the government of the universe; specially of the Church, *the kingdom* of Christ. *In the heavenly places*, may mean not only in heaven, to which Christ has ascended, where He is honored as a king jointly with the Father, who delights to honor His beloved Son, but in heavenly things, in things pertaining to God, to religion, to salvation. Both are true, and both may be intended here.

Verse 21. *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.* — In this verse, Christ's superiority over all creatures, good or evil, of time or eternity, is declared. They are servants, he is a Son. This regards chiefly the dignity of His person. In the next verse is declared the dignity of His authority.

Verse 22. *And hath put all things under His feet, and*

<sup>1</sup> John i. 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4; John x. 26.



*gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church.*—All things are subject to Him. In His original and higher nature, as the eternal Word, He has universal dominion as one with the Father. This He laid aside, at least veiled the glory of it, while on earth. To this He has returned, and with His assumed nature, to Him has been given all power in heaven and on earth.<sup>1</sup> *Head over all to the Church.* Not only its ruler, but its Saviour and *protector*. To make perfect His care and His promotion of the Church, *all things* must be subject to Him. As mediatorial king, He not only reigns over His saints, but has all things and all events at His disposal. The doctrine is not here that of universal dominion as God, but rather of universal control, so far as the interests and glory of the Church are concerned. What is true of the Church collectively, is, of course, true of every individual in it. That this glorious doctrine might be appreciated, is the prayer of the apostle.

Verse 23. *Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.* This passage may be interpreted in two ways, which, though essentially alike, seen from different points, give different conceptions. 1. The first is an image, as a picture on the canvas. It is the figure of a human body, of which Christ is the head, the Church the body, together making a complete human frame. The head, to be completed, must have a body. But the head is peculiar in this relation. While Christ is the head, and so is distinct from the body, He holds a higher relation to it. *He pervades the body.* He animates it. In Christ, the head of the Church, is divinity whose spiritual presence and influence interpenetrates every member. Christ as a *person* is not dependent on the Church as His body ;

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 18.

He is complete without it. But not so as a *sovereign*. In this conception of Him He would not be complete without the Church as the complement, as the *fulness* or filling out of the organization. Christ and His people are one. One body and one spirit constituting one mystical person. The head pervading the body is its life.

2. The other idea is that Christ is head over all to the Church, which, as His body, is filled with Him who fills the universe. *All in all* is intensive, giving force to the idea that Christ, being divine, spiritually pervades or fills the Church; and, being the only efficient cause in the universe, He, of course, has power to quicken and exalt sinners, dead in sins, to a holy life and to heavenly enjoyments. The Church is the *fulness*, that is, is made full of Him who is an omnipresent cause. What ground of praise! No wonder Paul ceased not to give thanks, in view of such an exercise of the divine goodness and power. The two views of this passage are essentially alike. Both teach the quickening energy of Christ in all believers — that the body is *animated* by the head. Which conception was that of the apostle — the former, which exhibits the spiritual presence of Christ in the Church through an image, a picture, or the latter, without one — it is difficult to determine.

## CHAPTER II.

The Apostle having presented a general view of the scheme of mercy, and besought God to give his readers an appreciating knowledge of these spiritual blessings, proceeds to revolve the main subject in a new light, and under different relations. The quickening power of God in the gospel is made more obvious, and its grace more glorious, by a consideration of the moral condition of all men; specially of the Gentiles, prior to their conversion.

Verses 1—3. And you hath he quickened, who were  
2 dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past  
ye walked according to the course of this world,  
according to the prince of the power of the air, the  
spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedi-  
3 ence: among whom also we all had our conversa-  
tion in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling  
the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were  
by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

### A N A L Y S I S.

*Their moral condition is described in general as one of death; seen in the fact that their moral habits were vicious.— That they were subject to the evil influences of Satan; to vile affections; and even by nature, depraved and under condemnation.*

Verse 1. All that is found in the original text is,  
*And you, who were dead in trespasses and sins;—the*

words "hath he quickened," which are in italics in our version, being added by the translators, and taken from the fifth verse. Having spoken of their condition before conversion, and from which the gospel had delivered them, as being a *state of death*, he is detained by the deplorableness of this condition, and, as his manner frequently is, expresses the idea more fully. It is, in fact, an analysis of moral death. To be *dead in trespasses and sins*, shows both the nature of this death, and the cause of it. To be a sinner, is to be dead; that is, it is a state of depravity and condemnation and misery, which is moral death; and he who is depraved, is, as a consequent, condemned and wretched. It is the opposite of spiritual life, which is holiness, reconciliation with God, and spiritual joy. Such are without spiritual knowledge, or desires, or affections, or powers; active in the practice of sin, but dead to holiness.

#### SPECIFIC VIEWS OF THIS SPIRITUAL DEATH.

I. Verse 2. *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world.* — *Wherein*, in which sins, etc.; *in time past*, before their conversion; *ye walked*, had your manner of life. They lived in the practice of sin. It implies *habit*; constancy and activity, *according to the course of this world*. This implies not only after the manner of this world, but under and through its influence. The world lives in wickedness; it walks in wickedness. This is the *course of this world*. "As it is wont to go in this world." But the term *according to*, both in the Greek and English, means something more than in conformity to. There underlies it a *causative* idea. It is by the universal practice of sin in the world that each is influenced, borne

along as if by a current. This is the latent idea, because of, on account of. In a thousand ways one sinner influences another, and the combined influences of the multitude are as the cords of death. The course of this world is that of vicious habits, and all feel its corrupting influence.

II. Verse 2. *According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*—The fact of an evil spiritual agent, who influences men to the commission of sin, is clearly taught in the Scriptures, and, more or less extensively, has always been believed. Christians receive the doctrine from the Bible. So did the Jews from the Old Testament. With them, it was a national belief, amounting frequently to a superstition. Some of the heathen believe it, as the Karens, among whom also it is a gross superstition. They have a knowledge, by tradition, of this agency in the temptation of our first parents, almost as distinct as we have from revelation. In this, as from the nature of the subject is inevitable, there is much which we cannot understand; but which is not, on this account, to be rejected as a fact. *How* this evil spirit *works* in the human heart we do not know. We know he does so work, and that our own sins and the sins of the race are largely to be attributed to his corrupting agency. The Scriptures are explicit on this subject, and the principles of interpretation which will allow us to set aside or explain away this fact would render all the inspired teachings nugatory. And although we cannot be *conscious* of his presence, being a spirit, invisible and *impalpable*, yet we are conscious of effects, such as his agency fully accounts for. He *works*—tempts and allures to sin. The Scriptures say that he *entered into* Judas, who immediately departed and held intercourse

with the chief priests and rulers, Christ's enemies, with the intent of betraying him. Here the connection between this wicked agency and the subsequent conduct of Judas—Satan some way filling the heart of this already unprincipled man with thoughts and purposes of treachery—is close and obvious.<sup>1</sup> When Ananias and Sapphira endeavored to deceive the apostles as to their charities, Satan is said to have caused the purpose by an action upon their hearts. "Ananias," inquires Peter, "why hath Satan *filled thy heart to lie* unto the Holy Ghost, to keep back part of the price of the land?" How he did it is unintelligible. The *fact* Peter believed and declares. He is called a *prince*—sometimes prince of devils, or demons, who are his correlatives,<sup>2</sup> of whom he is the chief or leader. He is also called the "*prince of this world*,"<sup>3</sup> whom Christ came to cast out, and to "destroy his work;"<sup>4</sup> that is, to put an end to his corrupting and ruinous influence over the souls of men. In this passage he is called *the prince of the power of the air*; that is, the ruler of those myriads of fallen, malignant spirits, who *invisibly* hover around our tempted race, *as if floating in the air*:—though always at hand, ever ready to do their malicious work, are never seen. As was natural, both Jews and Pagans have so located these evil agents. This prince, with his myriads, works in the *children of disobedience*. There can be no doubt that this enemy of God, and of righteousness, and of human happiness—for with all is he malignantly at war—often worries and makes his assaults on the children of God; but his chief efforts are with the wicked. *He now worketh in the children of disobedience*—meaning in disobedient and ungodly men. Judas was a fit subject to be tempted by him.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. ix. 34; xii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> John xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John iii. 8.

Ananias and Sapphira were already covetous, ambitious, and hypocritical. Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.<sup>1</sup> Satan came to Christ, but found nothing in him;<sup>2</sup> but he never fails to furnish a depraved heart with enough to do. In the hearts of the disobedient, Satan works, and not in vain.

III. Verse 3. *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.* — But our wickedness has not its ground exclusively in the evil workings of Satan. Depravity is seated in the heart. Wicked purposes and actions are alike the offspring of the *lusts of the flesh, the desires of the flesh, and of the mind.* As we have before intimated, temptation has no power when the heart is right. Christ was in all points tempted as we are, *yet without sin.*<sup>3</sup> Every man is tempted (successfully) when he is drawn away of his own lust.<sup>4</sup> Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; that is, actual transgression. The wicked only follow the impulses of their corrupt appetites and propensities. These are called the *lusts of the flesh*; but, lest the expression should seem to countenance the idea, always somewhat prevalent, that all sinful actions have their seat in the *body* exclusively, and so at death will terminate, the body being destroyed, he adds, *fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind.* A sinful life flows not only from the appetites of the body, but from the passions and affections of our spiritual nature. Whoever will examine Gal. 5 : 19—21, will readily perceive that the “works of the flesh,” equivalent to *lusts of the flesh* in this passage, extend beyond the body, and belong to the higher and more spiritual powers of the soul. They are not only “unclean-

1 Matt. xxiv. 28.

2 John xiv. 30.

3 Heb. iv. 15.

4 James i. 14, 15.

ness and drunkenness," but "hatred," "variance," "emulations," "envyings," "wrath," "strife," etc. — each and all of which are exclusive exercises of the soul, and as much belong to the disembodied spirit as to one clothed in a human body. These depraved, active propensities, the passions of ambition and hatred, may not only continue to actuate the soul in the spiritual world, but may wax stronger, feeding on their own depraved productions. The death of the body may put an end to gluttony, intemperance, and lasciviousness, but not to pride or envy, or any of the other malevolent affections. While the Christian exults in the hope that, as his body lies mouldering in the grave, or when it shall no longer be a "natural body," the soul shall have its full bliss in the fruits of the Spirit — "love," "joy," "peace," "gentleness," "meekness," "goodness" and "faith,"<sup>1</sup> — the wicked ought to tremble at the thought that his spiritual nature, unsatisfied, will be a fountain of endless bitterness and death. He may leave behind him this body, which so often wars against the dictates both of conscience and of the word of God, but he cannot leave behind the deepest and most malignant source of depravity and guilt.

IV. Verse 3. *And are by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* — We have considered a *sinful life*, as instigated by Satan, also as proceeding from lust. Out of the heart are the issues of life. Corrupt affections and desires give rise to outward violations of the laws of God. But, is this all? or does the apostle design to sink the shaft deeper? He says not only *doing the will of the flesh and the mind*, but *by nature the children of wrath*. Our vicious "walk" and "conversation" flow, as we have seen, from depraved, impure affections; but both the conduct and these impure

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 22, 23, 24.



affections are the result of a deeper cause — of a depraved tendency of the soul. To be “dead in sins,” means, then, not only wrong acts and affections, condemnation and misery, but an absence of religious *susceptibility*. More, a *tendency* to unholy affections, actions, etc. Out of this depraved susceptibility, when the occasion comes, are developed both an evil walk and those evil desires which prompt it.

The question arises, *when* and *whence* comes this depraved tendency? Is it as early as our moral constitution? or is it *induced* and entirely caused by the habit of yielding to evil desires? If it were the effect of mere habit, some one might be expected to escape it, and men forming the habit, or producing the tendency, *might* form virtuous habits, and so not be of the number “dead in sins.” We say, though such a case might not occur, it probably would. But we are assured that *all* are under the displeasure of God. *We all* have these vile appetites, and, *even as others, are children of wrath*. This plainly means the race.

Verse 3. *And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*—The latter part of this third verse settles the question *when* it commences. We are so by nature.

We say of a tree, that it bears sweet or pleasant fruit because it has been grafted; but that, naturally, or *by nature*, it bore bitter fruit. When it is said of the tree, it bears a peculiar fruit *by nature*, no reference is had to the latent principle of fructification, *why* the fruit was originally bitter; but to the fact that it was so, before the interference of any other agent than its own nature. It only expresses what the tree bore when in its original state, and what it would have continued to bear, had it not been grafted. Man has a *nature* from which spring evil thoughts and desires and actions, till this nature is somehow changed

by grace. The soul, united to Christ by faith, brings forth fruit unto God.<sup>1</sup> Our race are as much born into the world with a bias to sin, both in heart and life, as the tree germinates with the tendency to the peculiar kind of fruit which it afterwards bears, if left to itself. We distinguish soils, saying some are *by nature*, or naturally, — that is, before fertilized by man, — sterile or fertile; meaning as found at first by the husbandman, before culture. No reason is intended to be assigned, by such language, *why* it is barren or fertile, but the fact that it is so in its natural state. So far, the tree and the soil are analogous to the human heart. If it be asked, therefore, when this moral state of depravity and divine wrath begins, we say, at the time we begin to be moral agents — not merely to have moral actions and desires, but susceptibilities and tendencies. If it be asked *whence* this tendency comes — what causes it? we will answer the question when the inquirer will explain *why* one tree bears bitter fruit, and another sweet, by nature.

But although, in this respect, no answer can be given, or should be asked, — whether by the direct agency of God, or by some mediate agency, — there is a *moral* reason given in Scripture why we, as a race, have forfeited the favor of God, and are born into the world depraved and condemned. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.<sup>2</sup> Through the offence of one many be dead.<sup>3</sup> The judgment was by one to *condemnation*.<sup>4</sup> By one man's offence death reigned by one.<sup>5</sup> By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to *condemnation*.<sup>6</sup> By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.<sup>7</sup> Whatever difficulties may be suggested as to the interpretation of particular passages quoted, or of individual words, nothing can be

1 Rom. vii. 4.

3 Rom. v. 15.

5 Rom. v. 17.

7 Rom. v. 19

2 Rom. v. 12.

4 Rom. v. 16.

6 Rom. v. 18.

plainer than that all that is meant by *death*, as the result of sin or the condition of sinners; by *being made sinners*, by judgment and *condemnation*, is ascribed here, without qualification, to the *single offence of one man*. The object of the apostle, in this epistle to the Romans, is not, we admit, to show that we are dead, sinners, condemned, *exclusively* on account of Adam's offence; but that this is *a reason*. Our depravity and guilt are never, we believe, separated from the "condemnation." But we are children of wrath, because the children of him who committed the first and fearful offence; and also because we are the children of disobedience — all of which is implied in *death*.

Perhaps there is in the human mind a moral instinct — the action of our moral constitution, not as depraved, but as endowed, and therefore the "voice of God" in us — which decides that no man can be *blameworthy* for the wrongdoing of another; that there is no organism in the human race, or between Adam and his posterity, by which his fault can become *our blame*. But the Scriptures do teach, that, in consequence of Adam's offence, or blame, we are *treated* as if blameworthy. Against this fact there can be no moral instinct. A decision upon it is an act of judgment, which is not infallible, like an intuition or a constitutional decision. This judgment needs the light of divine revelation to be infallible. The principle of this act of the divine government is unfathomable. But if a doctrine of revelation, however mysterious, it is to be received in silence, and with profound adoration. God is in it, somehow, *just*. *This* is a dictate of our moral nature. It is the voice of God, not only in His Word, but in ourselves. There is something analogous to it, also, in the providences of God. The good and the evil effects of one man's conduct often reach others; that of parents, their children, and the

contrary; that of magistrates, their subjects. These effects, visited on men, not on account of their *own* ill desert, but that of others, are sometimes long and fearful. They are well known, and are often treated of under what is called the law of *general liabilities*. They are not accidents, or mere natural effects of general laws. They are the effects of a *moral cause* — sin, demerit, desert of punishment, somewhere. In this case the punishment is not confined to the personally blameworthy, but reaches others. It is for sin, let the effect fall where it may. It is the wages of sin which is death. The ruin which sin brings is widespread. The principle of the justification of the guilty, or the treating of the blameworthy as if innocent, on account of the merits of Christ, though opposite in its moral character, is virtually analogous. The treatment is not in consequence of the merit of the individual, but of another — Christ. Still, in no way can we solve all the difficulties of this doctrine. It is a trial and a test of our faith in God, as absolutely good.

*Even as others*, as we have hinted, is a proof of universal depravity and condemnation. Christians are *by nature* as depraved as those yet unconverted. They are not converted because of any peculiar religious susceptibility *foreseen*, as if more inclined by nature to faith in Christ, or to a godly conversation. Our race “need redemption from the moment of their birth,” and are entitled to baptism, its symbol, so soon as redemption is actually experienced.

Verse 4. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us.

Mercy is a species under the genus benevolence. Benevolence is the general idea; it is the desire of the happiness of any sentient being, without regard to its condition or

character. The love of *complacency* implies an approbation of the character of another, and an affection for him, which is always attended with a desire to see the individual blessed; it may be to bless him ourselves. Pity or compassion is exercised toward a sufferer, and is attended with a desire to *relieve*. Mercy is this benevolence, or pity, to the *ill deserving*. Though sensible that the suffering endured is deserved, still the heart yearns to relieve it. This is the idea in this passage: *rich in mercy for (on account of) the great love wherewith He loved us*. It is love in the form of mercy, or compassion, for the guilty sufferer.

Desert of suffering was an obstacle to the exercise of this mercy, however strong its promptings. This obstacle Christ removed by His death on the cross. He became the sufferer in the sinner's stead. By His stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. For the transgression of my people was He stricken.<sup>1</sup> The gift of Christ is both the manifestation and the *measure* of God's love; His "unspeakable gift." The mercy was rich and the gift was equally so.<sup>2</sup>

Verses 5, 6. Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye 6 are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

The death spoken of in this verse — *dead in sins* — was introduced in the first verse — *dead in trespasses and sins*. If any distinction is to be made between these two terms, *trespasses* refers to wrong *acts*, and *sins* comprehends all moral wrong, of heart as well as of life.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah liii. 5, 6, 8.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. ix. 15; 1 Peter i. 19.

The change which both Jewish and Gentile believers had experienced through the gospel, is next stated. It is, in substance, what had been said in chapter 1:19, etc., exhibited in new relations and under additional circumstances: quickened, raised up, made blissful, — which is an act of grace, — not arbitrary, but through Christ.

In chapter 1:19, 20, the apostle speaks of the exceeding greatness of God's power in our renovation — *to usward who believe*. Here the same act is expressed by, *quickened* — *hath quickened us* — made us alive. To give life to a dead human body requires as much divine power as to animate a stone. So to change, that is, to give spiritual life to the soul dead in sins, requires the same divine energy. The renewed soul, by this act, is said to be *raised up*. The soul is not only reanimated, but made active, and restored to all the relations and duties of life. The sinner is no sooner converted than he walks forth redeemed, and active for God. He takes his place among the active servants of Christ, and performs the part of a living man. There is a sense, high and serious, in which the unconverted does not discharge the functions of a living man. *And made us sit together in heavenly places*. — Christ is exalted to glory and blessedness. His followers are to be exalted to a glory and bliss kindred in character, though not equal in degree. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.<sup>1</sup> Of this future and perfected blessedness, we have the *beginnings* in this life. Spiritual life begun in the soul, is called *everlasting life*.<sup>2</sup> The future tree is virtually in the germ. "Might not the man," says Vinet, "who holds in his hand an acorn, say, I hold in my hand an oak. Is not the whole of a river in its source?" *In heavenly places, in*

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 36.

*Christ Jesus*, means any place where God in Christ is present to the believing soul. Communion with our heavenly Father, through Christ, is not only a heavenly exercise in which eternity will be spent by the Christian, but may well be designated a *heavenly place* here on earth.<sup>1</sup>

Souls once dead in sins—those by nature children of wrath—when renovated by the spirit of God and constrained by the love of Christ to a life of active piety, and exalted to heavenly enjoyments, do, indeed, prove God to be “rich in mercy.” These are graphic exhibitions of the work of grace in the soul. Nor must it be overlooked, that Paul never speaks on this subject of grace in which he does not baptize the whole idea of salvation into Christ. He is not only the ground of this *great love wherewith God has loved us*,—the *meritorious* mediator,—but His resurrection and glorious exaltation are a glowing type of that spiritual change which He works in the elect.

To all this is to be added the delightful fact, also, that Christ’s resurrection is the “first fruits” of the resurrection of our dead *bodies*. This corruption shall put on incorruption. Glorious are the prospects of those by nature children of wrath. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?<sup>2</sup>

Verse 7. That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

In the notes on chapter 1: 4—14, it was said that God was moved to ordain and execute this scheme of mercy by three distinct, but coöperating motives: the promotion

<sup>1</sup> See note on chapter i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 55.

of His own glory, specially as a God of grace; pity to wretched and sinful men; and a love of holiness, and a desire to promote it through His moral dominions. The first and second are distinctly stated in the paragraph alluded to; and the third, the love of holiness, is implied in the object of our election,—He chose us to be *holy*. The reasons of God's kindness to us are again brought forward in this chapter. In the fourth verse, His compassion or mercy is set forth. In this verse is added His own glory,—that He might show in all future time the exceeding *riches of His grace*. The strength of God's love, in sending His Son to ransom the guilty, is a subject which the Apostle *labors* to unfold. It deserves the glory he claims for it. Angels shall see it and eternally admire: the redeemed shall forever experience its riches, ever unfolding into new themes of praise. They shall also behold its glory with grateful adoration, in the bliss and exaltation of their brethren: the condemned shall eternally see it from afar, and wail at the loss of it. The distant vision of the glory of God's grace in the redeemed must aggravate the bitterness of their sorrow who, in this world, as despisers, beheld, and wondered, and perished.<sup>1</sup>

Verses 8—10. For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

In the sixth verse he had incidentally said: *for by grace are ye saved*—to which he here adds, *through faith*, as

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 41.



the condition. But the Apostle is particular to show them that, though faith is the condition of salvation, there is in it no merit, as in "works." *All* is of grace; even our faith. This, as well as every other part of our salvation, is *not of ourselves*. We do not naturally possess the disposition to believe, any more than to obey, the moral law; nor have we the power to excite in ourselves this disposition to believe, any more than a spirit of obedience: *it is the gift of God*.

*Not of works.*—That is, faith, though exercised by us, does not take from salvation, in the least degree, its gratuitous character, as "works" would do, there being always in Scripture attached to this word "works," the idea of merit, or desert of reward. Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are *forgiven*, and whose sins are *covered*. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will *not impute sin*.<sup>1</sup> Lest it should be supposed that faith is meritorious, though works are not, the apostle guards his brethren from this error by two reasons. It would be a ground, in some degree at least, of claiming salvation: *lest any man should boast*; which in one of our sinful race would be absurd. The other reason is, *we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works*. For these "good works," which every believer does actually perform, we are dependent on the peculiar causative, creative energy of God. The soul in its believing, obeying state, zealous of good works, is God's work-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 4:4—8.

manship.<sup>1</sup> He has given it this disposition to believe, love and obey. Nor is this new creation an arbitrary act, like the creation of the soul with its powers. It is *created in Christ Jesus*. On Christ's account, as a meritorious mediator, and *in Christ*, as a gracious cause of all that is good in us. The soul, through faith, having a vital union with Christ as a quickening spirit, draws out its spiritual life as the branch draws its vegetable life from the vine. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.<sup>2</sup>

*Which* (good works) *God hath foreordained that we should walk in them.*—The word translated “foreordained,” literally means, in the Greek, foreprepared, or prepared beforehand. The same Greek word in Rom. 9 : 23 is translated “afore prepared,” speaking of the “vessels of mercy,” that is, the *subjects* of grace, “which He had afore prepared unto glory.” The *actions* of these subjects of grace being now regarded, they are said to be “foreordained.” The whole idea is expressed by neither word alone. Ordination and preparation are both included. He chose us (ch. 1 : 4) to be holy and without blame before him in love ; that is, He predestinated the *good works* that believers ought, and actually would, perform ; and also that spiritual change and preparation of heart which would secure their performance, together with those moral influences which would effect this change. He thus both foreordained and foreprepared the *good works*. It is obvious that both in this passage, and in that in Rom. 9 : 23, these two ideas are involved. But as in English we have no single term which will fully express this complex idea, the translators chose to vary them. God gives us the dis-

1 See notes on ch. i. 11. Execution of the Scheme of Mercy, III.

2 John 15 : 5.

position to do good works, in which sense He *afore prepares* them, and thus we are His *workmanship*. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake.<sup>1</sup>

CHANGE IN THE RELATION OF THE GENTILES TO THE JEWS,  
AND OF BOTH TO GOD.

Verses 11—13. Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circum-  
12 cision in the flesh made by hands ; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without  
13 God in the world : but now, in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

The apostle, having given a vivid description of the blessings of the gospel, is about to show its adaptedness and design to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews.<sup>2</sup> This principle had once and again been intimated ; but it is now distinctly stated, and magnified. But before doing so he calls their attention to their former religious condition. He had spoken of them as “ dead in sins.” Now he speaks of them as destitute of all religious privileges. *Remember*, that before visited by the gospel, ye were Gentiles. In the very name is a degrading moral element. The Jews called every nation except their own, *uncircumcision*, or the uncircumcised. Though this was

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. x. 11—15.

often prompted by an arrogant, self-righteous spirit, displeasing to God, as well as odious to the heathen, yet the fact of their degradation and religious destitution was true. They were destitute of all which this rite involved. The designation intended something more, even when kindly used, than the mere absence of the physical rite *in the flesh*, though frequently there was mingled wicked contempt. In their character and condition there was a merited reproach; as when we call an individual a heathen, we mean something more than that he is destitute of the means of salvation. There is combined in it the idea of vileness, and so worthy of being considered *aliens*.

In the next verse the apostle expands this idea of the "uncircumcision," from which we learn what were the peculiar religious privileges which distinguished the Jews from the Gentiles. (Remember) *that at that time ye were without Christ*. — Without a knowledge of Him as the promised Saviour of the world—the anointed of God;<sup>1</sup> and thus without the hopes and consolations which faith in a coming Messiah gave to the pious Jews, offered to the entire nation, and enjoyed by those who believed. *Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel*. — The literal idea is, that to the Jewish nation the Gentile portion of the church at Ephesus had been foreigners. But as the Jewish polity involved special religious privileges, being not only a Theocracy, but including an outline of the gospel, teaching by its rites and shadows, and specially by its prophetic revelations, *justification by faith*, the Gentiles, as foreigners, had no share in these blessings. *Strangers from the covenants of promise*. — "Covenants," in the plural, because though essentially one in spirit, and having one great central point, Christ, who was to redeem Israel, yet

<sup>1</sup> Psalm ii. 2—6; Isaiah lxi. 1; Luke iv. 18; John i. 41; Acts iv. 27; x. 38.

they were often repeated, in different ages, to different persons, and to the same individual on various occasions.<sup>1</sup> “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” That Christ is the essential object of this covenant, is plain. Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek (that is, the Messiah) shall suddenly come to His temple, *even the messenger of the covenant*, whom ye delight in.<sup>2</sup> This is more fully developed in the New Testament. Ye are the children of the prophets, and *of the covenant* which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.<sup>3</sup> — The sending of Christ is said to be in remembrance of *His holy covenant*.<sup>4</sup> This covenant was finally sealed by the blood of Christ. Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*, make you perfect, etc.<sup>5</sup>

The original word as used in the Scriptures, includes, in different degrees, the two ideas of a covenant and testament. The idea of a covenant predominates when used with reference to promises on the part of God, and conditions on the part of men; implying obligations to fulfil these conditions, if not an express promise to do so. The idea of a testament is chief when it is a declaration of the divine will promising, on the part of God, future blessings, — specially the “unspeakable gift,” — and giving assurances that the benefits of this gift shall be realized. “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the *sure*

1 Gen. xii. 1—3.

3 Acts iii. 25, 26.

5 Heb. xiii. 20.

2 Malachi iii 1.

4 Luke i. 72.

*mercies* of David ;”<sup>1</sup> meaning of Christ the son of David.<sup>2</sup> Christ is, in the temple of mercy, a *sure foundation* ; in Him the believer may confidently trust. More than this, these benefits shall be realized in the elect. For all the promises of God in Him (in Christ) are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God.<sup>3</sup> There are testaments or *covenants of promise*, in which the great idea is the promise of a Saviour and of “good things to come.” Compare Heb. 9 : 15—20, where the word is translated “testament,” and the promise is “eternal inheritance,” which is made sure by the blood of the testator.

A covenant between God and his creatures is in several respects unlike that made between men who are equals. The obligations of men to God, arising from their relations to Him, are the ground of a tacit *promise*, and are so treated. Between men either party can and may violate the condition. In the “covenants of promise,” which, we have said, are of the nature of a “testament,” the fulfillment of the conditions in both parties are *sure*. God is faithful; and He who “works all things after the counsel of His own will,” makes by His grace the fulfillment of the conditions on the part of his *chosen* certain. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.<sup>4</sup>

The desolation of such a state is next described : *Having no hope*. — The object of the apostle is to lead his readers, especially those converted from heathenism, to properly appreciate the mercy of God in giving them the gospel, by reminding them of their former state.<sup>5</sup> “The covenants of promise,” like the star in the East, ever guided and inspired the believing Jews. The hearts of the heathen

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lv. 3.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor i 20.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah lxxv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xxviii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> John vi. 37.

were “like parched places in the wilderness,” wearied and heavy laden with the toils and sorrows of this life — hopeless and cheerless in view of the life that is to come; not only without hope, but *without God*; worshippers of many gods, but truly atheists; without any just notions of the spiritual nature of the true God, of His moral perfections, especially of His holiness and love; with no Heavenly Father in whom to trust. The expression *in the world* is intended to give emphasis to the preceding description. Men *without God* wander and grope as in a wide waste of darkness and peril. This is the sad condition of men without a divine revelation.

Verse 13. *But now, in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. But now.* — Since your reception of the gospel. *In Christ Jesus, ye.* — Those of the Ephesian Church who had been converted from heathenism are described as *in Christ Jesus*; — that is, ye Gentile Christians are, etc. The Christian is always recognized as *in Christ*, or *in the Lord* — implying an intimate union. He who believes in Christ is united to Him, is in Him.<sup>1</sup> See also numerous other passages. The connection is not only one of intimacy, but *causative* in its character. The union is the ground of the believer’s spiritual life, and of his being brought near to God. *Who sometimes were far off.* — Those now in Christ Jesus were formerly far from God. *Are made nigh*, are brought into His presence and favor. Whether the apostle had in his mind the presence and manifestations of God in the Tabernacle and Temple, the Shechinah, is not certain. The Jews, as a people, did draw near to God, or God drew near to them, as He did not to the Gentiles. God not only went before

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 28, v. 6; Rom. xii. 5; Phil. iv. 1; 1 Thess. iii. 8.

His people in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night; He not only was seen in the Tabernacle, but His "presence" went with them.<sup>1</sup> He held constant intercourse with them. He was their God. The believing part "walked with God." To all this those Gentiles *in Christ* were admitted, and so were *brought nigh* into His conscious and gracious presence; to a more intimate knowledge and fellowship than ever the ancient Jews had enjoyed. He that is in Christ, is in God manifest in the flesh.<sup>2</sup> The ground of this nearness is *the blood of Christ*, the merits of His death. Had he not shed His blood, we could never be *in Him*, and, of course, could not thus be brought near to God. The distinction in the use of these two expressions is, that by the blood of Christ we are redeemed, or the door of mercy is *opened*; by being *in Christ* this gracious relation and the believer's spiritual life are *sustained*. Because I live, ye shall live also.<sup>3</sup>

JEWS AND GENTILES MADE ONE, AND BOTH RECONCILED  
UNTO GOD THROUGH CHRIST.

Verses 14—18. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh  
15 the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances: for to make in Himself of  
16 twain one new man, so making peace: and that He  
might reconcile both unto God in one body by the  
17 cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xxxiii. 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> John xiv. 19; xvi. 15—19.



18 to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

In bringing the Gentiles and the Jews alike under the power of the gospel, two effects are produced: they are reconciled to each other, and both to God. The first is the consequence of the second, and both the fruits of Christ's death, and made actual by the Holy Spirit.

*The middle wall of partition between us* consisted in alienated feelings, having its seat in natural depravity, but aggravated by the ceremonial institutions which God had given the Jews as a nation, called *the law of commandments contained in ordinances*. These ordinances, of which God had ordained many, consisting of circumcision and their ritual worship, were designed, besides their moral and religious influence, to keep the Jews separate from other nations. A striking illustration of this is seen in the construction of the Temple. None but Jews were allowed to enter into the sanctuary. There was a special apartment called the "court of the Gentiles," farther than which no Gentile could enter. This was common to them and to animals bought and sold for sacrifices.<sup>1</sup> All nations could come thus far, for *prayer*. It was often entered for merchandise — even the *unclean* were not prohibited. Between that, however, and the altar, not to say the inner sanctuary, there was a middle wall of partition. This made the Jews, as God's *favoured* people, proud, and often contemptuous. They looked upon other nations as dogs,<sup>2</sup> to whom nothing holy must be given.<sup>3</sup> In consequence of these distinctions, often maintained in an oppressive manner, the Gentiles were rendered envious, and frequently *hated* the Jews. Add to this that all men are

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxi. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xv. 26, 27.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. vii. 6.

by nature the enemies of God.<sup>1</sup> Now, to make Jews and Gentiles one, and to restore the souls of the chosen, both Jews and Gentiles, to fellowship with the Father, was the errand of Christ to earth. His object was *to make of twain one new man*. This He did, *having abolished in His flesh the enmity* which these ordinances occasioned. All these ordinances, centering in Him, and fulfilled by Him on the cross, were displaced by the gospel. He taketh away the first that He may establish the second.<sup>2</sup> He thus abolished the *occasion* of enmity, which is its meaning in this passage.

*And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body.* The whole scope of Scripture teaching is that there is an alienation of feelings on the part of God toward the sinner, as well as on the part of the sinner toward God. God pities, but cannot approve or love. Christ, by his death, made expiation — was a sweet-smelling savor unto God. Noah, after the waters subsided, builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake.<sup>3</sup> This was a type and prophecy of Christ's sacrifice; and the *satisfaction* it gave to God must have consisted in the faith of Noah in the coming Messiah. To this Paul obviously refers in his epistle.<sup>4</sup> As Christ hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. But the force of the expression, *to reconcile both unto God*, in this passage, regards chiefly the change which the sinner experiences toward God. Being an enemy, by wicked works, he becomes the cheerful, obedient worshipper of Jehovah. This is effected by regeneration;

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. viii. 20, 21.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. v. 2.

*having slain the enmity.* To *slay*, as used in this sixteenth verse, is a much more forcible term, more specific, than *abolish*, in the fifteenth. Ordinances are abolished, when made to cease, by being abrogated; or when their object has already been accomplished, they are no longer of force. To *slay* is to kill, or to destroy by violence. Sin is condemned; that is, put to death, or executed, as a criminal,<sup>1</sup>—crucified.<sup>2</sup> This, we say, is effected in regeneration, by giving faith, which works by love; constraining by the love of Christ; imparting a spirit of reconciliation, and so making peace.

*For He is our peace.*—The effect for the cause. Christ is the author of peace. He not only awakens the disposition in the two great conflicting parties, Jews and Gentiles, but is Himself a common centre of love, a common Lord to obey, a common Saviour to trust in. This peace both between sinners and God, and among themselves, is effected *in His flesh, by the cross*. Having laid the foundation of this peace by *the cross*,—that is, having made an atonement,<sup>3</sup>—He *came and preached peace*. Christ was not only the Prince of Peace,<sup>4</sup> but the *preacher* of peace. His personal ministry before His crucifixion was one of peace,<sup>5</sup> so after His passion.<sup>6</sup> But subsequently it was chiefly through the ministry of His disciples. They went everywhere preaching the gospel of peace—to Gentiles as well as Jews. There are three views which may be taken of the peace produced by the gospel—peace with God.<sup>7</sup> The soul is at peace with itself; that is, the wrong and angry passions are subdued into a sweet submission to conscience; the sanctified affections delight in the law of God. There is a peace in the hope, in the spirit of trust, and in the

1 Rom. viii. 3.

3 Rom. v. 11.

5 John xiv. 27.

7 Rom. v. 1.

2 Rom. vi. 6.

4 Isaiah ix. 6.

6 Luke xxiv. 36.

tokens of God's favor, experienced by the believer, such as the world giveth not. This is the peace which passeth understanding.<sup>1</sup> And lastly, the soul is at peace with all men. It is peaceable, as well as peaceful — giving no offence, doing to others as we would that they should do to us, and forgiving others when they wrong us. The gospel is a message of peace on earth from God, and it makes its possessor peaceful within and peaceable towards those without. *To you which were afar off* — to the Gentiles — and *to them that were nigh* — to the Jews.<sup>2</sup>

*For through Him* (Christ).— We have again the prominent and ever-recurring doctrine, that all spiritual blessings to our sinful race are through Christ. *We both*—Jews and Gentiles — that is, the entire race, or “whosoever will.”<sup>3</sup> *Have an access*; meaning both a way of approach to God, and an actual introduction of the believer to Him. Christ says, I am the *way*.<sup>4</sup> He made the way into the holiest manifest.<sup>5</sup> He consecrated a *new and living way*.<sup>6</sup> Having made an atonement, — that is, opened the way of life by His death on the cross, — He carries on the work of mediation in heaven. “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God.”<sup>7</sup> Christ is an eternal High-priest. He hath “an unchangeable priesthood.”<sup>8</sup> “Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost (eternally) that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”<sup>9</sup> He is an intercessor, a mediator, an advocate. The peculiar efficacy of all this lies in the merits of His death. These merits are *sufficient* for the salvation of all men, but are *efficacious* only in behalf of those who were chosen in Him

1 Phil. iv. 7.

2 See notes on verse 13 of this chapter.

3 Rev. xxii. 17.

4 John xiv. 6.

5 Heb. ix. 8.

6 Heb. x. 20.

7 Heb. x. 12.

8 Heb. vii. 24.

9 Heb. vii. 25.

before the foundation of the world. *By one Spirit*; the meaning of which is, that all who approach God, or rely on Christ as a Mediator in seeking God and His favor, are influenced to do so by the Holy Spirit. It is not only true that none can have access to God except through the mediation of Christ, but none are *disposed* to do so till drawn by the Spirit. All are alike dependent on this one and the same Spirit. The Spirit secretly and sweetly *moves the heart* to approach God through Christ, and *teaches* how to address ourselves to our offended Father. "I have sinned against heaven, and am no more worthy to be called Thy Son."—"God be merciful to me, a sinner!" This temper of heart is awakened by the Spirit. The Spirit is our helper, and comforter, and intercessor. He is not our meritorious intercessor, as Christ is; but He maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.<sup>1</sup> We pray in the Spirit.<sup>2</sup> This access is *to the Father*. This must mean not only the Father, both in distinction from Christ as the Son of God, and from the Spirit, who is sent as the divine agent to draw us to God through Christ, but *our Heavenly Father*, specially the Father of all believers, of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named.<sup>3</sup> Though God is our Father, we could not have access to Him except through one more worthy and more beloved than we are. Though He is our Father, and is infinitely excellent, there is in the heart of the sinner no correlative affection, no *filial spirit*, by which it is attracted to Him. Nor are we even conscious of God's love to us as a Father, till it is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.<sup>4</sup>

Here is for the second time a recognition of the personal distinction of the Godhead. Our access is, to God the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. vi. 18; Jude 20.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iii. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. v. 5.

Father, through Christ, effected by the Spirit. Surely they who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, must be as greatly embarrassed to account for the frequent and striking appearance of the doctrine in the Scriptures, as Trinitarians are to solve satisfactorily the inexplicable mystery of their doctrine, if true. There obviously can be no wonder that so many believe the doctrine, whether true or false. The Bible *seems* to teach it.

Verse 19. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

This spiritual change of which the Gentiles had been made the subject, through the gospel, left them no longer *strangers and foreigners*, but has made them *fellow-citizens with the saints*. Not only sharers with the Jews in all the *religious* privileges which had distinguished them as a nation, the chosen and distinct people of God, but with all who belong to the kingdom of God, or of Christ. This kingdom is not of this world, and the citizenship of it is spiritual. They are not only fellow-citizens, but *of the household of God*. A household comprises the individuals who live under the same roof—children, servants, regular inmates, and dependents. The relation is more intimate and affectionate, both to one another and to the head, than that of fellow-citizens to one another and to their king. All believers are one family, called the Household of Faith.<sup>1</sup> The head of this household is *God*. Christians, Gentiles as well as Jews, enjoy the privilege and honor of being the family of God. If

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi 10.

viewed in the light of *children*, then heirs; if in the character of servants, then honored and graciously rewarded. In every respect, there is intimacy and affection among themselves, and nearness to God, the head. As every householder cares for each member of his household, so every saint is encouraged to cast his care upon the Lord, knowing that He careth for him.<sup>1</sup> Though the different members of His household are of different ranks, and render different services, all are alike the objects of His affection and protection. All are alike watched over and provided for. No earthly honor or privilege like being *of the household of God*. This is one of the spiritual blessings, through Christ, which constitutes the theme of this epistle. 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.<sup>2</sup>

Verse 20. And are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

*Are built.*—The relation is again changed. The saints are not only a household, but are viewed under the image of the house itself. The word *house* is used figuratively in the Scriptures. The body is represented as the house of the soul.<sup>3</sup> Any place at which God is present and is worshipped, is called the “house of God.”<sup>4</sup> Heaven is called God’s house. In my Father’s house are many mansions.<sup>5</sup> The church is called a house. These things write

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter v. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 6.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. xxviii. 17.

<sup>5</sup> John xiv. 2.

I unto thee . . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God.<sup>1</sup> All the saints, God's sanctified people, of every age and nation, are called a house. Christ as a son (is faithful) over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, etc.<sup>2</sup> This is the idea in this passage. Christians are represented as *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets*. — In this passage reference is had to the agency of their inspired teachers, the apostles and prophets, who laid instrumentally the foundation of the Christian church. The apostles were permanently inspired; the New Testament prophets, including evangelists, etc., were occasionally so, and thus leading and guiding the individual efforts of the body of Christians, were the chief human agencies of the conversion of men, and of the subsequent religious advancement of those converted. With reference to this subordinate but important agency, the church is said to be the pillar and ground of the truth.<sup>3</sup> James, Cephas, and John, are spoken of as "pillars."<sup>4</sup> Paul styles himself a "wise master-builder."<sup>5</sup> He says in this passage, "I have laid the foundation." This is obviously the import of Christ's declaration to Peter: "On this rock will I build my church."<sup>6</sup> God is the builder, through the agency of His dependent but highly honored servants and co-workers. The same *principle* is recognized in 1 Cor. 4: 15; Philem. 10. *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone*. — But whatever agency, and however important the agency, exerted by inspired or uninspired teachers, in giving the gospel to the world, Christ is *chief*. Of all this finite, derived agency, Christ is the underlying, the meritorious and en-

1 1 Tim. iii. 14, 15.

3 1 Tim. iii. 15.

5 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11, 12.

2 Heb. iii. 6; 1 Cor. iii. 9.

4 Gal. ii. 9.

6 Matt. xvi. 18.



ergizing cause. With him is *merit and divine efficiency*, which transcends and comprehends all others. When His redeemed are a building, or the superstructure, He is the foundation simply. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, *which is Jesus Christ*.<sup>1</sup> It is only when Christ is the *chief corner-stone*, that even the ablest and most honored of His servants are regarded as the *foundation*, or as *pillars*. This subordinate, dependent agency of His servants, is constantly and most expressly taught throughout the New Testament. The apostle, in the passage 1 Cor. 3 : 10, acknowledges his dependence on divine grace. *According to the grace of God* which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation. How fully and honestly he disclaims all self-reliance! I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.<sup>2</sup>

Verse 21. In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

*In whom.*—The chief foundation is Christ. The progress of the building is equally through Him. It is only *in Him* that Christianity, individually or socially, makes progress. *All the building.*—Each member of this true church, of this spiritual association. *Fitly framed together.*—The parts not only joined together, but *fitted* to each other. *Groweth.*—Each individual advances in personal piety; so the kingdom of Christ is progressing and filling the earth. This relation of individual Christians to each

1 1 Cor. iii. 11.

2 1 Cor. ii. 3, 4.

other, and the mutual aid rendered by being thus *fitted together*, is a beautiful idea in this passage, as well as in chapter 4:16. Every part of the building is necessary to its strength, and symmetry, and beauty. Every member of the church not only has a work devolved on himself, but, by his relation to every other member, the importance of his particular service is augmented. A slight defect in a single part of a complicated machine often deranges the action of the whole, and essentially impairs its force. Grace, by giving unity of spirit, by fitly framing the members together, gives great power to the action of the church. Each member growing, and pervading the whole social body with his hallowed and *inspiring* influence, all grow. *Unto a holy temple.*—It is no longer a mere house, but a temple. The allusion is, doubtless, to the temple at Jerusalem,—the type of the church. The actual temple was called holy, because consecrated to holy purposes exclusively. Christians are set apart to the service of God, personally sanctified by the blood of Christ. This idea of a temple is beautiful, and exceedingly significant. The tabernacle, and afterwards Solomon's temple, filled with the shekinah, was a sublime symbol of the church. The manifestation was that of a supernatural cloud, mild and effulgent. This exhibition of the divine presence ordinarily rested over the Ark of the Covenant, or the mercy-seat, "between the cherubim." And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; . . . and there I will meet with thee, and will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim, etc.<sup>1</sup> He that dwelleth between the cherubim.<sup>2</sup> Though the word shekinah is not a Bible term, allusion to the fact symbolized by it is frequent. The Jews, as is seen in their

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xxv. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm lxxx. 1; Numb. vii. 89; Psalm xcix. 1.

writings, so designated the visible presence of the divine glory. Occasionally, this divine presence was seen in the door of the tabernacle.<sup>1</sup> The divine presence was also symbolized in the pillar of cloud and of fire, which conducted the Israelites through the wilderness. But our passage is an allusion to it only as seen in the temple, or tabernacle. Here God gave oracles, was worshipped, and communed with His people. In allusion to this, each individual Christian is called a temple; also, the whole church in its organic capacity. God is present, by His Spirit, to each believer — ruling, leading, speaking peace to his soul through faith, shedding abroad His love in the heart; that is, expressing His parental affection to the consciousness of our filial feelings. The tokens of His love, called the *shekinah*, are ineffably mild and full of glory. Before Him the soul waits to obey His commands, and to offer its homage; and thus, through each individual believing heart, God rules and upholds the entire church, making it, in the noblest sense, the temple *in the Lord*. God is never worshipped except in the Lord; that is, in Christ.

Verse 22. In whom also ye are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Believers in Christ had been represented as citizens, — *fellow-citizens*; then, as the *household* of God, — members or inmates of the house of God. Thirdly, the figure is changed, and they are viewed in the light of a *house* itself, the superstructure of which is raised on the apostles and prophets as instruments, and on Christ as the chief foundation. In the fourth place, this building is enlarged and

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xii. 1–10; Deut. xxxi. 15.

beautified into a *temple*. In this twenty-second verse the idea of a temple gives place to a more familiar and endearing one — *an habitation of God*. This is its fifth view. *In whom*; that is, in Christ: a mere repetition of redemption through Christ. *Also ye*. — Not only the Ephesian Christians, as well as all believers, but especially the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. *Are builded together*. — All, alike, receive their vitalizing energy in and through Christ. It is the “spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” which rears this superstructure, — makes the house *grow*. Of His fulness have *all we* received.<sup>1</sup> *An habitation of God*. — That which was viewed as a temple where God approached, or met His people, and occasionally is seen by them, is here represented as *abiding* — permanently dwelling. The idea of the temple has in it more majesty; this, more of the home-feeling. This idea of God’s *dwelling* in His people, is found in the Old Testament, as well as the New. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.<sup>2</sup> He who inhabiteth *eternity*, who dwells in the high and holy place, — the throne of the universe, — dwells also with him that is contrite and humble, — the light of whose presence *revives* the heart. This is unspeakable love — infinite condescension. In the New Testament, the doctrine abounds frequently with the additional idea of Christ’s spiritual presence in the soul. Not only the spirit of truth *dwelleth* with you, and shall be in you, but Jesus said, If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and *we* will come unto him, and make our *abode* with him.<sup>3</sup> A habitation

<sup>1</sup> John i. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah lvii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> John xiv. 17—23.

is a place where the inmates dwell not only permanently, — it is an abode, — but where there is social enjoyment. Hence Christ says,<sup>1</sup> If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and *will sup with him, and he with me.* Christ's intercourse with His disciples is as friend with friend. This is through the Spirit. God does not take up His abode except where He has previously prepared a habitation. And there is no true church which is not pervaded by the Spirit. It is not the organic body which He makes His *habitation*, but the believing, obeying, sanctified church. The building is built up of *lively stones.*<sup>2</sup>

It must not be overlooked, that, for the third time in these two chapters, the doctrine of the Trinity is distinctly brought forward by the apostle. Compare notes on chapter 1:13, 14; chapter 2:18; and now this twenty-second verse. *In whom; that is, in Christ. An habitation of God; in the Spirit.*

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Peter ii. 5.

## CHAPTER III.

After the apostle had, in Chapter I., unfolded the scheme of mercy, he offered a prayer, that, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might be able to comprehend and appreciate its rich grace. Having occupied Chapter II. in showing how this rich grace was designed for all men, Gentiles as well as Jews; and the power of Christ's cross to reconcile them to each other, and both to God; in Chapter III. he again declares (verse 14, etc.) his habit of praying for them; that God would strengthen their piety by His Spirit; that Christ might dwell in them, and thus they be able to comprehend the incomprehensible love of Christ. But before he had completed the first sentence, he is turned aside — as his fervid spirit often is, in his epistles — to declare and explain his call to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

### THE APOSTLE'S MISSION TO THE GENTILES.

Verse 1. For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.

*For this cause.* — Because in this scheme of mercy the Gentiles were included. Because Gentiles and Jews *are builded together, for a habitation of God. I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ.* — Paul styles himself the *servant* of Jesus Christ; also, an *apostle* of Jesus Christ; here, the *prisoner* of Jesus Christ. He was then a prisoner at Rome, sent thither by the persecution of the Jews.<sup>1</sup> *For you Gentiles.* — It was an offence to the unbelieving and bigoted Jews, that “the covenants of promise” should be extended to the Gentiles. Even the Christian Jews were slow to acknowledge this claim. Paul taught that

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxv. 11; xxvi. 32; xxviii. 19.

there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.<sup>1</sup> And he vindicates his conduct in going among the Gentiles and preaching the gospel to them, in the verses subsequent to those just quoted: that, in order to call on God, they must believe; and faith requires instruction; and, having no teacher of their own, he was *sent*. This was the brunt of his offence, and for which he was sent a prisoner to Cæsar.

Verses 2—13. If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3 how that by revelation He made known unto me the 4 mystery, as I wrote afore in few words; whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in 5 the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the 6 Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in 7 Christ by the Gospel: whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the 9 Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 12, 13.

10 Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known  
 11 by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed.  
 12 in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.  
 13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

## ANALYSIS.

*In the paragraph just given, the following points are brought to view:—The ministry of the gospel as committed to Paul, vs. 2, 7.—The message is one of mercy, unsearchable in its nature and degree, vs. 2, 8.—The gospel, specially that the Gentiles should share in its salvation on equal terms with the Jews, was not fully made known for ages, as it now is—it had been a mystery, vs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 9.—This mystery was made known to Paul, as well as to the other apostles and prophets, by revelation; much of it in the form of inspiration, v. 3, 5.—His commission or dispensation was a gift of grace; and to engage in the work assigned him, he was incited by the effectual working of divine power in his heart. This was his call to preach, v. 7.—One of the motives constraining him, and which moved God to commission him, was to make known the manifold wisdom of God, both in the plan of redemption and its execution: specially in extending it to the Gentiles, vs. 9, 10.—All of which was according to an eternal purpose in Christ Jesus, v. 11.—Faith in whom gives us confident access to God, v. 12.—Finally, in view of this relation and its peculiar circumstances, the apostle beseeches his Gentile brethren of the church at Ephesus, not to faint at his tribulation, being a prisoner for them, for it should be for their glory, v. 13.*

•Verse 2. *If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.—If ye have heard,* does not express a doubt. It is equivalent to an



expression very like this: If ye have heard, as I am confident you have; or since ye have heard of, and know my calling to, the work of this ministry. *Dispensation of the grace of God.*—The term *dispensation* has three meanings: a plan, or the arrangements of a scheme or enterprise; the actual administration of this plan; and the function or office of him who thus administers. The last is the idea here,—the duty, or responsibility, of dispensing the gifts of God in salvation. It is a stewardship. Paul was commissioned to publish to sinners this scheme of grace. The grace was to all. The scheme included the Gentiles as well as the Jews. *To you-ward.*—To you, Gentiles.

Verse 3. *How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote afore in few words.*—The supernatural character of Paul's knowledge of the scheme of mercy, is here alluded to, but more fully stated in verse sixth, where it is explained. *Mystery* is a term employed to designate those doctrines of the gospel exhibited in the first chapter of this epistle,—the general plan of redemption,—including, specially, the fact, in the second chapter, that this gospel was to be extended to the Gentiles. It is called a *mystery*, because it could not be known by the unaided powers of the human mind. The riches of God's grace in the scheme of mercy are *unsearchable*. They are not to be fathomed by reason. They never can be fully fathomed, even when revealed. But that is not the reason why here they are called a mystery. It is only what could not be understood till revealed supernaturally. This is true of the principles of the gospel generally. It is specially true that no one could have foreknown, till told, that the Gentiles should share in it. The analogy of past history, till the advent of Christ, was unfavorable to such a supposition. Everything favored the idea that, as the

Jews had been His chosen people, so they were to continue in exclusive enjoyment of the covenants of promise. That God would save sinners by Christ, and that those who were *afar off* should be brought *nigh*, through Christ, could be known only by a special revelation. *As I wrote afore in few words*; — referring to what he had written in the first and second chapters, which, as we have said, contain a brief exposition of the elements of the gospel. Some have supposed that allusion is here made to some short epistle (*in few words*), addressed to the church at Ephesus, but now lost. There is, however, no evidence that any of the *inspired* writings are lost. The application of the expression, *as I wrote in few words*, to the former part of *this* epistle, is natural and satisfactory.

Verse 4. *Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.* — *Whereby*, by what he had briefly written; *when ye read*, or by reading which, *ye may understand* my knowledge in the mystery of Christ. By reading, ye will be able to understand the character and extent of my knowledge of the plan of salvation. All the church might hear this epistle read in public, — it being customary to read publicly the apostolic communications. Some might have the private perusal and examination of the original manuscript. Any one could take copies when the writing was so brief as this epistle. Before the art of printing, books of all kinds were expensive, and therefore scarce. Still, there can be no reasonable doubt that this short epistle was frequently copied, and might be read by all. *Mystery of Christ.* — Christ reveals the mystery of salvation. He brings life and immortality to light. In this sense, it is the mystery of Christ. But the probable meaning is, the mystery of the scheme of mercy; of which scheme Christ is the foundation and the

executor. Christ is, in His nature, and person, and works, a mystery — the great mystery of godliness — God manifest in the flesh. The spiritual blessings with which God has blessed us in Christ,<sup>1</sup> are the leading feature, the all-comprehending idea of this mystery. The relation of Christ to it is somewhat various; and its relation to the Gentiles is an important fact, and made prominent in this chapter.

Verse 5. *Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.* — *Which* (mystery) *in other ages.* Either to others, — that is, to former generations, — or, according to our translation, having respect to time and not to people, during other periods; which in other, or during other ages, was not made known. *Was not made known unto the sons of men.* — The purpose of God to give to the world a Saviour, made known early in the history of the race, and often repeated, was called the “covenant of promise.”<sup>2</sup> But the *indistinctness* of these communications is obvious, and what the apostle here alludes to. The law was a *shadow* of good things to come.<sup>3</sup> The prophets of the Old Testament did not themselves understand this subject as the apostles and prophets of the New did; and of the mass of the race, *of the sons of men*, this is strikingly true. The heathen were not only without Christ, but without God in the world. The Jewish nation, as such, were ever looking and longing for clearer light, and the *reality* of what they hoped for. That these spiritual blessings should, in due time, be given to the Gentiles, is also shadowed forth. He will furnish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen:<sup>4</sup> But whether this was to be by bringing all nations into the Jewish polity,

1 Eph. i. 3.

2 See notes on chapter ii. 12.

3 Heb. x. 1.

4 Zeph. ii. 11.

and thus making of all nations one theocratic kingdom, and so making them “fellow-heirs,” and “one body;” or by breaking down the middle wall of partition, and thus bringing the Gentiles nigh, was not understood. Hence emphasis is to be placed on the particle *as*: *as it is now revealed*. Not so clearly as it now is. On the mountain-tops were seen gleams of the morning dawn; but over the plains, and through the valleys, was widespread and unbroken darkness — “a land of darkness, as darkness itself.” It is now revealed — that is, made known — *unto His holy apostles and prophets*, the *inspired* teachers of the gospel.<sup>1</sup> They are *His* — that is, God’s — apostles and prophets, because commissioned and qualified by Him. They are said to be *holy*, not only because of their personal piety and peculiar miraculous gifts, — on both of which accounts they were said to be men full of the Holy Ghost,<sup>2</sup> — but because of their being set apart to a religious service exclusively. They were holy, because *consecrated*. *By the Spirit*. — These supernatural communications were not merely revelations, but revelations made by *inspiration*. Few subjects are so important to be rightly understood as the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures. Some deny not only that they are inspired, but also that they contain a revelation from God. Others admit that revelations have been made, and are recorded in the Bible; but they attach no infallibility to the record — believing that *good* and *wise* men, with important advantages for knowing the truth, have given to us their conceptions of the doctrines and facts of revealed religion. They deny the special superintending and suggesting agency of

<sup>1</sup> On the office and qualifications of these apostles and prophets, see notes on chapter ii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Acts vi. 3, 8; vii. 55.

the Holy Spirit. The idea that the apostles and prophets were divinely taught, so as to render them infallible, is either utterly rejected, or so modified and attenuated, as to undermine the authority of the Bible. It will be perceived that we make a distinction between revelation and inspiration. Revelation is the substance, inspiration the method of communication — the vehicle of truth revealed. A revelation may be made orally, as the conversations of Christ. God has often spoken to our race in a supernatural manifestation and voice, — as to Adam,<sup>1</sup> to Moses,<sup>2</sup> to the Israelites,<sup>3</sup> to Joshua,<sup>4</sup> to the prophet Isaiah.<sup>5</sup> Instances are scattered through the Old Testament. It is repeatedly called the *word of God*, communicated in any manner — by voice, by vision, or by inspiration. That it was often communicated by inspiration, and that all the Bible was written under the agency of the Spirit, is plainly taught in the Scriptures themselves. To this there have been made several objections. (1) It has been said that it would require a miracle; and, as the objectors deny miracles, they of course deny inspiration. But the laws of both matter and mind are neither original nor unchangeable. They must ultimately, if not now, have depended on the divine will. The same will which creates, can, of course, modify or destroy. The contrary supposition would be absurd. He who created the mind, can speak to it and give it understanding. An image, faint we admit, but fitted to remove all possible objections of this character, may be seen in the manner that the silent look of the mother often conveys to her infant, before it can speak or understand language, the thoughts and feelings of her own heart. The infant so distinctly interprets the workings of the mother's mind, as to smile

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 8, 9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus xx.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah vi. 1, 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus iii. 2—22.

<sup>4</sup> Joshua v. 13—15.

or be sad as she *looks*. Cannot God, who can be present to the finite spirit without any media, express to it His thoughts and will? *How* this communication can be given, we do not know; nor do we know how the infant reads the heart of its mother. We know it does. Nor do we, who have never been inspired, know how the prophets and others could be *confident*, of such communications, that they were from God, and not imaginary. We are told that it is a *sure* word of prophecy.<sup>1</sup> This certainty attached, necessarily, to the consciousness of him to whom God was speaking. (2) Some think that because the writings of the Bible vary, according to the peculiar mental habits of the individual writers, they must be purely human, and not divinely dictated. It can be, however, no more an objection to God's causative agency in the production of the book, than *variety* in the phenomena of nature is a proof that God is not their cause. That the different portions of the Bible should vary according to the mental character of their authors, is *analogous* to all God's works. God endows different minds differently, for wise ends. Moses and Aaron had different gifts, but the same spirit guided them. Isaiah and Ezekiel, among the prophets; Paul and John, among the apostles, differed in a marked manner: but all were animated by one spirit. That inspiration should be plenary, making the subject of it infallible, is no proof that the divine agency must destroy, or even interfere with, the freedom of the finite agent. — "So far," says Gaussen, "are we from overlooking human individuality, everywhere impressed on our sacred books, that, on the contrary, it is with profound gratitude, and with an ever-increasing admiration, that we regard this living, real, human character infused so charmingly

<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter i. 19.

into every part of the Word of God. We admit the fact, and we see in it clear proof of the divine wisdom which dictated the Scriptures." We might thus answer, were it necessary, many similar objections; not one of which does, in fact, militate against their infallibility, through the agency of God, who is truthful, and cannot err.

But the direct proof that the writers of the Bible were inspired, is abundant and positive. Christ teaches the fact. David wrote *in the Spirit*.<sup>1</sup> Paul not only declares the Scriptures to be *holy*, and *able to make us wise unto salvation*, and to make the man of God perfect,—which they could not do unless infallible,—but to be inspired. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*.<sup>2</sup> Peter, in like manner, teaches that the writers of the Old Testament were divinely inspired. In alluding to the infallibility of the revelations of the gospel, he calls attention to the *voice* of God in "the holy mount," when there came to Christ, in the hearing of His disciples, "a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Compared even with this, the Scriptures of the Old Testament were *a more sure word, as a light that shineth in a dark place*. The reason of this infallibility is, that it came not *by the will of man*; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.<sup>3</sup>

That the authors of the New Testament were inspired, and so infallible, is manifest (1) from the promise of Christ that He would so qualify His apostles when He commissioned them to carry forward the work of which he had laid the foundation. Christ, in His last free conversation with His disciples, said, "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you." (Oral revelation.) But

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 41, 42.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 15—17.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Peter i. 16—21.

the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.<sup>1</sup> This is *inspiration*. It is the promise of Christ. And, as Christ proceeded in his conversations and consolations, He renewed the promise with an important addition,—not only to recall what He had said to them, but to make fuller disclosures, which they could not bear as yet. When the Spirit of truth shall come, He shall guide you into *all truth*; *He will show you things to come.*<sup>2</sup> That this promise was fulfilled, the apostles claimed. “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Why? For the gospel which was preached of me *is not after man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*<sup>3</sup> He was a divinely taught, and divinely authorized teacher, and, therefore, infallible, and spoke with authority. But that this revelation was by inspiration, is distinctly shown 1 Cor. 2:1—13, specially verse ten: *God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.* That the Scriptures are infallible, and speak with authority, is their peculiarity, which distinguishes them not only from cunningly devised fables, but from all human compositions; and all attempts to impair the confidence of men in such distinguishing characteristics is wrong,—injurious to the best interests of our race, and must be displeasing to God.

Verse 6. *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.*—One of the important elements of the gospel, to which the apostle makes reference in the third, fourth, and fifth verses, and which he calls a mystery,—now much more clearly revealed than formerly,—was that

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 25, 26.

<sup>2</sup> John xvi. 12, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. i. 8—12.



the Gentiles should share with the Jews in its blessings. (See notes on 2:4—17.) They were to be heirs of God. The gospel was to make them children, and if children, then *heirs* — fellow-heirs with the Jews; as truly children as the Jews; heirs of God through Christ;<sup>1</sup> heirs according to the promise;<sup>2</sup> heirs of salvation;<sup>3</sup> heirs according to the hope of eternal life.<sup>4</sup> *Of the same body.* — In the Christian Church, Jew and Gentile are one. Whatever *local* separations there may be among the disciples of Christ, they are essentially “one body and one spirit” (4:4). *Partakers of His promise in Christ.* — The object of the promise was the Messiah, and in Him, all spiritual blessings; and that these blessings should be extended to the Gentiles — that they should be partakers. The promise was first to Adam in the garden, — The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.<sup>5</sup> Specially to Abraham, in which the promise is made to include the race, — In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.<sup>6</sup> Similar promises were frequent before Christ.<sup>7</sup> Between Abraham and Christ there were important limitations, restricting these promises to the literal posterity of Abraham. But no sooner had Christ come, than they were extended without restrictions to *all nations*. The commission was universal. Go ye into *all the world* and preach the gospel to every creature. We are liable to look upon the privileges of the gospel as the Jews did, as if an original inheritance to us. This is not the fact. In time past, we were not a people; but are now the people of God. We had not obtained mercy; but now have obtained mercy.<sup>8</sup> But when the Gentiles first heard this gospel preached to them, they were glad, and glorified the

1 Gal. iv. 7.

3 Heb. i. 14.

5 Gen. iii. 15.

7 Acts xiii. 23, 27; xxvi. 6.

2 Gal. iii. 29.

4 Tit. iii. 7.

6 Gen. xii. 3.

8 1 Peter ii. 10.

word of the Lord.<sup>1</sup> This promise was *in Christ, by the gospel*.—Made in Him; realized *in Him* by His death, and by the preaching of His cross. He is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the *world*; and the field of the gospel is the *world*.

Verse 7. *Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power.*—*Whereof*.—Of which gospel. *A minister* (a preacher).—But the word implies service. It is the same word which is often translated deacon; applied to him, in the early church, who was its almoner—cared for the poor and the sick, and dispensed its charities. A minister of the *gospel* is one who dispenses its spiritual treasures. The idea is not very unlike that of steward,—a responsible and entrusted servant.<sup>2</sup> These treasures are dispensed by preaching, or by religious teaching. The minister of Christ preaches Christ's gospel. But the idea is more comprehensive than preacher or herald. Preaching or public teaching is not the whole work of the minister. As a shepherd, he feeds the flock of God; as a steward, he gives to all their meat in due season. In Christ's stead,—in public and in private,—he beseeches men to be reconciled to God. *According to the gift of the grace of God.*—The appointment to the ministry is a gift—a *gracious* gift. It is a privilege to be a minister of the gospel. It was so deemed by Paul, and is so by all good ministers. It is not to be assumed; but when given, gratefully accepted, and its duties *cheerfully* discharged. It has its trials; but it has its rich consolations in this life, and will have still richer rewards in the future. For a sinner—not to say a persecutor, as Paul had been—to be permitted to minister this rich grace to sinners, is unspeakable

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 48.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 5; 1 Thess. iii. 2; 2 Cor. xi. 23; Col. i. 7.

ble condescension in God. *Given unto me* (that is, communicated to him) *by the effectual working of His power.* —The working, or energy, of God's power in the heart in any way, — to believe, to obey the gospel, or to preach it, — is effectual, by exciting the affections. This divine energy is *effectual*; not contrary to the will of man, but *irresistible*, by taking away the disposition to resist. When the heart is made susceptible by divine grace, truth, duty, future rewards, all affect the will. The power of God works effectually by changing the desires, and so suppressing the opposition of the will. It is thus that God makes us willing in the day of His power. The soul, thus renewed, breaks for the longing it hath unto the judgments of God.<sup>1</sup> Paul was not only thus effectually wrought upon to embrace the gospel, but to preach it — to minister it to the Gentiles. He believed and loved the truth. He saw and appreciated the condition of guilty, wretched men. He had respect unto the crown of righteousness. This was Paul's *call to preach*. The language of the passage shows that he was powerfully wrought upon. This idea of agency, or energy, is involved in the term *according to* — not merely in agreement with, but as the effect of — the gift of grace effectually working. The ministry of this day, and of all times, needs this effectual working of the power of God. All ministers may not have Paul's talents, either natural or supernatural; but all may have, and ought to have, his spirit — his earnestness and self-denial.

Verse 8. *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, that I should preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.* — The apostle's humanity is remarkable, and is the obvious effect of

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxix. 20.

the gospel. There is no evidence that he was *naturally* a meek man. There are striking evidences of the contrary. The new religion made him a “new man.” Intellectually the ablest of the apostles, he deems himself *the least of all saints*. In the original the term is a comparative superlative, which renders the idea intensive; a use not confined to Paul, but found occasionally in other writers, specially in the poets. *Was this grace given* (see notes on verses second and seventh): *the unsearchable riches of Christ*. The gospel is a provision of rich mercy, incomprehensibly rich. The love which originated it is divine, unsearchable: God so loved the world, etc.<sup>1</sup> It was executed in love unsearchable. Christ loved us, and gave *Himself* for us.<sup>2</sup> The love of Christ passeth knowledge.<sup>3</sup> That the Holy Spirit should condescend to enter and dwell in depraved, unlovely hearts like ours, and garnish them as temples, is love unsearchable.<sup>4</sup> The unsearchableness of Christ is also seen in the number of sinners saved,—a great multitude, which no man can number,<sup>5</sup>—in the number of each individual’s sins, and the degree of their turpitude and guilt,—the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin,<sup>6</sup>—in the number and value of its blessings. The forms of the blessings, and their power, are as various and as efficacious as our needs: freedom from punishment, bliss, both present and future; guidance, support, and present consolation; holiness and glory—and all everlasting. It is eternal life. New discoveries will be made, and new riches experienced eternally. No wonder Paul’s quickened spirit deemed it a privilege to preach these unsearchable riches to perishing men. Though called specially to preach them to the Gentiles;

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 16; 1 John iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iii. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. xv. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. vii. 9.

<sup>6</sup> 1 John i. 7.

not exclusively. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for *Israel* is, that they may be saved.<sup>1</sup> But his whole life was characterized by a missionary spirit. If the missionary of this day faint in his work, let him rekindle his missionary zeal by reading the history of Paul, as well as of Jesus Christ, the altar where the apostle lighted his flame.

Verse 9. *And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.*

—Paul's chief commission was to the Gentiles, as we have said. But it was general. This is the force of *and* as well as *all*;—to make men *see*. To instruct the mind, is analogous to giving light to the eye. Light reveals material objects; knowledge, spiritual truths. Divine revelation is a light shining in a dark place. He who promulgates this revelation makes men see. The light of the glorious gospel *shines*.<sup>2</sup> Preachers of the gospel shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.<sup>3</sup> Paul was *graciously* and *effectually* wrought upon to enlighten the world as to the scheme of mercy. All ministers of the gospel are to be emphatically *teachers* of the scheme of mercy. There is no such field of knowledge as this. It is unsearchable in its science as well as in its love. What need and what motives to study; what patient, honest and earnest investigation is indispensable in the Christian ministry! Paul received his knowledge by direct revelation. We must gather ours from the treasures of the inspired word. How inadequate is *mere* declamation, or even exhortation! The object of preaching is to make men *see*; and then to persuade. To make men see *what is the fellowship of the mystery*. Some eritics prefer, what is the "economy"

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 15, 16; Rev. i. 20.

or "dispensation" of the mystery, instead of "fellowship." The fellowship of the mystery, as in our translation, must mean the oneness of spirit which the gospel imparts to all classes and nations; the mutual sharing of its benefits, hopes, trials, labors and prayers. If "economy of mystery" be preferred, it regards rather the dispensation of this mysterious scheme of mercy. This would be more pertinent, perhaps, to the main scope, where preaching or ministering is the leading idea. But we cannot avoid remarking, in this connection, how rarely any discrepancy of the readings of the text of Scripture changes the sense. There are few, *very few* various readings of the New Testament which so much affect the thought as in this instance, unimportant as it is. *Which from the beginning of the world.* — That is, from eternity, as is the fact, and as the phrase doubtless means. *Was hid in God.* — Which He kept to Himself, locked up in His own mind, though the race to whom it pertained had existed four thousand years. There was a duration without beginning, when there were no creatures to whom to make the revelation; and after the creation of intelligent beings, God, as a sovereign, withheld the knowledge of it till "the fulness of time." *Who created all things by Jesus Christ.* — That the universe, material and mental, was created by Christ, is distinctly taught in the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> It is equally clear from the Bible that God the Father is the universal Creator; but how God created all things *by Jesus Christ*, I do not understand. It seems to recognize the *voluntary* subordinated relation of the Second person to the First. But this is still a mystery. As a sovereign, God has a right to leave it so eternally. In condescension, He may, in the fulness of time, — that is, in eternity, — reveal it to us, as

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2-10; iii. 4.

He has that scheme of redemption which was so long hid with Himself.

Verse 10. *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.*—*To the intent*, or in order that. One design of God in calling Paul to preach the gospel was to make known His perfections, not only to men, but to angels, even of the highest orders. *The manifold wisdom of God.*—This wisdom is seen in the scheme of mercy, and also in the methods of its execution. Consisting of parts, it is *manifold*; all profoundly wise. The expiation of sin by the blood of Christ, though the doctrine commends itself to our moral judgment when understood, is divine wisdom. The original conception is divinely wise. The method employed in bringing men under its influence so as to make it the power of God to their salvation is equally so. *Might be known by the church.*—The idea is plainly that the preacher is to associate with himself the great body of believers. He is to seek to enlighten the minds of *all* whom he can personally reach, and through the coöperation of those who shall believe through him, to accumulate moral power. Thus Christians, as the church increases in numbers, go from strength to strength. *All* are to let their light shine, *all* are to hold forth the word of life. Not as Paul, the official preacher, but all, each in his sphere, and as the Providence of God shall give the occasion, must make known the manifold wisdom of God. The *church* refers only to true disciples, actual believers. But in its associated capacity, the church, as an assembly, or an organism, is obviously an underlying idea. Pastor and church are correlative terms. One implies the other. A church without a pastor is like a flock without a shepherd

—they are soon scattered. But a preacher, without a coöperating church, has but little power. His chief influence is through the agency of the members of the body. Christ devoted much, if not most, of his three years' ministry on earth to training a band who should be co-workers, and should labor in His absence. A larger part of the ministry of the apostles, as their epistles show, was to educate the church as fellow-laborers. *Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places.* — The redeemed have the deepest interest in the gospel, but angels contemplate it with profound interest. They announced the Saviour's birth. They ministered to him when on earth, as they do to his disciples. But here the most exalted of them are represented as sharing in this interest. *Principalities and powers*, archangels. Hints like this teach us that there are distinctions, ranks of unknown character among the angels of heaven; and that none are too exalted to sympathize in human redemption. Christ as a Redeemer will be glorified by angels as well as by saints. He will, at his appearing, be admired by all, for all will love Him. The idea is sublime, and the inspiration unspeakable, that our cloud of witnesses includes all ranks, from the humblest believer to the most exalted celestial power.

Verse 11. *According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus, our Lord.* — This manifold wisdom, executed on earth by the varied agencies of the gospel, and made known in heaven, was an eternal purpose of God. It was not only executed by Christ, but *purposed in Christ Jesus*. The original is, which He *made* in Christ Jesus; meaning, which purpose He made, as the connection obviously demands. Christ did execute this purpose of mercy. The ground of mercy to sinners was in Him; in what He *did*, and what He is now doing, as mediator and



as a quickening Spirit. But all this was foreseen, and, in the divine purpose, anticipated from eternity (see notes, chapter 1 : 3, 4).

Verse 12. *In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.*—From the sovereign goodness of God the apostle turns to the privileges and piety of the believer. *In whom*—that is, in Christ Jesus—*we have boldness.*—Not arrogance or temerity, but that fearlessness which love and a spirit of reconciliation awakens. Though as sinners we fear to approach God,—to such, as conscience testifies, God out of Christ is a “consuming fire,”—yet *in Christ* we approach him fearlessly. *And access with confidence.*—The believer has a confident approach to God, in all forms of worship, in prayer and praise, in reliance on Him as parental and forgiving, with the fullest assurance that He will not repel us. We expect His parental sympathy, His benignant smile, and an answer to all petitions. But this confident approach must be *by the faith of Him*; faith, of which Christ is the object, in His personal existence and mediatorial work. From want of this faith in Christ, some are deterred from coming to God in prayer; while others, equally destitute of faith, call on Him in their own name, and go away unaccepted and unanswered. The faith required implies love, abandonment of all personal merit, implicit reliance on the merit of Christ’s blood. With this temper of heart, we have free access to God. Not that there is merit in these exercises of themselves,—all merit is in Christ,—but they are suitable to the relations of a sinner to God, and will not, ought not to be dispensed with.

Verse 13. *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*—Paul had suffered great persecution for preaching the gospel to the

Gentiles, and for this reason was then a prisoner at Rome (3:1). But he entreated them not to be discouraged, — that they *faint not*, — so as to abandon their position as believers, or relax their onward course as followers of Christ. His tribulation, experienced in their behalf, was their *glory* — a ground of exultation and encouragement. They were a proof of his appreciation of the gospel, both for himself and them. It made manifest, in the eyes of the world, the moral power of the gospel in sustaining and urging forward the apostle through such sacrifices for their sakes. Thus the gospel, even in afflictions, was the glory of His disciples as well as of Christ; worthy to be received and trusted in.

#### THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER.

Verses 14—19. For this cause I bow my knees unto  
 15 the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the  
 16 whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He  
     would grant you, according to the riches of His  
     glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit  
 17 in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your  
     hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded  
 18 in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints  
     what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and  
 19 height; and to know the love of Christ, which  
     passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all  
     the fulness of God.

#### ANALYSIS.

*Prayer addressed to the God and Father of Christ;—Its object  
 — inward strength by the Spirit — the indwelling of Christ by faith —*

*the fruit — love ; — the effect of all — a knowledge of the incomprehensible love of Christ ; — and summarily, both as an effect and a cause — that they might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

Verse 14. *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*— At this verse the apostle resumes what he had commenced in the first verse, but from which he had been diverted, by the consideration of his call to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. *For this cause.*— Either because of the *manifold wisdom* of God manifest in the gospel, of which he had just spoken, or because he was commissioned to preach to them these *unsearchable riches*, or, which is probably true, from both considerations, he prays for them. *I bow my knees.*— The attitude is significant of the act. The idea is that of *habit* of prayer for his brethren. Doubtless the chief reference is to the Gentiles, who are the principal class here addressed. But his enlarged spirit, under the influence of such a liberalizing theme, did not, and could not, overlook his Hebrew brethren. *Unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>1</sup>

Verse 15. *Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*— If *of whom* means of God, then the *whole family* includes all the children of God, in heaven and on earth ; holy angels, as well as Christians. If *our Lord Jesus Christ* is the antecedent of *whom*, Christians only are included ; but all in heaven, already made perfect ; all on earth, in their militant state ; and all yet to be converted, who are named Christians. They are the Household of Faith. The grammatical construction allows either rendering. Both are true, and analogous to the teachings of the Scriptures. All holy beings, angels and saints, are a fraternity, and are the children of God. All Christians,

<sup>1</sup> See notes, chapter i. 3, 17.

Jews and Gentiles, are a fraternity, and are the children of God; they are a family; they are named Christians, after Christ. It was one motive with Paul, to impress upon the minds of both the Jews and Gentiles, in the church at Ephesus, that they were *one family*. The logical reason rather favors the idea that God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the antecedent; the historical, that *Christ* is.

Who can be indifferent to the privilege of being a member of such a family — a brother beloved in such a household? This is one of the *spiritual blessings* of the gospel (1:3).

Verse 16. *That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.* — The object of the prayer is for spiritual blessings. That God would carry forward in the hearts of these Ephesian Christians what He had begun. The *inner man* means not only the soul in distinction from the body, the spirit, the “hidden man,”<sup>1</sup> in distinction from the material, visible; but this spiritual nature, renewed and partially sanctified. It means something more than the reason, or higher powers of the soul, including conscience and intellect; for it is a Bible doctrine that these powers are corrupted by sin, and the whole mind alienated from God. The carnal mind, the whole unrenewed mind, which means something more than the lower propensities, is enmity against God.<sup>2</sup> The more this is *strengthened*, the more depraved the man must be. The man, the inner man, the whole man, must become a *new man*, before additional strength would be a spiritual blessing. *To be strengthened.* — To strengthen this partially sanctified soul, is not only to *purify* the affections, but to increase the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter iii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 7.

intensity of those already holy; to render more distinct and comprehensive their apprehensions of truths, more positive and cogent their convictions of duty; to increase their love of Christ, and their faith as to the realities of the invisible world. Add to this a *will* firm and energetic, and you describe one strengthened *with might*, or mightily, in the inner man. The same Greek expression is found in Rom. 1:4, in which Christ, by His resurrection from the dead, is said to have been declared the Son of God with power; that is, with wonderful clearness, and demonstrative force. Here Paul prays that God would, by *His Spirit*, powerfully strengthen the religious principles of believers; specially of the Gentile believers, who had recently been brought forth from deep darkness and spiritual debasement. This, as in all moral improvement, is the work of the Divine Spirit. *According to the riches of His glory*.—According to, signifying not only in proportion to, but in consequence of, in which the idea is that of *cause* as well as degree. Such strengthening as can be effected by the *riches of His glory*; as nothing but the divine perfections can give. Although all the attributes of God are included, His supreme excellence, as the “Father of glory” (1:17), the leading idea is that of power. In all His perfections He is glorious, *richly so*; yet in the renovation of the sinner dead in sins, omnipotence, as well as grace, is glorious. If such might is requisite, how wonderful the event of regeneration, and all progress in personal holiness.

Verse 17. *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love*.—The general object of the prayer, as we have intimated, was strength and confirmation in holiness, *by the Spirit*. The same result is taught in this verse by the indwelling

of Christ. *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.*—Without any recognition of its apparent difficulty, the inspired writers attribute the same work to God, to the Spirit, and to Christ. This is explicable only on the principle that there is a sense in which they are identical, — one Nature, one Being, one God. But in some way, unknown to us, they are distinct and three. The fact of Christ's dwelling in the hearts of believers, is frequently taught in the New Testament. "Christ *in you*, the hope of glory."<sup>1</sup> If a man love me, etc., my Father will love him, and *we* will come unto him, and make *our* abode with him.<sup>2</sup> Here, the Father and Son are represented as distinct, and yet as the identical God. Christ with God, and yet as doing the same divine work: omnipresent, and giving spiritual life. The power of Christ in giving spiritual life is taught also in connection with *human* agency, and equally left without explanation. "I live: yet not I, but Christ *liveth in me.*"<sup>3</sup> Christ is everywhere, all in all; but in a gracious manner He dwells in the heart of the believer. The atonement is a doctrine incomprehensible, in the ground of its efficacy and in the extent of its love. But neither are more inexplicable than His indwelling agency, regarded with reference to the Father, or to the voluntary agency of the human spirit on which, and through which, it acts. It is an idea full of adoring interest that Christ mediates on high; but not less solemn or affecting that *He lives in us.* Such is the depravity of the human heart, that we never have a good thought or desire but that He is the secret cause of it. And if we persevere in holiness, and obtain victory over the world, it is because Christ dwells in us. Christ dwells in us *by faith.* In John, quoted above, *love* is the condi-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Col. i. 27.<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 23.<sup>3</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

tion of His indwelling; here, *faith*. They reciprocally imply and promote each other. But faith, in this connection, regards rather the appropriating of the quickening, sanctifying, strengthening grace of Christ. The soul is active, voluntarily laying hold on Christ's strength. The connection of the branch and the vine gives a passive conception, *imbibing* strength. The connection between Christ and the believing soul is active—a voluntary using of power proffered. It is an act of *trust* in the redeeming power of Christ; of reliance<sup>1</sup> on the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which makes us free from the law of sin and death.<sup>1</sup> Christ is "our life."<sup>2</sup> To believe this so as to *rely* on it, is the condition of all progress in holiness. The omission of this voluntary act of the soul, is not only to abide in depravity, but in guilt and death. *That ye, being rooted and grounded in love.*—Love, as here described, is one of the effects of being strengthened by the Spirit, and of Christ's dwelling in us by faith. Love is to be taken, in its widest sense, as a pious affection: love to God and love to man; love of holiness and benevolence. As the fruit of the Spirit, love is the soil in which the tree takes root, and by which it is nourished. It is also the foundation which gives stability to the soul as the "habitation of God." This love is both the condition and the means of spiritual illumination, as seen in the next verses.

Verses 18, 19. *That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.*—The connection here is obvious. Spiritual illumination results from deep-seated love. Both love and illumination are the results of the indwelling of Christ, and

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 4.

the agency of the Spirit strengthening the inner man; that is, from general sanctification or growth in grace. For all these the apostle prays, in behalf of his brethren, having as an ulterior and specific object their appreciation of those "spiritual blessings" which is his theme (chapter 1:3), and which he has so magnificently unfolded. Thus comprehensive is the particle *that*: *That* ye (Ephesians) may, *with all saints* (Gentiles or Jews, Ephesians or others), *be able to comprehend and to know*. If a distinction is to be made between these terms,—to *comprehend* and to *know*,—the former has stricter reference to the intellect, the latter to the feelings; not only to grasp with the understanding, but to appreciate with the heart. Without *love*, this is impossible; which shows that in one of these terms, at least, the affections are the chief element. To comprehend the *breadth, and length, and depth, and height*, has for its object, *probably*, the "spiritual blessings," the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (chapter 1:3), which we have considered his subject—the seed of this fruitful tree. It is more general than *the love of Christ*, and comprehends it. The love of Christ is not only a particular, but the remarkable, the all-glorious, part of these "unsearchable riches." There are many things in these spiritual blessings which, to the natural man, are foolishness.<sup>1</sup> All are to be spiritually discerned. They have a "breadth, and length, and depth, and height," beyond the actual compass of any finite intelligence, unsanctified or sanctified. There is something unfathomable about the whole scheme of mercy. The love of Christ *passeth knowledge*; and yet the apostle prays that they may comprehend and appreciate this subject. There is a sense in which love will enable them to do so. Though the love

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 14.



of Christ is actually incomprehensible; though *it passeth knowledge*, — yet, the believing, contrite, loving spirit, having sympathy with Christ, love for His person, fellowship with His sufferings, does appreciate His love. Though it passes knowledge in one view, its *nature* he knows, and its value he gratefully acknowledges; and this knowledge of the love of Christ will expand with growth in grace. This knowledge and love will mutually nourish each other eternally.

Verse 19. *That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*—For Christ to dwell in the heart of the believer, is to be filled with all the fulness of God; for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead.<sup>1</sup> Christ is full of the divine perfections — of power and love specially. And of His fulness have all we received.<sup>2</sup> When filled with Christ, therefore, we are filled with all the fulness of God. In these descriptions of the apostle, language fails him. His speech falters under the infinite weight of the glory of his theme. To be filled with all the fulness of God, is to be abundantly supplied, according to our capacity, with the exhaustless abundance of divine power and consolation. The only limit to these gracious influences is our ability to contain, especially our receptivity, or the degree of our love. No wonder that the apostle should break forth in the following strain of sublime praise.

#### DOXOLOGY.

Verses 20, 21. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, 21 according to the power that worketh in us, unto

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 16.

Him be the glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

There is nothing we can *ask*, or *even think*, which God is not able to do. He can exceed this — *abundantly* exceed it. The believer, frequently striving against sin in vain, often foiled by his spiritual foes, faints in the conflict, limiting the power of God, as well as conscious of his own weakness. How often do Christians regard the condition of individuals, or of communities, as hopeless. If such be not their theoretic views, such are their practical feelings. They admit that God is omnipotent; but, when looking upon the peculiar temperament, or wrong education, or actual ignorance, or prejudice, or social irreligious influences, or the force of some habitual temptation, daily waxing stronger and more enslaving, it is difficult to conceive, and still more to *feel*, that God can triumph over it all; that He can exceed this *abundantly*; that, according to the power which quickened the dead body of Christ, and *that worketh in us*, quickening the dead in sins, He can change the peculiar temperament, correct the wrong education by the teaching of His word, open the eyes of the heart, and dispel the darkness of ignorance, give charity and candor for prejudice, and remove the corrupting influence of irreligious associates by converting them, or laying them one by one in their graves. God is the Almighty. God can make the light to shine out of darkness; and faith in this power is also His gift. *Unto Him be glory in the church.* — Such power, so graciously exerted in behalf of sinful man, claims all gratitude and praise; and thus to praise His grace, would be to glorify Him. To pardon a sinner through the death of his Son, is an act of glorious grace. To make a depraved being

holy, is not only glorious grace, but glorious power. This glory is seen in, and reflected by, the *church*—the redeemed throng in heaven and on earth. To render this is the duty and object of the saints. A holy, devout, earnest church so let their light shine, that others, seeing their good works, glorify their Father which is in heaven. All this is *by Christ Jesus*.—Not only is their praise rendered through His name, and accepted on His account, but they are moved to their deeds of piety by Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith. Their piety is Christ shining through them. *Throughout all ages, world without end*.—The translation is the happiest possible. Here, again, language fails in exactness and compass. To all generations of the age of ages, of the cycle of cycles,—continuing to return where it began, without end. Eternity! That it is, we know; *what* it is, we cannot know, much less describe. A notion is given of what is incomprehensible, by heaping together terms. To such excellence and such unsearchable riches, glory will be eternally due. *Amen*.—So be it. Let the church praise Him.

## CHAPTER IV.

At this point the character of the epistle is changed. The preceding three chapters are an exposition of the doctrines of the gospel, pervaded by a spirit of devotion, as is seen in the prayers of chapter i. 16, etc.; also in chapter iii. 14, etc., and in the doxology of chapter iii. 20, 21. These doctrines are made to underlie the experience of the believer; the gracious power of God on the "inner man." On these doctrines, also, are grounded duties; and from them are made to flow forth practical godliness, enforced in the remaining portion of the epistle. It is an *exhortation*—to right tempers of heart, iv. 1—24;—to the practice of specific duties, iv. 25—32; v. 1—33; vi. 1—9;—and to seek the requisite strength by putting on the panoply of God, chapter vi. 10—17.

### AN EXHORTATION TO UNITY, ETC.

Verses 1—16. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord,  
beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation  
2 wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and  
meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one an-  
3 other in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the  
4 Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body,  
and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of  
5 your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one  
6 God and Father of all, who is above all, and through  
7 all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is  
given grace according to the measure of the gift of  
8 Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended  
up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts

9 unto men. Now that He ascended, what is it but  
that He also descended first into the lower parts of  
10 the earth? He that descended is the same also  
that ascended up far above all heavens, that He  
11 might fill all things. And He gave some, apostles;  
and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and  
12 some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of  
the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the  
13 edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in  
the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the  
Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure  
14 of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we  
henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro,  
and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by  
the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby  
15 they lie in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth  
in love, may grow up unto Him in all things, which  
16 is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole  
body fitly joined together and compacted by that  
which every joint supplieth, according to the effect-  
ual working in the measure of every part, maketh  
increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in  
love.

## ANALYSIS.

*General exhortation to a life worthy of those spiritual blessings by which and to which they had been called: specifying the inward graces of — humility — meekness — patience — forbearance — and unity, vs. 1—3. — This unity is enforced by the numerous instances of unity attending their religious condition; — one body, animated by one Spirit, with its fruits of common hope; having one Lord, with*

*His requirements of a common faith and baptism;—one God and Father of all, as the Supreme, vs. 4—6. — This unity is not inconsistent with a diversity of spiritual gifts, furnished by Christ; specifying the institution of the gospel ministry, as apostles, prophets, etc., vs. 7—11. — All of which are given for the perfecting of the saints; seen in — the growth of the body unto the measure of the fulness of Christ — in its unity — in its stability, vs. 12—14. — And finally, this diversity in unity is exhibited — as centering in Christ as the uniting and nourishing principle; — all are fitly joined together, mutually ministering to each other's strength and growth; the controlling grace being love, vs. 15, 16.*

I. Verse 1. *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.* — This first verse is a general exhortation to a worthy, religious life. It is *incidentally* enforced by the fact that he was a prisoner at Rome on their account, which the Gentile portion of the church well understood, and would be likely tenderly to appreciate; but *chiefly* enforced by the nature of their spiritual calling; — called of God to be holy and without blame before Him in love<sup>1</sup> — to be children.<sup>2</sup> Nothing could be *worthy* of such spiritual blessings but eminent godliness. In what manner believers would walk thus worthily, the apostle proceeds to specify.

Verses 2, 3. *With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* — This distinction between lowliness and meekness, is, that *lowliness* — or, as it is frequently translated, *humility* — implies, ordinarily, conscious unworthiness; or, as is perhaps preferable, *a sense of unworthiness*. Not only are the feelings affected, but depressed; and, when religion is involved, this

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. i. 5.

depression is caused by a conviction of guilt and ill desert, which always characterizes true repentance. Contrition is the chief element in the lowliness of this passage. It is the opposite of that pride and self-righteousness which characterize the Pharisee. The proud man is sufficient in himself, both in strength and goodness, while he despises others. *Meekness*, on the contrary,—we mean when used in distinction from humility,—may be the feeling of one, actually and consciously, both strong and innocent. Though conscious of no feebleness, he is yet lowly; though unconscious of guilt, he is not boastful. In his relations to others, he exercises his power and rights with gentleness. He is not conceited, making arrogant pretensions; he does not even *claim* all that he actually merits. *Long-suffering* is the patient endurance of evils of every kind, but here of evils wrongly inflicted by others; that is, not easily angry. This last idea is more fully expressed in the subsequent expression — *forbearing one another in love*; meeting the frailties, and even unkindnesses, of others with gentleness and forgiveness. Love is both the ground or active principle of such conduct, and the virtue and moral worth of it. Love is the fulfilling of the law.<sup>1</sup> This is true, not only as being what the law requires, to love God and our neighbor, but as a constraining principle. This affection, like all others, acts on the will, and excites to activity. As here considered, it works no evil, but restrains and extinguishes anger. The last duty included in this exhortation is unity: *endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit*. — The exhortation was occasioned, and, in some degree, made necessary, by the unlikeness of manners, education, and prejudices of the two classes comprising the Ephesian Church—the Jews and the Gentiles.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 8—10.

They were liable to come into collision, and actually did so. What was true of them, is, in a greater or less degree, true of all Christians. From this view, it is not difficult to apprehend the meaning of the exhortation, to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit. It means something more than mere concord. The word *spirit* does not simply mean mind; it means the mind as affected by the divine Spirit, the condition of the human spirit, the heart, under the gracious influences of the Spirit of God. These gracious exercises of the believer are not designated spiritual so much because they belong to the finite spirit, the soul, as because they are the fruit of the Spirit. See 1 Cor. 2:15, where such a one is called the "spiritual." See, also, a catalogue of the fruits of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance — in Gal. 5:22, 23. Such "live in the Spirit," "walk in the Spirit," — which includes both the cause and the effect. They endeavor, therefore, to keep the unity of the Spirit, who cultivate, by watchfulness and prayer, these gracious tempers of heart. They who do this, invite and cherish that Spirit who is their author. These exercises belong to the renewed soul; they are its furniture, wrought and adorned by the hand of the Spirit. This unity is to be sustained *in the bond of peace*. This peaceful influence — this bond which ties so many hearts, meeting and mingling, like so many drops of water, into one — is, doubtless, love, of which the apostle had just spoken: *forbearing one another in love*. Love makes hearts kindred. The Spirit gives oneness of doctrinal views, but love is its strong bond. This is the *bond of peace*.

II. Verses 4—6. *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of*



*all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* — This unity is enforced by several instances of oneness in the gospel, and by their relations to it. *There is one body.* — The true church is the body of Christ. It is an illustration drawn from the human body, — an organism, a system composed of parts, of different members and functions. Though, without faith, this body is dead and loathsome, it is as essential to the development and manifestations of what is spiritual, as the functions of the body are to the activity of the soul. All disregard of it is as unwise as to neglect the body; and all contempt of it, exhibited by many, is a reflection on the wisdom of God. The fact of this relation of the members of the Christian Church to one another, their mutual dependence, corresponding duties, and moral symmetry, is beautifully exhibited in 1 Cor. 12. The body is not one member, but many. . . . God hath tempered the body together, that all members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Though each believer holds a separate, individual, and personal relation to Christ, — acting in some essential respects alone with Christ, — all are, nevertheless, one body. There is a sense in which the Church — all believers, the body of Christ — *is one*. The human family are an organism, holding a common relation to God the Father. If one member suffers, all do. But the unity of believers in Christ is still more intimate and mysterious. Members dead, or infectious, must be amputated. But rather let it be healed.<sup>1</sup>

This body is animated by *one spirit*, as the human body is by a single soul. The one spirit here is obviously the

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 13.

Holy Spirit. But, as we have said on verse third, it includes the active exercises of the soul, led by the Spirit. There is here a union between the human and divine agencies — so blended, and so coöperating, as to be *one*. The relation of the different members of the body is less intimate and less mysterious than that of the divine and human spirit in constituting a single animating principle — that of spiritual life. A body of professed disciples, having differing views of the teachings of the gospel, separate interests, peculiar prejudices, with conflicting wills, must be distracted, feeble, and unlovely. But a church filled with the fruits of the Spirit, though differing in intellectual abilities, in their spheres of activity, in their social relations, tastes, and temperaments, and as unequal in worldly possessions as various in looks and habits, is a beautiful reflection of the one centre of light and love — the indwelling Spirit and the renovated inner man. Like the kaleidoscope, it exhibits, in infinite variety, the moral beauty and glory of Christ. In them His Spirit lives; and through their diversified, sanctified powers He shines. The loveliness, as well as the holiness of this, is urged upon Christians as a motive to unity.

*Even as ye are called with one hope of your calling.* — Hope, in this passage, comprehends both the object of the believer's expectation — eternal life — and the expectation itself: the object to which the Christian is called, and the state of mind which it awakens. These affections, expectations, desires and aspirations, are generically alike in all Christians, as they centre in the same heavenly treasures. The inheritance is one, and the foretastes in all are kindred. This hope is one of the effects of that one Spirit *which seals every believer*.<sup>1</sup> To this hope all Christians are

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13; iv. 30

called by the invitations of the same gospel, and *effectually* called by the same Spirit. Hence both the fitness and the duty of unity.

This body of believers has *one Lord, one faith, one baptism*.—While the Spirit is the agent who works in us to will and to do, leads God's children and seals them unto the day of redemption, Christ is the *Lord* of the church. On Him all are dependent, to Him all are subject. He is head over all things to the church.<sup>1</sup> His authority is comprehended in *faith and baptism*. By faith we understand the system of doctrines which He has revealed in the gospel, and which He requires us to believe; by baptism, a symbolical rite to which His disciples are to submit. Christ is our only Master, His inspired teachings our only rule of faith and practice. He is Lord, and binds the conscience. He requires that we believe what He has revealed. His gospel is made known for the *obedience of the faith*.<sup>2</sup> This must require us to believe not only in the existence and perfections of Jehovah, the holiness of His moral government, the future existence of all men, both good and bad, and those retributions which must eternally separate between the righteous and the wicked,—all of which, with more or less distinctness, natural religion teaches,—but in His own mediation as God manifest in the flesh, and manifested to take away sins. This last is specially those “spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus,” those “unsearchable riches of Christ,” of which the apostle speaks in the earlier part of this epistle, and which are ever the burthen of his teachings. As Lord He requires faith in these doctrines, and on obedience to this faith He makes our salvation depend. He that believes shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 20—23.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xvi. 26.

We have but *one Lord*. Christ is God's only Son. Our profession of this faith is made in the act of *baptism*, to which Christ as our Lord has required us to submit. It is an expression or acknowledgment of our acceptance of Christ and His gospel. And although the act itself may not be saving, not being necessarily a spiritual act, and like every other work, without faith being dead, its voluntary rejection is an aggravated sin. Its rejection, if deliberate, is not only an act of disobedience to our *one Lord*, but reveals the irreconciliation of the heart to Him as Lord and Saviour. Baptism is sometimes administered in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,<sup>1</sup> at others in the name of Christ only.<sup>2</sup> The oneness of the three persons in the Godhead is the only principle on which this can be explained. There is some principle on which, if baptized in (or into) the name of either, we are in the name of all, being one God. But none are baptized either in the name of the Father alone, or of the Holy Ghost, while they are of Christ. The reason is obvious. When the persons are distinguished, Christ is our *Lord*. He is our Redeemer and Master. He is, under the mediatorial dispensation, the head of the church. The ordinance of baptism may be administered, therefore, not only with scriptural authority, but with as much doctrinal propriety, in the name of Christ alone, as of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. It may be less imposing, but, when properly understood, not less significant or binding.

Baptism into the name of Christ is an acknowledgment of His divine authority, and a solemn promise, or oath, that we will take Him as our only Lord — *one Lord*; that we will acknowledge, worship and obey no other. And as

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii 19.

<sup>2</sup> Acts viii 16; Rom. vi. 3; Gal. iii. 27.

there is but one God, Christ, in the act of baptism, is confessed to be this one God. And I will turn mine hand upon the little ones, . . . . and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; . . . . they shall call on my name and I will hear them, and I will say: It is my people; and they shall say: the *Lord* is my God.<sup>1</sup> A comparison of this passage with Matt. 26 : 31, shows that the Lord called "my God" is Christ, the *one Lord* of the apostle. One of the methods in which this prophecy is fulfilled is seen in the rite of baptism.

The promissory character of baptism, the obligation it involves as a solemn vow, is graphically illustrated in 1 Cor. 10 : 1, 2. The Israelites, passing under the cloud and in the sea, *were all baptized unto Moses*. That is, by this act, they acknowledged Moses to be their leader, and gave a tacit but solemn pledge that they would obey him in all their wanderings and perils through the wilderness to the land of promise. The analogy between this and baptism into, or unto, or in the name of, Christ, consists not merely in the fact that, as the believer is buried in water, so the Israelites were buried within the walls of the sea, and the overhanging cloud of the divine presence, but essentially in the corresponding pledges given. And the admonition is thus rendered forcible, not to tempt Christ, as some of them tempted, and were destroyed. Disobedience after such a vow is aggravated guilt.

Baptism is also *a symbol*. A "creed," or a summary of "articles of faith" adopted by a body of believers, is a symbol expressed in words. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are emblems, or outward signs of an inward spiritual grace. They are metaphorical representations, not unlike devices which cluster into a close compass

<sup>1</sup> Zach. xiii 7—9.

several qualities or events having some common resemblance between the thing representing and that represented. This resemblance frequently relates to several associated principles or facts, but has some one prominent, around which subordinate ones are associated; like the plough for general agriculture, or the sheaf for harvest, or the union of hands for mutual aid. In the Eucharist the bread and wine are significant of all that Christ suffered for sinners, and, which is the leading idea, life-giving efficacy and comfort. This is my body, *broken for you*. This is my blood, shed for the remission of sins. *Baptism*, in the same manner, is a physical representation of several of the leading truths of the gospel, and is specially significant of the experience and hopes of the believer. The element, water, is a beautiful symbol of spiritual purification.<sup>1</sup> If the didactic character of the rite terminated here, the amount of water or mode of its application would be of no importance. But if it be still further significant, one portion of the symbol is as essential as another. If Christ teaches us in this rite not only that we must be purified from sin, but also what is the *experience* of the soul in this process of purification, this “washing of regeneration;” then, to mutilate this device or symbol, is as unwarrantable as to expunge from the text of Scripture passages of intrinsic value. Regeneration is represented frequently in the New Testament by death — an act of *dying to sin*. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?<sup>2</sup> We are said to be *dead with Christ*.<sup>3</sup> This death is viewed in the light of a crucifixion. Our old man is crucified.<sup>4</sup> I am crucified with Christ.<sup>5</sup> The principal analogy here between Christ’s

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 22; Eph. v. 26; Tit. iii. 5; 1 Cor. vi. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 2; 1 Peter ii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. vi. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. vi. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

dying on the cross and regeneration, is, that the end is the same in each—the *destruction of sin*. But this is more explicitly set forth in the passages: They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.<sup>1</sup> By whom (Christ) the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.<sup>2</sup> The cross put to death Christ—the moral efficacy of that cross destroys sin in the human soul. The dead are *buried*. Those dead with Christ are emblematically buried with Him by baptism into death.<sup>3</sup> Ingenuity has been displayed in obscuring this plain allusion to the mode and significance of this rite.

The doctrine of the resurrection is here taught; and in the act of baptism, professed, with equal clearness. This includes first the spiritual resurrection experienced in regeneration. Paul says to Christians, In baptism ye are also risen with Him.<sup>4</sup> Not only buried with Him, but *risen* with Him. If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.<sup>5</sup> The renewal of the soul by God is compared to the power of Christ's resurrection.<sup>6</sup> It is, in the second place, a symbol of the resurrection of the body of Christ, which is an earnest of our own final resurrection. "Else"—that is, if there be no resurrection of the dead—"what shall they do which are baptized for the dead?" The meaning of which is obvious, "those baptized on account of the dead; that is, why baptized into a *belief of the resurrection of the dead*, if in fact the dead rise not."<sup>7</sup>

Thus we see that the ordinance of baptism is full of meaning and solemnity. It is not only a profession, but an oath, attended with an act more significant, and more impressive, than laying the hand on the Bible, or raising it in the presence of the magistrate; purified, dead, buried,

1 Gal. v. 24.

4 Col. ii. 12.

7 Robinson's Greek and English

2 Gal. vi. 14.

5 Col. iii. 1.

Lexicon of the N. T.

3 Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12.

6 Phil. iii. 10.

and raised with Christ. If submitted to understandingly, with a deliberate, prayerful consecration of ourselves to Christ our only Lord, it must exert on us through life a practical influence of unspeakable value; restraining from sin, stimulating the believer to pious activity, inspiring him with hope and peace in death, brightening his prospect of a holy and blessed resurrection.

*One God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in you all.* — One Spirit calls — both invites and sanctifies. Christ, the one Lord, redeems and rules as the head of the church, the mediatorial King. There is One God and Father of all. He is the universal sovereign. *Above all* beings, animate and inanimate, He has universal supremacy. As a sovereign, He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. He is *through all*: everywhere present, penetrating, pervading all, sustaining all, and at will energizing into life. *And in you all.* Or, as some editions have it, in *us* all; meaning apparently to limit the precious expression to His more immediate connection with *believers*; the indwelling of God in them as in a habitation. He is over all and through all His creatures; but His people are filled with all the fulness of God.

The unity of believers is enforced by the unity of the Godhead. There is not only one Spirit, one Lord, one God the Father, but these are all one and the same God. Everything in religion inspires the union of believers. There is no wonder that the apostle should base his future exhortation to a godly life on Christian union.

III. This unity is not inconsistent with a diversity of spiritual gifts, furnished by Christ; in which is specified the institution of the gospel ministry, as prophets, apostles, etc.

Verse 7. *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* — The duty



of humility, meekness, long-suffering, and forbearance, specially of unity of spirit, has been enforced by the instances of unity in the gospel they profess. It is now enforced by the consideration that, though an arduous work, *adequate grace* has been furnished by Christ. The provision recognized in this verse is general; all spiritual aid, all means and influences, necessary to promote our sanctification. These aids are obviously, as everywhere taught in the Bible, the Spirit, revealed truth, — which is the sword of the Spirit, — together with the various ordinances of the church. This grace is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Christ is both the author and dispenser of these gifts. To Christ's grace there is a divine fulness, and of this fulness have all we received.<sup>1</sup> This fulness is inexhaustible. We cannot receive all of it. We have not the capacity, nor the necessity. As a sovereign Lord He dispenses it to us, in both wisdom and love. He who died for us will withhold no needed grace, if sought. My grace shall be sufficient for you.<sup>2</sup> Our duty is that it be not bestowed on us in vain.<sup>3</sup> This grace is both a cause and an effect. Startle not, gentle reader, as if this were a contradiction. It is a mystery, but not an absurdity. Growth in grace is both a gift and an acquisition. Christ lives in the believer; while to him that hath, that is, hath a disposition to use what he already has, shall be given more abundantly. Both facts are revealed, and must be accepted. Nor is it to be overlooked that this grace is given to *every one of us*; to all believers. As there are none for whom this adequate grace is not provided, so there are no exceptions to the duty of mature piety.

Verses 8—10. *Wherefore he saith, When He ascended up*

<sup>1</sup> John i. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 10; 2 Cor. vi. 1.

*on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that He ascended, what is it but that He descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.*—These verses are parenthetical. Having spoken of the “gifts” which Christ gives His disciples, the apostle recalls a passage of David,<sup>1</sup> adducing it as an illustration of the manner in which Christ procured for us these gifts. The subject of *saith* (“he”) is not in the original. It may be he (the Psalmist) saith, it (the Scripture) saith, or God saith. *When He (Christ) ascended up on high*, refers to His ascension from Olivet, in the presence of His disciples, when God exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour.<sup>2</sup> *He led captivity captive.*—The mission of Christ to earth was not only to overcome the devil, but to destroy his works. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.<sup>3</sup> Not only to conquer him, but to recover those whom he had ensnared. Christ leads “captivity captive.”<sup>4</sup> The conqueror and his captives in sin are led in glorious triumph, as trophies are brought back by a victorious prince returning from the slaughter. Besides this, sin and death are the enemies of our race. By the cross Christ takes away the sin of the world; that is, its destructive power; and by His resurrection and ascension He triumphed over death. Death has no longer to the believer its “sting,” nor the grave its victory.<sup>5</sup> *And gave gifts unto man.*—This is an allusion to the frequent custom of returning conquerors, who, on entering the city in triumph, made displays of their rich spoils by distributing them among the multitude. While the allusion is designed

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxviii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Acts v. 31.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John iii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 26.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 54—57.

to honor Christ as a conqueror, and as generous, it also gives a graphic idea of the *abundance* of His grace. Having in mind the *ascent* of the returning conqueror, his going up to Jerusalem in a triumphal procession, scattering, as he advanced, his largesses to the admiring throng, he calls to mind the ascension of Christ to the right hand of God; which again reminds him, *by contrast*, of the Redeemer's descent from heaven to earth. *He descended first into the lower parts of the earth.*—He died and was buried. To be buried, is to enter actually into the earth. The burial of Christ was significant of His humiliation. Perhaps, however, it means nothing more than that in His advent He descended from heaven to this lower world. This *descended first* implies His prior existence on high, in glory with the Father; that previously He had been *with* God. In His descent He became a man, a servant; was treated as a malefactor. He died and was *buried*. Taking the place which the sinner deserves, and actually receives, is a part of the atonement, as well as His obedience and suffering.

But His descent, or humiliation, is followed by *exaltation*. *He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens.*—Above the material heavens, to the *third heavens*.<sup>1</sup> *Far above.*—As far above as the Deity is above creation. Though He had glory with the Father before His descent, yet his exaltation after His resurrection was *peculiar*. It was that of God manifest in the flesh. And on account, or as the reward, of His work of love, we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor.<sup>2</sup> *That He might fill all things.*—This is the object of His ascension. On earth His divinity was vol-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ii. 9.

untarily restricted; in heaven, without restriction, He pervades with His presence and perfections, the universe; with special reference, however, to the completion of the work of redemption. This was His mission to earth; for the perfecting of it is His ascension; that He may *give gifts unto men*. Not only is He, in view of His triumphs on earth, anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows,<sup>1</sup> but He is on high fulfilling the promises.

In the sixty-eighth psalm, He is said to have *received* gifts for man. In our epistle, He *gave gifts*. As mediator, He must first receive before He gives; both are necessary parts of the whole; the psalmist obviously selecting one, the apostle the other. A correct idea of the relations of Christ, both to the Father and to His saints, relieves the subject of all possible difficulty. He *receives* from the one, and *gives* to the other. The doctrines of the Bible contribute essentially to the right interpretation of it. Though an erroneous system of doctrines will embarrass the inquirer, and may corrupt the truth, the harmony of Scriptural teachings should never be overlooked. Philology, or an accurate knowledge of language, is the first qualification of an interpreter; an acquaintance with the circumstances of the inspired writer and his readers, or with the course of history, is important; a right state of heart—that it be imbued with love, and a spirit of obedience, etc.—is needed to quicken the perceptive powers of the soul; but not least in importance is a *just and comprehensive system of evangelical truths*. Each doctrine is related to every other. Their symmetry is a part of their glory. And though some may have exercised a vain confidence in their imaginary and unwarranted systems, the absence of theological system is the error of the age.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. i. 9.

Another difficulty experienced by some in relation to this passage is removed in a way equally satisfactory. Two principles, common in the inspired writings, are to be recognized in this passage, which the apostle quotes. One is, that what in the Old Testament is referred to God, is in the New Testament applied to Christ. In the Old Testament, *God* triumphs over His enemies, and *loads us with His benefits*. The *apostle* says *Christ* leads the triumphs and gives gifts. The same principle is seen in Heb. 1 : 10—12 and Ps. 102 : 25—27. Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure. . . . Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail. Here *God* is acknowledged as the universal Creator, and as unchangeable. The writer to the Hebrews, also, that he might exalt *Christ* above creatures, even angels, ascribes these works and attributes to Him. This is frequent in the New Testament. The solution is obvious. Christ is God manifest in the flesh.

The other principle involved in the passage, is, that much of the Old Testament history is typical of the dispensation of the gospel. Though the events and institutions of the first testament had their specific application and end, their import was not thus confined. Though real in a limited respect, they were in a wider sense “shadows of good things to come;” — a principle of interpretation liable to abuse, but which, we are confident, is indispensable to a correct and lucid exposition of the word of God. If any one objects to the idea that an event or institution has a double meaning, — the one relating to the present time, the other to the distant and more comprehensive future, — let him be satisfied to consider both present and future as parts of one whole.

Let it be granted that there are common principles running through all the dispensations, patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian, all having a mutual bearing on eternal life as an end; and while there is no "double sense," there are *various and repeated applications of a common principle*. God promised by Moses<sup>1</sup> to raise up a prophet like unto himself. This promise plainly had its fulfilment in every prophet till Christ, in whom it chiefly and sublimely centered.<sup>2</sup> A careful study of these passages will throw much light on the manner in which the government of God, specially the scheme of redemption, was unfolded. Each prophet had his own chronological mission; but all were types of Christ, and spoke of His time. "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, *as many as have spoken*, have likewise foretold of these days."<sup>3</sup> And so in this passage in Ephesians. All of God's victories over His enemies are pervaded by one principle, and if not formal types of Christ's victory over sin and death, are analogous to it. We would say types of it, intended to inculcate faith in God in all things—the coming of Christ, however, and the triumphs of His cross, being the glorious consummation of all.

Verse 11. *And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.*—In the seventh verse the apostle had spoken of the grace given unto us as a *general* influence, including the internal work of grace on the heart,—Christ dwelling in us by faith, specified more fully in ch. 2:16—19. In the eleventh verse he returns to the gifts of Christ, having more special reference to the external agencies which Christ has provided for the church—the different classes of ministers. The twelfth and fourteenth chapters of 1 Cor. throw addi-

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xviii. 15—19.

<sup>2</sup> Acts. iii. 21—23.

<sup>3</sup> Acts iii. 24.

tional light on these offices. It is evident that several of these functions were discharged by the same individual. This fact seems to be indicated in the grammatical construction of "pastors and teachers," classed together as if one. Nor is it to be supposed that each church had all of these officers and teachers, much less is it probable they had them all at the same time. All were more or less inspired; the apostles permanently, the prophets occasionally, and specially enabled to interpret what other inspired teachers had communicated. If what we have just said be true, that different gifts united often in the same individual, then an evangelist, or a pastor, or a common religious teacher, might occasionally prophesy. But the important point is the *abundant* and *varied* means graciously furnished by Christ *for the perfecting of the saints*.

IV. Verses 12—15. *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.* — The design of these gifts of Christ, whether the Spirit's influences directly on the inner man, or the external ministry of His appointed servants, is to increase the piety of believers. *For the perfecting of the saints.* — The perfection of the saints, in the sense of absolute sinlessness, will be realized only after death. There is, however, a sense in which perfection, as taught in Scripture, is realized in this life.

Paul says,<sup>1</sup> “We speak wisdom among them that are *perfect*.” Such are not sinless, holy as God is holy, but relatively, compared with the unsanctified and unenlightened. Christians, specially those deeply imbued with the knowledge and spirit of the gospel, are called, in the fifteenth verse of the same chapter, *spiritual*; a term obviously synonymous with *perfect*, in the sixth verse. Such are filled with the Holy Ghost, are led by the Spirit. According to this meaning, perfection is attainable in this life, but not in its absolute degree. This will be realized only by the justified spirit made perfect—by those delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. To this the believer aspires—for it he prays and strives. He is conscious that everything short of this, be his attainments what they may, is blameworthy; and hence his struggles against sinful propensities. Perhaps in no case does the warfare cease till our final victory through Him that loved us. Not only does the Bible teach, but conscience witnesses, that all deficiencies, as well as positive transgressions, are inexcusable. Absolute sinlessness is required of us simply on the ground of our free moral agency, which accountability is not destroyed by the fall of man. The guilt of sin, however, is aggravated, when committed in opposition to, or even in neglect of, grace. Not only is there sufficient internal grace in the fulness of Christ, but all requisite external means are provided by Christ. *For the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*—The preposition translated *for*, which precedes the clause *perfecting of the saints*, differs in the Greek from that in either of the subsequent clauses, *for the work of the ministry*, and *for the edifying of the body of Christ*.



The first relates to the *ultimate* object of Christ's gifts; that is, the apostles, etc., were given as an ultimate object for the perfection, etc. The other two relate to the subordinate design: to *minister* to the perfection of the saints, or, in the use of different language, but giving the same idea, to *build up* Christians; since the work of the ministry is often compared to building, both as laying the foundation and rearing the superstructure.<sup>1</sup>

There are several distinct thoughts suggested by this passage relative to Christian perfection. One is, that regeneration is only the beginning and foundation of that character which is to be fitted for heaven. It is the first link in the chain, of which there is subsequently an infinite series of links. It may be said to include all that is to come, even the infinite series; because there is given to the heart a religious susceptibility, which is the earnest of progressive holiness, and so of eternal life. The beginning is a radical change of the character; the future is all of it a development, and is gradual. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."<sup>2</sup> Hence the injunction, "*grow in grace.*"<sup>3</sup>

This progressive development has two points to be attained. One kind of perfection is to be realized in this life, — to be spiritually minded, — in which the believer presents himself a willing offering, holy and acceptable; the other is unto a *perfect man*. This is the perfection not only of a finite being in distinction from the infinite Jehovah, but of a man in distinction from angels. The nature of the perfection depends on the peculiar endowments of the subject, and also on his relations to other beings. The adjective *perfect*, which qualifies *man*, is significant, — meaning the *end*, or the limit of his capacity. The point

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 20; Col. ii. 7; 1 Cor. iii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Mark iv. 28.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Peter iii. 18.

to be attained is a religious progress, till every person is fully employed in loving and honoring God. As we are dependent on Christ for this progress, the idea is repeated with reference to this fact: *unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*; unto the degree of development, or adult growth, to which the grace of Christ, acting on such capabilities, is adequate. There is in this expression a peculiar repletteness. It seems, at first view, encumbered with terms. The naked idea, however, is that the fulness of Christ's grace is not only adequate to make, and shall ultimately make, believers sinless, but shall forever develop the intellectual, spiritual powers of the soul, according to their susceptibility. A perfect man, will be one whom Christ shall make, and in eternity shall sustain, *complete*. This is heaven — the hope of our calling.

"O, glorious day! O, blest abode!  
I shall be near, and like my God!"

Another fact given under this doctrine of perfection, is, that it includes *all* Christians — *the body of Christ* — meaning the entire church. Perfection is as much the duty and the privilege of one Christian as of another; and Christ's grace is equally adequate to *all*.

*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.* — Here is again the idea of *progress*: We come into this state of unity. Faith and knowledge involve each other, but are not synonymous. A correct knowledge of few terms in Scripture is so important as of these; and, though we have once and again attended to their complex meaning, we hazard a repetition. Both words include perception and emotion; that is, an exercise of the intellect and of the heart. In faith, greater stress is laid on the emotion. Faith works by love, and

includes in lively exercise every religious affection. No other faith is saving. Knowledge recognizes more distinctly the perception of the understanding, but is not religious nor discerning, when the affections are not holy. Though in knowledge there is more of the intellect, and in faith more of the heart, the union of both makes the *perfect man*. This unity of faith and knowledge is, therefore, both an end to be attained, as a part of our perfection, and also the means of attaining it. The more full this union of faith and knowledge, the more rapid our spiritual advancement, and the nearer also are we to the end of our struggles.

The unity, then, is that of faith and knowledge, and not of the members of the church. In proportion as all progress in faith and knowledge, they will have *common* views of Christian doctrine. There is one Body, and one Spirit, and *one Faith*. But the point held up to view here is the perfect reciprocal influence of faith and knowledge on each other as exercises of the individual mind. This unity of faith and knowledge centres in *the Son of God*, as its object; a distinct, comprehensive, and *appreciating* view of the person and work of Christ, as the Redeemer.

This perfection of the saints is seen also in their Christian stability: *that we henceforth be no more children*. Children are weak in judgment as well as body, fickle in their purposes, and inconstant in their habits. To some extent, this is excusable in children, wanting in experience and strength, but unlovely and blamable in full-grown men. The idea is carried still further: *tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine*. Tossed, agitated like the unsteady motion of waves; variously driven by suddenly shifting, or *chopped winds*. Some

persons are never settled in their religious views. Their minds are awakened to inquiry, often intensely so, but are never truly enlightened. They never rest on a distinct and firm conviction. Not only does every new doctrine captivate them, but old truths seen under new phases unsettle their judgments. They are agitated, like waves by the wind, or *driven about* as light objects by the whirlwind. Such make no progress in piety. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."<sup>1</sup> They are "unstable souls," whom wicked men easily "beguile."<sup>2</sup> Such wrest the Scriptures to "their own destruction."<sup>3</sup>

It may be asked, may a Christian never change his religious opinions? Doubtless he may. But, in doing so, he should be governed by the following rules: Having adopted his opinions first, cautiously, candidly, and prayerfully, he may change them only after he has spent more time in the new investigation than in the first; under new and improved opportunities of knowledge; till he has offered more prayer for divine guidance; and all under a better frame of religious feeling. These fickle Christians are ever exposed to the evil influences of malicious men. *By sleight of men.*—Reference is made to a sly artifice often used by gamblers (*cunning craftiness* is in Greek a single word, compounded of *all* and *work*); doing everything in their power, regardless of right, to accomplish an end. This is done not only intentionally, but *secretly*, as seen in what follows. *Whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*—They lie in ambush, that they may unexpectedly fall upon their prey. These tempters take a malicious pleasure in worrying and corrupting the children of God; and those thus corrupted, though actual Christians (or they would not be designated as children),<sup>4</sup> greatly enfeeble the

1 Gen. xlix. 4.

2 2 Peter ii. 14.

3 2 Peter iii. 16.

4 Babes, 1 Cor. iii. 1.

church, and mar its beauty. They are to be treated, by those of more mature piety, with great forbearance; to be loved, pitied, instructed, and prayed for.

That Paul wrote this with a distinct prophetic knowledge of what this church were to experience, is made probable by his address to the elders of this church, when at Miletus: <sup>1</sup> “Grievous wolves [false teachers] shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” The condition of the church at Ephesus countenances such an opinion.<sup>2</sup>

V. And, finally, this diversity in unity is exhibited as centering in Christ, as the uniting and nourishing principle. All are fitly joined together, mutually ministering to each other, attaining growth and strength through the principle of love.

Verses 15, 16. *But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things; which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.—Speaking the truth.*—The original does not confine the word to *speaking*. Though speaking is a leading idea in the word, as ordinarily used, it has here a more general meaning:—being candid, sincere; doing and acting the truth, as well as uttering it; not thinking one thing, and doing another; not speaking or acting contrary to our feelings. The injunction was manifestly suggested by the two characters just exhibited,—the fickle, those tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine,—which shows that truth is not sincerely regarded,—and also those who, *in cunning craftiness, lie in wait to deceive*; who, instead of loving the truth, love a lie.<sup>3</sup> To

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. ii 1—3.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xxi. 27.

speak the truth *in love*, is, therefore, to be influenced in all things by a sincere regard to truth. Not only should we be truthful in our intercourse with men, but our religious opinions must all be sincere—embraced and promulgated with an honest conviction that they are true, and are precious. Both the deceiver and the deceived are held up to our reprobation in 2 Thess. 2:8—12. The deceiver's coming is after the working of Satan; and in them that perish there is "all deceivableness of unrighteousness," because they receive not the love of the truth (that is, they receive not the truth in the love of it) that they might be saved. They have pleasure in unrighteousness. A truth-loving spirit, both in word and in doctrine, is the spirit of the true believer. There is no piety without love. This affection is exercised not only toward personal objects, God and man, but toward the truth. From this love of truth, love of holiness is inseparable; and intensity is given to this affection by the gracious character of gospel truth. He, also, who acts from love, is not only moved by a right motive, but by one that gives to the individual character simplicity and loveliness.

The apostle enjoins this, that Christians *may grow up into Him in all things*.—We still find the doctrine of religious progress. That we *may grow up into Him*; that is, into Christ. Some translate *unto Him*, as in the thirteenth verse: "unto a perfect man;" "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This would limit the idea to the mere *degree* of growth; whereas, according to our translation, a fuller and wider meaning is allowed. Christ is not merely the standard, but He nourishes the piety of the believer. At our conversion, we are inserted, by faith, into Christ, as the graft is into the stock of the tree. Time and growth increase this union; the branch

penetrates deeper, and becomes more close in its connection, and drinks in increasing nourishment. Christ is the *head*, from which proceeds the animating principle of the body. *In all things*.—Not only is every joint of every member of the body thus pervaded and strengthened, but it affects every voluntary action of each member. He who has grown up into Christ, is made Christ-like in his habits of thought, feelings, plans of life; in his speech and actions; in commerce, in politics, in his intellectual pursuits and tastes; in social enjoyments, and in domestic cares; in health and sickness, in pleasure and toil, in life and death. The injunction is thus to grow up *into Christ in all things*.

*From whom*;—that is, from Christ, as a source of spiritual life, and growth in His causal connection with the church, which is His mystical body. *The whole body*;—each member of the church, in his associated relation. The importance of the church as an association in which there is a mutual dependence and aid, is here forcibly taught. Each individual's growth is made dependent on his connection with his fellow-disciples. Whatever amount of grace Christ may give to individual believers *separately*, much of it is given through this connection. This union, and its contribution to our growth in grace, is distinctly recognized in the expression, *fitly joined together*;—like the joints of the body, bound together with ligaments; or the parts of a frame, which, previously fitted, are joined together.<sup>1</sup> *And compacted*;—in which a still closer union is expressed,—knit together. Love creates an indissoluble union between believers. A selfish, isolated Christian, having little fellowship with his fellow-Christians, is a moral absurdity. God's love shed abroad in the heart,—that is, manifested to the consciousness of the believer,

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 21.

— not only flows back to Him, but out and around, pervading and binding together every member of the body. *By that which every joint supplieth*, — is only another form of expression for the same general idea. Each, by this connection (joint) with all others, ministers spiritual aid, not as Christ the original Source does, but as an *active* medium of communication. This mutual contribution to the spiritual growth of each member, is *according to the effectual working in the measure of every part*; or according to the energy (which is the meaning of “effectual working”) of each Christian, which is in proportion to the measure of grace given him by Christ. Each Christian’s usefulness to the church, and, through the church, to the world, is the measure of the love of Christ constraining him.

The idea of progress is repeatedly brought forward: *Maketh increase of the body: unto the edifying of itself in love.* — Advancement in the divine life is illustrated by the art of building; or, the body makes its increase gradually, as in the erection of a house. In one sense, the increase of the body is self-effected. Though the animating principle — the life which pervades the body — flows from Christ, the head, still, the Christian *cultivates* his own piety. His increase is by *edifying himself* (itself) *in love*. This affection, whether viewed as a filial spirit cherished toward God as a Father, or a grateful attachment to Christ as a Saviour, is an essential element of true piety, and is the bond of union, the cement of the church. A nominal church, without love, is a skeleton without life. But, without a church, individual piety would be stunted in its stature, and of feeble force. This is the third time in this chapter that the apostle has mentioned *love* (verses 2, 15, 16), while in verse third it is obviously the *bond of peace*.



## AN EXHORTATION TO HOLINESS.

Verses 17—24. This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

## ANALYSIS.

*An exhortation to holiness: by setting before their minds the opposite example of the Gentiles, who walk in the vanity of their mind, in consequence of — ignorance — alienation from the life of God, vs. 17—19. — This exhortation is enforced by their knowledge of the teachings of Christ, vs. 20, 21. — For the attainment of this holiness, they are exhorted to be renewed in the spirit of their mind; the change of character and conduct attending which is compared to putting off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and putting on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness, vs. 22—24.*

I. Verses 17—19. *This I say, therefore.*—Since such spiritual blessings have been bestowed, and you hold such intimate and responsible relations to your brethren. *I say and testify in the Lord.*—In this language there is both solemnity and earnestness. The apostle calls upon his brethren to bear witness to the justness of the injunction which follows. The definition given in the lexicons of the verb to testify, *in this grammatical form*, is not merely to testify, but to exhort solemnly—to charge. *In the Lord.*—That is, not only with Christian sincerity, but with the authority of Christ; instructed and commissioned by Him: *that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.* Most of this epistle has special reference to those members of the church gathered from the heathen. These having professed a pure religion, of substantial realities and immortal hopes, a broad line of distinction should be drawn between them and other Gentiles not converted, but *who walk in the vanity of their mind.* Vanity here means *foolish perverseness*. Frequently it means empty, senseless. But it sometimes conveys an additional idea of waywardness, as well as foolishness; wicked, as well as unprofitable. The idolatry of the heathen is vain; their pursuits of life are temporal, and without substantial value. Compared with the durable riches and incorruptible treasures of the Christian's hopes, they are vanity. Their pleasures are empty amusements, often low, and unworthy of rational beings; never like the believer's, which are pure, and full of glory. This *vanity* has its seat in the *mind*,—infecting all the powers of the soul, the understanding, the desires, passions, conscience, and will. The term *mind*, as here used, is equivalent to heart, as frequently employed in the Scriptures. The apostle, though speaking of the Gentiles as a mass, uses the

singular number,—*their mind*, not minds. All have one; that is, similar moral characters. As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man. The elements of this complex idea of “mind” are analyzed in what follows, and each is separately considered. *Having their understanding darkened, and being alienated from the life of God.*—The term *understanding*, in this clause, is more restricted than the word *mind*, in the preceding. It refers exclusively to the condition of the discerning faculty. The soul is deprived of light, and is filled with darkness. It neither understands its own interest, nor perceives its obligations. The blindness of the depraved heart is repeatedly set forth in the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

They are also *alienated from the life of God*. This is the other element in the word *mind*, as used in the seventeenth verse—having respect exclusively to the *religious feelings*. They are *alienated*, or estranged, from the life of God. They take no more interest in matters of religion—its duties, enjoyments, or hopes—than an alien does in a foreign land, in which he may chance to travel, or temporarily to reside. He has in it no citizenship, no relations, possessions, or sympathies. The Christian has his conversation (citizenship) in heaven;<sup>2</sup> the unbeliever, on earth. The heart of each is where its treasure is. Ignorance and alienation of heart not only coëxist in the depraved heart, but exert on each other a reciprocal influence. Depraved affections blind the understanding, and cause a reprobate judgment in matters of religion. Ignorance, on the other hand, is a fruitful source of evil desires and purposes. This alienation from the life of God is accounted for on

<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter i. 9; Rev. iii. 17; John xii. 40; Rom. xi. 7; 2 Cor. iii. 14; iv. 4; 1 John ii. 11; Mark iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 20.

this principle: *through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.*—The relation of these two clauses to each other is not obvious. The probable meaning is, that the first refers to the *exercises* of the mind, its false judgments, erroneous views, which lead to alienation of heart from a life of piety; that the last clause—*because of the blindness of their heart*—indicates a deeper cause of this alienation—the cause, even, of this *ignorance*. The word translated *blindness*, means rather the cause of ignorance, than ignorance itself. Blindness is not merely not seeing: it is the *reason why* we do not see. There is, indeed, in the original word, translated blindness, a strongly marked moral depravity, obtuseness, or want of quick religious sensibility. It is the *heart* that is blind, stupid, insensible. The perception is defective, because the perceptive faculty is impaired; the sensibilities are wholly wanting, sluggish, or corrupt, because the sensitivity, or the underlying susceptibility of the soul, is obtuse; quick neither to apprehend nor to feel the claims of God. This is consistent with what follows: *who being past feeling.* The reason why they are *alienated*, is their insensibility. They are incapable of feeling. They are *past feeling*. This implies progress, both in ignorance and in insensibility, to a fearful extent. Conscience dictates indistinctly and unsteadily; it impels to duty feebly, if at all; sin is committed with little or no shame or remorse; the judgment-day is forgotten, or thought of with indifference, if not with contempt. This underlying depraved tendency of the soul, is developed into wicked appetites and affections, and these, again, into external vices. Such *have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*—In proportion to their insensibility to religion,—to its claims and pleasures,—

their evil propensities strengthen, and such abandon themselves to their influences. Lasciviousness is a state of the heart; not its underlying corrupt tendency, but its actual depravity in exercise, springing up from a corrupt moral nature. It means irregular, undue, and wicked desire. It ordinarily is confined to animal desires, wantonness, and, in this passage, to *Jewdness*. There results from these base propensities a corresponding practice. *They work all uncleanness with greediness*.—Stimulated by these passions, they abandon themselves to vile practices without restraint—greedily. For a graphic and more detailed account of these vices of the heathen, see Rom. 1:21—32. The reciprocal influence of ignorance and the depraved desires, causing *progress* in vicious practices, and specially the prevalence of their licentiousness, are seen alike in both epistles. In Romans, *God* is said to give up, or abandon, the wicked. *God* gave them up to uncleanness.<sup>1</sup> *God* gave them up to vile affections.<sup>2</sup> *God* gave them over to a reprobate mind to *do* those things which are not convenient.<sup>3</sup> In our epistle, by the same apostle, the wicked are said to have given *themselves* over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness. Both are, of course, true. This is only one of the numerous instances of the twofold agency in voluntary, accountable actions,—the divine and the human.

We are not to suppose that all Gentiles *practise* every class of sins here included; nor that all who do are equally abandoned in practice. They are vile in different degrees; they all sin. All are ignorant and blind, and, as a body, are past feeling; but not all equally *greedy* in the commission of sin. Such is not the condition of our fallen natures. History does not warrant such a view of human

1 Rom. i. 24.

2 Rom. i. 26.

3 Rom. i. 28.

depravity, nor does it accord with the experience of missionaries to the heathen. There is no true *piety*; but there are some natural virtues, feeble and disfigured as they may be. Some, more than others, have strengthened their vicious propensities. Some are subject to more stimulating temptations than others. The end of all is destruction; but all fuel is not equally fitted for the flames. There are degrees of depravity in the unrenewed, as well as degrees of sanctification in the regenerated.

In the first part of the second chapter of this epistle, this depravity is declared to be seated in our moral constitution;—we are by *nature* the children of wrath. We commence our moral career depraved, and our first moral developments are alienated from the life of God. We *naturally* choose what is wrong and offensive to God. We are dead in sins. All that is here said of the heathen, is equally true in *principle* of the race. Christ died for all; and if Christ died for all, *then were all dead*.<sup>1</sup> The vilest practices of the heathen only show what human nature is capable of, and *tends to*, unless restrained either by the providences of God or by His grace. There is no piety in any man till made a “new creature;” yet there are *natural virtues*. This is true of the heathen, under the restraining influence of natural conscience and the light of natural religion. In Christian lands the Bible exerts a stronger restraint; and, though always short of actual holiness till born of the Spirit, these social virtues are sufficient to preserve the race from intolerable misery and from utter annihilation. But the broad distinction between the natural heart and that of the “new creature,” is, that the former is susceptible to evil, the latter to holiness. The degree of development in each depends chiefly on the circumstances under which they are placed.

II. This exhortation is enforced by their knowledge of the teachings of Christ.

Verse 20, 21. *But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus.*—The personal character of Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled; the precepts of His gospel are all pure; the spirit it requires and awakens is also pure and lovely. Nothing can so strikingly exhibit the impurity and unloveliness of sin, as a thorough study of the character of Christ, and of the doctrines of His gospel. The form of the expression—*learned Christ*—shows that the principles of the gospel are not to be separated from His person and character. To be learned in religion, is to be learned as to the person of its author. *If so be ye have heard Him, and been taught by Him.*—*If so be*, that is, as certainly as ye have heard, etc. To have *heard* Christ, and to have been *taught* by Him, are essentially the same,—a repetition of the idea in other words, to give emphasis, and to protract the contemplation of the thought. To hear Christ, does not mean merely to hear about Him; to be taught by Him, or in Him, means to be truly taught—instruction sealed by the Spirit. To be taught of God, is to be spiritually enlightened and drawn to Christ. “Every man,” says the Saviour, “that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”<sup>1</sup> To be taught as *truth is in Jesus*, means to know and to embrace all that is peculiar to Christ, and the gospel of our salvation; not only all that distinguishes truth from error, but the scheme of mercy from natural religion. This gospel, however, is not only a scheme of mercy, but a system of absolute moral purity. A knowledge of this must have for its fruit purity of life; a walk

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 44, 45.

worthy of such a calling must be in all “lowliness and meekness of spirit.” Not only does such instruction impose on its disciples the duty of holiness, but it must be productive of holiness. To walk, therefore, as other Gentiles walk, would prove the profession false and their faith dead.

The connection between truth and sanctification is here obvious. See also John 17 : 17 ; 1 Peter 1 : 22. This is true of the law. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.”<sup>1</sup> This is emphatically true of the gospel. “For it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.”<sup>2</sup>

III. To attain to this holiness, the heart must be changed. This renovation must be so radical, that the change is compared to an entire transformation of the person.

Verses 22—24. *That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind ; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*—All permanent and accepted reformation of manners depends on regeneration ; hence the injunction, to *be renewed in the spirit of your mind*. The spirit of the mind respects its disposition. We speak of a gentle spirit, a generous spirit ; a revengeful, a covetous, a haughty spirit ; a spirit of prayer and forgiveness ; a teachable spirit, high spirited, and a tame spirit. In all these instances the *habit* of the mind, and so its *tendency*, is implied. It is the spirit of the natural heart to hate holiness, and to love sin ; to disobey God, and choose death. Such a spirit must be radically changed, before we shall walk worthy of our voca-

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xix. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 16.



tion. What the nature of this change is, may be learnt by the character of the subject to be renewed. *Former conversation*, means the habits of life previous to conversion. The *old man*, is the moral character before conversion, in comparison with the character resulting from this change—the *new man*. The former conversation was a life of vanity, with the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God. More than these, it was *corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*. By *lusts* is meant undue general desires; specially lascivious, and so corrupt, or tending to decay and destruction. They are also *lusts of deceit*. This may mean either deceitful lusts,—the noun having the force of an adjective, of which there are numerous examples in Scripture,—or, the lusts which a deceitful heart produces, and so a genitive of source or cause. This accords with what the apostle had just taught, that alienation results from ignorance and blindness.<sup>1</sup> It accords, also, with other portions of Scripture. The heart is deceitful.<sup>2</sup> Wicked men are said to be “turned aside like a deceitful bow.”<sup>3</sup> It is the bow that deceives, giving, unexpectedly, obliquity to the arrow.

As the deceiving heart awakens desires that are never to be realized, or, if realized, ruinous in their effects, promising happiness never to be enjoyed, both ideas are true. The desires are deceitful, and the heart is the source of corrupt desires when least expected. Of this last, Hazael affords a striking example. When the prophet forewarned him of the flagrant crimes he was soon to commit,—all unconscious of any such intentions, and ignorant of what his heart was capable, and to what, under temptation, it was *liable*,—he shrunk back with horror. What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah xvii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm lxxviii. 57.

it came to pass *on the morrow*, that he took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water, and spread it on the king's face, so that he died.<sup>1</sup> Having no murderous *intention* at the time, he was ignorant of the effect of temptation. His heart was as a deceitful bow.

He that is renewed in the *spirit of his mind*, is at once transformed in his personal character. It is attended by a reformation as obvious as laying aside worn-out and soiled garments for new ones, neat and beautiful. The *old man*, with its deceitful lusts, is put off and cast away as filthy rags, and the *new man* is put on, *which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*.

To be created *after God*, means either *according to God*, — that is, according to His will, as in Rom. 8 : 27, — which would teach, that to be renewed, or to be created in righteousness, etc., is to enable us to live as God requires. Or *after God*, means *conformably to God*; morally like Him. Both would be true, and each involves the other. The soul renewed, does live in obedience to the divine will; and in no other way than by obedience can the creature resemble his Creator. To be in the image of God, is to be holy, and the creature's holiness is perfect obedience. *In righteousness and true holiness*, include, *taken together*, the whole of moral perfection in man. When *distinguished*, righteousness regards our relations to men; holiness, our relations to God. A righteous man, in this sense, is one who does no evil to his neighbor; a holy man, one who not only loves and worships God, but is just to his neighbor because God requires it. This last renders every act *piouſ*. The one is mere obedience to conscience; the other, is not only obedience to conscience, but to the *authority of God*. But even this obedience

to God is not *filial*, is not *true holiness*, except it be prompted by love. Love is the fulfilling of the law.<sup>1</sup> *True holiness* may mean either holiness according to truth, — real, and not feigned or superficial; and so truth, which is a genitive noun in the original, may have the force of an adjective; or it may mean the holiness of which truth is the cause — a genitive of source. This is a common doctrine, and analogous to what the apostle had taught first above, concerning the truth as it is in Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Holiness must follow such truth, understood and loved, as inevitably as the effect follows its cause.

#### PRACTICAL DUTIES.

From the twenty-fifth verse of this chapter to the tenth of the sixth chapter, the epistle is occupied in the inculcation of some of the most important duties of practical godliness. The enforcement of these outward duties with propriety, follows that of right *tempers of heart*, in which the preceding part of this chapter is occupied. To have these tempers, the heart must be *renewed*. The connection between regeneration, right affections, and a holy life, is everywhere taught, either directly or by implication, in the Scriptures.

Verses 25—32. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 20, 21.

30 minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not  
 the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto  
 31 the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and  
 wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be  
 32 put away from you, with all malice : and be ye kind  
 to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one an-  
 other, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven  
 you.

#### ANALYSIS.

*Prohibited are the following sins: lying — anger — theft — corrupt speech — malicious speech, with the opposite correlative virtue, forgiveness, enjoined.*

Verse 25. *Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor ; for we are members one of another.* — This conjunction *wherefore*, or *therefore*, shows the connection between the exhortation which follows, and the reasons for it previously given. Whether these reasons are to be found in the paragraph *immediately* preceding, or in the whole previous part of the epistle, is doubtful. Nor is it important. Either is suitable. Obviously, *wherefore* connects all of the subsequent exhortation with some one of the reasons which the apostle had already presented. *Putting away lying.* — A notorious habit of the heathen, not to say characteristic, to a great extent, of all irreligious men. *Speak every man truth with his neighbor.* — Which is the fruit of that renovation which the apostle has enjoined. The Christian is, by his new disposition, *truthful*. The remembrance of his previous want of this virtue fills him with shame and penitential grief. Man has a constitutional regard for truth. He is prompted, we might say, by a natural instinct to speak the truth.

This instinct depravity has injured. It is enfeebled by sin, if not wholly destroyed. There is wickedness which loves a lie. But ordinarily, man would speak the truth, unless interest, real or apparent, opposed this instinctive tendency. Everything in the gospel tends to correct this wrong influence, and to strengthen the love of truth. *For we are members one of another*, furnishes an incidental motive to veracity. The relation of men to each other, specially of Christians as the Household of Faith, involves new and imperative obligations. Justice, and even benevolence, to all men is a duty; but the obligation is rendered intense by the intimacy of our civil, social, or religious relations. For one Christian to deceive another, is as if the eye should misguide the feet.

The duty extends to every individual, be his condition or relations what they may. The injunction is, speak *every man* truth with his neighbor.

Verses 26, 27. *Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath; neither give place to the devil.* — Another sin specified, and to be avoided, is protracted and nourished resentment. Resentment, which is the meaning of *anger* in the text, is that excitement of mind exercised in view of a real or supposed injury. This excitement is natural to us as men, and not merely as sinners. When thus awakened, it is *innocent*, provided we are candid in the examination of the character and circumstances of the supposed offence. If there appears to be wrong *intended* in the act, it is more than right, it is a duty, to properly appreciate the offence, the evil to ourselves especially; to disapprove of the moral character of the deed, and of the author of it. Not to feel that such a one deserves punishment, would indicate in ourselves an unnatural state, if not a wrong one. Such a feeling would

only be a mere *sense of justice*, and is in its motive right. Resentment, in this sense, for injuries inflicted on ourselves, or indignation in view of their infliction on others, is obviously the meaning of the word *anger*. With it *wrath* is doubtless synonymous; meaning that *excitement of mind* which naturally arises at sight of injustice. In our depraved state, we are liable to suffer this excitement to engender malice. This is done by retaining or indulging the excited feeling. It may be wrong to give so great importance to it as to harbor it and dwell upon it: it gives opportunity for other and evil passions to rise,—a spirit of revenge and retaliation. It affords the opportunity, also, for Satan to suggest false motives in the offender, and to aggravate the injustice of the offence. If we would not sin under such provocations, our only safety is in restraining the feeling, or diverting it; forgetting and forgiving the wrong. We should especially sin if we attempt to inflict, ourselves, that punishment which we ought to leave either to the civil authority, or to God, to inflict; or which, as sinners who hope for mercy, we ought to forgive. *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*—Habitual love is abiding peace; protracted anger is wrong in itself, and dangerous to the soul: it will soon bring forth a corrupt brood.

Verse 28. *Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*—Singular advice to be given to a Christian church, but deemed necessary to those whose Gentile vices included not only lying, but theft. And if the power of habit is considered, the necessity is still more urgent. The principles of such converts, recently translated out of heathen darkness into light, must be feeble, compared with those who have been

educated under Christian influences. With the Bible as a daily private study, taught in the Sabbath School, under the plain and genial teachings of the faithful and affectionate pastor, and, above all, with domestic instructions, impressed and made persuasive with a father's and a mother's love, this vice is rare. *But rather let him labor, working with his hands that which is good.*—Industry is a Christian duty. The charities of the church had doubtless been abused by unprincipled and indolent members. The law of the Lord is simple and exact: If any will not work, neither shall he eat.<sup>1</sup> Self-reliance and self-support is the law of our being. The only limitation to this is helplessness. In this it is right to receive, and to give is both a duty and a privilege. Self-support is not the only motive to labor, but *that he may have to give to him that needeth.* Christian principle and benevolence alike lead the believer to seek those pursuits in life, alone, which are useful to society; while to produce that which will relieve human suffering, and promote the happiness and moral worth of others, is the Christian's strongest motive. It is more blessed to give than to receive.<sup>2</sup> This is a noble spirit. The selfish are not wise. Covetousness is the bane of personal happiness, while benevolence opens in the soul refreshing springs of bliss, ever deepening. The pleasure of benevolence increases with the practice, till it becomes the master passion of the soul. An indolent man not only fails to do the good to others which they need, and is his duty, but he fails to realize that which he seeks—his own bliss. Alms-giving, as well as alms-receiving, may be on purely selfish principles, as the doctrine of *merit* in the Catholic church is a sad example; but when prompted by

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 10—12.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xx. 35.

simple benevolence, specially *for Christ's sake*, is an instance of the purest piety.

Verse 29. *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*—A single vice is rare. He who lies and steals, is revengeful and indolent; is liable to be foul-mouthed; addicted to low, scurrilous, profane, and obscene language. The mind being vacant of good thoughts, imagination will be active, and replete with what is vulgar and impure; and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Corrupt communications are unsuitable for those who have been renewed in the spirit of their mind, and have thus *put off the old man*; they should follow that which is good, to the use of edifying. *That which is good*, means profitable, as is seen in what follows: *To the use of edifying*; or for useful edification; for the promotion of the holiness and happiness of others. This idea is repeated in other language, that *it may minister grace to the hearers*. Not only does Christian duty require us to do all in our power to promote each other's growth in grace, but to this the Christian spirit prompts us. Shall the benevolent man work with his hands that he may minister to the physical wants of others, and not be studious to improve their moral character, the most valuable of blessings? On character depends not only acceptance with God, but happiness, present and eternal, and eternally growing. He who depraves the character of another, is guilty of criminal injustice; he poisons the fountain; while he who improves, or endeavors in meekness to improve, the character of a fellow-being, *ministers grace*, and thus is God-like.

The serious nature of this sin of corrupt speech is set forth in the following admonition, that it grieves the Holy Spirit.



Verse 30. *And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*—This verse, Paul-like, breaks in upon the orderly succession of topics. His mind deeply penetrated with the religious grounds of all true morality, which adorns the character and makes us lovely in the eyes of man, as well as accepted of God; feeling that all good is the fruit of the Spirit; that, should this divine agent withdraw from the soul, or cease to work in us, backsliding and sin would be inevitable,—he expresses his solicitude, exhorting them to be on their guard, and not to grieve Him. Indulgence in sin, even in corrupt conversation, without malice, grieves the Spirit. It dishonors Him. Its disrespect is offensive. Shall the Master be treated with disrespect in His own house? Shall the worshipper pollute the temple, and shamelessly trifle with the God who dwells in it? Not only is God dishonored, and so offended, but the ingratitude of it aggravates the guilt, and endangers the soul. The Spirit's influences are the Christian's only hope of final triumph; by it we are *sealed unto the day of redemption.* This the believer knows. Why, then, trifle with such a pledge, or act as if we would break this seal so precious to him who is working out his salvation with fear and trembling?<sup>1</sup> or even *seem* to come short of entering into rest.<sup>2</sup> Such communications are not only corrupting to the soul of him who utters them, but to the souls of the hearers. So, also, it grieves the Spirit from his own heart, and, in the result, from the hearts of others. It is a fearful sin to destroy our brethren for whom Christ died. And if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy.<sup>3</sup>

Verse 31. *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all*

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. iv. 1.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 17.

*malice*. — The first three of these vices are states of the heart, and are only modifications of the same temper; but which naturally give rise to the external expressions of *clamor and evil speaking*. *Bitterness* indicates that ill-will is pungent in its reaction on the mind of him who exercises it. It is a two-edged sword, wounding alike him who wields it, and him against whom it is employed. If there be any difference between *wrath* and *anger*, *wrath* refers simply to the strong excitement of the mind under provocations, while *anger* includes a desire to inflict suffering on the object of our displeasure — *revenge*. But the chief object of this accumulation of terms is to give emphasis. The moral character of these passions is expressed in the closing clause. *With all malice*. — This distinguishes the disposition from that spoken of in verse 26. There, if the punishment of the offender was any part of the desire, it was because justice demanded it, and the prohibition was to its protracted indulgence, lest it give rise to *malice*; here, *malicious* retaliation is the actual and original passion, giving rise to *clamor*, tumultuous, vociferous demands for vengeance, and *evil speaking*, or blasphemy, which is the original. It is blasphemy, not against God, but evil speaking against our fellow whom we hate. He blasphemes men, who speaks reproachfully to them; reviles, utters abuse, calumniates them in person, or back-bites. Hate is the seed, and revenge the harvest. Though those whom the apostle addressed had been guilty of these malignant passions, they were to be so no longer.

Verse 32. *And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*. — Christians are exhorted to the opposite virtue, kindness, and from the motive of the divine forgiveness. The primary idea of "*kind*," is to be useful, or

serviceable. But, as the act arises from the disposition, when spoken of persons, it means kindly-disposed, gentle and benevolent, benignant; it in fact includes all kinds of beneficence. But to be *tender-hearted, forgiving one another*, are particular instances of the fruits of this benevolent feeling. To be tender-hearted, implies not only strong feelings of pity, but pity easily excited.

The motive is a religious one. *Even as God for Christ's sake* (or literally, in Christ) *hath forgiven you. — Gratuitously*, with no reason but that He is *rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us*. This rich mercy He cannot exercise out of Christ, but *in Him* He can abundantly pardon. This example of God's mercy is not only to be the *principle* on which we are to be forgiven, *gratuitously*, but its extraordinary character should stimulate our susceptible hearts.

All are liable to receive injuries, to be wronged in property or reputation, or to be treated with social disrespect; if not through malice, through blind selfishness, or thoughtless indifference, which are scarcely less offensive. The duty enjoined is to *forgive*, habitually and promptly, irrespective of the character of the provocation; remembering that our only hope is in mercy. We, in forgiving, have no sacrifice to make but that of bitter feelings, in which there is torment; while God, to forgive, gave his well-beloved Son to die.

This precept, so pure and so unlike the spirit of the natural heart, not to say of the heathen world, whose tender mercies are cruel, is one of the most prominent inculcated in the gospel. The same spirit is enjoined in 1 Pet. 3: 8, 9. "Finally, be ye all of one mind, *having compassion one of another*" (the same word in the Greek which is in Ephesians translated *tender-hearted*); "love as brethren, be

pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, *blessing*." Christ himself has given an inimitable exposition of this duty of forgiveness by those who have themselves received forgiveness, in Mat. 18: 21—35. The lord was *moved* with compassion by the pitiful entreaty of one of his servants, who owed him *ten thousand talents*, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants who owed him a *hundred pence*, and he laid violent hands on him, and *took him by the throat*, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt. Then his lord said unto him, O thou wicked servant, *I forgave thee all that debt*, because thou desiredst it me; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, *even as I had pity on thee?* It is not in human nature not to be indignant at such selfish ingratitude, *such hard-heartedness*; and yet God is so treated daily by those whose very life depends upon His compassion, and whose only hope of heaven is forgiveness.

## CHAPTER V.

Verses 1—20. Be ye therefore followers of God as  
2 dear children ; and walk in love, as Christ also hath  
loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering  
and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.  
3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetous-  
ness, let it not once be named among you, as becom-  
4 eth saints ; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking,  
nor jesting, which are not convenient ; but rather  
5 giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whore-  
monger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who  
is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom  
6 of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you  
with vain words ; for because of these things cometh  
the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.  
7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye  
8 were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the  
9 Lord : walk as children of light (for the fruit of  
the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and  
10 truth) ; proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.  
11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works  
12 of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a  
shame even to speak of those things which are done  
13 of them in secret. But all things that are reprov-  
ed, are made manifest by the light : for whatsoever doth

14 make manifest is light. Wherefore He saith, Awake,  
 thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and  
 15 Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk  
 16 circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming  
 17 the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore, be  
 ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of  
 18 the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein  
 19 is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to  
 yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs,  
 singing and making melody in your heart to the  
 20 Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God  
 and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus  
 Christ.

#### ANALYSIS.

*Uncleanness and covetousness, v. 3 — foolish talking, v. 4 — fellowship with wicked men, vs. 11, 12 — are forbidden. — The requirements are, to walk circumspectly — redeeming the time, vs. 15, 16 — to be filled with the Spirit in opposition to intemperance, v. 18 — that we express our joys in spiritual songs — and giving thanks, vs. 19, 20.*

Verses 1, 2. *Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.* — A better division of these chapters would have been either to have closed chapter IV. with the thirtieth verse, at the exhortation not to grieve the Holy Spirit, or to have extended it two verses further, and have included the first two of chapter V. These four verses are more concinnous with each other than with what precedes or what follows. Seeing God has manifested such love and forgiveness, we

ought to imitate Him in loving and forgiving one another. We ought to be *followers* — that is, imitators — of God. Though we are human and finite, we can imitate the infinite in this spirit of forgiveness. We are to do it *as dear children*, adopted through grace, made dear through grace, and made lovely through efficient grace.<sup>1</sup> Though all this is grace, it is not the less a *duty*; hence the exhortation: *Walk in love*. Let your spirit be lovely; cultivate it, manifest it. Let your words, tones of voice, your expressions of face, that mirror of the soul, and your actions, those confessions of the heart, be prompted by love. Oh! what a heaven-wide distinction between such a character and that described in verse thirty-one of the preceding chapter, — bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil-speaking *with malice*. What a glorious transformation is effected by grace! He that is in Christ Jesus is a *new creature*. *As Christ hath loved us and given Himself for us*. — Christ's love influenced Him to give *Himself*. With God, who gave His Son, it was an "unspeakable gift;" with the Son it was all, except His innocency. Through all His temptations and sufferings He was "without sin."<sup>2</sup> Christ's offering of Himself as a sacrifice is presented as our pattern, to deny ourselves for the good of others. It was *for us* that Christ gave Himself. This can mean nothing less than a *substitute* for us. If He had not done what He has, we must have remained under condemnation. "Christ suffered, the just for the unjust."<sup>3</sup> The apostle does not say He gave Himself for *you*, Gentiles, but for *us*, Jews as well as Gentiles; for all. He died for *all*, inasmuch as all were dead. He gave Himself an *offering* and a *sacrifice*. Anything presented to the Deity in worship is an *offering*. A sacrifice is a more specific idea. He *suffered* in our stead, to make

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 4, 5, 6.<sup>2</sup> Heb. iv. 15.<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 18.

expiation of sin, or to furnish the ground of reconciliation.<sup>1</sup> A sacrifice is something slain — in which life is taken. In the case of Christ, life is *given* as well as taken. I lay down my life for the sheep.<sup>2</sup> He had power to lay it down, and power to take it again. It was a willing offering. The sacrifice was to *God, for a sweet-smelling savor*. The point to be illustrated is a *self-sacrificing spirit*, of which Christ was an illustrious example. The scope does not require, therefore, the idea that *expiation* was the object of this self-sacrifice. Yet the doctrine is involved both in the expression and in the well-established mission of Christ. There was something infinitely pleasing to the Father in the love and obedience of the Son — in his filial piety. “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.” But why was it so pleasing to God? Why was this sacrifice a *sweet-smelling savor*? It might have been *piety* in the Son to obey, but not goodness in the Father to *require*, unless there was a stern necessity. It was plainly *satisfaction to justice*, as well as pleasing filial obedience. Not all offerings, not even all *sacrifices* when blood was shed, were expiatory. But without the shedding of blood there is no remission.<sup>3</sup> All offerings and sacrifices are divine worship, an exercise of faith and obedience; but one of their most important elements is that they appease the displeasure of God; — symbolically, in the case of the ritual worship; essentially and effectually, in the death of the Lamb of God. It is an odor of sweet fragrance, agreeable, reconciling, winning the alienated feelings of God to the offender; so that mercy is now exercised toward the ungodly. In our sacrifices for others, the sweet odor is not that of expiation, but of a filial spirit, and *so far* Christ-like.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 17; x. 10—14; Rom. iii. 20—26; v. 8, 9; Heb. x. 1—22.

<sup>2</sup> John x. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. ix. 14—22.



Verse 3. *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named among you as becometh saints.* — The apostle returns to a dissuasion from the commission of particular sins. *Fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness* are classed together, as of common demerit. They are not alike vile, but are perhaps equally criminal in the sight of God. *Let it not be once named among you.* — It becomes *saints* to shun the very appearance of such vices. They are contrary to their holy professions. Professing to be separated from all vileness, and yet to practise it, is a moral contradiction. The light in which God looks upon these sins is seen in the subsequent verses. He adds another class of sins which Christians are to avoid, and all of which he soon shows shut out from heaven.

Verse 4. *Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks.* — *Filthiness*, in this passage, has not as is usual, like *uncleanness* in the third verse, reference to lewdness or lasciviousness, but rather to the ugliness of some sins — their unbecomingness. These may be either of words or acts, but here have chief reference to words; not obscene, but nevertheless disgusting language. Holiness is lovely and attractive. He adds, *foolish talking*; without reason, frivolous: light, vain, trifling conversation, betraying a mind wanting in seriousness. And *jesting*; talking for merriment; spicing the spirit with low wit. Wit is not necessarily a sin; but low and coarse wit, the apostle says, is *not convenient*; that is, it is unbecoming a saint. Perhaps he means more: that it is unprofitable both to the speaker and to the hearer, diverting the mind from serious thoughts; also degrading it. Levity is a vicious element of character, and as such should be guarded against. “I said of laughter, it is mad.”<sup>1</sup> Empty mirth is the part of a fool. Relig-

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. ii. 2.

ion is refining; it purifies and elevates the character and taste; it clothes its possessor with a serious, chaste aspect. This is becoming to saints; specially *giving of thanks*. The idea is that of *habit*. Instead of habitual levity and jesting, let our conversation be seasoned with acknowledgments of the divine goodness. These expressions of gratitude need not be *cant*, or whining pretensions of goodness; but may be, and ought to be, the outpourings of a heart deeply penetrated with a sense of God's mercy. Life is replete with His gifts, which should be received with thanksgiving. This duty is largely inculcated in the Word of God.<sup>1</sup> From these passages it is plain that we should thank God, not only in our acts of formal worship, but in our daily reception of His mercies. This is specially becoming in him who believes himself to have been pardoned, and to have been made an heir of life.

In addition to the inconsistency and unprofitableness of such conversations to both parties, the apostle admonishes them that it perils the soul.

Verse 5. *For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*—That sins such as have been enumerated exclude from heaven, is *known* by all who have been instructed in the religion of Christ. No doctrine is more explicitly taught in Scripture. No lewd person, vile in life or heart, *nor covetous man, who is an idolater*, can be admitted into heaven. Idolatry is a sin displeasing to God, and has ever been treated as a capital offence. The guilt of idolatry, and the severity with which God treated idolaters under the Jewish dispensation, makes the exhortation in this passage exceedingly impressive.<sup>2</sup> It was a capital

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 15; Phil. iv. 6; Col. ii. 7; iv. 2; 1 Tim. iv. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> See Deut. xiii. 10; also xvii. 5.

offence, because *treason* against the Sovereign. Covetousness is virtually idolatry. The covetous man puts his wealth in the place of God, both as an object of supreme affection and of reliance. The idolator trusts to other gods, to the neglect of the living and true God. The covetous man relies on his riches, and forgets God. Such worship and serve the creature more than the Creator.<sup>1</sup> This is idolatry in spirit. Covetousness, like idolatry, is forbidden in the decalogue. They are frequently associated in the teachings of Scripture. Mortify your members, and *covetousness*, which is idolatry,<sup>2</sup> as it is with uncleanness.<sup>3</sup> It leads to other sins.<sup>4</sup> It is a *greedy* sin.<sup>5</sup> See the character of Balaam;<sup>6</sup> also of Achan.<sup>7</sup> Such are abhorred of the Lord;<sup>8</sup> such have *no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*.

There is and can be no sin in heaven. The sins specified above, though of a flagrant character, are only of the nature and the representations of all sin. This cannot mean that no man who *has been* guilty of these sins can be saved; for to sincere repentance and faith in Christ is promised pardon and life. The blood of Christ cleanseth from *all* sin. Him that cometh to me, says the Saviour, I will in nowise cast out. But it may be said, these vile persons will come to Christ, and avail themselves of the cleansing efficacy of His blood? *When?* Some think that, if not before, either at death, or after death, in eternity.

Can it be at death? Regeneration being an *instantaneous* work, and a work *effected by God as a Sovereign*, some believe it may be experienced in the event of death. But, however true it is that the believer is born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man,

1 Rom. i. 25.

4 1 Tim. vi. 10; 1 Pet. ii. 3.

7 Joshua vii. 12.

2 Col. iii. 5.

5 Isaiah lvi. 11.

8 Psalm x. 3.

3 Rom. i. 29.

6 Num. xxii—xxiv.

*but of God,*<sup>1</sup> the Scriptures nowhere represent this change as other than according to the laws of the human mind. The effects are produced by God; but in a soul intelligent, free, and responsible. God, in regeneration, is a Sovereign in no such sense as to violate or overlook our agency. This is as true in regeneration as in subsequent sanctification. It is the *will* that He influences. He works in us to will; He makes us *willing* in the day of His power. In this spiritual change God is *chosen*, Christ is trusted in. The sinner *believes* in Christ, and *comes* to Him. This, in one sense, is an *event*; in another, it is an *act*. As has been before intimated, no attempt is made to explain or elucidate this subtle connection between the two agencies of God and man; but it is adduced as a *fact* — a revealed fact. When it is said, therefore, that this change is instantaneous, it must not be understood to be such an annihilation of time as to exclude mental action — willing, choosing, believing, repenting. These are, one and all, without qualification or *exception*, the conditions of salvation to the adult. “He that believeth not shall be damned.”<sup>2</sup> Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.<sup>3</sup>

The instances in which men pass from this life into eternity too suddenly to be converted, — at least, apparently so, if repentance and faith are *acts*, — are numerous. The duellist, the murderer, or the man in excited fight, falls by the hand of his intended victim. Some are shot, or otherwise killed by accident, or a vital vessel is ruptured; and the man, up to that point, having a heart alienated from the life of God, and on whom the wrath of God has hitherto rested, passes into eternity, not (apparently) while a duration, however short, is passing, but between two points of time. Death may occur in sleep, or the sinner is struck by

1 John i. 13.

2 Mark xvi. 16; 2 Thess. ii. 12.

3 Luke xiii. 8.

a shaft from the clouds, in the act of *blaspheming his Maker*. Can any one suppose such to repent, or to believe on Christ, or *come to Christ*? As an *arbitrary* act of divine power, God could change the heart in the twinkling of an eye. But, had He made no declaration on the subject, — had He affixed to the conditions of salvation no mental act, no moral *exercises* of the heart, — it would be unreasonable, not to say madness, to trust our salvation to such an *instant* of our existence. To squander a whole life of twenty, forty, or sixty or more years, — of a life obviously given for this great end, — in making no preparation, and still hope and intend to secure it in an instant, — during, *if there be any duration*, a space of time not perceptible, in which the soul seems to be unconscious, — is not reasonable. It is tempting God, and trifling with the retributions of a future state. An *honest* mind cannot think that the sinner comes to Christ in such a death as we have described; and there are many such.

But if the sinner does not come to Christ in this instant, while suddenly and unconsciously dying, when does he? Will he ever do it? Is there a single passage of Scripture which even hints at the fact as probable, or even possible? I know of none — *not one*. There are those who believe, or rather *hope*, — for we are not aware that any intelligent minds ever profess settled conviction, — that human probation extends beyond death. Some entertain an opinion that *all* men will have an opportunity in the future state of accepting salvation at the hands of Christ. Others suppose it possible, if not probable, that while such as reject Christ in this life will not have the offer repeated to them in the future, the *heathen*, who have not known Christ, nor had the opportunity and incurred the guilt of rejecting Him, will have his offers after death. As to the

heathen, we cannot here discuss the question. The Bible is absolutely, we think, *silent* as to any such future offers. The Bible seems to teach that *all probation* — the probation of the race — is confined to the present life, and that the heathen are in danger of future punishment; or that without the gospel their salvation is impossible.<sup>1</sup> That the heathen, that “all the world” are guilty before God, is plainly taught.<sup>2</sup> Though the light of the gospel increases man’s accountability, so that the rejection of Christ aggravates his guilt, yet the accountability of man lies farther back, and deeper in his nature. On a moral constitution such as his, the light of nature makes him responsible. God treats men, the heathen, in this world, as accountable. Heathen nations are *punished for their sins*. “The Lord is known by the judgments He executeth.”<sup>3</sup> If it is right in God to punish the heathen in this life, it will be right to do so in the next; and analogy, to say nothing of divine instruction, teaches that He will. But with us, who know the provisions of mercy in the gospel, the subject is practical, and unspeakably solemn. Addressing those to whom this mercy has been offered, the language is explicit and positive: 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.<sup>4</sup> Here the controverted terms are *believeth*, and *believeth not*; *hath everlasting life*, and *shall not see life*. Never? No, never! But as the wrath of God is now on the wicked, on the *unbeliever*, it shall abide — shall not be removed. As everlasting life abideth, so shall the divine displeasure abide. Both are eternal.<sup>5</sup> To show that probation is limited to this life, reference will be made to only two more

1 Rom. x.

3 Psalm ix. 16.

5 Matt. xxv. 46.

2 Rom. iii. 19.

4 John iii. 33.

passages, in both of which one of the main objects of Christ was to teach the fact, that a preparation for heaven must be made *here* and *now*, or it never can be. In the parable of the ten virgins this is plain.<sup>1</sup> They that were *ready* entered in, and *the door was shut*. Is it again to be opened? To suppose it, is to suppose Christ trifled with His hearers.

That this life alone affords an opportunity to sinners to meet their God, is set forth with equal clearness in Matt. 5 : 25, 26. It obviously has no other object. "Agree with thine adversary *quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him* [hast an opportunity], lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." When will this uttermost farthing be paid? Will the punishment terminate because the *guilt* will be exhausted? We answer: Were we to enter eternity unpardoned for past sin, but with no *disposition* to sin in future, it might be *imagined* that the penalty would be limited. Human reason cannot say how much or how long sin deserves punishment. The obligations we owe to God are *inconceivably great*.<sup>2</sup>

We cannot say when it would be cancelled, or whether it could be cancelled at all by suffering. The expression, *till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing*, does not necessarily mean, nor does it *imply*, that it ever will be paid. It rather seems to be an impressive mode of declaring its eternity.

But this is not the most serious view of the sinner's condition after death. The impenitent enter the future world *depraved* as well as unpardoned; with dispositions still to

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv. 1—13.

<sup>2</sup> See Wayland's Moral Science.

sin, and with growing capacities both for sin and misery. Such is the analogy of our entire constitution. And as his depravity—that is, his capacity and disposition to sin—will increase, instead of reducing the amount of his indebtedness, it must be eternally augmented. As the capacity of the redeemed for holiness and bliss shall forever increase, so that heaven shall open to them an eternal weight of glory, the opposite of this must be the experience of those who have put it from them, and have judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life.<sup>1</sup> The despair of the lost, we apprehend, must arise largely from the fact, that mercy has not only been rejected, but is less and less deserved. The divine displeasure, instead of being slowly turned away, is perceptibly growing more intense. The fearfulness of such a prospect, who can contemplate without the liveliest solicitude. None so appreciate this solemn truth as the Christian. He only knows what sin is—its nature and ruinous power. But he does not on this account reject the doctrine of the final punishment of the wicked, but believes it the more from the consciousness of sin in himself. We are, as it has been intimated, incompetent to fathom the unsearchableness of God. That the Judge of all the earth will do right, we know. He will justify His ways to men in the final judgment. The day shall declare it.<sup>2</sup> This is true alike of men's works and of God's retributions.

How often does a child become excited, in view of punishment inflicted by a judicious and kind parent on a brother or sister. The justice of the act is frequently questioned. This chastisement, now seeming so severe, and, it may be, *unjustifiable*, will in maturer years assume a different character. The conduct of the parent may be approved and gratefully admired. God will never inflict a

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 46.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 13.



single sensation of pain on the sinner, which, if known to holy beings, will not be esteemed a ground of divine glory. This will not be inconsistent with the purest and most amiable benevolence. "God is love;" and yet He does in this world inflict fearful judgments. He not only permits, but *inflicts* them. In all these matters we must accept the teachings of God's word. They teach explicitly that there are those who have *no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*. The kingdom of Christ and of God is heaven, including also the incipient state of it on earth,—the Christian dispensation. It is the inheritance of *saints* only. Man in his natural, sinful state is barred from this privilege, either on earth or above. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> It is sometimes called the kingdom of *heaven*;<sup>2</sup> at others, called the kingdom of *God*,<sup>3</sup> and frequently it is also called the kingdom of *Christ*.<sup>4</sup> In this passage it is called the kingdom of *Christ and of God*. All mean the same thing,—the divine, spiritual reign of Christ as one with God. This use of the designations does not militate against the oneness of Christ and God. It is doubtless the kingdom of Christ, or the Messiah *as God*. In Gal. 1:4, the "God and Father" must mean the God who is the Father, and not two distinct beings. So in this passage, Christ who is God. This idea, that Christ is in some sense distinct from, and in another one with God, is ever showing itself in the New Testament, without explanation or any recognition of its mystery. The final epiphany of Christ is identified with that of the absolute Deity in Titus 2:13,— "The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." It can mean nothing less than the *great God* is our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

1 John iii 3.

2 Matt. iii. 2; iv. 17.

3 Matt. vi. 33; Luke iv. 4.

4 Matt. xiii. 41; xx. 21; Rev. i. 9.

The danger of being thus excluded from this blissful kingdom is seen in the solemn warning, not to be deceived by false teachers.

Verse 6. *Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*—False teachers had arisen in many places, subverting the truth. This passage looks as if the admonition had a present occasion. The object of those at Ephesus was to persuade Christians that there was no future punishment of the wicked. *With vain words.*—Empty, unmeaning reasonings, adapted to excite their prejudices against this fearful truth; professing to have too much confidence in God to believe Him so cruel or unjust as to exclude any of His creatures from heaven. Objections to the final separation of the righteous and wicked, are in this day supported, not by rational or scriptural arguments, but by declaring the doctrine abhorrent to our better feelings. Against such influences the apostle urges them to guard; *for because of these things* (these vile practices), *cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.* Be assured, whatever wicked men may say to the contrary, God is displeased with sin, and wicked men shall not go unpunished. *Wrath of God*, is the cause for the effect. It is punishment, the effect of the divine indignation against sin, which comes upon the *children of disobedience*; that is, on those who are in their dispositions disobedient. Their conduct is the offspring of their spirit of disobedience.

Verse 7. *Be ye not, therefore, partakers with them.*—Have no sympathy with the children of disobedience. Avoid even their society, except as it is necessary, or is sought from benevolent and religious motives. Christ came to call *sinner*s to repentance. He mingled with the wicked as well as the lowly, only that to them the gospel

might be preached. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.<sup>1</sup> The lustre and beauty of the Christian's virtue must not be tarnished by contact with the vile. They who commit these vices, and they who encourage them, shall together experience the wrath of God. Let the saints separate themselves from such, lest they be punished with them. All who share in their guilt, must share in their doom.

Verse 8. *For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.—Walk as children of light.—Ye were sometime darkness,* means that before their conversion they were in darkness. They walked in darkness; their hearts were full of darkness. The word includes three distinct ideas,—ignorance in religion, depravity, and misery. This is the complex state of the natural man. It is emphatically true of the heathen. *But now are ye light in the Lord.*—Light is the moral opposite of darkness. Such are said to have an unction from the Holy One, and to know all things.<sup>2</sup> They that are *in the Lord*,—that is, are united to Him by faith,—have been translated out of darkness into light. Such have spiritual perceptions; truth by them is spiritually discerned. Christ is the Source of this light in the souls of believers. They also love holiness, and are led by a spirit of obedience. They also have “peace in believing.” These are *light*; hence the exhortation, *walk as children of light*, as those thus illuminated ought to walk—holy, harmless, undefiled.

Verse 9. *For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.* The fruit of the Spirit (or,

<sup>1</sup> Psalm i. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John ii. 20.

as good authority has it, the fruit of *light*, of being spiritually enlightened), is an intelligent, holy, and blissful life. These three terms, *goodness*, *righteousness*, and *truth*, are obviously employed for emphasis, as the apostle frequently does. The fruits of this enlightened and sanctified state of the mind are all forms of holiness, — holy affections, holy intentions, and holy works. Spiritual illumination is the effect of the Spirit's influence, and the cause of good works.

Though these three terms are accumulated for emphasis, each has a distinct meaning. *Goodness* is an upright disposition and character, with the additional idea of kindness toward others. • *Righteousness* is an upright and impartial disposition purely. *Truth* not only means one who is truthful, sincere, but who loves the truth; specially gospel truth, its holiness and its scheme of mercy. The fruits of the Spirit (or of light) are as unlike those of the flesh as light is unlike darkness.<sup>1</sup>

The connection between the renewed state and a holy life is here intimate. It is a moral absurdity for a renewed man to live in sin. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? <sup>2</sup> See, also, the whole chapter, specially the twenty-first and twenty-second verses. The "servants of sin," having been "made free from sin," and become "servants to God, have their fruit unto holiness." The doctrine is not only that it is the *duty* of such to be holy, but that, if they have been enlightened by the Spirit, they *will* live unto God. The absurdity of the contrary is as great as the severing of the connection between cause and effect, or as that the dead should act as one alive. This verse is parenthetical, the eighth and tenth being grammatically connected.

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 19—24.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 2.

Verse 10. *Proving what is acceptable unto God.*—The ninth verse is thrown in as a consideration adapted to show the reasonableness of the exhortation to walk as children of light, for this is the aim of the Spirit that worketh in you. In the tenth verse, returning to his main theme, he adds, that by so doing they will be enabled to understand and appreciate (*proving*) what pleases God. *Proving* means to examine, then to distinguish and appreciate; and here has the moral idea of *approving*. This is *acceptable unto God*. He approves, and is pleased. That God is pleased with the piety of his children is a frequent and inspiring doctrine of Scripture.<sup>1</sup> The filial piety of Christ pleased God.<sup>2</sup>

Practical godliness increases the discerning power of the soul in religion. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, etc.<sup>3</sup> A spirit of obedience fills the heart with light. This is specially true of *love*.<sup>4</sup>

How noble and elevated the motive of pleasing God! How peaceful the consciousness of being approved of Him! What must heaven be, where this consciousness shall be unceasing, growing, and eternal! How reasonable the aspirations of the believer!

In the expression *unto the Lord*, reference is had to Christ, the same as in the eighteenth verse, in whom the Christian is said to be. It is to Him we are responsible for our actions, who approves of *goodness*, and *righteousness*, and *truth*; in whose presence we constantly live, and whom we are to endeavor to please. Can any doubt that Christ, who is here called Lord, is the Supreme Jehovah, the Judge of quick and dead?

<sup>1</sup> Malachi iii. 3, 4; Psalm lxxix. 30, 31; Prov. xvi. 7; 1 Cor. vii. 32; 2 Tim. ii. 4; Heb. xi. 5, 6; xiii. 16—21; Phil. iv. 18; Col. iii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> John vii. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. i. 9—11.

Verse 11. *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*—In the seventh verse the saints are exhorted not to be partakers with certain wicked persons, because it exposed them to exclusion from the kingdom of Christ and of God. In this verse they are exhorted to the same course, and to *reprove them*. To be *partakers*, and to have *fellowship*, are essentially synonymous. In the former instance, the sins, in which the children of light are to have no share, are specified; in this, they are called the *unfruitful works of darkness*. Sin is not only committed in dark places, but is the effect of darkness, or of religious ignorance and insensibility. These works are called *unfruitful*, unproductive of any benefit. In an accountable being like man, this want of usefulness is *blameworthy*. Men should be useful. Instead of having fellowship with such, and so encouraging them in the commission of sin, or sharing with them in their fearful retributions, we ought *rather to reprove them*. To *reprove*, means to convict of a fault; thus to rebuke, and so to shame. The reformation of the offender is the primary object of the rebuke here enjoined as a duty. It is frequently effectual, though not always. A secondary reason, though subordinate in importance, is its moral effect on others. The shame experienced, and the disgrace inflicted, are admonitions to those who witness them. To rebuke a fellow-man is a delicate and difficult duty. Paul intimates that to be *able to admonish one another* requires that we be *full of goodness, filled with all knowledge*.<sup>1</sup> This implies great judgment, or discretion, mingled with something more than an honest intention. *Full of goodness*, comprehends love, and gentleness, and forgiveness.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 14.

Verse 12. *For it is a shame even to speak of these things which are done of them in secret.*—To a pure-minded man, the mere language necessary to describe some vices done *in secret, in darkness*, is too offensive to be unnecessarily employed. Instead of having *fellowship* with such, the pure-minded Christian would *be ashamed to speak of them*. The indwelling of Christ's spirit (light) makes the soul delicate—loathing the thought of what others practise with greediness. Whether *for*, in this verse, shows the connection thus: *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, for it is a shame even to speak of them*; or, *reprove them, for it is a shame*, etc., is not evident. Either is good sense; both are grammatical. Perhaps it is the former.

Verse 13. *But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.*—The apostle expands the idea of administering reproof, intimating that as godliness is light, and sin darkness, the children of light are fitted to reprove sin, or to dispel this darkness. The figurative and literal ideas are blended. All things that are *reprov'd* are made *manifest by light*. The way to reprove sinners is to shed light on their deeds. This is done by the precepts of a pure religion, and by the contrast of the vileness of sin with the beauty and loveliness of virtue. This contrast reveals the odiousness of sin. In harmony with this injunction, he exhorts the Philippian Christians to be blameless and harmless,—the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. Among whom ye *shine as lights in the world*, holding forth the word of life.<sup>1</sup> Whatever may be the depravity of the affections, the *natural conscience* is on the side of virtue and moral goodness.

<sup>1</sup> Phil ii. 15, 16.

The ugliness of some sins is visible to the vilest sinner himself. Nor can he be wholly indifferent to the infamy of guilt. He is ashamed, and will either withdraw himself to some darker recess of his den, or will be reformed. Evil is not only made manifest by good, but is *overcome* by it.<sup>1</sup> Not, we admit, so long as the susceptibility of the heart remains as it is by nature. Till this is changed the sinner will *hate* the light, and will not come to it *lest his deeds be reprov'd*.<sup>2</sup> But Christians are encouraged to abound even in this difficult work, knowing that their work is not in vain in the Lord.<sup>3</sup> Some of these Ephesian Christians had, previous to their reception of the gospel, been as vile as any of those for whose conversion they are exhorted to labor. *Ye were sometime darkness*.<sup>4</sup> Why shall not others, the vicious of the present time, be equally affected by the light reflected from the word of God, and from the blameless lives of believers? Some of these Ephesian disciples had, before conversion, practised lying,<sup>5</sup> stealing;<sup>6</sup> were given to anger, clamor, and malice, and were foul-mouthed.<sup>7</sup> Vile as they had been, the apostle says, Now are ye light in the Lord.<sup>8</sup> Such is the power of the gospel, when faithfully taught and exhibited in the lives of its professors. Modern missionaries have proved its transforming efficacy in the conversion of the most corrupt heathen. Baxter witnessed its redeeming power among his ignorant and profane colliers. If there were more light at this day, there would be not only more reproof, but a more visible reformation. "The vicious cannot bear the presence of the good, whose very *looks* reprove them, and whose *life* is a severe, though a silent, admonition."<sup>9</sup>

The apostle reiterates the idea, that reproof is like light.

1 Rom. xii. 21.

3 1 Cor. xv. 58.

5 Eph. iv. 25.

7 Eph. iv. 29—31.

2 John iii. 20.

4 Eph. v. 8.

6 Eph. iv. 28.

8 Eph. v. 8.

9 Buckminster.



*For whatever doth make manifest is light.* — Christians are suitable persons to reprove the wicked; for their piety is light, and it is the property of light to *make manifest*. The word in the original has obviously an active signification, as our translators indicate; and not a passive, as some maintain.

Verse 14. *Wherefore He saith: Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* — Sleep, death, and darkness are emblems of depravity. To awake from sleep, to arise from the dead, to pass from darkness to light, are only different figurative expressions of the same religious change, — the renewal of the heart. This light Christ gives. In Him was life, and the life was the *light* of men.<sup>1</sup> In these passages light is represented both as *reforming*, and as given to *the reformed*. All grace is of this double relation to the believer. It is *prevenient*; that is, goes before, and first awakens thoughtfulness, and gives to the heart its *first disposition* to seek holiness and life; even faith is its gift.<sup>2</sup> And then to him *that hath* shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.<sup>3</sup> The Spirit of Christ — that is, light — first awakens the desire, and then gratifies this desire in proportion to its strength. Enmity is changed into love; then, as the soul longs for more love, more love is given. *Saith*; that is, either God or some passage of Scripture. *It saith*, as Isaiah 60: 1—3, freely paraphrased by the apostle, which, being inspired, he could safely do; or, as is reasonable, though without direct proof, some fragment of familiar poetry, accustomed to be sung by the early Christians. If the last be true, it would harmonize with the injunction in the nineteenth verse: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.”

<sup>1</sup> John i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Eph ii 8.

<sup>3</sup> Matt xiii. 12.

Verse 15. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.* — *See then*, since you have such duties to perform in behalf of those living in darkness, take heed that you let your light shine. To *walk circumspectly*, means to conduct ourselves exactly, or in strict conformity to the requirements of the gospel. This requires caution, lest duty be overlooked, or the Christian be allured to the vanities and follies of life, or be overcome by some sudden temptation to sin. Lest, living like the wicked, they be unable to reprove them. The apostle, in his epistle to the Colossians, adds to the injunction, to walk circumspectly, *towards them that are without*.<sup>1</sup> An evil example on the part of Christians strengthens the vicious in the commission of sin. Let there be no spots on your sun, but let it be a broad, mild, luminous disk. *Not as fools, but as wise.* — A fool is one who does not exercise reason on any subject. In religious matters it is one who thinks, feels, and acts as if religion were not true. This is not only irrational, but depraved. In Scripture, depravity is the chief element of folly. The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.<sup>2</sup> To be wise is the opposite of this. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do His commandments.<sup>3</sup> The idea is in harmony with what precedes, — that piety is light, godliness is wisdom. Such believe and feel that there is a God; they apprehend His constant presence, and acknowledge His authority. They aim at a blameless life themselves, and seek to promote it in others. For the accomplishment of these ends all means are *wisely* employed by them.

Verse 16. *Redeeming the time because the days are evil.* — The time of Christians, like that of students and business

<sup>1</sup> Col. iv. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xiv. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm cxi. 10.

men, is liable to be frittered away, by numberless drafts upon it. These interruptions, though short, are so frequent as to consume no small portion of it. These are often of such a character as seem to *claim* our attention. The supreme end of the Christian is to cultivate personal piety, and to do good to others; *to be a careful man*; to win men from vice to virtue, from darkness to light. Great diligence is indispensable, as well as watchfulness as to occasions. He has no time to lose. Every moment should be *redeemed*; that is, our time must not only be faithfully improved, but often *rescued* from those claims which ought to yield to the main purposes of life. The Christian has a "high calling;" and to the wanton wasters of his time he should reply, as Nehemiah did to Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you?"<sup>1</sup> Consider that this solicitation was repeated several times, and as often received the same answer. *Decision* of character is essential to usefulness. *Because the days are evil.*—*Evil*, as here used, does not exclude sufferings, of which the world is full. But it chiefly regards moral evil, depravity, and vice. The apostle says it is a corrupt age, as the Saviour had declared before him.<sup>2</sup> There is a great amount of individual and social depravity. To overcome and remove these, is the mission of the Christian; and because sin thus abounds, he should seize every occasion of religious influence. The children of this world do. Shall not the children of light?

Verse 17. *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*—*Wherefore*; that is, because there is so important a claim on the Christian's diligence and fidelity in reprovng and reclaiming the

<sup>1</sup> Neh. vi. 1—4.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xii. 39.

wicked. To be *unwise*, though not the same Greek word as “fools” in the fifteenth verse, is essentially like it in meaning. It contains, perhaps, more distinctly the idea of ignorance founded in depravity, erroneous views of duty, or a failure to perceive what is our duty; in religion, practically unwise. Instead of this imperfection of character, they are admonished to *understand what the will of the Lord is*. Knowledge, in this sense, and on this subject, is a duty. In the fifteenth verse Christians are exhorted to walk as wise; here, to walk so that they may be wise. A spirit of obedience makes one wise, or enables him to understand what the will of the Lord is. Much discrimination is often necessary to know what is duty in particular circumstances. This power of rightly apprehending our duty is essentially aided by a right temper of heart. This is abundantly taught in Scripture. Besides this, to such a special promise is given of divine illumination. “The meek will He guide in judgment.”<sup>1</sup> *What the will of the Lord is*; that is, what Christ requires, whose will has divine authority.

Verses 18—20. *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit: speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*—*And be not drunk with wine*, relates to a common vice. Few nations are so civilized or moral, so ignorant or degraded, that they do not use some intoxicating substances, to the detriment, often to the utter ruin, of body, intellect, and soul. This was the practice of Greeks and Asiatics, of East and American Indians. Most, if not all modern nations, civilized and uncivilized, include

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxv. 9.

a portion of drunkards. Though *wine* is specified, it is the representative of all inebriating drinks.

*Wherein is excess*, does not mean the excess of drinking, but the effects of drinking, which are ruinous. The Greek word is composed of two terms, *saving* and the *contrary*; that is, what prevents anything from being saved, — destruction, as all revelry and debauchery must be, which are the consequences of intemperance. Intemperance in eating and drinking, especially in the latter, debases the moral feelings, extinguishes the social affections, weakens the restraints of conscience, strengthens the vicious appetites, and enslaves the higher powers of the soul to the lower. When the habit is fully formed, human nature is seen as most despicable and pitiable.

*But be filled with the Spirit*, means to be powerfully and habitually under its influence. Every faculty of the soul feels its influence (perhaps as the man full of wine is under the influence of its inebriating qualities). The expression is analogous to several others, — “filled with wrath,” “filled with indignation,” “filled with madness,” “filled with envy,” “filled with fear.”<sup>1</sup> These are the penetrating and subduing influences of some of the evil passions. Men are spoken of as “filled with wonder;” also with agreeable sensations, “filled with joy.”<sup>2</sup> So Christians are said to be filled with the Spirit, the Holy Ghost.<sup>3</sup> Here it is made a *duty*, and Christians are exhorted to be filled with the Spirit. Religion, as we have before intimated, is both a *gift* and an *acquisition*. To have the soul dark, the affections sluggish, or set on forbidden objects, or the will to be enslaved to unholy desires, is always wrong. As we are under obligation to be truly pious, and as this piety never

<sup>1</sup> Luke v. 26; Acts v. 17; Luke vi. 11; Acts xiii. 45, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiii. 52.

<sup>3</sup> Acts ii. 4; Luke i. 41—67.

exceeds spiritual influence, we are plainly under *obligation* to be *filled with the Spirit*. The Spirit is not given to *make it our duty to be holy*, but to *aid* us in discharging what is *already duty*. The Scriptures, we repeat, give no explanation of these matters. Their truth is felt by every pious heart, whether understood or not.

*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.* — *Wine and the Spirit* alike excite the feelings. The former manifests itself in hilarity and revelry, unworthy of rational beings. The latter leads the soul to pour forth its pious sentiments, whether a calm, serene joy, or higher delight, or even rapture, in songs of grateful praise. *Psalms*, meaning originally to strike the lyre, came to mean any music accompanied by an instrument, as were the psalms of David in the Hebrew worship, and finally any sacred music. *Hymns* refers to vocal music exclusively, but with the same object; *spiritual songs*, or odes, refers to poetry of somewhat varied character, — set to music, sung with or without the accompaniment of an instrument. Though sometimes soft and melting, at others it was impulsive and rapturous. This was employed on festive and secular occasions. Hence the injunction that these *songs* should be *spiritual*; not necessarily inspired, but in harmony with spiritual sentiments, becoming those who are *filled with the Spirit*.

It is natural for Christians, when alone, to hum in gentle murmur their peaceful emotions; when in society of other Christians sweetly beloved, excited by sympathy, to give utterance to their sentiments in fuller and louder songs of praise. They thus speak to one another; not necessarily (though possibly) by formal responses, but with mutual sympathy. Christians thus quicken each other's religious feelings and mutual comfort.

*Making melody in your hearts*, contains an admonition that the songs should not only be *spiritual*, not carnal, but that they should be accompanied by proper pious feelings, with a true devotional spirit. It does not regard the degree of feeling, the earnestness, that it be *from the heart*; but that it be with sentiments in harmony with these hymns of divine praise. Instruments, and voice, and words, and spirit, should have harmony as well as melody—should constitute a symphony. This is *to the Lord*; that is, to Christ, who is the Jehovah of the Bible. In the seventeenth verse, Christians are exhorted to seek to know His *will* as Sovereign; here, to offer Him their praise as Jehovah.

All cannot sing, nor play skilfully on an instrument; but, what is infinitely more desirable, all can *make melody in their hearts to the Lord*: and the Lord will hear and be pleased. If there were more praises *sung* it would greatly contribute to the mutual comfort of Christians. Select, chaste, devout *spiritual songs* animate any heart susceptible of religious feeling. The church needs more of this devotional feeling, both in the closet and in the sanctuary.

With these songs is to be united *giving of thanks*. Not only should this be done in distinct acts of gratitude, as a part of divine worship, but thanksgiving, grateful sentiments, should constitute largely our songs of praise. This is to be done *always*, habitually; for *all things*, for small as well as great blessings, for things both spiritual and temporal, for affliction as well as prosperity; for all things work together for good to them that love God.

These thanks are to be given *unto God and the Father*; that is, unto God, who, in distinction from Christ, is the Father, as in the fifth verse we said “of Christ and of God” meant of Christ, who is God. Here it is unto God,

even the Father. This necessarily includes Christ in His *divine* nature — not as Father, but as God. These thanks are to be rendered *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who, in His *human and divine natures*, is our Mediator. Here is a manifest instance of the personal distinction in the Godhead. Human wisdom would have been likely to have attempted some solution of its difficulties. Not so the wisdom of God. We are to walk by faith, not by sight.

#### MUTUAL DUTIES.

Verse 21. Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Submission is a mutual duty, and is here taught as a general principle, introductory to the subsequent injunction of specific duties. The gospel not only inculcates this duty, but it excites the disposition. We comply with the injunction first when we acknowledge the authority of a superior, and *cheerfully* acquiesce in it. And secondly, it is that meek, yielding spirit which, through benevolence and lowliness of mind, defers to the wishes of others, whether superiors or inferiors. *Submitting yourselves one to another.* — Every one should exhibit in his daily intercourse with others this lovely habit. It stands opposed not only to that exacting, arrogant spirit which distracts the peace of the social circle, but, in no small degree, to that false decision of character, stubbornness, which is so nearly allied to manliness and bravery as often to be mistaken for a virtue. The gospel requires us to do whatever things are *lovely*. This is to be done *in the fear of God*, meaning with a deep sense of our *accountability* to Him. This regard to God gives to the disposition the element of



*piety*, of which the disposition, if wanting in this, is destitute. It is pusillanimity, or that weakness of mind which does not distinguish between the rights of their fellow-men and imaginary obstacles.

In this verse the general duty of mutual submission is enforced. As we advance we have this duty in specified instances: the duties of wives and husbands — of children and parents — of servants and masters.

#### CONJUGAL DUTIES OF WIVES.

Verses 22—24. Wives, submit yourselves unto your  
 23 own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband  
 is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head  
 of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body.  
 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so  
 let the wives be to their own husbands in every-  
 thing.

The grounds of this submission due from the wife to her husband are her dependence upon him — his natural superiority of strength and intellect. To this there may be exceptions; but they are *exceptions*, and therefore do not vary the principle. The happiness of the domestic relation requires this conjugal subordination — that there be but *one head*. Which this should be, as a rule, needs no argument. And if it were not in itself obvious, God has settled the question by His Ordinance. The Scriptures are explicit, and cannot be misunderstood. All attempts to violate or weaken the relation must be unqualified evil. To do so is to violate both the natural and moral laws of God. Some of the efforts recently made to protect the rights of females,

set at defiance both nature and religion. They are marked by a zeal of a mixed character — vanity and benevolence. The former, it is feared, is hidden by its connection with the latter. It is not the only instance in which a vicious principle is lost sight of by being blended with a good one, and so is not only tolerated, but gives force to the common motive of action. Bigotry is thus mixed, and becomes cruel. No one can deny that in all the social relations there is much wrong — enough to give scope to the purest benevolence. The conjugal relation, however, is not the only one where there is wrong. The feeble are often abused ; children are neglected, and even cruelly treated, by their parents, without means of redress. But this abuse cannot be diminished by destroying the relation, and giving to the child equality with the parent. God, who established this relation, is both wise and good. Not only the temporal interest of the race depends on these relations being kept inviolate, but the moral virtues and Christian graces are better developed.

The wife is to cherish this spirit, and render this practical submission, *as unto the Lord* ; that is, as unto Christ, who is our Sovereign. Not only is that submission to be rendered to the husband because he is *the head*, but because the Lord requires it. This will render the act *pious*. The unbelieving wife may render this submission from a sense of propriety, or of his actual superiority, and authority ; it may be from sincere love to him ; but if Christ be overlooked in it all, there is in it no religious element. The wife's love and submission to her husband will not be accepted for what is due to Christ as Lord of both.

*The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.* — This relation between Christ and the church not only renders the conjugal relation

clear, but unspeakably serious and tender. Surely the wife cannot be unhappy under a relation which resembles, though faintly, that of the redeemed church to its divine Lord. Christians love to be ruled by Christ. They love Him, and are conscious of His love to them. This makes obedience cheerful. It is indeed a yoke, but it is *easy*.

*And he is the Saviour of the body.*—Christ has redeemed the church by the sacrifice of Himself, and daily sustains and protects it, both by His providence and His grace. Cheerful, *grateful* submission is therefore due to Him. A good husband not only loves his wife, but is her protector, and habitually makes sacrifices for her happiness and pleasure. Since, therefore, such a relation exists between the wife and her husband, resembling that of all Christians to the Saviour, *as the church is subject unto Christ (with a sweet, cheerful spirit), so let the wives be to their own husbands in all things.* This *in all things* is, of course, to be modified by the higher obligation to Christ. The wife is not bound to commit sin to please her husband; for Christ is head, and the husband *under* authority. But she is to please her husband *in all things* which do not conflict with the will of Christ. Her own judgment in matters of domestic interests, her preferences and tastes, are to be subordinate to his, not supposing his necessarily right and hers necessarily wrong. But this spirit in the wife is always lovely, and when done as *unto the Lord* is eminently religious.

#### DUTIES OF HUSBANDS.

Verses 25—33. — Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for

26 it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the  
27 washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it  
28 should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies. He  
29 that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and  
30 cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His  
31 bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and  
32 they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery;  
33 tery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

1. The *reasonableness* of the husband's love is not grounded *exclusively* in the personal worth of the wife. Great purity of spirit and character, discreetness, modesty, patience, gentleness and affectionate confidence, are lovely; and, if the heart of the husband be not wanting in natural susceptibility, he must love her in whom such excellences are combined. But when these exist, they are not the only reason why she should be loved; and even when they are to some extent wanting, she is still to share in his affections, because she is one with himself; *she is himself* (28). As it is, therefore, *natural* for a man to love himself, so it is to love his wife. Though there is a sense in which each individual, husband or wife, is a *distinct person*, with separate duties, separately accountable, com-

plete within themselves, except as related to God, from whom they are never separate, without whom never complete; yet, there is another and a peculiar view in which the husband and the wife are *one*. *They two shall be one flesh* (31), his *own flesh* (29). Though the thirtieth verse has reference to the union between Christ and the church (*we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones*), there can be no doubt there is an allusion to Gen. 2: 21—24, where the woman is said to be *taken out of the man*, and hence bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. This was obviously a symbol of the social union, the mutual interests and sympathies, and *oneness* of affection which should constitute the conjugal relation through all future time. The *two* shall be *one* — *one self*. It is, therefore, not only as natural, but as *reasonable*, that a man love his wife, as that he love himself. No man ever yet hated his own flesh (29).

2. The *measure* of this love is (a), that of Christ's love to the church: *As Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it* (25). The relation involves a self-sacrificing spirit. Christ gave *Himself*. He laid aside glory; He humbled Himself; He suffered cruelly, ignominiously; He died. This shows not only the nature of the affection, but its tensivity. A selfish, exacting husband has not the spirit of Christ.

(b) The degree of this affection is measured again by our self-love. Men are to love their wives *as their own bodies*. Let every one of you in particular so love his wife *even as himself* (33). Christ requires that all men love others (their neighbors) *as themselves*. Is the injunction here nothing different? The so-called golden rule, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them," undoubtedly interprets our duty

to our neighbors. As the relations vary, so do the obligations. We not only have no right to require what, *under similar circumstances*, we would not be willing to render either of justice or benevolence, but we have no right to withhold what we, under similar circumstances, require of others. In the conjugal relation, though this rule is applicable, as it is in every relation of life, there is something peculiar and specific in the relation itself. *All men are our neighbors*; but all are not so *intimate*, as is the idea of *one flesh — his own flesh*. There being no such oneness anywhere else, there can be no such intensity of affection. All that watchfulness which a man exercises over his own happiness and general interests, he should exercise in behalf of his wife. This is not true of our neighbor. He should be willing to make as great sacrifices for her as he is of present pleasures, in view of a greater future good for himself; as ready to overlook or excuse her failings as his own defects; and because he *loves* her. He loves her though she have faults; he does not hate his own flesh because it is diseased or uncomely.

3. The *practical effect* of this affection of the husband for his wife is (a): It leads him to leave father and mother, and join himself unto his wife. The verb *to join* has an intensive idea, to cleave to. It is stronger than to be added to, or to be associated with. No relation so intimate. This affection withdraws him from the parent. This relation to the parent, so tender, so endearing, may be more sensibly and gratefully appreciated as experience increases; but it, in no respect, conflicts with or diminishes his love for the object he has chosen as one with himself. He leaves father and mother, and joins himself to his wife, because he loves her. The union is (or should be) begun in love, and maintained in love. Any instances

to the contrary do not destroy the principle, nor its importance, any more than instances of foolishness prove that man is not a rational being.

This union is in its very nature for life. To dissolve it — to separate husband and wife — is to sunder violently one body.

(b) The practical influence of this oneness is seen again in the fact, that it leads the husband to minister to the welfare of the wife; he ministers support, protection, comfort, and personal improvement. This is not only the *duty* involved in the relation, but it is the natural effect of the peculiar *oneness*. It prompts to offices of conjugal affection, as our instincts excite us to self-protection, or as self-love urges us to provide for our own welfare. No man ever hated his own flesh; *but he nourisheth and cherisheth it* (29). His physical strength and manliness of intellect do, or ought to, qualify him to provide for her support, and to surround her as a wall of defence. In Christian countries, and in times of peace, this necessity is not so obvious as in savage warfare; but can never wholly cease to be indispensable. The diligent wife is less dependent on her husband to spread her table than to *shield* her from the numberless ills of life. Besides this, the affection, such as the gospel inspires, mingling in his manly tones of voice, and expressed in the eye and aspect of a face radiant with honest love, *cherishes* her whose very being is inseparable from his own. This is the unconscious influence which pervades the two made *one flesh*, like the silent currents of life which flow through and animate every member of the system. Nor is the influence of the good husband confined to these ministrations. The relation implies the duty, and the tendency to *improve* the character of the wife, both intellectually and morally. In Christian coun-

tries, where female piety is often so elevated and influential, there can be little doubt but the improving influence is frequently exerted by the wife on her husband. It is common to witness, and for the public to acknowledge, the refining and often elevating effect of a Christian wife on the stern, it may be rough and rugged, character of a husband with whom she is unequally yoked. Such instances are above all praise. But the obligation is both more natural and more imperative on the husband to *improve* his wife. His firm, manly authority, tempered with an affection which none but a good husband knows, should instruct, inspire, and elevate the soul of her, who is with him heir of the grace of life. But this influence will be more fully seen when we come to speak of the example of Christ's care for the church.

This duty is illustrated by the example of Christ: By His love for the church, and by His mysterious oneness with it.

Every reader must be impressed with the manner in which the apostle amplifies on the work and design of Christ in behalf of the church. Having spoken of Christ, he is, so to speak, diverted from the main object of discourse, which is, to illustrate the relation of the husband to the wife, and dwells with eloquence on what Christ designed in His mission to earth. Something kindred to this may be seen in the seventh chapter of Hebrews, where, in describing the person and character of Melchisedec, language is employed which could literally belong to Christ only; — as if the mind of the apostle was so full of glowing thoughts of Christ, he had unconsciously transferred them to the type, and illustrated the type rather than the character of Christ. That is, he forgets Melchisedec in the presence of Christ, the archetype. He not only



gave Himself for the church, which illustrates the duty of the husband, but His motive was holy as well as benevolent: *that He might sanctify and cleanse it (26): that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (27)*. The husband is exhorted to love his wife, *even as the Lord the church (29)*: which means, not only in *degree*,—that is, to give himself for her,—but in *moral character*; that is, in a desire for her improvement in holiness,—that she be *glorious, holy, and without blemish*. Whatever effect age or disease may have on her personal beauty, in character, there must be neither *spot nor wrinkle*.

This oneness between the husband and the wife suggests that which exists between Christ and the church, and on this his mind is fixed. *For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones (30)*. *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and His church*.—This cannot mean that Christians are *in fact* members of Christ's body, *of His flesh and of His bones*. Christ has not in heaven a physical body, nor will His disciples have. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> Between our present bodies, or our future ones, and Christ, there is the connection of effects with their cause; for Christ created all things, and sustains them. But there is no such sense in which we are *of Him* as Eve was of Adam. The wife *now* is not so related to her husband. The *mystery* of the union in neither case—that is, between man and wife, or Christ and the church—is of this character. It is a *social* union in the former, and in the latter a *vital, spiritual* one. God accepts us in Christ, as the “beloved.” We live also because “Christ liveth in us.” He has also

assumed our nature, and glorified it; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. This is a *mystery*, and a beautiful illustration of the likeness, even the oneness, of the affectionate husband and trusting wife in their social union.

Verse 26 requires a distinct consideration. *That He might sanctify it* (the church), *and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.*—From this passage has been deduced the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Not that the water affects the mind, but that its application, as a religious rite, is the *occasion* and the *channel* through which the divine agency is exerted, not only in changing the relation of the individual to God (a rejected sinner comes into the relation of a child, *is born again* in this respect, and so, if there be no future forfeit, is an *heir*), but also in imparting inward grace, and the beginning of spiritual life, so that one is in *this sense* born again. On the occasion of baptism, God looks upon the sinner in Christ, and commences the restoration of the soul to fellowship with Himself. This is the doctrine of baptismal regeneration.

Now, if this doctrine were clearly taught in the Scriptures, that would settle the question. But is there any proof of its being taught? While the whole scope and spirit of the gospel is opposed to this idea, teaching that our relations to God are changed by an exercise of faith in Christ, and that the moral change is effected by the Spirit through the word of truth, there is no passage where baptism, or the application of water, is mentioned, which cannot be explained exclusive of this idea; and so explained as not to violate the scriptural use of language. In John 6: 53—56, we are taught that, except we eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, we have no life in us; and

also, Whoso eateth Christ's flesh, and drinketh His blood, hath eternal life. And such as do this are represented as having a peculiar union with Christ. Christ says, *He dwelleth in me, and I in Him*. Now this *life*, this *eternal life*, this reciprocal indwelling of Christ's Spirit and of the human spirit, cannot depend on the *actual* eating of the flesh and drinking of the blood of the Son of Man. It teaches a moral truth, a spiritual exercise; and on this the effect depends. So in baptism, though there is a literal, an actual application of water, the moral effect is produced by the *Word*; or, as in Titus 3: 5, on the divine agency itself, *by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*. Both the *Spirit* and the *Word* are always combined in the work of regeneration. In one of these passages the Spirit's agency is mentioned; in the other, the instrumentality of the *Word*. The Scriptures abundantly teach that they are never separated in effecting this change.

Why, then, is this recognition of washing in water? Because it is the *appointed emblem* of this purification, this cleansing from sin. Neither this passage, nor the one in Titus, extends to the whole idea of baptism, which has three distinct meanings, as we have before seen:—a promise or vow, cleansing from the guilt and defilement of sin, and the experimental doctrine of death to sin and resurrection to a new spiritual life; extending also to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. But here the only idea is that of *cleansing from sin*,—a *moral purification*—hence *washing*, and not baptism. Obviously the reference is to *this element* of the import of baptism. This limited view of baptism is manifestly recognized in John 3: 5: Except a man be born of *water* and of the *Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That the application

of water is but an emblem of the cleansing efficacy of the Spirit, is obvious from the eighth verse of this third chapter of John, where the agency of the Spirit is spoken of as the exclusive cause: *So is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

## CHAPTER VI.

### RELATIVE DUTIES OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS.

Verses 1—4. Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Verse 1. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord.*—Filial obedience is a scriptural injunction. The foundation of the duty is deeply and obviously laid in the mental constitution of both parent and child, as well as in the circumstances under which the child is placed at birth and in early life. The comfort of the parent, and the well-being of the child, depend largely and equally on the practical influence of parental authority properly exercised. And God has adapted the internal character of the minds of each to these circumstances. Parental authority, and the duty of filial obedience, find their counterpart in the heart, which is the voice of God, and speaks with divine authority. Every parent feels that he has a right to the obedience of his child, and that he is wronged by its being refused. And every child instinctively feels that he *ought* (whether willing or not), to obey his parents, and is con-

scious of guilt and degradation if he do not obey. On this obedience depend the peace and loveliness of the family. The *habit* of submission also fits the child for its future social and civil relations of life. We may add, that so far as any habit can have force in favor of piety, it is favorable to his obedience in his higher and more solemn relations to the authority of God.

This obedience is also to be rendered from Christian principles. *In the Lord*,—that is, as a Christian, from religious motives, connected with a sense of parental authority; as one might be expected to do who is *in the Lord*, or in Christ, whose motives may be expected to be heavenly, and whose temper and spirit are pure and filial, when derived from such a source. This obedience *in the Lord* may also imply obedience in every thing not forbidden by the Lord. Christ is Lord even of the parent. *For this is right*,—that is, proper, or becoming the relation of a child to his parent.

Verse 2. *Honor thy father and mother*.—To honor a parent, while it implies obedience, as in the preceding verse, includes more: reverence, if he be excellent and deserving. If not excellent, the *relation* itself requires respect, a certain deference and civility, and a tender consideration of his happiness, which are due to no other relation. It implies a readiness, also, to honor him, or to make him honorable in the eyes of others; to conceal his faults, and, with proper modesty, to bring to notice his virtues. Few habits are more lovely, or draw forth warmer expressions of commendation, than the manifestation of this studious desire of honoring a parent in the child's ordinary intercourse with it.

*Which is the first commandment with promise.*<sup>1</sup>—That

<sup>1</sup> Exodus xx. 12.

is, this is a *chief commandment*, and has attached to it a promise *expressed*, showing its dignity and importance. That *first* does not mean in point of time, or order, but of rank, and not *the* first, but *a* first, or one of the chief commandments, is obvious from Mat. 20: 27; 22: 38. Mark 12: 30. Also, Mark 10: 44; 12: 28—30. In Acts 16: 12 the same Greek word is translated “chief.” Here it is the chief city of Macedonia. In the passage in Ephesians, it was the object of the apostle merely to show that it was not a command of minor importance.

Verse 3. *That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.* — This is the promise annexed, and which is alluded to because it shows the importance and *rank* of the duty enjoined. The nature of the promise is general; the spiritual blessings are clothed in a material garb. Temporal blessings, as long life and happiness, are manifestly the natural results of parental authority wisely and successfully exercised. These, however, are but the types and indices of spiritual and future life; for all duties discharged from religious motives, *in the Lord*, have their appropriate rewards promised.

Verse 4. *And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.* — The duties of parents and children are correlative, and mutually imply each other. They differ according to the relation; and though the conduct of each is modified materially by the conduct and character of the other, yet, in many respects, the duties of each are unchangeable. The deficiencies of the parent do not wholly destroy, and in some cases do not even modify, the duties of the child. Neither does the perverseness of the child free the parent from his responsibilities. He is still to be the providing, watchful, tender, and *authoritative* parent. He is also to be cautious that, by his treatment of the child, he do not

awaken a spirit of insubordination, or even of discouragement. This may be done by unreasonable requirements, which, though they may not free the child from obligation to obey, are *wrong* in the parent; by undue severity in chastisement, administered in anger or peevishness; by needlessly depriving the child of his natural and innocent amusements; by apparent indifference and neglect of the child's wishes and happiness; by too frequent and untimely complaints and censures, uttered in tones of voice adapted to excite ill-will in the child. Delicate praise is inspiring, and is as much a duty as faithful rebuke. A child, especially as it advances in years, should be respected, as well as loved; and should be loved, as well as taught to love and obey.

*But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*—*To bring up a child*, is to educate it, or to train it; not only to guard it from folly and evil, but to teach it to guard itself, and by every possible means to fit it for its future spheres of activity. Everything that has growth must be *nourished*,—the plant, the young animal, the human body, and soul; and each must be nourished according to its nature. Some parents make little distinction between the nurture of their own offspring and that of their young animals. It comprehends little more than food and shelter. The soul must be nurtured by knowledge and discipline. The discipline of the intellect must differ from that of the heart, out of which is to be formed the moral character. While the nurture of the body and of the intellect are important, and the responsibility of the parent in respect to them serious, that of the spiritual man, the moral and religious affections and habits, are unspeakably most important. These require *religious* culture,—*the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. In such nurture



the child is not only to be taught the character and will of the Lord, but is to be trained to do what the Lord requires. No domestic education short of that which is eminently religious, will be pleasing to God, or fit the child for its destiny in either world.

RELATIVE DUTIES OF SERVANTS AND MASTERS.

Verses 5—9. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto 6 Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God 7 from the heart; with good will doing service, as to 8 the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive 9 of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him.

*Servants*, in this passage, means bondmen or slaves, in distinction from hired servants. *Masters* means their owners; not merely employers, but *legal* possessors. *According to the flesh*, means their physical condition, in distinction from the soul, which nothing can enslave except sin. The master had a *legal* right to the time, labor, and obedience of his slave. He had neither the legal right nor the power to dictate what tempers of heart he should cherish, or the motives by which he should be actuated. He could not command the personal love and respect of his slave, if he

did not deserve it; nor even then, only as it was the free exercise of the slave. It is not in the power of the master to prevent his slave from loving God, or worshipping Him in spirit and in truth, or believing in Christ. But the master has the *legal* right and the power to require his slave to *gird himself* and *serve him*. In his submission, the slave lays the master under no obligations.<sup>1</sup> Such was the law of the Roman government, under which the apostle lived. With it the apostle did not interfere any more than he did with many other acts of civil injustice. The kingdom he labored to establish was not of this world; but its principles, pervading society like leaven, were to regenerate it,—to undermine cruelty, or to enable the injured to *endure* their wrongs with patience and forgiveness. He therefore instructs the slave on the points where he had freedom,—as to the temper of his heart, and his motives; to submit to his condition, *right or wrong*, as a Christian, with sincerity;—*in singleness of heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart: with good will doing service* (that is, serving his master), *as to the Lord, and not to men*.—Servants were to obey with *fear and trembling*, not resisting, knowing that they were in the hands of their masters, who had power to inflict physical suffering; still, they were to do it *religiously*, which was a freedom out of the reach of the most cruel master.

The expression *singleness of heart*, claims a moment's explanation. It does not mean that *one motive* only must lodge in the mind at once, and influence it to obedience. There may be several motives: a regard to the authority of God, and to His glory; the constraining love of Christ; an honest desire to promote the interests of the master,

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvii. 7—9.

kind or cruel; a desire to set a Christian example to his fellow-servants, and thus to let his light shine; or, finally, the approval and peace of his own soul, and what, as a *reward*, he should receive of the Lord.<sup>1</sup> All these would be *religious*; and, though varied and complex in one respect, might all act in unison at the same time, and in this sense be *singleness of heart*,—without duplicity or hypocrisy; not professing what he did not honestly perform.

In the eighth verse the impartiality of God (or of the Lord, that is, of Christ) is set forth as an encouragement to the faithful discharge of his duties as a slave: *Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.*—The promise is universal—*any man*. *Whitsoever good thing.*—Every act of usefulness religiously performed shall be rewarded, or the author shall receive of the Lord corresponding good—the divine favor. For reasons best known to Infinite Wisdom, men are placed in this life under circumstances diversified and unequal. Their conditions are not only unlike, but *unequal*. Health and feebleness, wealth and poverty, fame and obscurity, liberty and bondage, are only a few of the many inequalities in human society. Injustice may underlie or mingle with any and all of these inequalities. The man defrauded by his shrewder neighbor may *feel* the injustice, but he is required to *feel* it as a Christian. The slave may know and feel the injustice of his bondage, but he is exhorted by the apostle to act as a Christian. We ourselves can see some of the reasons for this diversity, both as dispensed by God, and, by His permission, as inflicted by man. Great moral ends are frequently accomplished in this world of probation and of moral discipline. But it is

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 8.

sufficient that we are assured that, in the future life, virtue and piety shall be rewarded according to character, and not to rank or condition, *whether bond or free*. There can be no doubt that Lazarus, in the bosom of the patriarch, often adores divine Goodness and Wisdom, in not giving him in this life the treasures of Dives — for that poverty and lowly condition which, through grace, chastened his heart, and fitted him for the bliss and exaltation of the saints in light.

Verse nine enforces the correlative duties of masters with the same explicitness, and from corresponding religious motives. *And ye masters do the same things unto them*; that is, fulfil your relative duties to your servants with the same exactness, and from the same motives, — to please God. Give watch-care and protection; healthful and sufficient sustenance; comfortable and becoming apparel; kindness in sickness; firmness, yet gentleness in authority. As they minister to your physical wants and general comfort, so do you regard their intellectual and spiritual necessities. God has endowed them as He has the rest of the race, and as He has not irrational animals, with an *instinctive desire for knowledge*. Gratify that desire, by opening to them suitable sources of information. Above all, they are accountable creatures, and capable of communion and fellowship with the unseen and infinite Jehovah. Give them, therefore, the means of knowing the spiritual treasures of His word; the precepts of the gospel; its conditions of life, and its blissful and sustaining hopes. This would be doing the *same things* to them, and, obviously, nothing less would be. *Forbearing threatening*, refers to an unkindness and injustice to which the master's relation to his slave makes him specially liable. Power engenders haughtiness. The faults, and sometimes even the virtues,

of the slave, excite hatred, revenge, and cruelty. Such are admonished of their own accountability to the Judge of all. *Knowing that your Master also is in heaven.*—Whatever may be the *legal* right of the master to the possession, obedience, and service of his servant, God has an infinitely higher claim on the master himself. He is his Creator, and therefore his *owner*; and as on the ground of ownership he claims the right to dictate to his servants, who are his fellow-men and *fellow-servants to God*, God's right and the master's responsibility to Him are infinitely more comprehensive and solemn. The final judgment will be impartial. *Neither is there respect of persons with Him.*—Instead of overlooking the rights of the slave, or the master's cruelty, or even his neglect of kindness, He will be exact and impartial. They, all they, who plough iniquity and sow wickedness, shall reap the same.<sup>1</sup> And much will be required of him to whom much is given. The impartiality of God is one of His most adorable perfections—absolute justice associated with equal benignity. This ought to render the rich intelligent and powerful, humble and careful. Such should do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.<sup>2</sup> Poverty, and ignorance, and bondage, are not grounds of merit; but the Lord will hear their cry, and visit them.

In these remarks we have admitted the *legal* right of the master to his slave as *property*, to be disposed of largely at his will. We have said nothing of the *moral* right. The passage does not of itself require us to do so: yet it is a question of great importance, involving serious obligations. It excites strong instinctive feelings, and must address the conscience of every honest slave-owner.

In respect to the moral character of slavery, a few

<sup>1</sup> Job. iv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Micah vi. 8.

points are obvious, and every mind free from prejudice must acknowledge them.

The apostle does not denounce or prohibit the relation as morally wrong. The same is true of the Scriptures generally.

The slave is exhorted to conduct *as if* his bondage were just; and the master *as if* his possession was right in itself, as well as legal. Paul, as well as the other inspired teachers, found slavery already existing as a civil institution, legally acknowledged and protected. They did nothing, either *by precept* or *by example*, to sustain and perpetuate it. The prohibition of it would have been direct opposition to the civil government, as opposition to no other sin would have been. Civil society would have been so convulsed by no other prohibition. Civil war and bloodshed would not follow the prohibition, by the Christian church, of polygamy; but probably would have followed, had slaves been taught that they might leave their masters, or had masters been required to manumit their slaves. This came under the common duty (often involving perplexed questions) of submission to authorized government.

Again: slaves were taught — as instinct teaches — that bondage was an evil, and that liberty was to be *preferred*. In 1 Cor. 7: 20—24, slaves are instructed not to seek freedom by violence, nor to be unduly unhappy under their condition; but to *use their freedom* if they could obtain it properly. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called; but if thou mayest be made free, *use it rather*. The word of God thus acknowledges the natural desire for freedom, and that it is *preferable to bondage*. Dugald Stewart (in his treatise on “Active and Moral Powers”) says of slavery, it “mortifies.” It is man-

ifestly an unnatural degradation of the soul of man, to be endured only from necessity, either of force or of Christian duty. Now, if freedom is a blessing in itself, when not abused, and there is, as all feel there is, a natural, and often irrepressible desire in the heart of man for it, so strong that it requires the most solemn religious motives to submit to bondage; if slavery “mortifies” us,—then, benevolence, not to say Christian love, must constrain the owner to do all he can to secure for his own, and for all slaves, their freedom, together with all the benefits connected with it. These benefits must include both this life and the future. The love of Christ must sap the foundations of any institution in which there is liable to be so much selfishness, wrong, and cruelty.

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#### THE GOSPEL ARMOR,

The epistle, from the beginning of Chapter IV. to this point, is occupied in an *exhortation* to right tempers of heart, and to the practice of specific duties.<sup>1</sup> To be able to discharge these duties, the Ephesian Christians are exhorted to seek the requisite strength by putting on the panoply of God.

Verses 10—17. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the  
 11 Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the  
 whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand  
 12 against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not  
 against flesh and blood, but against principalities,  
 against powers, against the rulers of the darkness  
 of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high  
 13 places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor  
 of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil

<sup>1</sup> See Analysis, p. 118.

14 day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and  
 15 having on the breast-plate of righteousness: and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of  
 16 peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of  
 17 the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

## ANALYSIS

*The Christian's condition in this life is one of conflict. — This conflict is one both of assault and of defence. — In this paragraph it is considered chiefly in respect to the defence. — The exhortation is to withstand the opposition made by superhuman foes. — To do this successfully requires personal strength, and an appropriate armor. — This strength is to be found in Christ, v. 10. — The armor, here described metaphorically, is furnished by God, vs. 11, 13, 17. — This panoply consists of — Truth, or the Word of God, vs. 14, 17 — and in those gracious exercises of heart, which are the peculiar experience of the Christian, viz.: Girded with Truth; — having for a breast-plate, Righteousness; — the feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace; — Faith as a shield; — the helmet of salvation; and sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. — These are not only indispensable to a successful conflict with our powerful adversaries, but they are our duties, and hence the ground of the exhortation. — Here we see, as everywhere, that dependence on God does not lessen our obligations. — All spiritual blessings are equally a gift and an acquisition.*

I. The Christian's personal strength is to be found in Christ, verse 10. *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.* The strength here required is the force of religious principle. Its source is *Christ*. There is in some minds a constitutional firmness,



the live oak of the soul, neither feeble nor fickle. But something more than constitutional firmness is needed to lead a consistent, persevering, directly onward, Christian life; neither halting because wearied in well-doing, nor turned aside by allurements; neither intimidated nor beaten back by opposition. Strength for this is found only in Christ, *in the power of His might*; that is, by His mighty power.<sup>1</sup> The distinction between what is natural, as an original endowment of the soul which God gives in great variety to men, as a sovereign Creator, and that special, gracious endowment of soul attending regeneration, or God working in us *to will and to do*,—in the soul's being constrained by faith which works by love, or the same idea expressed in other words, constrained by the love of Christ,—is everywhere explicitly taught in the Bible. Whatever constitutional peculiarities there may be among men, there is no such natural difference as grace makes. He is ignorant of his own weakness, who feels strong except *in the Lord, and in the power of His might*.

II. The armor here described is furnished *by God*, of God, vs. 11. *Put on the whole armor of God*, not to the exclusion of Christ, from whom, in the preceding verse, we are taught we derive our spiritual strength, but from God in Christ. The whole armor, means the *varied* gracious aids, which are not only defensive, but instruments of returning the assaults of the foe, and of beating him back to his utter overthrow. The *nature* of the armor is fitted to the character of the adversaries with which the Christian contends.

Verses 11, 12. *The wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*—The foe with

<sup>1</sup> See, also, 2 Tim. ii 1.

which the believer grapples has not only strength, but malignity and subtlety. What a conflict must be that of the Christian, who has to contend with foes of superhuman power, influenced by a hatred of God, and of all holiness; who delight in the misery they inflict, as well as in the wickedness which they instigate, all under the direction of a wily, deceitful cunning, which ceases not in efforts to ensnare the souls of men! Our conflict is not ordinarily, or, as to its principal danger, with the physical force of men, which, however malignant and cruel, is comparatively weak. *We wrestle not against flesh and blood*, as two wrestlers strive for mastery, but against principalities, etc.<sup>1</sup> It is a general designation of the higher orders, the most influential of fallen angels. The terms *principalities*, *powers*, and *rulers*, imply *authority*, with which they are invested through their superior strength, if not through their superior malignant zeal. Such rule over the *darkness of this world*—a metaphorical designation of human depravity and ignorance. Though Satan is the *prince*, the chief of this dark dominion,<sup>2</sup> to cast out whom Christ came, there are under his influence, and in league with him, legions, including many in authority. Satan is most graphically represented here as marshalling his hosts against the Lord and His people. These constitute the *spiritual wickedness in high places*, against which the believer is to contend; who, both in their superior capacities and exalted spheres, seek by every possible means of malignant energy and deceit to hinder our obedience to God, and to thwart His designs of love and mercy. To be able, therefore, to *stand against these wiles*,<sup>3</sup> to *withstand in the evil day*,—the day of assault and temptation,—and, *having done all, to stand*;<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See notes on chapter II. 2.

<sup>2</sup> John xii. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. vi. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. vi. 13.

in spite of all opposition, and in the use of all means of defence, to remain unvanquished and unmoved, your enemy foiled,—take *unto you, put on, the whole armor of God.*<sup>1</sup>

The following specifications of the different parts of this panoply which God furnishes the believer, is metaphorical, and historical, and persuasive, rather than analytical.

1. *Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.*<sup>2</sup>—The orientals, that, in running or laboring, they might not be encumbered, girded their flowing garments around their loins, and were thus prepared for any effort or emergency. Christians are to gird themselves with *truth*; that is, to be prepared for any onset of Satan with some suitable portion of divine truth, as Christ was in His temptation in the wilderness. See these three several temptations of Christ recorded in Matt. 4:1—11. Each was met by a passage of Scripture, each was warded off by the *force of truth*. Such truths not only silence the adversary, but strengthen the inner man. Hence the exhortation of the apostle,<sup>3</sup> “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” It will brace up the soul as the girdle does the loins.

2. The second specification is the *breast-plate: having on the breast-plate of righteousness.*<sup>4</sup>—The breast-plate, or thorax, was a covering in two parts, extending, behind and before, from the neck down to the limbs, to protect the body from blows or missile weapons. The Christian’s breast-plate is his *righteousness*. This may mean conscious innocency when wrongly accused — as Christians often are — by men unenlightened, and thus incapable of appreciating the purity of religious motives. It may mean the peace of a “good conscience,” that support of the witness within, of honesty toward man, and sincere piety toward God; or it may mean, as it probably does,

1 Eph. vi. 11—13.

2 Eph. vi. 14.

3 Col. iii. 16.

4 Eph. vi. 14.

the righteousness of God in Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 5: 8, it is called the breast-plate of faith and love. This implies, necessarily, the merits of Christ, — His gratuitous and justifying righteousness, furnished by God in Christ, available by “faith which works by love.” “Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”<sup>1</sup> This is not our own righteousness, but the “righteousness of God by faith,” in which Paul trusted,<sup>2</sup> and which will enable the soul to stand unmoved against the denunciations of the law, the accusations of conscience, or the assaults of Satan. We do not here refer to the personal righteousness of Christ as “without sin,” but to the *moral efficacy* of His obedience, sufferings, and humiliation, which is communicable, and is the ground of our being “accepted in the Beloved.”<sup>3</sup>

3. *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.* — The Christian must be in readiness, or *prepared*, as the earnest traveller whose sandals are on and tied, having in the moment of setting out on his journey no delay or confusion, but ready to start alike with composure and alacrity. Or, as the idea is that of conflict, allusion is more probably to the “nailed shoes of the Roman soldiers,” which covered and protected the whole foot. Alacrity, however, is the chief idea in the *peace* of the *gospel*. The gospel fills the mind of the believer with a cheerfulness indispensable to the successful discharge of Christian duty. God says to His people, “Ye shall go out with joy;”<sup>4</sup> and “*The joy of the Lord is your strength.*”<sup>5</sup>

1 Rom. viii. 24; Jer. xxiii. 6.

2 Phil. iii. 8, 9.

3 Eph. i. 6.

4 Isaiah lv. 12.

5 Neh. viii. 10.

4. *Above all, taking the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*—A *shield* is a weapon not worn like the thorax, but held in the hand, and interposed skilfully as the missile is seen approaching. The shield, or buckler, often had a “boss,” thick and impenetrable at the centre,—a protuberance by which the darts of the enemy were turned aside and fell harmless. This is to be added to the parts of the armor already mentioned; *above all.*—*Faith* is the material; and truth being the exciting cause of this faith, it is a mental exercise—a Christian grace and duty. Faith is an *active grace*. Working by love, it constrains the believer to zealous activity. By it the soul is urged to every good work. But here, it is regarded as a defensive weapon—a shield to protect the believer from the assaults of Satan. *Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*—This expression, *darts of the wicked* [one], though it includes indirectly all temptations and allurements, whether addressed to us by our circumstances, or by wicked men or subordinate wicked spirits,—refers emphatically to the devil, *the wicked one*, who, both personally and by inspiring his subordinate agents, is ever laboring to draw away from the path of life the disciples of Christ. His malevolence is exerted against the faithfulness, the hopes, and the peace of the saints. This malevolence is expressed in the terms *fiery darts*, either because the arrows had been lighted to a flame, or because, dipped in poison, they inflamed the wound inflicted. Both were the practice in savage warfare; and Satan is even more malignant and savage. He delights not only in the sin of believers, but in their anguish. The Christian, though conscious of sin and of his desert of God’s

displeasure, has “peace in believing.” Christ is our peace.<sup>1</sup> Faith in Christ quenches these fiery darts.

5. *And take the helmet of salvation.*—This is the fifth specification of the Christian’s armor. The helmet serves a double purpose—as an *ornament* and as a *defence*. Practical godliness is an ornament. He who is clothed with salvation is morally beautiful. In this passage, *salvation* is said to be the helmet. In 1 Thess. 5: 8, the *hope of salvation* is said to be the helmet, which is obviously the idea here. The salvation itself beautifies: the hope of it sustains and elevates the soul, inspiring it with confidence and joy.<sup>2</sup> I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath *clothed me with the garments of salvation*, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.<sup>3</sup> See also the inspiring influence of this hope of salvation described in Rom. 5: 5, “*Hope maketh not ashamed*, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” In this passage the *consciousness of God’s love* to the believer makes him assured and bold. Salvation gives beauty without, and consolation within. But the helmet is not only the symbol of beauty and joy, it is a defence, worn ordinarily by horsemen to protect the head from the broadsword. The believer’s ground of hope is the salvation of Christ. By *grace* we are saved. This doctrine is his helmet. Because I live, ye shall live also. My grace shall be sufficient for you. Strength shall be equal to your day. These are promises of salvation, and they are the believer’s helmet.

6. *And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of*

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xv. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah lxi. 10.

*God*, is the last article of the armor mentioned, and completes the believer's panoply. The *word of God* is the sword which the Spirit furnishes. The Bible is an inspired revelation.<sup>1</sup> The power of this word is implied in its being called a *sword*. The word is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, etc.<sup>2</sup> It is not only truth with which the believer girds *himself*,<sup>3</sup> but the all-conquering instrument which is furnished by the Spirit, and therefore infallible, and put into the hand of the Christian, which hand is also nerved to wield it by the same Spirit. It overcomes and destroys all opposition—it changes the heart; and so God makes his enemies willing in the day of His power.

The importance of abundant and correct religious instruction is thus made obvious. An able, instructive ministry; in early life, correct Sabbath-school instruction; the daily habit in the family of imparting, incidentally and industriously, the teachings of the word of God,—are blessings rarely, if ever, duly valued. Such instruction will overcome evil—it will win a crown of life; and he who thus teaches, *arms* others with a weapon mighty to conquer.

We have thus completed the description of the believer's panoply, *the whole armor of God*. In review it will be seen that it is external and internal. *Truth*, the *word of God*—that is, the *sword*—is furnished from without; the rest consists in the *exercises* of the *believer*, and is wrought, so far as it is grace, in the soul. And all internal and external, both the personal strength and the armor, are from the Lord. In whatever light the inspired writers view the gospel, there are certain essential elements always visible and prominent. Religion is both a gift and a duty; something

1 2 Peter i. 21.

2 Heb. iv. 12.

3 Eph. vi. 14.

to be received and to be done. It is a life of action and of conflict, yet consisting in and springing from the affections and tempers of the heart.

#### EXHORTATION TO PRAYER.

Verses 18—20. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 19 and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly; to make known 20 the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak.

#### ANALYSIS.

*The subjects of prayer, all saints, v. 18.— for himself in particular, v. 19. — The objects, blessings in general for all saints; for himself, that he may preach as he ought, v. 20. — All kinds of prayer; habitual, always watching for occasions; relying upon and actually under the influence of the Spirit, v. 18.*

I. The subjects of our prayers mentioned are *all saints*. In 1 Tim. 2 : 1, prayer is enjoined *for all men*, which is an obvious duty; but here—not to the exclusion of others, but because the object suggested this limited view—for the *saints*, with special reference to himself, as one of them.

II. The object of the prayer, so far as all saints are concerned, is left general; from the nature of the case, however, embracing all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. To confine it to their need of divine aid in the successful use



of the panoply just described, is without warrant; though this was doubtless an essential object. So far as his own needs were an object, they are specified. That he who had a *dispensation of the grace of God*; who had been made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God, by the effectual working of His power, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;<sup>1</sup> that he should feel the need of that divine aid which prayer only can procure, and should entreat his brethren to intercede for him, is reasonable. He needed divine teaching as to the *mystery*; he needed *boldness*, and *eloquence*.<sup>2</sup> To pray for individuals—to single out particular friends, converted or unconverted, and entreat God in their behalf, made importunate by a knowledge of their special circumstances—is a great *aid* to prayer. There is nothing pious in instinctive sympathy; but it is lovely, and nourishes a spirit of devotion. The affections draw out the heart in prayer, and render the habit of intercourse with Christ fixed and easy. And certainly the object was a worthy one, that he might be a faithful and able preacher. If the prayer of Solomon, that he should have given unto him “an understanding heart” to judge his people,<sup>3</sup> was pleasing to the Lord, how much more this desire of the apostle, that he might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ as he ought—correctly, eloquently, and boldly. Eloquence, or *utterance*, though to some extent a natural endowment, and greatly improved by cultivation, is, in its highest sense, a gift of God, and to be sought in prayer. The connection between eloquence and its religious effects on the hearts of hearers, is as intimate as cause and effect in any department of morals. Men are to be reasoned with and to be persuaded. Nor ought even *manner* to be disregarded. Yet the *utterance* for which

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 2, 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. vi. 19, 20.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings iii. 5—15.

the apostle desired his brethren to pray, is doubtless described in 1 Cor. 2: "I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the *demonstration of the Spirit*, and of power." Self-distrusting, he relied on the power of the Spirit to make a *demonstration* of the mystery of the gospel; giving an apprehension which neither logic nor rhetoric could give. The circumstances, also, under which he preached the gospel, required much moral courage. He was not only a *prisoner in bonds*, but was to appear as Christ's *ambassador* at the most august court in the world. A sense of duty must triumph over natural timidity. The union of modesty and moral courage is rare, but they are both essential qualifications in the preacher. Something more than eloquence and boldness is requisite to make an able minister of the gospel. It is a *mystery* to be made known. Wisdom, not the wisdom of this world, but the wisdom of God—spiritual *illumination*,—is indispensable. It is the word without, and the Spirit shining within, in their reciprocal influence on the understanding and the heart, which can enable the preacher to perceive clearly, and unfold lucidly, the plan of salvation.

III. With *all kinds* of prayer—*with all prayer and supplication*.<sup>1</sup> When prayer and supplication are united, as in this passage, prayer is more general than supplication, comprehending the general idea of worship. My house shall be called a house of prayer; that is, of religious worship. Supplication has stricter reference to *need*. Intercession is supplication in behalf of others, which, as the scope shows, must have been included in this exhortation. Prayer must be *habitual, always*; and *watching thereunto with all perseverance*.<sup>2</sup> The injunction *always* to pray, can be ful-

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. vi. 18.

filled only in the spirit of it. It is that spirit and readiness of the mind which is excited to prayer on every occasion, and also *watching* for these occasions. Such a Christian is ever wakeful and thoughtful. Thoughtlessness is not only the occasion of many a fall; but care and *persevering* purpose are indispensable to keep alive the spirit and the habit of prayer. Thoughtlessness is *wrong*. Though it may be less blamable than deliberate, wilful transgression, still there is in it an element of guilt. As it is essentially blameworthy in different degrees, no Christian should offer forgetfulness as an excuse for not praying. This duty of prayer is to be discharged in reliance on, and under the actual influence of, the Spirit; *in the Spirit*. By His aid alone can acceptable prayer be offered. The Spirit teaches what to pray for; excites in us the suitable tempers; gives an earnestness.<sup>1</sup> Here, again, we see it is *our duty* to have and to be what is plainly a gift. Our absolute dependence on the divine agency in no way affects our agency, as it respects duty or privilege. It is as much our duty to pray *in the Spirit*, as it is to pray. Not to pray in our necessities is as unnatural as it is to refuse food when hungry. The Spirit is not given us to make it our duty, but to aid us in its fulfilment. Not to avail ourselves of its gracious aid, doubtless, *aggravates* our guilt, but is not necessary to the obligation.

## TYCHICUS, A MESSENGER TO EPHEBUS.

Verses 21, 22. But that ye may also know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you

<sup>1</sup> Jude 20; Rom. viii. 26, 27.

22 all things: whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

Tychicus was an Asiatic, a companion of Paul. He was a faithful minister, and beloved. He carried several of the apostle's epistles—the first to Timothy, one to the Colossians, and this to the Ephesians. His errand, besides carrying these epistles, was to comfort the hearts of the brethren, by assuring them to what extent the apostle was exempt from those trials to which, as a prisoner, he was liable.

#### BENEDICTION.

Verses 23, 24. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus 24 Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. AMEN.

This benediction, full of piety and love, closes this wonderful epistle. The benediction is pronounced on *all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*. On all such the divine favor is bestowed, and thus wide and free is the apostle's charity.

# I N D E X.

- ADOPTION** — ch. i. 5.
- ALIENATED** — from life of God, ch. iv. 18.
- ANALYSIS** — general, p. 9.  
“ particular, ch. i. 4—14; i. 17—23; ii. 1—3; iii. 1—13; iii. 14—19; iv. 1—16; iv. 17—20; v. 1—20; vi. 10—17; vi. 18—20.
- APOSTLE** — Paul, ch. i. 1; iv. 10.
- BAPTISM** — ch. iv. 5.
- BELOVED** — accepted in, ch. i. 6.
- BENEDICTION** — ch. vi. 23, 24.
- BITTERNESS** — ch. iv. 31.
- BLESSED** — different significations, ch. i. 3.
- BODY** — the Church of Christ, ch. i. 23; iv. 12—16.
- CHILDREN** — of disobedience, ch. v. 6; of wrath, ch. ii. 3.
- CHILDREN** — of light, ch. v. 8; children and parents, ch. vi. 1—4.
- CHRIST** — gave himself, ch. v. 12; in Christ's name, ch. v. 20; may dwell in you, ch. iii. 17; in Christ, ch. i. 3; ii. 6; iii. 6.
- CHURCH** — ch. iii. 10; v. 2; Christ the Head of, and nourishes it, ch. v. 24—33.
- COMMANDMENT** — the meaning of *first*, ch. vi. 2.
- COMPREHEND** — the love of Christ, ch. iii. 18.
- CORNER-STONE** — chief, ch. ii. 20.
- CORRUPT COMMUNICATIONS** — ch. iv. 29.
- COVENANTS** — of promise; distinction between Covenant and Testament, ch. ii. 11—13.
- COVETOUSNESS** — ch. v. 3—5.
- CRAFTINESS** — ch. iv. 12—15.
- CREATED** — in righteousness, ch. iv. 14.  
“ — all things by Christ, ch. iii. 8.
- DARKNESS** — and blindness, ch. iv. 18; v. 8.
- DAYS** — evil, ch. v. 16.
- DEATH** — specific views of, ch. ii. 3.
- DEAD IN SINS** — ch. ii. 1—5.
- DEVIL** — ch. iv. 26, 27.
- DESIRES** — of the flesh and of the mind, ch. ii. 3.
- DISPENSATION** — of grace, ch. iii. 2.
- DOCTRINE** — wind of, ch. iv. 12—15.
- DOMINION** — of Christ, ch. i. 22.
- DOXOLOGY** — ch. iii. 20, 21.
- EDIFYING** — of the body, ch. iv. 12—15.
- EYES** — of the understanding, ch. i. 18.
- FAITH** — ch. ii. 8—10; vi. 16.
- FAMILY** — in heaven and in earth, ch. iii. 15.
- FATHER** — God and Father of Christ, ch. i. 3—17; of glory, ch. i. 17.
- FEELING** — past, ch. iv. 19.
- FELLOWSHIP** — ch. iii. 9.
- FELLOW-CITIZENS**, ch. ii. 19; heirs, ch. iii. 6.
- FILLED with the fulness of God**, ch. iii. 19.
- FOLLOWERS of God**, ch. v. 1, 2.
- FOUNDATION** — apostles and prophets, ch. ii. 20.
- FORGIVENESS** — ch. iv. 32.
- FRUIT of the Spirit**, ch. v. 9.
- FULNESS** — of Christ, ch. iv. 12—15.
- GENTILES** — far off — made nigh, ch. ii. 11—13; iii. vi.
- GOSPEL ARMOR**, ch. vi. 10—17.
- GRACE** — ch. ii. 7, 8.
- GRATITUDE** of the apostle for the faith and love of the saints at Ephesus, ch. i. 15, 16.
- GRATITUDE** accompanied with prayer, ch. i. 16; v. 4.
- GRATITUDE** through Christ, ch. v. 20.
- GIFTS** — unto men, ch. iv. 8—10.
- GROW UP** — in Christ, ch. iv. 15; growth into a temple, ch. ii. 21.
- GROUNDED** — in love, ch. iii. 17.
- GRIEVE** — not the Holy Spirit, ch. iv. 30.

- HABITATION** — of God, ch. ii. 22.
- HEAD** — Christ, of the church, ch. iv. 15, 16.
- HEAVENLY** — places, ch. ii. 6.
- HOLINESS** — ch. iv. 24.
- HOUSEHOLD** — of God, ch. ii. 19.
- HOPE** — of the Christian's calling, ch. i. 18.
- IDOLATERS** — ch. v. 5.
- INHERITANCE** — ch. v. 5; ours in heaven, ch. i. 14; God's in the saints, ch. i. 15.
- JEWS AND GENTILES** — change of relation to each other and to God, ch. ii. 11—13.
- JEWS AND GENTILES** — made one, ch. ii. 14—18.
- KINGDOM** — of Christ and of God, ch. v. 5.
- LABOR** — with the hands, ch. iv. 28.
- LASCIVIOUSNESS** — ch. iv. 19.
- LIGHT** — in the Lord, ch. v. 8.  
" — children of, ch. v. 8.
- LOVE** — ch. iv. 16; i. 4.
- MEASURE** — of the gift of Christ, ch. iv. 7—16.
- MERCY** — scheme of; God the author; the plan from eternity; the design; motives; self-moved; his own glory; benevolence; no motive supreme, but each ultimate in itself, ch. i. 4—12; rich in, ch. ii. 4.
- MERCY** — scheme of mercy executed by Christ, ch. i. 8—7, 10—13.
- MERCY** — scheme of mercy executed wisely, ch. i. 8.
- MERCY** — scheme of mercy executed with certainty, ch. i. 11.
- MERCY** — scheme of mercy executed by the Spirit solacing the believer, ch. i. 13, 14.
- MESSENGER** — Tychicus, ch. vi. 21.
- MINISTER** — gift of grace, and effectual power of God, ch. iii. 7.
- MINISTRY** — ch. iv. 12.
- MYSTERY** — ch. iii. 3, 4—9.
- NEW MAN** — ch. iv. 24.
- OLD MAN** — ch. iv. 22.
- PEACE** — made and preached, ch. ii. 14—18.
- PERFECT MAN** — ch. iv. 12—15.
- POWER** — in faith, ch. i. 19.
- POWER** — in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, ch. i. 20, 21.
- PRAYER** — the object spiritual illumination, ch. i. 17—23; enjoined, ch. vi. 18—20.
- PREDESTINATION** — ch. i. 5—11.
- PRINCE** — of the power of the air, ch. ii. 2.
- PRINCIPALITIES** etc., ch. i. 21.
- PRISONER** — of Christ, ch. iii. 1; iv. 1.
- PROMISE** — in Christ, ch. iii. 6.
- PURPOSE** — ch. i. 9—11; iii. 11.
- QUICKENED** — with Christ, ch. ii. 5.
- RECONOILE** — to God, ch. ii. 14—18.
- RICHES** — of Christ, unspeakable, ch. iii. 8.
- RICHES** — of glory, ch. iii. 16.
- REDEEMING** — time, ch. v. 16.
- REDEMPTION** — through His blood, ch. i. 7.
- REPROVED** — by light, ch. v. 13.
- REVELATION** — ch. iii. 3.
- SACRIFICE** — offering; savor, ch. v. 2.
- SAINTS** — ch. i. 1.
- SALUTATION** — ch. i. 1, 2.
- SEALING** — of the Spirit, ch. i. 13, 14; iv. 30.
- SPIRIT** — of wisdom and revelation, ch. i. 17.
- STATURE** — measure, ch. iv. 12—15.
- TESTIFY** — in the Lord, ch. iv. 17.
- TOSSED** — to and fro, ch. iv. 12—15.
- TRINITY** — ch. ii. 14—18.
- UNDERSTANDING** — darkness, ch. iv. 18.
- UNITY** — ch. iv. 4—6, 12—15.
- VANITY** — of their minds, ch. iv. 17.
- VOCATION** — ch. iv. 1.
- WALK** — according to the course of this world, ch. ii. 2.
- WALK** — not as other Gentiles, ch. iv. 17.  
" — not as fools, but as wise, ch. v. 15.
- WALK** — in love, ch. v. 2.  
" — as children of light, ch. v. 8.
- WALL** — middle; broken down, ch. ii. 14—18.
- WILL** — of the Lord, ch. v. 17.
- WORKS** — not of works, ch. ii. 9.  
" — good, ordained, ch. ii. 10.
- WORKMANSHIP** — created in Christ Jesus unto good works, ch. ii. 10.

# QUESTIONS FOR THE SEVERAL LESSONS,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE WHO USE THE WORK AS A TEXT-BOOK.

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## LESSON I.

SALUTATION. CH. 1 : 1, 2. PAGE 11.

- 1 What is the meaning of the term *apostle*? p. 11.
- 2 In what sense was Christ an apostle? p. 12.
- 3 Did *the* apostles differ from other teachers? p. 13.
- 4 What were the qualifications for the select class of apostles? p. 13.
- 5 Was their inspiration peculiar? p. 13.
- 6 Was Paul an apostle? and why? p. 13.
- 7 Why called an apostle of *Jesus Christ*? p. 13.
- 8 From whom did he derive authority? p. 14.
- 9 Did he attach much importance to his divine appointment? p. 14.
- 10 To whom was the epistle addressed? p. 14.
- 11 Why are they called saints? p. 14.
- 12 Why said to be in *Christ Jesus*? p. 15.
- 13 What is the meaning of the salutation? p. 16.
- 14 How does it differ from common salutations? p. 16.
- 15 Through whom are all divine blessings bestowed? p. 16.
- 16 Is there here a recognition of the Divinity of Christ? p. 16.

## LESSON II.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE SCHEME OF MERCY. CH. 1:3—14. PAGE 17.

- 1 What is the meaning of the term *blessed*? p. 17.
- 2 In what sense is Christ the Son of God? p. 18.
- 3 Why are the blessings of the gospel called *spiritual*? p. 21.
- 4 Meaning of the term *heavenly places*? p. 21.
- 5 With whom did the scheme of mercy originate? p. 23.
- 6 How early was the scheme conceived? p. 33.
- 7 To what are believers chosen? p. 24.
- 8 What is meant by an election *of grace*? p. 26.
- 9 Are God's purposes always directed by infinite wisdom? p. 26.
- 10 What motives are specified for his election of believers? p. 26.
- 11 Is there any need of supposing an ultimate motive? p. 27.
- 12 Were believers chosen for their foreseen future holiness? p. 28.

## LESSON III.

EXECUTION OF THE SCHEME OF MERCY. CH. 1:3—14. PAGE 29.

- 1 By whom did God execute his scheme of mercy? p. 29.
- 2 What allusions are made to Christ in this connection? p. 29.
- 3 What proofs of divine wisdom are afforded in the *manner* of executing the scheme of mercy? p. 30.
- 4 What are the *conditions* of salvation? p. 29.
- 5 What are the *means* employed? p. 31.
- 6 On what does the successful execution of the scheme depend? p. 33.
- 7 Does divine efficiency destroy free agency? p. 33.
- 8 Can salvation be both a gift and an acquisition? p. 34.
- 9 Is the divine energy in nature equally inexplicable? pp. 33 and 34.
- 10 What is the *sealing* operation of the Spirit? p. 35.
- 11 What is the relation of *sealing* to *sanctification*? p. 35.
- 12 How does the sealing of the Spirit beget in the Christian the assurance of salvation? p. 36.
- 13 How does this scheme of mercy exhibit the Trinity of the Godhead? p. 37.



LESSON IV.

THE APOSTLE'S GRATITUDE FOR THE EFFICACIOUS GRACE GIVEN TO THE EPHESIAN CHRISTIANS, AND HIS PRAYER FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL ILLUMINATION. CH. 1 : 15—23. PAGE 38.

- 1 Where was Paul when the epistle was written? p. 226.
- 2 For what graces in the Ephesian Christians was Paul particularly grateful? p. 38.
- 3 What do faith and love include? p. 39.
- 4 Why is Jesus called *Lord*? p. 38.
- 5 How did Paul indicate his gratitude? p. 39.
- 6 Why is prayer habitual to the Christian? p. 40.
- 7 What elements in Paul's character appear in his habitual prayerfulness? p. 40.
- 8 Why is God called the *Father of Glory*? p. 41.
- 9 What is meant by spiritual illumination? pp. 42 and 43.
- 10 What does the *spirit of wisdom* mean? p. 42.
- 11 What is the distinction between inspiration and illumination? p. 43.
- 12 Do all Christians share in illumination? p. 43.
- 13 Meaning of the term *understanding*? p. 44.
- 14 Is holiness inseparable from knowledge? p. 44.
- 15 What is meant by *the hope of His calling*? p. 45.
- 16 Are the saints God's inheritance, or is God the inheritance of the saints? p. 46.
- 17 To what power is faith attributed? p. 48.
- 18 By what illustration is the energy of this power exhibited? p. 49.
- 19 What is meant by setting Him *at His right hand*? p. 50.
- 20 By *heavenly places*? p. 50.
- 21 How is the dignity of Christ's person taught? p. 50.
- 22 How the extent of his authority? p. 76.
- 23 In what sense is the church *Christ's body*? p. 51.

LESSON V.

THE MORAL CONDITION OF THE EPHESIANS, AND OF ALL MEN, BY NATURE. CH. 2 : 1—3. PAGE 53.

- 1 What is the import of the word *death*? p. 54.
- 2 What does it include? p. 54.

- 3 What is its moral opposite? p. 54.
- 4 What is the force of the word *walked*? p. 54.
- 5 Of the phrase *the course of this world*? p. 54.
- 6 Of the phrase *Prince of the power of the air*? p. 55.
- 7 Do the Scriptures teach the existence of fallen spirits? p. 55.
- 8 What is the nature and extent of their influence? p. 56.
- 9 Why do they have peculiar power with the *children of disobedience*? p. 56.
- 10 What is the chief source of human depravity? p. 57.
- 11 Do wicked propensities inhere only in the body? p. 57.
- 12 To what must depraved tendencies be ascribed? p. 58.
- 13 How early are they manifested? p. 59.
- 14 What is the moral reason for the depravity of the race? p. 60.
- 15 What is meant by *children of wrath*? p. 61.
- 16 Are men blameworthy for Adam's sin? p. 61.
- 17 Are they *treated as if* blameworthy? p. 61.
- 18 Does an enlightened moral instinct protest against such treatment? p. 61.
- 19 Does the providence of God furnish any analogies? p. 62.
- 20 Does the scheme of mercy unfold a similar principle? p. 62.
- 21 What is a practical use of this doctrine? p. 62.

## LESSON VI.

### THE MORAL CHANGE EFFECTED BY THE QUICKENING POWER OF THE GOSPEL, THROUGH FAITH. CH. 2 : 4—10. PAGE 62.

- 1 How does *mercy* differ from *love*? p. 62.
- 2 How from *pity*? p. 62.
- 3 How was mercy made consistent with man's desert of suffering? p. 63.
- 4 What is the distinction between *trespasses* and *sins*? p. 63.
- 5 What is the meaning of *quicken*? p. 64.
- 6 Does this require the putting forth of divine power? p. 64.
- 7 What additional meaning is expressed by *raised up*? p. 64.
- 8 What is meant by *sitting together in heavenly places*? p. 64.
- 9 Of what is Christ's resurrection a type? p. 65.
- 10 Of what is it the first fruits? p. 65.
- 11 Three motives for the exercise of the divine mercy have been assigned (pp. 25—28); what new one is alluded to here? p. 66.

- 12 Can man claim any merit for the faith, which is the condition of salvation? p. 67.
- 13 Is faith as truly the gift of God as salvation itself? p. 67.
- 14 How does the apostle guard against the error that faith might be meritorious? p. 67.
- 15 What is the meaning of *His workmanship*? p. 67.
- 16 Of *created in Jesus Christ*? p. 67.
- 17 How has God foreordained good works? p. 68.

## LESSON VII.

JEWES AND GENTILES ARE CHANGED IN THEIR RELATIONS TO EACH OTHER BY THE GOSPEL; ARE MADE ONE, AND RECONCILED TO GOD. CH. 2 : 11—22. PAGE 69.

- 1 What was the relation of the Gentiles to God before the coming of Christ? p. 70.
- 2 What their relation to the Jews? p. 70.
- 3 What change was effected by the gospel? pp. 70—74.
- 4 What is the meaning of *without Christ*? p. 70.
- 5 Of *having no hope*? p. 72.
- 6 Of *without God*? p. 73.
- 7 What is the design of covenants? p. 71.
- 8 Distinction between *covenant* and *testament*? p. 71.
- 9 Distinction between being *in Christ*, and being *brought nigh by his blood*? p. 74.
- 10 How was the middle wall of partition an occasion of enmity? p. 75.
- 11 How was this removed? p. 76.
- 12 What are the two meanings of *reconcile*? p. 76.
- 13 In what sense is Christ *our peace*? p. 77.
- 14 Meaning of *access*? p. 78.
- 15 How is this access *through Christ*? p. 78.
- 16 How *by one Spirit*? p. 79.
- 17 What recognition is made here of the Trinity of the Godhead? p. 79.
- 18 Meaning of *fellow-citizens with the saints*? p. 80.
- 19 Of *the household of God*? p. 80.
- 20 Why are Christians called *a house*? p. 81.
- 21 Difference between *foundation* and *corner-stone*? p. 82.

- 22 How are Christians a *holy temple*? p. 84.  
 23 How a habitation of God? p. 86.  
 24 Is the office of each person in the Godhead recognized here? p. 87.

### LESSON VIII.

THE MYSTERY (INCLUDING BOTH THE GENERAL SCHEME OF MERCY, AND ITS EXTENSION TO THE GENTILES) MADE KNOWN TO THE APOSTLE BY REVELATION. CH. 3:16. PAGE 86.

- 1 Why was Paul a prisoner at Rome? p. 88.
- 2 Meaning of *dispensation*? p. 91.
- 3 Meaning of *Mystery*? pp. 91-2.
- 4 How was this made known to Paul? p. 91.
- 5 What do we understand by *inspiration*? p. 95.
- 6 What objections have been urged to the inspiration of the Scriptures?  
p. 95.
- 7 Are these objections valid? p. 97.
- 8 What are the proofs of inspiration? p. 97.
- 9 Were the Gentiles included in the scheme of mercy, as originally conceived by God? p. 98.

### LESSON IX.

PAUL CALLED BY GRACE TO BE A MINISTER OF THIS MERCY TO THE GENTILES. CH. 3:7-13. PAGE 100.

- 1 What is it to be a minister of the Gospel? p. 100.
- 2 How is one appointed such *by grace*? p. 101.
- 3 How is one *called* to preach? p. 101.
- 4 What occasioned the apostle's weakness? p. 102.
- 5 Meaning of *unsearchable riches of Christ*? p. 102.
- 6 Of *fellowship of the mystery*? p. 103.
- 7 What is the object of preaching? p. 103.
- 8 Meaning of *to make men see*? p. 103.
- 9 Are discrepancies in the text of the Bible of great practical importance?  
p. 104.

- 10 Does the scheme of mercy have an indirect relation to heavenly beings?  
p. 105.
- 11 Is there a distinction of rank among them? p. 106.
- 12 Are they interested in transactions on earth? p. 106.
- 13 Was the scheme of mercy devised after Adam's fall? p. 106.
- 14 How do believers have access to God? p. 107.

## LESSON X.

SECOND PRAYER AND DOXOLOGY. CH. 3:14—21. PAGE 108.

- 1 Is the family in heaven and earth named after the Father, or Christ?  
p. 109.
- 2 Who constitute this family? p. 109.
- 3 What is the object of the prayer? p. 110.
- 4 Meaning of *inner man*? p. 110.
- 5 How is the inner man strengthened? p. 110.
- 6 How is this *according to the riches of His glory*? p. 111.
- 7 Meaning of Christ *dwelling in you by faith*? p. 112.
- 8 What is the fruit of this indwelling? p. 113.
- 9 Is a knowledge of the fulness of Christ dependent on love? p. 114.
- 10 What is it to be filled with the fulness of God? p. 115.
- 11 Is anything hard to God? p. 116.
- 12 Is faith in God's omnipotence a motive to Christian labor? p. 116.
- 13 Does such faith inspire adoration and joy? p. 116.

## LESSON XI.

EXHORTATION TO THE CULTIVATION OF INWARD GRACES AND  
UNITY OF SPIRIT. CH. 4:1—6. PAGE 118.

Doctrinal knowledge underlies true Christian experience, and enforces the practical duties of the Christian life. (See remarks, p. 118.)

- 1 What is meant by *walk worthy of your vocation*? p. 120.
- 2 How is it enforced *incidentally*? p. 120.
- 3 How chiefly? p. 120.
- 4 What Christian virtues are specified? p. 120.
- 5 Meaning of each? p. 121.
- 6 What special need of exhorting to keep the *unity of the Spirit*? p. 121.

- 7 How may it be obtained? p. 122.
- 8 Meaning of *one body and one Spirit*? p. 123.
- 9 Of *one hope*? p. 124.
- 10 Who is the *one Lord* of Christians? p. 125.
- 11 What does Christ require, as Lord? p. 125.
- 12 What is understood by *faith*? p. 125.
- 13 Is baptism an important duty? p. 125.
- 14 What is its *import*? p. 126.
- 15 What *obligation* is assumed in baptism? p. 127.
- 16 Of what is it a *symbol*? p. 127.
- 17 By what new plea is unity among believers enforced? p. 130.

## LESSON XII.

UNITY IS CONSISTENT WITH A DIVERSITY OF GIFTS, ALL TENDING TO THE SAME END, A PERFECT MAN. CH. 4:7-16. PAGE 130.

- 1 Is adequate grace given for the nurture of Christian virtues? p. 131.
- 2 Is this given to all believers? p. 131.
- 3 From whom are all gifts derived? p. 132.
- 4 What incidental proof is given of the Divinity of Christ? p. 135.
- 5 How was Old Testament history typical? p. 135.
- 6 What is the design of all the gifts of Christ? p. 137.
- 7 What are some of the gifts of Christ to His church? p. 137.
- 8 What is the meaning of *a perfect man*? p. 139.
- 9 Are all Christians required to be perfect? p. 140.
- 10 Is growth in grace progressive? p. 139.
- 11 Meaning of *unity of faith*? p. 140.
- 12 Is stability an element of perfection? p. 141.
- 13 When is a change of opinion lawful? p. 142.
- 14 Meaning of *speaking the truth in love*? p. 143.
- 15 Can Christians aid one another in the increase of piety? p. 145.
- 16 Meaning of *edifieth itself in love*? p. 146.

## LESSON XIII.

EXHORTATION TO A HIGHER STANDARD OF MORAL CHARACTER THAN THAT OF THE GENTILE WORLD. CH. 4:17-24. PAGE 147.

- 1 From whom were the Ephesian converts generally gathered? p. 148.
- 2 What does the apostle say of the Gentile character? p. 148-152.

- 3 Meaning of *vanity of mind*? p. 148.
- 4 Meaning of *alienated from the life of God*? p. 149.
- 5 Are all the heathen equally depraved? p. 151.
- 6 Are the heathen fair representatives of man in his natural state? p. 152.
- 7 How have Christians a higher standard of moral character than the heathen? p. 153.
- 8 Does the gospel enjoin purity while it promises mercy? p. 153.
- 9 Is there an intimate connection between *truth* and *sanctification*? p. 154.
- 10 What must precede permanent reformation? p. 154.
- 11 How is the new birth described? p. 156.
- 12 Meaning of *created after God*? p. 156.
- 13 Meaning of *in righteousness and true holiness*? p. 156.

## LESSON XIV.

SINS TO BE AVOIDED. CH. 4: 25—32; 5: 1, 2. PAGE 159.

- 1 Is lying a common habit among the heathen? p. 158.
- 2 How far does it prevail among irreligious men? p. 158.
- 3 Has man a natural instinct for the truth? p. 158.
- 4 What has corrupted it? p. 159.
- 5 What strengthens the love of truth? p. 159.
- 6 What incidental motive to veracity is mentioned? p. 159.
- 7 When is anger innocent? p. 159.
- 8 When and why is it sinful? p. 160.
- 9 Why was the prohibition of theft necessary? p. 161.
- 10 What motive for labor is presented? p. 161.
- 11 Meaning of *corrupt communications*? p. 162.
- 12 With what is this generally associated? p. 162.
- 13 Why is it offensive to the Holy Spirit? p. 163.
- 14 What peculiar element of guilt in malice? p. 164.
- 15 By what pleas are opposite virtues enforced? p. 165.
- 16 How can Christians be followers of God? p. 168.
- 17 Why was the sacrifice of Christ a sweet-smelling savor? p. 170.

## LESSON XV.

OTHER SINS SPECIFIED WHICH EXCLUDE FROM HEAVEN.

CH. 5: 3—7. PAGE 171.

- 1 Why are fornication and covetousness inconsistent with Christian character? p. 171.

- 2 Is levity a *sin*? p. 171.
- 3 Does the apostle censure cheerfulness? p. 171.
- 4 Meaning and extent of *giving of thanks*? p. 172.
- 5 Why do such sins as have been enumerated exclude from heaven?  
p. 172.
- 6 Does regeneration conform to the laws of the human mind? p. 174.
- 7 Is there any proof of human probation after death? p. 175.
- 8 Does the Bible seem to limit it to this life? p. 176.
- 9 Is it the tendency of depravity to continue to increase? p. 178.
- 10 How do false teachers deceive? p. 180.
- 11 Meaning of *vain words*? p. 180.
- 12 On what grounds are objections to future punishment urged? p. 180.
- 13 What principle should regulate the intercourse of Christians with the  
wicked? p. 181.

## LESSON XVI.

DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT, RE-  
PROVING THE WICKED. CH. 5:8—20. PAGE 181.

- 1 What are the three chief elements of moral darkness? p. 181.
- 2 What are the elements of light? p. 181.
- 3 What is the natural fruit of an enlightened state? pp. 181-2.
- 4 Does light quicken the discerning power of the soul? p. 183.
- 5 Meaning of *unfruitful works of darkness*? p. 184.
- 6 Ought the Christian to reprove evil-doers? p. 184.
- 7 What is the end of reproof? p. 184.
- 8 In what way may it be administered? p. 185.
- 9 How should Christians conduct *towards those without*? p. 188.
- 10 What estimate should they put on time? p. 189.
- 11 Distinction between *unwise* and *fools*? p. 190.
- 12 Is the use of intoxicating substances general? p. 190.
- 13 Meaning of *wherein is excess*? p. 191.
- 14 Meaning of *be filled with the Spirit*? p. 191.
- 15 Is it a duty? p. 192.
- 16 Is obligation created by the gift of the Spirit? p. 192.
- 17 Are praise and thanksgiving religious duties? p. 192.



LESSON XVII.

MUTUAL DUTIES: OF WIVES AND HUSBANDS. CH. 5: 21—33.  
PAGE 194.

- 1 Meaning of *submitting yourselves*? p. 194.
- 2 Is it a general duty? p. 194.
- 3 By what motives regulated? p. 194.
- 4 Is the husband the head of the family by a divine ordinance? p. 195.
- 5 Does reason teach the same law? p. 196.
- 6 What renders the submission of the wife *pious*? p. 196.
- 7 How does the apostle illustrate the relation? p. 197.
- 8 Is there any limit to subjection *in all things*? p. 197.
- 9 What is the husband's correlative duty? p. 198.
- 10 On what does its *reasonableness* rest? p. 198.
- 11 What is its *measure*? p. 199.
- 12 What its practical effect? p. 200.
- 13 Ought the husband to seek the improvement of his wife? p. 201.
- 14 How is this illustrated? p. 202
- 15 Is baptismal regeneration taught in the Scriptures? p. 204.

LESSON XVIII.

DUTIES OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS. CH. 6: 1—4. PAGE 207.

- 1 Meaning of *filial obedience*? p. 207.
- 2 On what foundation does it rest? p. 207.
- 3 Meaning of *in the Lord*? p. 208.
- 4 What additional force in the command *to honor*? p. 208.
- 5 Meaning of *first commandment with promise*? p. 209.
- 6 How may a parent *provoke* a child? p. 210.
- 7 How are children to be nurtured? p. 210.

LESSON XIX.

DUTIES OF SERVANTS AND MASTERS. CH. 6: 5—9. PAGE 211.

- 1 Meaning of *servants*? p. 211.
- 2 To what has the master a legal right? p. 211.

- 3 Can he dictate tempers of heart or motives? p. 211.
- 4 How can the servant make his service *religious*? p. 213.
- 5 For what ends does God permit diversity of condition? p. 213.
- 6 How shall fidelity be rewarded? p. 213.
- 7 What is the duty of masters? p. 214.
- 8 Who will be their judge? p. 215.
- 9 Does the legal right of the master presuppose his moral right? p. 215.
- 10 Does the gospel prohibit the relation of master and slave? p. 216.
- 11 Does it teach that freedom is preferable to bondage? p. 216.
- 12 Is bondage an unnatural degradation? p. 217.
- 13 What duty is imposed on the Christian? p. 217.

## LESSON XX.

THE CHRISTIAN ARMOR. CH. 6:10—17. PAGE 217.

- 1 What is the source of Christian strength? p. 219.
- 2 Is the Christian's armor for assault or defence? p. 219.
- 3 What is the meaning of *the whole armor of God*? p. 219.
- 4 With what foes does the Christian contend? p. 220.
- 5 What are the several parts of the armor? pp. 221—25.
- 6 What their uses?
- 7 Is the word of God used as a sword by the Spirit, or by the believer?  
p. 225.
- 8 What is the twofold nature of religion? p. 225.

## LESSON XXI.

REQUEST FOR PRAYER: AND BENEDICTION. CH. 6:18—24. PAGE 226.

- 1 For whom is prayer in general enjoined? p. 226.
- 2 For whom in particular? p. 226.
- 3 For what object is prayer enjoined? p. 227.
- 4 Distinction between *prayer* and *supplication*? p. 228.
- 5 Meaning of praying *in the Spirit*? p. 229.
- 6 Who was Tychicus? p. 230.
- 7 Object of his mission? p. 230.
- 8 On whom is the benediction pronounced? p. 230.

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