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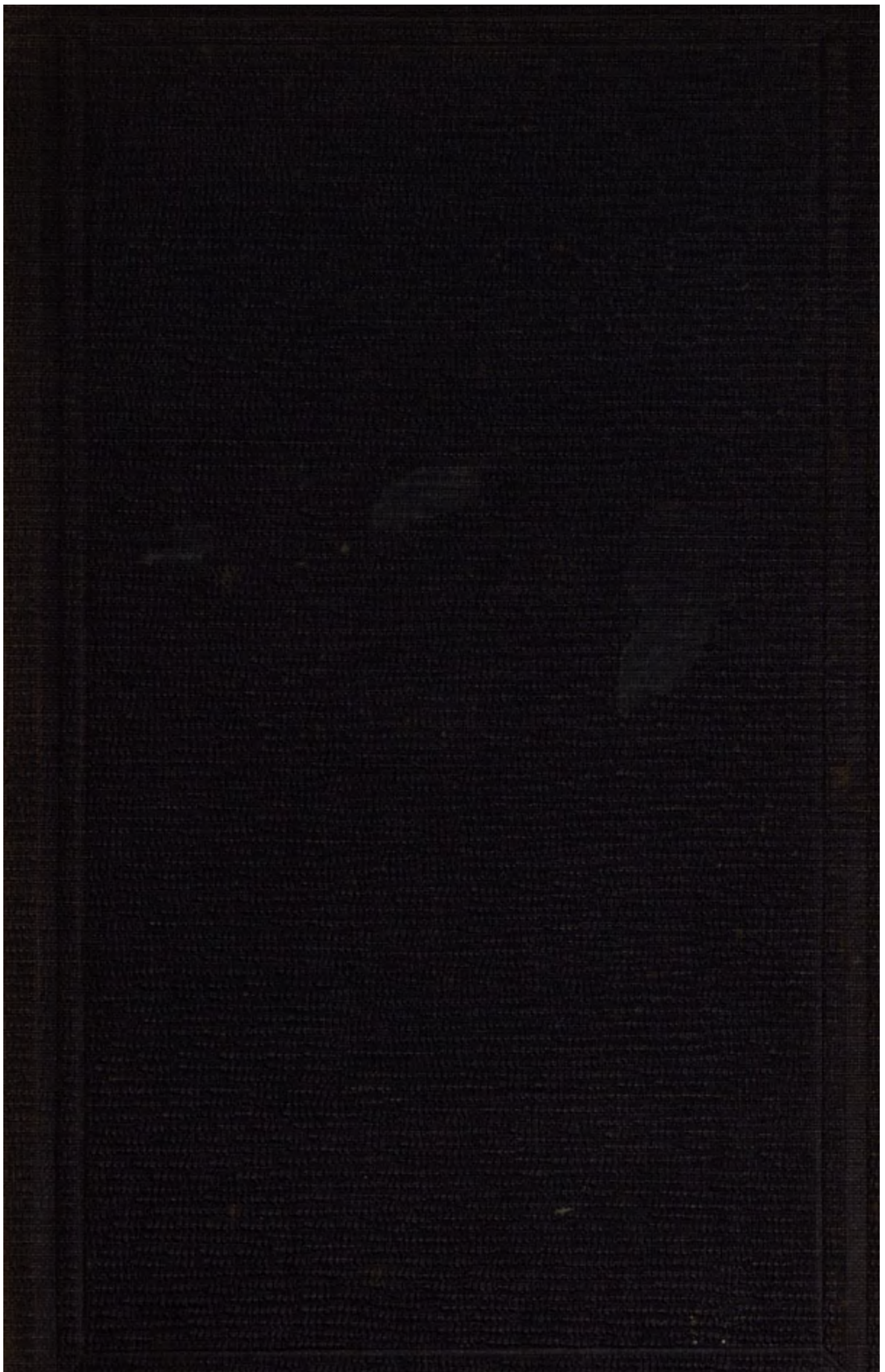
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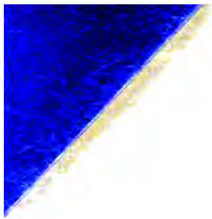
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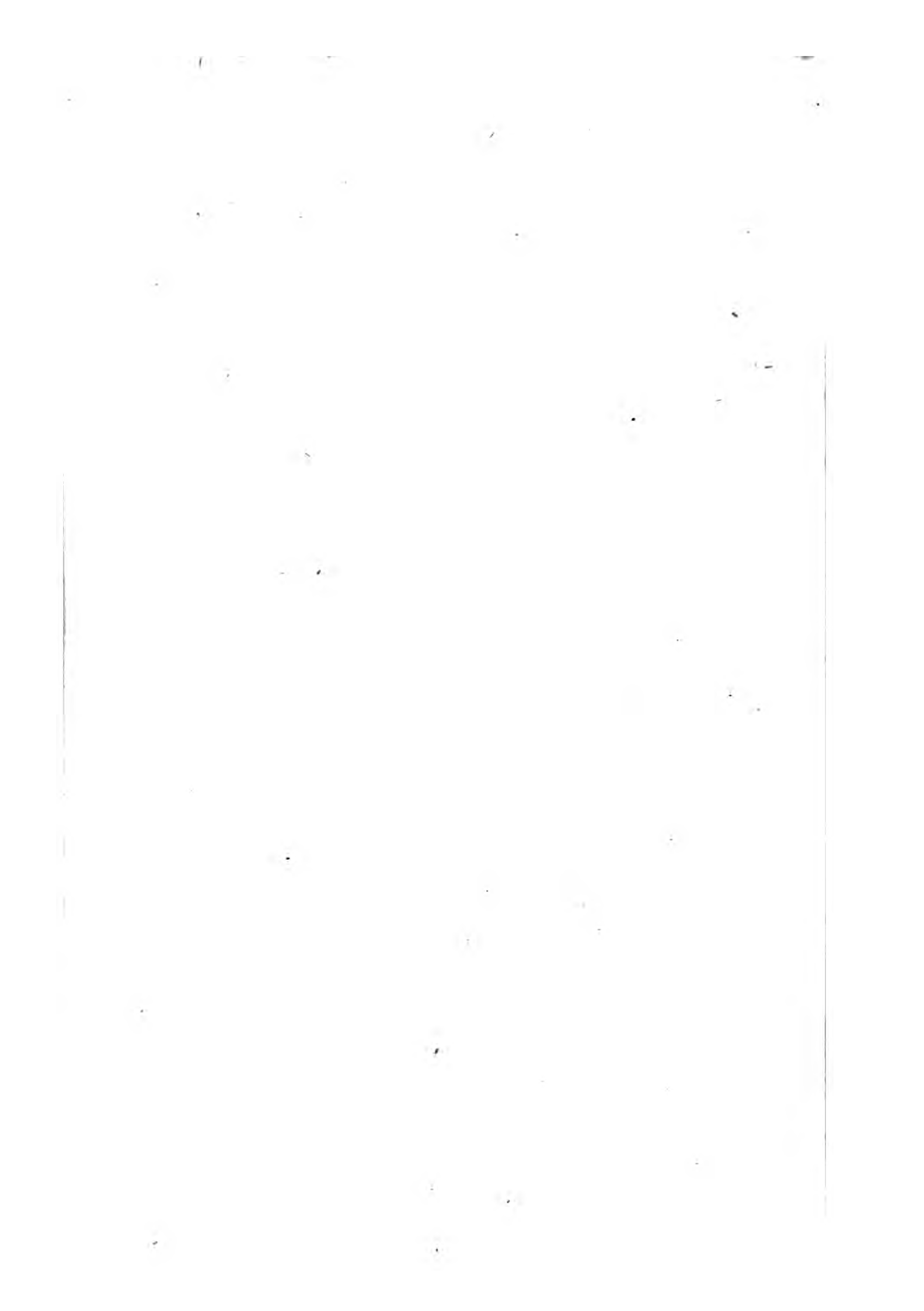


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VILLAGE SERMONS,

PREACHED

ON TYNESIDE,

IN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER, 1856.

BY

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OXFORD:

JOHN HENRY AND JAMES PARKER.

M DCCC LVII.

100.3.73.



TO THE RIGHT REVEREND
CHARLES THOMAS LONGLEY, D.D.,
LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM,
FORMERLY HEAD MASTER OF HARROW SCHOOL,

These Sermons,

PREACHED IN HIS LORDSHIP'S DIOCESE,
ARE (WITH PERMISSION) DEDICATED,
BY HIS LORDSHIP'S
FAITHFUL AND OBLIGED FRIEND
AND FORMER PUPIL,

THE AUTHOR.



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SERMON I.

1 COR. ii. 2.

“ For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

THIS determination of St. Paul, dear brethren, it is my desire to adopt to-day. I have but a short time to remain here as your minister; but however short the time, we shall have to give account of it,—I, to give an account of my ministrations to you; and you, of your reception of the Word preached. In that great day of account no name but that of Jesus will be in our mouths; for “there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The holiest men that ever lived will have no plea, no hope, but that name. They will cling to it then, and lift up their heads with joy, being clothed in a righteousness not their own, having fled for refuge to lay hold on this hope set before them, even Jesus; they will be calm and undismayed in the midst of universal consternation and destruction, and a dissolving world. They also who have *not* fled for refuge to this hope set

before them, but have crucified the Son of God afresh, by rejecting His love, and refusing the salvation He purchased with such awful travail of soul; they “shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn because of Him;” and they shall cry to the mountains, “Fall on us,” and to the hills, “Cover us,” and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb. For, on account of His humiliation and self-abasement in our flesh, “God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father^a.”

Jesus is the one theme of the Law and of the Prophets, of the Evangelists and Apostles, and has ever been the hope and the glory of the whole noble army of saints and martyrs, down to this day. God became man, and dwelt among us. Those who were on the earth with Him—His followers—“beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth^b.” Their eyes saw, and their hands handled, the Word of life. They were loving hands which thus handled Him in His daily life, and which wrote, under the guidance of

^a Philipp. ii. 9—11.

^b John i. 14.

the eternal Spirit, the testimony which we, who have not seen Jesus in the flesh, receive and believe. But there were cruel hands also which handled the Word of life; there were hands which plaited a crown of thorns for His brows, which roughly parted His garments among them, which smote Him, and which nailed Him to the tree. That was the hour and power of darkness, that was the hour of Satan's triumph. There were men wicked enough, and mad enough, to do Satan's work; but in accomplishing this masterpiece of Satanic cruelty, Satan knew not, and his agents knew not, that they were striking a deadly blow at the whole kingdom and dominion of darkness. Satan knew not that the blood flowing from the cross was the power by which the weakest saint should prevail against him; as it is written: "They overcame him" (the accuser) "by the blood of the Lamb^c." He knew not that the meek and suffering Form upon the cross should, through the very power of that death and that cross, go forth a mighty King, "conquering and to conquer," leading forth to victory "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," against whom death and hell should never prevail.

"Christ crucified" is the bane and the terror

^c Rev. xii. 11.

of devils. Witness the shriek of remorse and hatred with which they met Him when about to cast them out of the possessed man : “ What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God? art Thou come to torment us before the time^d?” “ Christ crucified” is the salvation or the condemnation of every man that was ever born, or who will be born. “ Christ crucified” is the theme of the songs of angels, and of the heavenly communications of departed saints. Witness the words of the Apostle, where, speaking of the redemption of man, he says, “ The angels desire to look into these things^e ;” and the event of the transfiguration of Jesus on the mount, when Moses and Elias, leaving the abodes of bliss, descended to this lower earth, “ to speak with Him of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem^f.” “ Christ crucified” will be the sweetness, the strength, nay, the whole theme and substance, of the “ new song” which the company of the redeemed shall sing in heaven. Their song shall be, from everlasting to everlasting, “ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour, and glory, and blessing, and riches, and dominion, and power^g.”

^d Matth. viii. 29.

^f Luke ix. 31.

^e 1 Pet. i. 12.

^g Rev. v. 12.

Shall *we*, then, who have no hope, no joy, no strength, no salvation, but that Name,—shall we choose any other theme in our relation to each other as minister and flock? Nay, brethren, by the grace of God, “I am determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

Some preach the means of grace as if they were our saviours, and put the Sacraments in place of Christ. Baptism, the Supper of our Lord, public and private prayer, are all most blessed and divinely appointed means of grace; but they are only means, and not the end, and we must beware of resting in them with a superstitious and ignorant notion that, if we only have enough of these, heaven is secure to us. He who instituted the Sacraments is greater than the Sacraments. They, and all other means of grace, are derived from Christ, and lead to Christ. Whatsoever virtue they have is in Christ, and flows from Him. Without Him, they are a mere form without spirit.

But let none who refuse to come to the blessed Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, and who treat with contempt that holy ordinance, imagine that they are rejecting a mere formal ceremony. Deliberately to refuse to comply with the dying request of a friend, would argue very little love for that

friend. What should you think, my brethren, of the wife, whose husband, on taking a long farewell of her, before starting for a distant country, had asked her to remember him at a particular time and in a particular manner—promising her that at that moment his thoughts would rest upon her with especial favour and love—what would you think of the wife who, having received so affectionate a charge, should decline to act upon it; or should, from carelessness or affection grown cold, suffer the appointed time to pass by again and again without a thought of complying with that loving request? Should you say of this wife that she was faithful, that she was dutiful, that she knew what true love meant? No, truly. Ah! my brethren, a dearer than any earthly husband or friend said, the night before He was betrayed, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” It shews that your hearts are cold, very cold indeed, towards Jesus, if you can habitually live in neglect of that loving, pathetic injunction, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” You care little for Christ if you do not try to draw nigh to Him by every means within your reach. “If ye love Me,” He said, “keep My commandments.” If you love Him, if you even desire to love Him, you will love all the means of grace, as unspeakably precious to your souls, not because they themselves can

save you, but because they bring you to Him who can save you to the uttermost.

Some have thought that their own tears could wash away their sin, or make them more worthy of the pardoning grace of God. Let us never imagine that there is any saving merit in repentance. Hermits and anchorites have spent their whole lives in lonely caves, weeping and lamenting night and day, torturing the body for the sin of the soul, vainly imagining that God would accept this penance as an atonement for former guilt. Where was the atonement made by Christ, that they should seek another? What was it, that they should set it aside, as insufficient? Here again, "I will know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified:"—

"Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know,
These, alas! would ne'er atone,—
Thou must save, and *Thou* alone."

John the Baptist was the great preacher of repentance; but if you turn to your Bibles, you will mark how pre-eminently he also preached Jesus Christ,—how continually he pointed to Jesus,—how he gave no excuse to his followers for thinking that the baptism of repentance was enough for their salvation;

but how he continually directed their eyes and hearts to the Lamb of God.

John said, "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me^h." This was spoken one day,—and it is writtenⁱ, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Again^k a third time John bare the same testimony.

And why was this? Because repentance, deep, heartfelt, lasting repentance, cannot be produced, except by the sight and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Christ crucified is the only sight which can teach us the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and God's hatred of it, and therefore the only sight which can make us bewail our own sins with any *godly* sorrow. John, in his preaching of that repentance which was to prepare the way for Christ's coming into the hearts of men, did, it is most true, bid them put away their evil practices, and learn to do good. "Let him that hath two coats, sell one, and give to him that hath none," he said; and to the soldiers he said, "Do violence to no man, and be content with your wages," knowing that they were a

^h John i. 26, 27. ⁱ Ibid. ver. 29. ^k Ibid. vers. 35, 36.



class given to deeds of violence, and to rebellion and discontent.

We have a solemn truth, my brethren, put before us in this—namely, that it is impossible to come to Christ with a desire to be saved, and continue in sin at the same time. Christ crucified will benefit you nothing, if you continue in the daily practice of sin. It is a mockery for any man to talk of hoping to be saved by Jesus Christ, unless he steadily endeavours to cast aside every evil habit, to cut off the right hand or pluck out the right eye, if needful, for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Sacrifices must be made by all who come to Christ for salvation. But observe, that these sacrifices are in no way the purchasers of heaven. However great may be the sacrifices we are called upon to make in following Christ, they can never stand in the place of the One great Sacrifice offered up once for all upon the cross—the great Sacrifice which the blessed Jesus made of Himself, whereby He purged away our sins, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Experience shews us how many motives a man may have for cutting off evil habits, reforming his ways, and leading a moral life; while the only motive which would make his reformation a true repentance may be utterly

a stranger to his heart. You may be quite free from vice; you may—as is often urged as a plea—never have done any harm, as you suppose, to any one; you may have lived a life outwardly harmless and quiet; nay, you may be amiable and strict in your relations towards others; and yet, alas! my friends, it may be that, with all this, you do not possess Christ. Remember the young ruler, who was so good that he could say he had kept all the commandments from his youth up, and was so pleasing and amiable that it is said, when Jesus looked on him, “He loved him;” and yet to him Jesus spake those terrible and searching words, “Yet one thing thou lackest.” My brethren, what was that one thing? It is clear that Christ meant that his *heart* was not God’s. If it had been, he would have loved God before any created thing. And he did *not* love God supremely. Jesus brought that conviction home to him and all the bystanders, by bidding him sell all his possessions,—his possessions being the idol of his heart which came between him and God,—and “he went away sorrowful.” That is a solemn and affecting lesson! Jesus “loved him;” and yet the young man, because he loved something better than Jesus, left Him; turned his back upon his Saviour, sorrowfully, with regret, it is

true, but refusing to accept Christ's condition of "Leave all, and follow Me."

I beseech you, brethren, be faithful and honest with yourselves in this matter. Search your own consciences, and ascertain whether you are leaning for salvation on anything except Christ crucified. Make sure that your repentance is sincere, that it is such a repentance as really brings you to Christ; for it is in vain if it stops short of the cross of Calvary. Nay, let not anything keep you away from the cross a moment longer. Do not delay from the wish to feel penitent before you come. Do not look for repentance and faith in yourselves, in order to prepare you to come to Christ. You can never truly repent until you *have come* to Him. The broken and contrite spirit which God requires will never be obtained except by seeing and knowing the matchless love of our Saviour. If you desire your heart to be truly broken for sin, come, cast yourselves upon this chief corner-stone, upon whom whosoever falls shall be broken.

Oh! my friends, believe me, there is nothing which will create in us true and lasting repentance, faith, and love, except *the knowledge that we are loved*. "We love Him, because He first loved us." It is only when we are fully con-

vinced in our hearts that we are beloved of God, that we begin to love Him. Love begets love.

Is there a heart so cold, so hard, as to resist all love, as to cease to care for being loved, or not to wish to be loved? You will find that almost every man has some one human being whose love he counts upon, and desires to have. The desire to love and be loved is a feeling which has a deep root in the soil of our human nature; and there are few so hardened in selfishness, or so chilled by neglect and unkindness, as to be insensible to the powerful attraction of a strong, disinterested love felt by a fellow-creature for them.

But how do we know we are loved? We know that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" to die for it. Perhaps some may say, "I believe in the love of God for the world, but yet I cannot feel the love of God for myself individually. I feel that there is an estrangement between God and me. I cannot believe it possible that He can really love me, or that He looks upon me in particular, and as a single individual, with a desire to save and bless me." Many feel thus, but none should rest contented in such a state. Never rest, my brethren, until you have the happy inward conviction and assur

ance that you individually are the object of the Lord's tender love and compassion. He does love you, each one of you here present, with an infinite, yearning, compassionate love. You may not believe it, or you may not feel it; nevertheless it is true, and you will never be holy and happy until you do believe in it and feel it.

We read in the book of Daniel, that Daniel, having set himself for a long time to seek God's face, was at last visited by an angel. God's messenger, Gabriel, being "caused to fly swiftly," touched him "about the time of the evening oblation," charged with a message direct from the courts above; and he thus addressed the man of prayer: "Oh! man, greatly beloved." Any of you who are truly seeking God will be able in some measure to conceive of the joy which must have overflowed the heart of Daniel on hearing the words proclaiming that he himself, *he, Daniel*, was "*greatly beloved*" by the God of heaven.

"Ah!" you say, "if I could only have such an assurance—if I could know certainly that God loves *me*, how different would all things appear to me! It would give wings to my prayers, and make my obedience the free, loving obedience of a child."

Oh! my brethren, come to Calvary, and

gaze upon the form of the Son of God dying there upon the cross for your sins. There you will find the assurance you need, as plainly and as clearly set forth as if it were spoken by an angel from heaven ; nay, more clearly. If Daniel could have gazed on the Cross of Christ, he would have desired no other assurance. We have a far more certain and affecting proof of the love of God, than the saints under the Old Testament dispensation had. “ Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which *ye* see, and have not seen them.” I beseech you look upon Christ crucified, and see written upon His suffering face, upon His wounded hands, and feet, and heart, the words, “ Fear not, *thou* art greatly beloved.” Yea, *thou* art greatly beloved, whoever thou art—man, woman, or child—who art listening to these words. Perhaps thou art friendless, perhaps thou hast never known human love. Perhaps thou hast lived to see friend after friend carried to the grave—to see the hearts that loved thee, and the hands that in thy youth grasped thine with the cordial grasp of true friendship, laid low in the dust. Perhaps thou hast heard the news again and again that this one, and this other, with whom thou hast held pleasant converse, is dead ; it may be that, visiting again scenes

where thy youth was spent, thou dost gaze sadly on the landscape, remembering that, of the friends whose sympathy once made that scene so dear, scarcely one is left, and that thou art left in thine old age, standing alone, solitary, like an ancient forest-tree, whose fellows have been laid low one by one by the blast of the storm or the hand of the feller. Nevertheless, thou, even thou, art greatly beloved. Love is not a thing past and gone, even for thee. Thou art even now loved with a love which transcends all human love, as much as the infinite transcends the finite. There is a friendship still offered to thee—a friendship which can never fail nor cease, and which, if thou wilt only accept it, will give thee back thy former friends, if through Christ they have passed into the heavens, and will restore all decay in human love, and will join together in one, and for ever, all those whose friendship on earth has been grounded upon a sure and lasting foundation.

“Behold what manner of love” is this which is offered to thee! It is full, free, infinite, everlasting. None but hearts of stone can resist this love. Alas! we have the testimony of Scripture as well as the witness of our own consciences, that our hearts *are* hearts of stone. But God says, “I will take away the stony

heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh¹." Pray, my brethren, that this promise may be fulfilled to you. Begin this very day, this very hour, if you have not made a beginning before, to pray for the influence of the Holy Spirit, who alone can open your eyes to behold, and your hearts to receive, Christ crucified for you. Is there not a great and surpassing joy in loving and being loved even by a fellow-creature? What must it be when that interchange exists between Christ and the soul? Do you know what that joy is? If not, be warned, be entreated this day to seek it. There is great danger in delay. This day I charge you solemnly to stir up yourselves to lay hold on Christ, and to respond to the love which is offered to you in the Name of Christ.

There are two great mysteries, my brethren, which can never be fathomed by the mind of man—namely, love and sin. There is but one plummet which can fathom the depths of both, and that is, the Cross of Jesus Christ. The Cross alone can give us any conception of the hatefulness of sin, and the infinite height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of God. That He who was God, eternally pure and sinless, should have suffered such agony

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

and woe, the punishment of our sin; and that He should have gone through it all to the very last—drunk every drop of the cup of trembling; that He should have neither fainted, feared, nor quailed, till He could say, “It is finished,”—does not this reveal in awful, wonderful clearness, both the anger of God against sin, and His love for the sinner?

Ye who make light of sin; ye who think it is enough to lead a decent, moral life, and know nothing of the love of God shed abroad in your hearts; ye who think little sins are excusable, and that God will not mark them—look to the cross of Jesus, and see there what all sin is. See your own sins laid upon Christ, see your indifference, your want of holiness, your cold-heartedness, all your daily and hourly provocations laid upon Him, swelling the deadly weight which bows down His sacred head, and crushes His quivering, dying frame. Read the awful nature of sin, and the strength of the love that endured its curse, in that strange eclipse which, like a dark curtain, fell at mid-day upon the earth; read it in the rending rocks and in the yawning graves; and read it still more distinctly and awfully in the spiritual anguish which He endured, in the ghastly gloom (of which the darkening of the sun was but the shadow) which enshrouded His dissolv-

ing nature, when the Man Christ Jesus, He who was accustomed to bask from all eternity in the unclouded sunshine of His Father's love, experienced the anguish of one deserted by His God—" beheld, as it were, the light of the universe put out, and under the strange, unimagined chill that fell upon His freezing spirit, shrieked out in His astonishment, "My God, My God, why hast *Thou* forsaken Me?"

Take up your place, I beseech you, with the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross, and depart not thence, until you have by long gazing learned something of the nature of the two great mysteries, *love* and *sin*; until your hearts are broken, and you can for ever forsake and mourn the sin which crushed the Son of God beneath its accursed load, and till you can accept and rejoice in the love which endured it. As a richly scented rose gives forth its sweetest perfume when crushed, so did the Holy Jesus, our "Rose of Sharon," give forth the fullest fragrance of His heart's love, when crushed and "bruised for our iniquities." "Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow!" He cried. Blessed Jesus! Thou mightest have added, "Behold, and see, if there be any love like unto My love."

May we be no longer insensible to that love. Draw us, O Christ! "with the cords of love,

with the bands of a man ;” “ Draw us, we will run after Thee ;” and bind all who have heard of Thy love this day to Thyself in an everlasting covenant, which shall never be broken ! Incline the hearts of this people to seek Thee ; and to every soul that is thirsting after Thee, reveal Thy love, and fulfil this Thy promise : “ The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee^m !”

^m Isa. liv. 10.

SERMON II.

ON THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

GALATIANS vi. 14.

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

IN this noble declaration of St. Paul, the cross of Christ is held up as the only subject of a Christian's glorying. This, then, by the blessing of God, will be the subject of my discourse to-day.

Before I enter upon it, I should wish, however, to draw your attention, brethren, to the context, in order that you may understand the occasion which drew forth the declaration from St. Paul.

The Galatians, to whom the Epistle was addressed, were a people of European origin, the descendants of a tribe of Celts, who migrated from the West of Europe and settled in Asia Minor. They resembled in the main features of their character the other Celtic nations.

They were a warlike people, of sanguine temperament, more remarkable for the ardour with which they engaged in any new undertaking, than the constancy with which they persevered in it. So in their reception of the Gospel of Christ: they appear to have heard Paul gladly, and to have embraced with joy the doctrine of justification through faith in Jesus Christ; yet afterwards they listened to the suggestions of the Judaizing Christians, perhaps also of the Jews, and sought to graft upon the new religion the doctrines of the old—namely, a rigid adherence to the forms and ceremonies established by the Mosaic law.

The motive which actuated these Judaizers seems to have been in their own case a desire to escape persecution. For while avowed Christians were sorely persecuted, Jews, and even Christian Jews who held to Jewish ceremonies, were tolerated. Hence they conceived a notion that they might engraft Christianity on to Judaism in such a way as that, retaining all the outward observances of Judaism, they might secure the inward advantages of Christianity. And to those who had embraced Christianity first they recommended the converse method, and persuaded them, in order to avoid the persecution of the Jews, to be circumcised, and so “make a fair show in the flesh.”

They did not recognise the real character of Christianity, which is to “make all things new;” nor could they bear to think that “old things, i.e. Jewish ceremonies, &c., were “passed away.”

They appear to have taken a pride in being able to say of their religion, “We have changed nothing, we have kept the traditions of our fathers; behold and see if we are less devoted in our allegiance to the law of Moses than our fathers were. Nay, see how many proselytes we have made. See how many uncircumcised Galatians have been circumcised at our suggestion, and keep the law of Moses.”

This is what St. Paul calls “glorying in their flesh;” and he warns the Galatians of the inefficacy of all outward signs of Church-membership, saying, “in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”

He had already reproved them, in an earlier part of the Epistle, for their folly in imagining that they could perfect “through the flesh” that which they had “begun in the spirit^a.” And he contrasts the “weak and beggarly elements to which they had returned,”—the observing “of days, and months, and times, and years,”—with the higher privileges to which

^a iii. 3.

he had at first introduced them—the vital doctrines of Christianity.

We gather from different parts of the Epistle that the Galatians desired to make a compromise between the highly spiritual religion in which they had been first instructed, and the formal religion which the Jews and Judaizing Christians professed.

It is easy to conceive that they may have loved the outward profession of Christianity, whilst they shunned the cross ; that they wished to gain all they could from the merits of Christ, without giving up station, or position, or their own claims upon God's favour, such as they might imagine the scrupulous observance of the law would give them.

If so, there are many amongst us, my brethren, who resemble the Galatians, and those who misled them. There are many merely professing Christians who try to serve both worlds ; who are willing to be religious, so far as it is creditable with the world to be so ; who would gladly accept the advantages which a religious life holds out, but will not consent to make the sacrifices which it involves.

Set before them the prospect of being saved through the merits of Jesus Christ, and their self-interest prompts them to embrace it. Call upon them to acknowledge the adorable love

and mercy of God exhibited in the scheme of man's redemption, and they will gladly do it. But call upon them to make a sacrifice, to lead such a life as is described in the following passages,—“If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me;” “They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof,”—and they turn away distastefully.

It is true that now-a-days we are little exposed—in this country, at least,—to outward persecutions, but still there is a cross for every one to bear, who would follow Christ. If true to our character as Christians, if faithful and *decided* in our Christian profession and practice, in our homes, in our dealings with others, in every relation in life, it is almost certain that we shall meet with some opposition, with some dislike from others, or with what is very painful to a kind heart—with misunderstanding and misrepresentation, perhaps from those who are dearest to us. The flesh still wars against the spirit; the devil still stirs up carnal men against those who are born of the Spirit.

How useless it is to attempt to effect a compromise between two such conflicting principles, will appear from our Lord's words—“Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.” God will have our whole hearts; otherwise we can be

none of His. You might as well expect a man to be selfish and generous, or humble and proud, at the same time, as to strike an even balance between the service of God and the service of the world. Did you ever, my brethren, see an instance where religious duties were sacrificed to secular duties, and a perfect balance preserved in the mind? Not one. You may, perhaps, have imagined it. A calm and respectable outward appearance may have so far imposed upon you, that you may have fancied all was peace within that heart. But if you could see beneath the surface, you would at once own that you had been deceived. Were you to see as God sees, you would confess that the inner state of that man presents no picture of harmony and good government, but of discord and anarchy. You would behold lower principles of action exalted to high places, and higher principles dethroned and trampled upon : lust, and avarice, and pride greedily and successfully urging their claims ; and purity, and self-denial, and humility silent and dishonoured ; conscience, that should reign supreme, rudely cast down—her voice unheeded, her authority gone ; Christian charity enslaved to sectarianism ; philanthropy crippled by prudence ; and the love of God made dim by selfishness, and chilled by fear.

Such is a not exaggerated picture of the heart of that man who tries to make a compromise between the calls of religion and those of the world. A religion which will not stand the test of persecution, and coldness of friends, and calumnies of enemies, is not likely to produce much fruit unto eternal life. If it is real, it is almost sure to stir up opposition, either within or without us; it will always have its enemies in our own hearts, as well as in the world.

Let us now turn our attention to the text. St. Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And yet St. Paul had whereof to glory, if ever man had, as he himself says: "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless^b." And he tells us that he was "brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, in this city," (i. e. Jerusalem,) "and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers^c." He had every privilege; birth, life, education, natural powers, all tended

^b Philipp. iii. 4-6.

^c Acts xxii. 3.

to make him confident, self-satisfied, proud. Yet he declares, once and again, that he will only “glory in his infirmities^d ;” and he says, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : . . . and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, . . . but the righteousness which is of God by faith^e .”

Paul made many sacrifices for Christ, as we read in 2 Cor. xi., where he recounts the labours and sufferings he had undergone ; yet *this* was perhaps the greatest of all—the giving up all thought of meriting salvation, of having a righteousness of his own, and submitting to be saved wholly by Christ, and freely, without merit of his own. That is a sacrifice, dear brethren, which every one must make who hopes to be saved. It is strange that such a way of salvation should be unpalatable to the natural man. But so it is ; all true Christians know that : they have all felt that it was only by the teaching of God that they were ever brought to see and embrace such a salvation ; that it is the natural tendency of the heart to establish its own righteousness, in some way or another ; and that to give up

^d 2 Cor. xi. 30 ; xii. 9.

^e Philipp. iii. 7—9.

for ever all hope *in ourselves*, all glorying in ourselves, and to glory only in the cross of Christ, and to cling to that cross as our only hope,—to do this is not possible to the unconverted and worldly man; for glorying in the cross of Christ, as St. Paul gloried in it, and embracing it as our salvation, imply of necessity being crucified to the world, and the world to us.

3. Let us now enquire what is the meaning of the word ‘cross.’

The word ‘cross’ in the Bible has three significations:—1. Sometimes it means the rood of wood upon which our Saviour was lifted up. Crucifixion was a punishment in use among the Romans, but only resorted to in the case of the basest and most notorious criminals or slaves, who were in those times treated with the greatest ignominy. The cross was first laid on the ground, and the criminal stretched upon it, and fastened to it by a nail driven through either hand, and one through the feet, thus piercing through some of the most sensitive parts of the human frame, tearing the delicate nerves communicating with the whole body, and sending through the tortured victim pangs of the sharpest agony. The cross was then lifted up, and the end dropped into a hole in the ground; and the criminal was then exposed to the gaze of all men, far and near, and left to die a slow,

lingering death, hanging with his whole weight upon his hands and feet, his life-blood oozing slowly forth. The anguish, the fever, the faintness, and the agonizing thirst produced by this slow death cannot well be conceived, nor what even the bodily sufferings alone of our Lord must have been when He cried out, after long endurance, "I thirst."

It was a shameful, an accursed death. In the Jewish law it was written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Thus He was held accursed by His own people, and esteemed one of the lowest of malefactors by the Gentiles. It was a death than which the ingenious cruelty of man could not invent a more terrible; a death deserving—as a great orator of antiquity expressed himself—to be for ever banished from the eyes, and ears, and very imagination of mankind. This was the death to which Jesus condescended, and which He endured *for us*. Oh! let us never forget, when we say that Jesus died, to say also *how* He died; when we repeat the words, "He became obedient unto death," never let us forget to add, "*even* the death of the *cross*."

2. A second meaning the word has, is the self-denial exercised by those who follow Christ. "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me."

This is the cross which St. Paul knew by daily experience, when he said, "I am crucified to the world, I die daily."

3. The third meaning is that which belongs to the expression used in the text: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here it is used in its widest, noblest, grandest sense. It means here "Christ crucified;" it means the way of salvation by Christ crucified.—"It is the name given to the whole plan of redemption by a crucified Redeemer. That little word the 'cross' implies the whole glorious work of Christ for us. It implies the love of God in giving His Son for us—the love of Christ in giving Himself—the incarnation of the Son of God—His substitution, One for many—His atoning sufferings and death. The whole work of Christ is included in that word, 'the cross of Christ,' and the reason is plain; His dying upon the cross was the lowest point of His humiliation. It was there that He cried 'It is finished; the work of My obedience is finished—My sufferings are finished—the work of redemption is complete—the wrath of My people is finished;' and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. Hence His whole finished work is called the 'cross of Christ'."

' Extract from McCheyne's Sermons.

4. This is "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" in which alone St. Paul declares that he will glory. Well may it be regarded as precious by him, and all believers.

"The cross" is glorious, because by it all the attributes of God are glorified.

1. He is revealed to us in Scripture as a just and righteous God, to whom sin is hateful, and whose vengeance all mankind have incurred,—“for all have sinned.” How can His severity be appeased? Not by the destruction of those who have sinned, even though a whole generation of men should perish, like those Israelites who murmured against Him, and whose bones were left in the wilderness. The wrath of God would only slumber to be reawakened by the first transgression of their posterity. Open the book of God’s Word: read there how His most blessed Son endured the agony of desertion in the Garden of Gethsemane; view Him as He went out of Jerusalem on the ascent to Calvary, wearing the crown of thorns and bearing His cross; look on that sacred Form nailed to the accursed tree, in the company of malefactors; dwell on each point in the sacred narrative, exhibiting the cruel mockery, the shame, the blasphemies to which the Son of God was exposed; and then say whether the justice of God was not

fully vindicated by Him who "Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

2. God is represented as a merciful God, long-suffering, and abounding in love to His creatures.

Was there ever such an illustration of these attributes as "the cross of Christ?" Suppose that all the good men on earth had combined to expiate the sins of their race,—do you think that their blood-shedding would have availed to purge the world of sin? No, brethren, they, even they too, were under condemnation. Even Abraham was saved by his faith in the coming Christ, whose day he rejoiced to see, and not by his works of righteousness.

But even supposing that such a sacrifice could have been accepted, and have been efficacious,—how long, think you, would its consequences have endured? Would the next generation have been thereby benefited? would they have been free from sin—free from the liability to go astray? or would they have enjoyed a perfect immunity—liberty to follow their own inclinations without incurring guilt?

No, brethren, they would have been born under condemnation, and would as surely have incurred the wages of sin—death—as their fathers had done. An endless series of sacrifices would have been required to do away the sins

of the world, and the condition of the human race would have been in no way affected. Men would be yet "in their sins."

See, then, the mercy of God, who, seeing our helpless condition, sent His only Son to take our nature upon Him; to crucify it with Him; to nail our sins to the cross, that henceforth we should not serve sin; but that by His one offering of Himself, once offered, He should sanctify for ever them that believe in Him.

Here is mercy! here is long-suffering! God might most justly have cut off all the world in their sins; but He endured for a season, bearing their disobedience, till in the appointed time He sent His Son to be a perfect ransom and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Here is love! God, who might have revealed Himself to us only as a righteous Judge, terrible in vengeance, and by no means sparing the guilty, condescends to lay aside these attributes, and to appear as a reconciled Father, offering full and free pardon and forgiveness to His disobedient children, if they will turn to Him and repent; promising that if they will flee to the cross of Christ, and lay fast hold on *that*, their sins and iniquities shall be remembered no more, but that His righteousness shall be imputed to them.

Is not the cross of Christ glorious, then, dear brethren? Does it not exhibit in most perfect balance the goodness and the severity of God? Is it not "the power of God unto salvation" to them that believe? Are not "many sons brought to glory" by it? Does it not make you feel the value of your own soul, when you think that such a price was given for its redemption? Can you hesitate a moment, then, to accept the boon that is freely offered you? Oh! if you have been backward hitherto, do no more despite to the Spirit of grace and mercy. Cast not, by your reluctance, an imputation of falsehood against the God of Truth. Doubt not His power—question not His interest in you. It is He who speaks to you this day: "Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation!"

The cross of Christ is not merely glorious in its results; it is glorious as an example. First, as an example of *humility*. We are not all of us accustomed to regard this virtue as ennobling its possessor. Nevertheless Scripture teaches us that "whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted;" "Before honour is humility," whereas "pride goeth before a fall." Humility is, indeed, true dignity; and hence the voluntary humiliation of our Lord Jesus Christ adds a crown of glory to His sacred

head. This is what the Apostle Paul says: "Wherefore — i. e. because of His voluntary abasement — God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father^s." And the doctrine of the cross requires in those who receive it humility. We must be content to owe everything to Christ. This is contrary to the notions and feelings of the natural heart; consequently the cross of Christ is a stumbling-block to many: they cannot see any glory in humiliation, nor in absolute dependence on another. We require to have an enlightened vision and a renewed heart before we can see the glory of the cross, or glory in being made like Christ in taking up *our* cross to follow Him.

Secondly, the cross of Christ is wonderful as an example of *love*. This is one of the greatest of God's attributes. We are told, "God is love." Love shews itself most in sacrifice of self. Love makes the meanest of creatures in a manner glorious. Stories have been told of the wonderful self-sacrificing attachment of

^s Philipp. ii. 9—11.

slaves, which will be remembered when the deeds of kings and great men are forgotten. Similarly our wonder and admiration are awakened in the highest degree when we contemplate the cross of Christ. It was not only the greatest sacrifice that the human mind can conceive, but it far transcends all conception. We can, perhaps, fathom the idea of a man's devoting himself to death for his friends; and, to use our blessed Lord's words,—“Greater love hath no man than this.” Instances have been recorded in profane history of such acts of self-sacrifice. But no man was ever known to die for the sake of his enemies. Some have died in defence of a principle—as did Socrates, refusing to violate the laws of his country by availing himself of the escape provided for him. But no man ever underwent voluntarily the most painful and humiliating of deaths to procure a lasting benefit for his persecutors. Such a case is, however, conceivable. But the sacrifice of Jesus Christ stands quite alone. We can never even in thought measure its extent. He was the Son of God—one with the Father from the beginning—Creator of the world, and of all living beings that move on the face of the earth—infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness—perfectly holy, pure, and righteous—from His very nature hating all evil, loving all His

creatures, desiring their happiness. Yet this Divine Being became as one of us—endured the most painful and humiliating death—sustained a conflict with Satan, alone and unaided—bore the weight of all the sins of all the world, knowing that for a large majority the sacrifice would be ineffectual—that the blood of the covenant would be deemed an unholy thing, and His offer of redemption spurned by those whom He had come to ransom. Surely there hath been no “sorrow like unto His sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted Him in the day of His anger^h!” Surely He hath “trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with Himⁱ!”

These things, which were hidden from the wise and prudent, are now revealed to babes. That mystery which the Cherubim and Seraphim — those pure and sinless beings who dwell in the presence of God, and know so much of the love of God towards themselves—desire to look into, the love of “the cross,” so far transcending all other love—this, this, beloved brethren, is revealed to you and me. Shall not we glory in it? God forbid that we should not! God forbid that we should glory in anything else, than in being the objects of such surpassing love!

^h Lam. i. 12.

ⁱ Isa. lxiii. 3.

Now if, like St. Paul, we glory in the cross of Christ, we shall take Him to be our example. We shall be transformed more and more into His likeness, and we shall be known to be Christ's by our humility, and by our love.

And what will be the blessed effects of this change? In the words of the text, "The world will be crucified to us, and we unto the world." If we truly love Christ, the attractions of the world will gradually fade away and die. Crucifixion, we have seen, is a lingering death; so is the death of the old nature within us, and the world without us. St. Paul said, "I die daily;" so must we die daily to the things of time, that we live with Christ to all eternity. We are not renewed all at once. The old nature gradually expiring, like a victim on the cross, is subject to a painful process. To hasten its death we have chiefly to keep near the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to look continually on Him. "They looked unto Him," we read^k, "and their faces were lightened." So, when we look on Christ, may our faces be lit up even with such a light as lightened the face of Moses, when he had been up in the mount with God. As all that the eye can scan looks comparatively dark after we have gazed

^k Ps. xxxiv. 5.

long upon the setting sun, so will the world appear to grow dim to our eyes when they have been long fixed upon the dying Saviour. From that great spectacle of love we shall never seek to turn away. Christ crucified for us will be the theme of our meditations, and the object of our adoring love. The more we meditate on His cross, the greater will be our loathing of sin, the more ardent our endeavours to live unto Him who died for us, the less distracting the cares and pleasures of the world. The voice of the multitude, which would tempt us to folly, will sound more faintly in our ears; it will be like an old song sung by a voice which has lost its power: but in its place we shall hear, from time to time, snatches of a new song—a song of heavenly melody, in which all who love the Lord Jesus, and glory in His cross, shall sometime join—“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing¹.”

This day you are invited to join in the commemoration of that sacrifice, in obedience to the last request of Jesus Christ. May the Holy Spirit be present with each one of you who do so, sanctifying your act of faith, and bringing you in an especial manner nearer to

¹ Rev. v. 12.

Jesus. May your souls be strengthened and refreshed by the presence of the Lord at His Feast. May you abound in love to the brethren with whom you are partakers thereof, and to those who are dispersed abroad; and may He, whose cross we have this day been contemplating, make Himself more intimately known to us in the breaking of bread, as He did to the disciples at Emmaus.

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end^m.” Amen.

^m Eph. iii. 20, 21.

SERMON III.

ON THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION.

ACTS iii. 19.

“Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins
may be blotted out.”

I STAND before you, dear brethren, to-day, the messenger of God to you, to speak of that great change—that change of the whole man—without which none can see the Lord. The message is not mine—it is the Lord’s. The doctrine of the necessity of conversion is not one which may be held by one man, and rejected by another, just as they please. It is an eternal truth, pronounced again and again by Christianity, in the strongest words that language can supply.

If I had come here to-day to speak to you about the motions of the stars and planets, or to describe to you the changes of the moon, or the course of the earth around the sun, you might go home and dismiss the subject from your thoughts, without being the better or the worse for doing so; you might refuse to believe all I should tell you about the sun, moon,

and stars, or you might forget it all before you left the church-door, and your happiness here and hereafter would not be affected by your doing so.

But it is far different with the message I have to bring to you to-day. Every time you hear *this* message without being moved by it, you reject God Himself, and are hardening your hearts against Him.

How will it be with you, my dear hearers, when you return to your houses to-day? You will make a few passing remarks to your neighbours, perhaps, as you walk home. "The preacher spoke to us to-day upon the necessity of conversion." You will express your approval or dislike of his manner of stating the case, and then dismiss the subject from your thoughts. On Monday morning you will return to your usual employments, and go on as if the preacher's message were no more to you than the movements of the moon and stars; and next Sunday, when you come to the house of God again, you will not be a step nearer to heaven, and further from hell, than you are to-day. I greatly fear that this will be the case with some of you. Suffer me to warn you, at the opening of my discourse, against such a hearing of the Word of God; and let me beseech you, when you return to your homes, in your

first quiet hour or moment, to think thus with yourselves: "God hath sent this message to *me* to-day, to tell me that unless I am converted, and become a new creature, I can never enter heaven. *Am I converted?*" Ask yourselves honestly this question; and be not content with asking the question merely, rest not till you have the answer also. It may be weeks, it may be months, before you can find any answer to satisfy you; but do not give up the enquiry; do not rest until you have the testimony of your conscience that you are at least earnestly, diligently seeking to be made a new creature; seeking Christ, if you have not actually found Him. Oh! the devices that Satan has to hinder us from putting this question to ourselves: "Am I in Christ, or am I still a stranger to Him?"

May the Holy Spirit take the message of to-day home with such power into your hearts, my brethren, that Satan shall be completely foiled in his attempts to pluck the good seed out of your hearts, and that it may take deep root, and from this time begin to spring up—"first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear."

It is not my purpose to-day to enter into an explanation of the nature of this change, to describe the manifold ways of the Holy Spirit's

working, or to dwell upon the gracious affections of the renewed heart; but rather to insist on the need of that spiritual new birth—on the great danger of delay in attaining it, or of resting satisfied with vague religious impressions, which produce no lasting results on the life and character.

In connexion with the words of my text, I may remind you of many others of Holy Scripture which set forth in undeniable clearness the facts, that man is by nature under wrath, and dead unto God, and that he needs to be supernaturally quickened, i.e. made alive, and to be brought, by grace, into a new relation to God.

In St. Matthew (xviii. 3) it is written, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus repeated the same truth, very emphatically, several times: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ^a." Again: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again ^b." And though these passages are generally taken as referring to Baptism, they are not to be so limited in their meaning as to apply *only* to

^a John iii. 3.

^b Ib. 7.

that holy Sacrament; for the life-giving operation of the Spirit is spoken of as wholly unrestricted: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit^c." Again, St. Paul, writing to the converts at Ephesus, says: "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins^d." And St. Peter describes the saints as "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but by the Word of God^e." And St. John says, "By this we know that we have passed from *death* unto *life*, because we love the brethren^f."

These are only a very few examples of the manner in which our Lord and His disciples spoke of that great change which we are considering. What can be stronger than the terms *death* and *life*, to describe the unrenewed and the renewed state of man? Other powerful similes are employed also in Holy Scripture to express it. It is called being brought from *darkness* to *light*: "Ye, who were sometime darkness, are now light in the Lord^g." It is called a turning from "the power of Satan unto God^h." It is described as a release from chains and a dungeon to liberty and the light of day:

^c John iii. 8.

^d Eph. ii. 1.

^e 1 Pet. i. 23.

^f 1 John iii. 14.

^g Eph. v. 8.

^h Acts xxvi. 18.

the Lord Jehovah said of Jesus Christ, "I will give Thee for a light to the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house ⁱ."

My brethren, the words I have been quoting from Holy Scripture are not new to you; you have heard them again and again. I trust that there are some here who have not only heard them, but have laid them to heart, and have in themselves experienced the great change they describe. If you have had your eyes opened to your lost estate; if you have sought and found a Saviour; if you live in the habit of constant prayer, and strive after likeness to Christ Jesus in your lives, then happy are ye! to you the words may be applied, "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered^k;" "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord^l." To you I would say, Do not rest where you are. There is no standing still in the road to heaven. Unless you be pressing forwards and gaining a step every day, such are your enemies within and without, that you may be sure you are being thrust back, and that you will lose more than *one* step every day. Strive that your

ⁱ Isa. xlii. 6, 7.

^k Ps. xxxii. 1.

^l Ps. cxix. 1.

path may be as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Strive to communicate to others of the divine life which has been breathed into you. A small piece of leaven hid in three measures of meal will by-and-bye leaven every ounce of that meal. So ought it to be in the kingdom of grace. The leaven of God's grace in your heart ought to spread first in your own homes, among your children, servants, and relatives, and gradually leaven and pervade your whole neighbourhood. Happy and blessed consequence of your own new birth unto righteousness! But the results need not stop here; not only your house and neighbourhood, but the village in which you dwell, nay, even your country, may be the better for your holiness. Very few of us have faith to ask and believe that such a blessing may attend our feeble efforts. We think, "How can we do any good, or have any influence over others?" But this is not humility, my brethren—it is simply want of faith: for if we consider that God is glorified in the weakness of the instruments that He makes use of, and that it is not by any power or goodness of *our own* that any of us can advance His cause, but by His Spirit alone, working in and by us—if we consider this, we shall be more humble and hopeful; and, cast-

ing ourselves at the feet of Christ, we shall beseech Him to make use of us, such as we are—"the chief of sinners," "the least of all saints," the weakest children of His family,—to make use of *us* to win souls to God.

You will remember, when our Lord wished to make His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, how He sent for a very humble animal to convey Him thither. Of that poor animal, the very name of which is commonly used as a term of contempt, it was said, "the Lord hath need of Him." If the Lord had need of such a creature, say not within yourselves, "the Lord hath no need of me." The Lord *has* need of you: He has need of every believer, and has a work for every believer to do, however ignorant or poor, or however young or old.

Oh! if there were but more faith, love, and zeal among the people of God,—if they would be contented to acknowledge that they are themselves nothing, and to magnify Christ's power in them,—that prayer, "Thy kingdom come," which every one utters daily, would not remain so long unanswered. We should not see around us so many of our friends and neighbours strangers to God, but we should be oftener reminded, in the abundant conversion of souls to Him, of the day on which Peter gave forth the admonition contained in

my text—"Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" a day on which a few words spoken by an unlettered fisherman were accompanied with such power from on high, that the number of those who were added to the Church was "about three thousand;"—"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord^m."

There may be others here who imagine that they are converted, and are all the while deceiving themselves. Perhaps they think that their being in a state of grace is sufficiently proved by their constant observance of certain duties, and by their regular attendance at church, and freedom from open sins. Or perhaps they think that all is well with them, because they have had their feelings aroused at times upon religious subjects, and because they have *occasionally* good thoughts and pious wishes.

It is very needful, dear brethren, that you should be on your guard against both these forms of self-deception. God looks at the *heart*. He says, "My son, give Me thine heart." Unless you give Him your heart, all other gifts are worthless, quite worthless. He said of the Jewish nation, "This people draweth near unto Me,"—how? they drew near unto God with their lips, with their religious observances, with

^m Zech. iv. 6.

their fasts, with their proud morality, and legal righteousness. But mark what is added: "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their lips, and honoureth Me with their mouth, but their *heart* is far from Meⁿ."

There is a very old saying which, alas! has some truth in it: "The nearer the Church the farther from God." So deceitful is the human heart, that those who dwell in the midst of religious privileges are often lulled by these into a dangerous sleep. They are satisfied with making a compromise. "We will be so far Christians," is their feeling, "as that we will abstain from outward sins; we will do all that is required of us by a nominal Christianity;" but they cannot bear the thought of taking up their cross to follow Jesus. They will not, cannot give to Him their whole hearts, nor "sanctify the Lord" in all their secret thoughts. A complete change of the whole being—a change in all the objects of their love, desire, and ambition—is what they do not like to hear of. And so, unless God, in His infinite love and power, shake to the foundations and utterly destroy this their house built upon the sand, so will they continue to deceive themselves to the end,—“having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof^o.”

ⁿ Matt. xv. 6.

^o 2 Tim. iii 5.

Others there are who know well that a mere nominal religion will not do; who know what it is to have experienced at times the promptings and secret drawings of the blessed Spirit, who is ever seeking to lead us to repentance. They can remember a time, perhaps, when they were concerned about their souls, when they shed tears, and felt for a time a sincere anxiety, which, however, passed away like the morning cloud, which is drawn up the hillside by the sun's hot rays, and disappears, leaving a dry and dewless earth. A death in your family, or a season of awakening among your neighbours, or a time of trouble or sickness, made you think seriously for a time. You regret that it is very different with you now, and find it painful to contrast yourselves now with what you were then, and difficult to revive old impressions. Do not be discouraged: what can more strongly shew the good-will of God towards you, than those strivings of His Holy Spirit with you from time to time? He is waiting, "stretching forth His hands all day" to you, saying, "Return unto Me, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." At the same time there is reason why you should fear. Your past experience will not benefit you, but rather be a witness against you, if you have fallen away. Do

not look back to the time when you were subject to some religious impressions, and flatter yourselves that, having had that sign of the favour of God towards you, *therefore* you cannot perish; nor imagine that you are in a better state than those who have always remained in impenitence. Believe me, convictions which are felt only for a time, and which then die away, are apt to leave the heart harder than it was before. He that looks back after he has once put his hand to the plough, is not worthy of the kingdom of Heaven. "Remember Lot's wife." She set out fairly. She fled with her husband from the doomed city, and followed him with haste for some way; but then she turned, to take one last lingering look at the place from which *in heart* she was never wholly separated, and — you know her fate. May the Holy Spirit awaken you once more, and effectually, and impress upon your hearts the words, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

"Without holiness," it is written, "no man shall see the Lord^p." If a man had spoken these words, my brethren, we might be allowed to doubt them, and we might indulge a hope that some of us surely might be permitted to see the Lord without holiness; but they are

^p Heb. xii. 14.

not the words of a man, but of God, who cannot lie, nor alter the thing which is gone out of His lips.

“Without holiness no man can see the Lord!” Is it possible? Is there no other way by which we can enter heaven? no other character in virtue of which we can be admitted? None! The man who ventured to appear at the marriage-feast without a wedding-garment was cast out without mercy into outer darkness. Very much surprised he very likely was; for he had hoped to get in unnoticed, and that his different appearance to that of the other guests would be overlooked: but he had no excuse to make; he had been informed that, to gain admission, a wedding-garment was needful; and therefore “he was speechless.”

Look around you, my brethren, and mark how many there are of those whom you see who hope and expect to go to heaven; and how many there are that are holy. Alas! holy men and women are few; and yet almost all people hope, in a vague, fruitless way, to go to heaven when they die. There are many who, if asked what their hope is, would confess that they are very unfit for heaven now, and that they would be very sorry to die without any further preparation. If they could be per-

suaded to confess what their hope is,—that is, if they have any hope at all,—it would in many cases prove to be some vision of this kind:—A time will come, they think, when they will be freer from business than they are now, and in a better mood to attend to the things of eternity. Providence will perhaps ordain for them some lingering illness, in which they will have plenty of time to make their peace with God. Friends will express a kind solicitude about them; a clergyman, perhaps, will visit them, and administer to them the Holy Sacrament, so that they will be enabled—in spite of the carelessness of their whole lives—to die pretty comfortably.

Do any of you live upon such a hope as this? Ah! my friends, do you expect that, after you have stoutly refused to have anything to do with Christ all your lives, He will accept you in your death? True, He has said, “Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Of a surety He will not cast out any that come to Him;—*that come to Him*: mark those words; and let me beseech you to remember this,—namely, that the power, and even the *will*, to come to Him may be forfeited by you. You will lose the power of repenting, if you refuse to repent. True, Christ is both able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come

to Him ; but hundreds and thousands have gone into eternity, who, having put off repentance all their lives, had neither the will nor the power to repent when their last hour came.

It is an awful thought, my brethren, that we may so grieve the Spirit of God, that He will depart from us for ever. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," saith the Lord. This terrible truth is evidenced in many death-scenes. You may see men just about to enter into the presence of God—knowing that they are dying—as callous, as cold, as fearless, as stupid about the salvation of their souls as they ever were in their busy prosperity and health. The human heart is capable of becoming as hard, and cold, and lifeless as a stone. There is an expression in the Bible in which there is a fearful depth of meaning, and also, alas ! of truth,—“shut up in unbelief.” It suggests the picture of men hardening themselves against the truth ; going on as if there were no heaven, no hell, no God who is angry against sin, no Saviour whose love they are slighting and trampling on ; living in a state of practical infidelity, until to believe becomes impossible to them ; until their cold unbelief closes round them like a heavy stone coffin, into which they are closely fitted, and shut up, and fastened down, and sealed for ever. “Strong

as death," and "stubborn as the grave," are expressions used in Scripture to denote the strength with which death grasps his victim, and the stubbornness with which the grave holds and retains those who are in its jaws.

Even such is *spiritual* death. So strongly, so stubbornly does it hold us, while we know not God, and are strangers to the breath of His Spirit. But there is *one* thing that is stronger than death—one thing, and one thing only. If you turn to the Song of Solomon^q you will find the words: "*Love* is strong as death;" and if you read the 11th chapter of St. John's Gospel, you will see how love brought forth from the dark tomb one who had been so long a time dead that his flesh had already begun to see corruption. So shall it be at the last day—"The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live^r."

Brethren, He who is love has sent you this message to-day—"Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." You have heard the message with your outward ears—oh! receive it into your hearts. "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts!" "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation." To-day is the Lord's Day,

^q viii. 6.

^r John v. 25.

when you have no excuse for not attending to the things of eternity. To-morrow you will return to your farms, your shops, or your household duties. You will have to be busy, and the things of the present moment will begin to appear nearer and more important, while the concerns of your souls will seem farther off, and less easy to be realized. To-day, then, is your opportunity. Oh! that the power of God may so accompany the efforts of all Christian preachers and teachers on this Sabbath, that an abundant harvest may be reaped; that faithful ministers in every place may have a good report to give to the Lord of the harvest of *this* day's work!

You may have heard, perhaps, of a great and good man called Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, in Africa, who laboured many years in the cause of God, and whose piety and learning have left a lasting monument in his writings which have come down to our day. In his youth he strayed very far from God, and plunged recklessly into all the vices and shameless dissipation of the heathen city in which he lived. The time came when the Spirit of God began to work a mighty change in him. He says of himself that he desired to repent, yet loved his sins—was terribly haunted by thoughts of the judgment to come, and yet could not

break through the fascinations which were wound so strongly around him, and the habits which had grown up with him from childhood. He confesses that, thus torn in pieces, as it were, he used constantly to pray, "Lord, convert me, —convert me, Lord! but not to-day, Lord, not to-day!" Thus he prayed for a time; but such a prayer as this could not be continued. "Ye cannot serve two masters." He found that he must make his choice; either to abandon the hope of salvation, and make a bargain with death, or else to turn his back on his old ways and former companions, and declare himself thenceforward on the Lord's side.

By God's grace he was enabled to choose the latter. His prayer was no longer, "Convert me, but not to-day." The strong cry of his heart became, as it must be with every sincere penitent, "*Make haste* to help me, O Lord;" "Make no long tarrying, O my God."

Now I think that the prayer that St. Augustine put into words—"Convert me, but not to-day"—is too often, if we were but honest enough to confess it, the secret language of our hearts. We wish to be made ready for heaven, but we do not like the thought of making our choice at once,—this very day. There is something which we must give up if we become Christ's disciples, and that something—brethren, your

own hearts will tell you in each case what it is—is dearer to us than Christ, dearer to us than heaven. Or we shrink from the trouble and effort it requires to come to God, and to receive a new heart; for trouble and effort there must be, undoubtedly. It is God who alone can work in us that great change; yet we must be fellow-workers with God, and *work hard*. What father is there who would not work hard, if he were called upon to save himself, his wife and children, from debt, from prison, starvation, or disgrace? Would he not put his shoulder to the wheel like a man, and wear himself out, if there were a need for it, in order to escape the dreaded evil? Would he not strain every nerve? and, after having accomplished all that he could by his own honest efforts, and attained his end, would he not sit down contented and happy, feeling himself sufficiently rewarded by freedom from anxiety and fear?

My dear friends, a greater work than this would be is set before you. There is a more terrible debt to be avoided; there is a darker prison and deeper disgrace to be shunned. Will you not have compassion on yourselves and on your families,—on those little ones whom you brought into being? Be not children, I beseech you, in this matter—be men.

Search the Scriptures, and satisfy yourselves

whether what has been spoken to you to-day be not true; and say to yourselves,—“If this is indeed true, it is high time to awake out of sleep. If there be such a great work as this for me to do, let me work while it is called to-day; let this be my first care, and let me not rest satisfied until the day when I shall have the happy assurance that not only I, but all whom I love best on earth, are entering in by the strait gate, and have passed from death unto life, from a state of condemnation and wrath to a state of freedom from guilty fear, a state of ‘righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’”

In my two last discourses I endeavoured to exhibit before you the cross of Christ, to direct your whole attention to a dying Saviour, as our one and only hope of salvation, and to speak of the wonderful love manifested in the plan of redemption by Christ crucified.

To that bleeding Sacrifice I would direct your eyes again to-day; and in so doing, I call upon you to consider what are the great gifts which by His precious blood-shedding He procured for us. There are two great gifts which are freely offered to all through the virtue of His cross and passion, namely, *pardon* and *holiness*. He died, not only that His people’s sins might be washed away, but also that they might un-

dergo an inward renovation and purification by the Holy Ghost. He died to “purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works^s.”

I beseech you to test your sincerity by asking yourselves whether the latter gift, viz. holiness, is as dear to you as the former, viz. pardon. It cannot be denied that many hope for pardon who have no desire to be made holy. Men will for the most part be glad to hear of forgiveness through Christ’s merits, and will bear with a preacher so far as he points out the hope of forgiveness for the very worst of men; but if he speak to them of that other gift,—the gift of an inward new birth unto holiness, without which pardon of sin is never bestowed,—the feelings with which they receive the message prove at once their hollow-heartedness and insincerity. Christ died, that they which live might henceforth not live unto themselves, as formerly, but unto Him who died for them. From His pierced side there flowed a double stream,—blood, to cleanse away guilt; and water, the sign of purification by the Spirit.

Think of this, beloved brethren, and do not be satisfied with looking vaguely forward to a *future* pardon, but accept *now* the twofold gift of pardon and a renewed heart. “Look unto Him, and be ye saved,”—saved not only from

^s Tit. ii. 14.

the load of guilt you have all your lives been incurring, but saved also from the power and dominion of sin *within* you. And may your joyful experience and humble declaration be that of St. Paul: "The law of the Spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death †."

† Rom. viii. 2.

SERMON IV.

THE TEN LEPERS.

LUKE xvii. 17.

“Were there not ten cleansed ; but where are the nine ?”

THE narrative from which my text is taken is familiar to all of you. So, too, is the nature of the disease which drove the ten men whom Jesus healed out into the highways. In the 13th chapter of Leviticus we find a minute description of the various forms of leprosy, and rules for the observance of the priests in detecting lepers, and in cleansing them. Nothing can give a more piteous idea of the condition of the leper than the 43rd and 44th verses of the same chapter:—“The leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled ; he is unclean : he shall dwell alone ; without the camp shall his habitation be.”

Thus he was an outcast from his brethren, condemned to herd with others who were afflicted in like manner, and bound to warn every one who approached him that he was "unclean."

In our days we look upon diseases as coming from natural causes; and there is no doubt that many of the disorders from which we suffer—especially epidemic diseases, such as cholera, small-pox, and infectious fevers—can be traced to habits of carelessness and filth. But when we have done all that we can to turn away the plague from us, we must still feel that we are in the hand of God, and that He can save the poor man in his cottage, and smite the eldest son of the peer in his palace, even as it seemeth good to Him.

Among the Jews, leprosy was looked upon as an immediate visitation of God. The leper was regarded as a man under sentence—suffering the displeasure of God. Hence he was banished from the congregation, and forced to dwell without the camp, debarred from the privilege of attending the daily worship of God in the temple.

This seclusion was more than a sanitary regulation, or quarantine. Had it been so, the leper would have been allowed to re-enter the congregation after a certain period had elapsed

from the date of his cure. But, according to the law of Moses, he must first satisfy the priest that he was free from bodily taint, and then offer a sacrifice of a peculiar nature. Had leprosy been looked upon as an ordinary contagious disease, it would have been enough that the cure of the leper should be attested by a person skilled in cutaneous diseases, and that the purifying rites in ordinary use should be performed. But it was regarded as a divinely inflicted scourge, sent to afflict the body for the sin of the soul; it was an outward type or figure of that sin, that corruption of the whole man, in which every human being since the transgression of Adam is born: and an expiatory rite was necessary; one which confessed the guilt of the soul, and the need of an atonement for sin. The sacrifice of the bird over running water, and the sprinkling of the living with the blood of the dead, were more than accidental forms without any spiritual meaning: they were designed to teach the Israelites that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins; but that by the death of an innocent victim the sins of the guilty should be done away; in short, that a fountain was to be opened for sin and uncleanness, drawn from Immanuel's veins, and that they who sought salvation must come to this fountain, and be

cleansed from their impurities, before they could be permitted to enter into the congregation of the Lord, in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Such was the law which Moses had ordained, and which Jesus ordered the ten lepers to conform to. "And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed^a."

Now, a certain amount of faith appears to have existed in every one of the lepers. They were obedient to the word of Jesus—"Go shew yourselves unto the priests,"—but there was only *one* of them who seems to have attributed his cure to the immediate operation of Divine power, consequent upon his obedience and faith in Jesus. "One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks^b."

Up to a certain point their conduct was just the same; but when it came to offering up thanksgiving and praise where thanksgiving and praise were due, and at the feet of Him to whom, jointly with the Father, they were due, a wide distinction was observable, at least in their outward actions; and our Lord's remark draws special attention to it: "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger^c."

^a Luke xvii. 14.

^b Ib. 15, 16.

^c Ib. 17, 18.

Observe, our Lord does not dispute the fact of the nine having been healed,—*that* is expressly asserted^d; but His words denote a certain degree of surprise, that an act which seems to us one of duty, and must to every one appear natural, was omitted by the nine lepers.


Of what country they were, we are not told; only, as it is mentioned that the one who returned to give glory to God was a Samaritan, it seems to be implied that the rest were Jews. At all events, they were on their way to Jerusalem; for this is undoubtedly implied in the words, “as they went,”—that is, to shew themselves to the priests,—because there was no establishment of priests anywhere else, recognised by the law of Moses. Perhaps they proceeded onward on their journey, and offered up the sacrifice which Moses commanded, and obtained the certificate of the priests that they were cured of their leprosy. Of *that* the Scripture narrative gives no account. Whatever laborious ways they may have taken to shew their gratitude to God, they did not take the obvious way of returning, and falling at Jesus’ feet, and giving glory to God. Their faith was not simple enough for this. They could not believe that He who had given them that

^d Luke xvii. 14.

plain direction, "Go shew yourselves to the priests," was anything more than a learned Rabbi, who was able to tell them the best thing to be done, according to the rites and ceremonies prescribed by Moses.

Probably they thought themselves equally capable of dealing with cases of leprosy, now that they had experienced the disease and its cure. Perhaps they would give the same directions to others, and expect that, as they went, they would be healed. And when the lepers, whom they had directed, returned, not to give glory to God, but to upbraid them with their idle imposture, they would say—as ignorant physicians are apt to say—that the patients had failed to observe some minute direction, something of immense importance in effecting a cure. But they themselves would be left in blank perplexity, covered with confusion and shame. They would say within themselves, "Here was He of whom Esaias spake, yet we gave no heed to Him. Who can heal lepers, but the Divine Physician, Jesus, the Healer, the Saviour, the Deliverer?"

It seems, then, that one error the nine lepers fell into was that of placing more dependence on outward rites and ordinances, than on the power of Him who spake the word through which they were healed. They thought there



was more virtue in shewing themselves to the priests, than in the Divine Stranger from whom they had received so great a boon. Is not that an error which we are too liable to fall into now? Do we not too often hope to find in outward ordinances all the grace and preparation for heaven which can only be found by seeking Jesus Himself, and casting ourselves at His feet? Are we not too apt to depend upon the ministers of religion to do that for us which each man must do for himself? And are we not continually receiving, like the nine lepers, temporal blessings, which we attribute to secondary causes, and not to God Himself? If we are raised up from sickness, we thank the physician for it, not God; if we are enjoying daily bread and daily comforts of every kind, we thank our own honest industry for it, not God. Ah! my friends, these common daily blessings ought not to be so received: they are all sent as messengers from God to you, to draw you to Him. Every good thing we have preaches the Gospel to us; every hour that we spend in the enjoyment of earthly things ought to teach us a lesson of the love and long-suffering of God. Temporal blessings are designed to bring us to Christ, in order that we may receive from Him spiritual blessings. But, alas! how often do those very earthly blessings

keep us away from Him ! How often do we, though offering thanks with our lips in His temple, as the nine lepers may have done, stop short of Jesus Himself ! And, dear brethren, let me here warn you that it is absolutely *fatal* to stop short of casting yourselves at Jesus' feet. No outward observances, nor religious appearance — nay, not even your own good wishes and intentions—will avail you anything, unless you have come face to face with your Saviour, and heard with a thankful heart, as the Samaritan leper heard, the words of joy, “Thy faith hath made thee whole.”

Herein was Christ's power shewn, that He spake the word, and the lepers were cleansed. Naaman's leprosy was not so healed by Elisha ; he must needs wash seven times in Jordan before he became clean ; but these ten were cleansed “as they went.”

One of them only, as we have seen, was so free from prejudices and notions of the all-sufficiency of the Jewish law, as to return to give thanks to God before the feet of Jesus, where He stood,—“and he was a Samaritan.” He was at least free from one superstition—that Jerusalem was the only place where men ought to worship, — which, perhaps, deterred the others. So it is that a religion which consists merely of outward forms and ceremonies,

of which the spirit has evaporated, performs no office but that of hindering the reception of a purer faith. Such a religion is like a tainted vessel: dry, and lacking moisture, it is not fitted to receive good liquor. The new wine must be poured into new bottles, in order that both may be preserved.

Let us now see what further lessons are to be drawn from our Lord's words^e, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And He said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."

First, as regards *faith*. We must believe that God is the Author of all good, not merely in the abstract, but in an especial and personal sense. Belief in a superintending Providence has always been a characteristic feature of the most eminent among God's servants. It was a remarkable feature in Abraham's character. The promise in which he trusted was not merely a general one; but God said, "In *thy* seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." In the Psalms of David we meet constantly with expressions of a strong belief in the immediate, special superintendence of God. "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my

^e Luke xvii. 17—19.

fortress; my God, in Him will I trust^f.” “Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil happen to thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways^g.” And Psalm cxxi. exhibits the same confidence in God’s protection extended to them that fear Him.

But, besides this faith in a superintending Providence, faith in the love and power of Christ our Saviour is needful for salvation: and Abraham and David possessed also *this* faith, and they trusted in a Saviour who was, as then, only *promised*. Our Lord said to the leper, “Thy faith hath made thee whole.” So, then, without faith his cure would not have been effected. So, too, we read on other occasions that Jesus addressed those whom He healed. And in the account of the cripple being healed by St. Paul at Lystra, it is said that, “Paul first stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet^h.” And it is clear that, if we doubt the power or will of God to do us good, we cannot receive the smallest spiritual benefit.

Another lesson that we learn is with respect

^f Ps. xci. 2.

^g Ibid. 9—11.

^h Acts xiv. 9.

to *gratitude*. We should not only feel our obligation, but seek to express it outwardly. It may be said that giving of thanks is not the whole of gratitude. And this is true. A feeling which expends itself in words is no very deep or real feeling. Frequently the persons who are most thankful for a kindness are least able to express their sense of it. More truth lies commonly beneath the downcast eye and faltering tongue, than beneath the bold aspect and voluble speech. Yet the generous mind will never rest till an attempt has been made to express the obligation which is felt. Nature is often truer than education. It suggests the best and most appropriate course of action. Now, if we reflect for a moment, we shall feel convinced that there is no way in which gratitude is more naturally and immediately expressed than in giving of thanks. Nay, the very expression of our gratitude heightens and intensifies the feeling. And those who are sincere in what they profess will shew their gratitude "not only with their lips, but in their lives." They will devote themselves heart and soul to the service of God, conscious of the insufficiency of their best efforts to make Him a fitting return for His mercies vouchsafed to them, yet diligent to do the little that is in their power to shew forth His praise. Their

language will be like that of David: "What reward shall I offer unto the Lord for all the benefits that He hath done unto me? I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows now unto the Lord in the presence of all His people¹." Unless we do so, we lose the chief benefit of those good things which God bestows upon us. They may add to our bodily comfort, but they do us no good spiritually.

It is a common remark, that the enjoyment of life and health is seldom, if ever, sufficiently prized by us till we see others wasted by sickness, or carried away by sudden death. Yet there are times when the uncertainty of all earthly blessings is brought prominently before us. When we read of thousands perishing in the assault or defence of a fortress, as at this time last year, and when we know that those who are dearest to us—husbands or fathers, or sons or brothers—are exposed to the same risk; when we hear of pestilence walking abroad at noonday, and filling the hospitals, and thinning the camp; when we see wasted forms return to the land that sent them forth in the full bloom of youth and health; when we look on the sunk cheek and the hollow eye, and mark the feeble step, and other unmistake-

¹ Ps. cxvi. 12—14.

able signs of premature decay,—we may perhaps be roused to pity, and our hearts touched with a feeling of devotion and thankfulness to God, who has spared us this year from the miseries of foreign warfare.

We are ready enough to express our gratitude to the brave men who have fought our battles in a foreign land. We are, no doubt, alive to the advantage of being able to pursue our daily business without fear of foreign invaders, or the unspeakable horrors of war at our own doors. But do we recognise in the continuance of our temporal blessings the goodwill of our God to draw us to Himself? And are we sufficiently grateful for being spared to meet together in the House of God? Do we sufficiently value the religious privileges which we enjoy? Is this house of prayer thronged with worshippers? Do those who come here join heart and soul in the prayers that are offered up?

Alas! no, my brethren. When I look at the many empty seats in this church; when I hear the feeble responses, and see the coldness and listlessness of many among you; when I listen, and listen in vain, for anything like a full, hearty burst of congregational singing,—I am reminded of certain persons who received a great and unlooked-for benefit long ago, in

consequence of their outward obedience to a command, yet did not acknowledge it; and of One who said, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."

Will you persist in this coldness of heart? Will you hang back, like the nine lepers, shrinking from the acknowledgment of your debt of gratitude to Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being? We are commanded to do all to the glory of God: how can we fulfil this command whilst we enjoy the good things provided for us? How, but by giving Him thanks? by offering up to God the sacrifice of a grateful heart, and praising Him for His goodness, and for the wonders that He doeth for the children of men? Thus shall we act in obedience to the words of inspiration uttered by the prophet and Psalmist of Israel,—“Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me^k ;” and we shall feel a double portion of pleasure in the enjoyment of the gifts which God’s bounty has provided for us, when we have consecrated ourselves and them to His service.

These reflections, which are fitting for us at all times, are especially so at the approach of

^k Ps. l. 23, Prayer-book Version.

harvest. During the late war it pleased God to bless the increase of our fields in a remarkable manner. Thus the pressure of that great burthen, war—for such war must always be upon all of us, especially on the poor,—was much lightened; and, although the price of bread was at times high, there was nothing like that degree of suffering which impoverished nations have to endure in order to support a war. For such a return of the fruits of the earth, at such a season, we owe our unfeigned thanks to God, “by whose knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew¹ ;” who sendeth the early and the latter rain, and giveth sunshine to ripen the fruits of the earth.

This year, when, by the blessing of God, peace has been re-established, when we are anxiously looking forward to the harvest, to crown the labours of the husbandman, and provide for our bodily wants and nourishment, it surely cannot be unsuitable to ask, whether we have used aright the blessings that we have enjoyed; whether we have been duly thankful to God, the Giver; and whether we have shewn forth His praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives?

According to the spirit in which we have received the good things which God has given

¹ Prov. iii. 20.

us, may we look hopefully or not for their continuance. It may be that we have been cold or ungrateful receivers of His bounty. If so, we must submit to be classed with the nine lepers, of whom our Lord asked, "Where are they?" Truly greater things have been done for you than for them. *They* were cleansed from legal defilement; for *you* a fountain has been opened to purge away your sin and uncleanness of heart; for *you* the blood of Jesus was shed, that you might not only be admitted into the congregation, but reconciled to God. You were engrafted at your baptism into the Church of Christ, which is His Body; you were then dedicated to Him, and the prayers of the congregation offered up for you, that you might receive the Holy Ghost, and that thenceforth you should not serve sin, but live unto God. Jesus Christ has since that been brought into closer and more immediate contact with as many of you as, by faith, have been partakers of His most blessed Body and Blood. But of these, alas! there are few among you. Let me ask you, at that heavenly feast where Christ presides, which He instituted on the same night that He was betrayed, saying, "Do this in remembrance of Me," and which is celebrated at regular, appointed seasons in this church,—
"Where are ye? Are ye of the number of

those who turn away, or of those who remain to give glory to God, who obey a dying Saviour's injunction, and who experience that comfort, that sense of being reconciled to God, of being one with Christ, of being accepted in Him, which those enjoy who, in humility, and faith, and love, receive that holy Sacrament?" Believe me, that it is with pain a minister says, when he looks upon the scanty attendance at the Lord's Table, "Were there not *ten* cleansed? but where are the nine?"

Is it possible that you mistake the nature of that sacred feast? Do you think you have received no invitation? Alas! brethren, the ministers of the Gospel have never ceased to urge you to be partakers of the marriage-feast of Christ and His Church. Why, then, will you not present yourselves? Is it that you have not a wedding-garment? Do you feel yourselves to be sinners, unable to put off the cloke of your sins? That is well. So far, then, you are fit to come to Christ; for He came to call sinners, not the righteous. Who were they who were invited to the feast? Were they the good, the wise, the healthy, the rich? No; but "the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind;" and the ministers of Christ are commanded to "go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My

house may be full," saith the Lord. It is for sinners, dear brethren, that the feast is prepared, which is the emblem of a crucified Saviour, and the foretaste of the heavenly feast prepared for those who love Him.

But do you feel unwilling to draw near to Christ, and to be arrayed in a robe of His righteousness? If so, there must be some strong reason for your unwillingness: either want of faith—nay, want even of the desire to believe—or want of love; and if so, how can you be in a state of reconciliation to God? for God is love: or a dislike to His service, because you would rather serve sin. What, then! will you receive the wages of sin? Know you what they are? They are this—death, in time and in eternity. Perhaps you do not like such wages. What then? Do you hope to serve one master and be paid by another,—to serve Mammon and be paid by God? Not so, my brethren; "no man can serve two masters." Besides, God pays no man his *wages*; we are all unprofitable servants, and can claim nothing at His hands. But what does He? Brethren, the same Scripture which tells us "the wages of sin is death," tells us also, "The gift of God is everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

How, then, may we obtain that gift? Our

blessed Lord says, "Ask, and ye shall receive." And again: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you." So, then, we must pray to God, through Jesus Christ, for the gift, the free gift, of eternal life. Moreover, the Gospel tells us that "this life is in His Son;" if so, and if we are "in Christ, and Christ in us," eternal life is in us,—its seeds are sown in our hearts, and will spring up, and bear fruit, now and for ever.

How, then, shall we be so closely united to Christ as to be *in* Him, and He in us? In St. John's Gospel, chap. vi., we have an answer to this question. In ver. 56 we are told, "He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." And contrariwise, (ver. 53,) "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." And in ver. 57, the doctrine of life being imparted to us is thus illustrated: "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."

Now the true Christian will be continually, and at all times, feeding spiritually and living upon the Body and Blood of Christ. His so doing is not confined to one outward act; as Jesus Himself said,—to avoid, as it would seem, His words being interpreted in an external and

material sense,—“It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life^m.” But inasmuch as no true Christian, who is thus living upon Christ, will fail to prove that he is doing so by partaking, at stated times, of the holy Sacrament, through which he receives by faith so great blessings; therefore it is not a light thing, brethren, that you should turn your backs on the Table of the Lord; but rather, in doing so, you pass a sentence of condemnation against yourselves. Ye say by your actions, “We have no life in us, and we will not have life in us.”

Are you bowed down by the weight of your sins? We are told, “The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, that all who believe in Him should be saved by the merits of His sacrifice, offered up upon the cross once for all.

Draw near to Him with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; plead with the Father in His Name for the saving of your souls. He has spoken the word,—“Go shew yourselves to the priest.” Draw nigh to Jesus, the great High-Priest of the whole human race, and offer the sacrifice which He has commanded for a

^m John vi. 63.

testimony of your faith. His mercy is not come to an end, that He should refuse to hearken ; nor His arm shortened, that He cannot save.

Behold ! He waits for you : while you are on the way, His power will be exerted to save you. The ten lepers were cleansed as they went to shew themselves to the Jewish high-priest, in obedience to the law of Moses ; and shall not *you* be cleansed as you go to the fountain of healing grace and mercy, in obedience to the command of Jesus ? “ for He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them ⁿ. ”

Finally, brethren, let us pray to our heavenly Father, that He may give us thankful and contented hearts, and dispose us in all things to give glory to Him ; that He may increase our faith, confirm our obedience, and make us to take delight in His service ; that we may be compassionate, and ready to do good to others, as glad distributors of His bounty ; that we may abstain, at this glad harvest-season, from all riot and excess, and from too great care for the things of this world ; that in all the prosperity with which it pleases Him to bless us, we may first seek

ⁿ Heb. vii. 25.

His heavenly kingdom, and those better things which He has prepared for us, through Christ; that, through the remainder of our mortal life, His guidance and fatherly protection may be ever with us, and that He may gather us, in His own good time, as rich sheaves in the great harvest of eternity.

Thus may we look for spiritual benefits, while we eat our bread with thanksgiving; and as we return from the house of God, may we have the answer of a good conscience before God, and the assurance of His Holy Spirit, conveyed to us in the words of Jesus addressed to the healed leper,—“Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.”

SERMON V.

ON INFLUENCING OTHERS.

JOHN i. 41, 42.

“He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.”

THIS is part of a simple and touching narrative of the calling of four disciples; and of these four it is said that Jesus found and called two, namely, Andrew and Philip; and the other two were called,—not *directly* by Jesus, but by the already made disciples—the one by his brother, the other by his friend. Andrew “first findeth his own brother Simon;” then, again^a, “Philip findeth Nathanael.” Thus it is in the kingdom of Christ. Some are called directly, without any human medium. But this is not so frequent as the being called through a fellow-creature. Thousands upon thousands of times that word must have come to pass in the history of Christian families—“He first findeth his own brother.” Sisters have called sisters to Christ, and brothers brothers; husbands

^a John i. 45.

wives, and wives husbands; and more than all, perhaps, parents have called their children; while not seldom children have brought their own parents to Christ.

This is a matter of daily experience; and yet Christians are apt to forget how useful they may be—how effectually they may serve God—by influencing others. The people of God are often too selfish in their religion, and forget the command, “Look not every one on his own things, but every one on the things of others also^b.” Too few, even of real Christians, know what it is constantly to intercede for others, or to travail in birth spiritually for the souls of their relatives and friends. Many a fellow-creature, it is to be feared, is lost eternally through the indolence and slowness of the people of God in responding to the calls of His Holy Spirit, which would move them to earnest intercession. A soul of some one dear to us may be at this moment trembling in the balance at a critical point, whence he may be turned this way or that, into the way that leads to life, or the way that leads to destruction; and all that he may require to solve the great question of his eternal future, and turn him to God, may be the prayers of a faithful heart. Is there none to pray for him? Oh!

^b Philipp. ii. 4.

let not the sense of duty in this matter grow weak; never, dear brethren, allow the faintest desire to pray for another's good to grow cold, until you have actually prayed for him; for you know not what mighty results may hang upon that first prayer. Praying once, you will pray again with an ever-increasing desire for his salvation. Your conduct towards him will be coloured by your prayers. You may warn or encourage him. He may begin to pray, and beginning, may persevere,—and a soul is saved!

We should not only pray for, but strive to influence, others by our example and conduct. We ought to try to remember continually that every human being we meet is immortal—is hastening to eternity—an eternity of happiness or woe; and this thought should influence all our conduct towards them. There have been Christians who have been enabled to live constantly in this state of awakened concern for others, and why should not we? why should not you? However small your gift of grace, it is your duty to communicate of that gift to others. If you do so, with your small measure of grace, you will fare as did the poor widow who gave of her small portion of meal and oil to the prophet, and whose reward for doing so was to have that little

cruise of oil and barrel of meal miraculously increased from day to day, till the famine ceased, and plenty was restored. We shall always find that doing good to others brings good to our own souls. It is a blessed thing to be much and often in the presence of Jesus, whatever it may be which brings us there. We ought to desire to go many errands to Him for our friends and neighbours, not only for our love to *them*, but for the mere pleasure of entering His presence-chamber, and holding converse with Him, which we can never do without bringing a blessing on ourselves, and going away the happier.

Turn to the last chapter in Job, and you will find that Job, when in great misery, and perhaps unable to feel any comfort in prayer for *himself*, was desired to pray for his three friends—the very friends who had been such miserable comforters to him; and it is written that God “turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends,”—and God gave Job double of what he had before. The soul of Job, you see, was greatly blest through prayer for his friends; and so it will ever be with us. We cannot seek for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on others, without ourselves coming under the refreshing influences of the heavenly shower.

Can we bear to think that any whom we love, whom it would distress us to see in any great pain or misery of an earthly kind, should be doomed to *eternal* misery? Can a mother with any affection, and any faith in the Bible's threats and promises, look upon her little ones around her, and not earnestly desire and labour for their salvation? Surely maternal affection might lead even a careless or irreligious mother to flee herself to Christ, if she has never done so before, in order that she may carry those little ones along with her. And oh! how great is a mother's influence! Through her teaching a child may learn, almost unconsciously, to love God and pray to Him. Through her example a child may be led to look to God in everything, for protection, for grace, and for the supply of every want. From her lips a child may learn portions of the Word of God, precious texts of Scripture, and hymns and spiritual songs, which set forth the goodness and wisdom of God, the providential care which He displays towards His children, and the tender love of Jesus, who suffers little children to be brought to Him, and blesses them. Such life-giving truths as these a child may learn upon its mother's knee; and feed in after years upon the treasures of Divine grace and mercy which in its early years were committed to memory.

And in like manner every Christian father of a family must earnestly desire that his children may be brought to a knowledge of the truth in Christ. It is written^c, "If any provide not for his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." That is primarily meant of natural sustenance; but how much more important is the salvation of the soul than the life of the body—religious instruction than the natural food! "Labour not," says Jesus, "for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life^d." That is the food with which every Christian father should supply his own house. And as every humane father or mother will take care that their family shall not have food which is poisonous in its quality,—such as would injure for life the constitution of their children, or destroy them in infancy,—so should they in a far higher degree beware of the kind of instructors they choose for their children.

The first enquiry should be as to the religious belief and character of a teacher. Whether, for instance, he reverences as inspired the Word of God, and whether the example of life which he sets is such as a sober-minded and

^c 1 Tim. v. 8.

^d John vi. 27.

rightly-judging parent would wish his son to follow. If not, let me ask you in all seriousness, whether any skill which children may acquire in certain kinds of knowledge, can ever counteract the poisonous influence which is day by day affecting their character. The influence may not be seen, but it is most surely at work. Can parents expect the blessing of God upon the progress their children make in knowledge, when they have been so sinfully careless about the influence exerted over them in that most important of all kinds of learning, religious learning? Can they wonder if their sons grow up scoffers and infidels?

I trust that none who hear me are guilty of the sin of placing their children under the guidance of a teacher who throws doubt upon the Word of God. But, short of this, there may be culpable neglect shewn in exposing children to evil without any counteracting influence. I would therefore appeal to you to ask yourselves whether you ever, by warnings or advice, endeavour to guard your children against the influence of others whose conduct you see is wrong; and furthermore, whether you try to influence others who are not dependent upon you; to stem the tide of the evil which is so strong even in this village; and to promote the good of your fellow-creatures?

Remember, you will have to answer to God at the last great day for your conduct in these matters. No man can say, as Cain said to God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" for we are every one of us in some degree our brother's keeper, and have a great responsibility to discharge in regard to him.

There is one especial subject to which I would draw your attention—a subject about which we cannot say, "I have nothing to do with it," — "I am free from blame in the matter,"—unless we have sincerely tried to act as God's servants should in such a matter. I mean the subject of the many idlers who are to be seen in this your village on the Lord's Day. It is a matter of observation to every stranger who enters this village, that the Sabbath-day seems to be a day of idleness to so many. As you passed along to-day on your way to this place of worship, you doubtless saw groups of men leaning against the walls of the houses, staring idly, and without any emotion of shame at the passers-by on their way to the house of God. Now to speak to you who are here, especially to you who regularly frequent the house of God, of profaning the Sabbath, and neglecting public worship, would be out of place. In outward act you are free of blame so far as *yourselves* are concerned; but bear with me,

my brethren, when I tell you that unless you have done *all that is in your power* to put down in the place you live in that habitual profanation of the Lord's Day, you are *not* free from guilt in the matter. You must say to yourselves, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." Is there any one of you here who has any acquaintance with any of those poor listless human beings who are thus sinning against God and their own souls? Do you know any one of them? and if so, have you ever spoken to him on the subject? Have you ever thought seriously of his sin and danger, or used your influence in any way whatever to turn him from it? If not, then indeed you are not free from blame in the matter. If you have never thought what you might do, think of it now. Think of the state of those who are deliberately and openly breaking God's commandments. They are not merely guilty of neglecting a commandment of God, but they are in the way of falling into every kind of sin. The confession of many a criminal who has been brought before his judge has shewn that his career of crime began with the sin of breaking the Sabbath. What do you suppose are the thoughts and words which are employing those idlers who are still, probably, at this very time lounging about the streets? Are they think-

ing or speaking of God, think you, or of anything good? Alas! no.

“Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do;”

and still more does Satan fill idle and vacant *hearts* with mischief. One idle word leads to another; from idle words they pass on to impure words, to profane words. Satan is busy among them, making them ready for any evil, filling their minds with impurity and folly, and preparing the way for deeds of shame and sin. This sacred day is not to them the Lord's Day, but the devil's day—the day on which they actually court the influences of the wicked one by their idleness and contempt of God. They are accumulating a terrible load of guilt upon their heads from Sunday to Sunday, and hardening their hearts wilfully against all good influences.

Did they go to any place of worship whatever at any time of this day, their case would be more hopeful. A blessing will attend the man who ever joins himself with others to meet together for prayer and praise, and hearing the Word of God. He may class himself among a set of Christians differing from ourselves in many things, and therefore refuse to worship in this place. Let him do so, so long as he seeks and worships God at all. It is not of

such that I speak. I speak now of those who make no such excuse, and who live as if there were no God, no heaven, no hell; and as if they had no souls to save. Can you pass them by again without feeling for their state? Can you refrain from raising your heart silently to Almighty God, as you meet these desecrators of His holy Day, to implore Him that He may turn their hearts, and correct them while yet there is hope? Remember the words, "He first findeth his own brother Simon,"—"and he brought him to Jesus." What a blessed thing it would be to bring a fellow-creature to Jesus! There is great encouragement to us to try to do so. St. James says, "Brethren, if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins^e."

Consider, I beseech you, the honour and happiness of being engaged in such a service. As soon as a man becomes a follower of Christ, he has a new work to do. He is introduced to a new honour and responsibility which he did not know of before. He is henceforth to be a steward, faithfully communicating to others. It is said to him, "Freely thou hast received,

^e James v. 19, 20.

freely give." His feet are "shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace;" and though he may not be a professed minister of that Gospel, though he may be obscure and in a subordinate rank, yet he is henceforth to be a "preacher of righteousness," a fellow-worker with God, a companion of apostles and teachers in the blessed work of bringing souls to Christ. How great an honour is this, brethren; and yet how few there are that covet it! What is the reason? Why are there so few who care for the souls of their fellow-men? My brethren, it is because there are so few that are awakened to any concern about their own souls. A man must know his own danger before he will cry out and give the alarm to others. He must believe in the Saviour, and follow Him, like Andrew, before he can take his brother by the hand and say, "We have found the Messiah," and lead him to Jesus.

But there are many of those who are not without heartfelt religion, who are not yet fully alive to the great honour and responsibility to which they are called. They are content to have just so much religion as will suffice for themselves. They think each person's salvation is his own concern; and their own inward life—their ups and downs, their doubts and fears—engage their whole atten-

tion, and leave them very little freedom or warmth of soul to bestow upon their fellow-creatures.

The only cure for this coldness towards others is for us to know more of the *love of Christ*. We cannot truly love our fellow-creatures unless we see and know the transcending love of God in Christ. When we are enlightened to behold the attitude of Christ towards lost mankind; when the Spirit takes of His heart's love for sinners, and shews it to us; and when we have ourselves been subdued and overcome by that love—then it is, and not till then, that we can burn with a holy zeal for the salvation of others; only then shall we with love and boldness, both by example and advice, beseech our friends to be reconciled to God.

If a poor man, an affectionate member of a family, were to be introduced to the palace of a king, and told that that king was henceforth his friend, and would raise him from his low estate of poverty and want to a share of all the plenty and glory of the kingly palace,—do you think the person so enriched could return and look upon his own beloved ones, his own wife and children and brethren, living in a mean dwelling, perishing with hunger and nakedness, feeding upon the husks which are the food of swine,—do you think that he

could look upon them without a feeling of deep yearning compassion? And supposing that the king had promised that the poor man's friends should all be partakers with him of the good things of the palace, provided he could persuade them to come and put in their claim,—do you think he would not at once proclaim to his starving friends what riches they were invited to, and beseech them to forget their misery and poverty, and come with him?

Such a king is the Lord Jesus. The soul that has been introduced to Him is rich indeed. He wonders at his own vast treasures, the treasures he possesses in Christ; for in Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," in Him "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" and the soul which has been made rich by the possession of Christ, and sees the inheritance laid up in store for him, as well as the *present* possession, cannot look upon the poverty of those who know not Christ without the deepest sorrow and pity. He has tasted of the only true happiness there is, and he longs that others should taste it too. He sees his friends seeking happiness in a thousand other ways,—perhaps not unlawful ways, yet ways which of themselves, and without Christ, will never

lead to true and lasting happiness; and his language is, "Oh! taste and see that the Lord is gracious." He invites all by his prayers and his outward life to the feast of good things prepared by Him, whose invitation is, "Eat, O friends — drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved ^f!"

Christ says, "Whosoever believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water ^g." Before the living water can flow *out* of a man, it must first have flowed *into* him. He cannot spiritually water others till he himself has been watered by the Holy Spirit from on high. Therefore Christ said that this stream, this living influence, can only flow to others out of him who believes on Jesus—who believes with his whole heart, who accepts Jesus as his Saviour, and loves Him. A divine virtue flows from the Lord Jesus into every one who touches Him in faith,—a virtue which makes his sins, before like scarlet, "as white as snow," — a virtue which purifies his heart, and makes him hate sin, and hunger and thirst after righteousness. This heavenly virtue passes through him to others, so that all who come in his way may feel its purifying influence. He who possesses it becomes part of "the salt of the earth," which preserves the surrounding mass from corrup-

^f Cant. v. 1.

^g John vii. 38.

tion. He becomes like a piece of leaven, secretly leavening those with whom he comes in contact.

Some of you may have experienced what a blessing it is to be brought under the influence of a person who habitually lives very near to Christ, whose heart beats in harmony with the infinite heart of God, harbouring no other feeling than *love*, breathing forth "peace on earth and good-will toward men." You may have seen something of the loveliness of Christ reflected in His saints, and you may have thought such excellence much to be desired, but hard to attain to. Recall that image now again to your memories, dwell upon its beauty, impress it upon your minds, and believe that such excellence is attainable by *you*. If you are languid and halting, let the example of the saints who have gone before stimulate you to more vigorous efforts. The prize of the high calling of Jesus is open to all; press forward and seize it. Press forward, and urge others to run with you in the same race. All who run well, and persevere to the end, will be rewarded. A peculiar glory awaits those whose holiness attracts others to the narrow way. "He that winneth souls is wise^h;" and "they that be wise shall shine as the light, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and everⁱ."

^h Prov. xi. 30.

ⁱ Dan. xii. 3.

But in order to win many to righteousness, it is needful to press on to the attainment of great likeness to Christ. If we are contented with low attainments we may creep into heaven ourselves, but we shall not bring others there, nor have an "abundant entrance" ministered unto us. The more likeness we have to Christ, the more attractive power shall we have over others.

Lastly, be assured, brethren, that there never was any one who, having drunk a deep draught of the love of Christ,—the water of life,—did not immediately desire to communicate it to others. When the love of God is revealed to the soul's vision, love to God and man becomes the ruling principle and engrossing passion of that heaven-born soul. He will leave other business to proclaim Christ to men, or find the means of proclaiming Christ in the midst of it; as the woman of Samaria, who had come to draw water, forgot her errand to the well when she had found Christ, and "left her water-pot," which would have checked her speed, and ran to the city, and told all the men of the city, "Come, see a man who told me all that ever I did: is not this the Christ^k?" She, a sinner, and a *great* sinner, became at once a happy and honoured missionary. What a won-

^k John iv. 28, sq.

drous change is wrought in that person who has "found the Christ!" Of this woman, this poor sinner, it might now be said, as she ran to proclaim Christ in the city—"How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things."

To you who have never known Christ I would now say, Oh! delay not to acquaint yourselves with this double joy,—the joy of tasting for yourself the love of Christ, and the joy of proclaiming Him to others. The latter joy is one in which the angels delighted to share, when they descended on Bethlehem's plains by night, bringing in that glorious message to our favoured earth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.—Fear not, for to-day is born to you in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord¹."

With those who know not this divine affection, selfishness is sure to strengthen as they increase in years; while with those who possess it, it becomes more and more deep and abiding. It does not wear out with the ardour of youth, but burns with an ever-increasing and purer fire until death; and even then, in the weakness of all other affections, when the sight is dim, and the ear is closed to the sounds

¹ Luke ii. 14, 11.

of this world, love shall prevail, and be the Christian's ruling passion in the hour of death.

I will conclude by setting before you the picture of a dying man, whose two ruling principles through life had been love to God and love to man:—For many weeks before his death, Adolphe Monod lay in a state of complete powerlessness and exhaustion, so that his wasted body, as he lay on his bed, resembled a corpse rather than a living being. At such times all consciousness appeared to forsake him; yet the great motive which ruled his heart in life was strong in death: so intense was his desire to bring souls to God, that he would even then, at times, cause his room to be filled with his friends and acquaintance, and, beginning feebly to speak to them of the things which concerned their peace, life and colour would return to his face, his languid eye would rekindle, and finally, as by supernatural strength, he would raise himself in his bed, and pour forth the most urgent appeals with the most persuasive eloquence. Then it might be said of him, as of Stephen, “They saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.” The last tones of his voice, as he went down into the valley of the shadow of death, proclaimed the truth of which his life had been a witness, that “God is love.” May you be enabled, with your lips

and in your lives, beloved brethren, to proclaim the same truth; and may your own families be the first to learn it from you. The dying Christian of whom I have just told you—that bright evening star of Protestant France—called his own friends around his bedside; Andrew first found his own brother Simon, and “brought him to Christ.” Take for your example the first-called of the apostles. If you have found the Messias, let not a day pass before you have made known to those whom you are most bound to love, your precious discovery. Take them with you to Jesus: if they know not the way, pray that you may have grace given you to shew them how to come to Him. And may you have the unspeakable comfort of seeing all whom you most love on earth bound in an indissoluble bond of love to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, that He might be able to present us faultless before the throne of God, and receive us into the unfading glories of His heavenly kingdom; unto which may He, of His infinite mercy, vouchsafe to bring us; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, and glory, and majesty, world without end. Amen.

A FAREWELL SERMON.

JUDE 20, 21.

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

THESE words were addressed by Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to the Church of Christ. After warning believers of certain false teachers who had crept into the Christian Church, he addresses them—
“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God.”

The word “but” denotes the contrast which the Apostle draws between “them that are sanctified^a,” and the ungodly men whose conduct he denounces in the earlier part of the Epistle.

He addresses the brethren as “beloved,” because they are in Christ, and Christ is the beloved—loved of God, and loved of all men

^a ver. 1.

who believe in Him. He calls them beloved, because they are members of Christ's Church, which He has espoused, and honoured with His love.

You, too, are beloved, if you believe in Christ. You are beloved, if you are true and living members of the Church of Christ; having been brought, not merely into involuntary and unconscious contact with Him at your baptism, when you were dedicated to His service, but into a voluntary and conscious relation to Him, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, who can change the desires of the heart, and fill you with the love of God, and enable you to offer unto Him acceptable service, in proof of your love. Hence it is the privilege of those who minister to you in spiritual things to address you as beloved — the beloved of Christ.

Moreover, the relation between a minister and his flock is one of love. If he be a faithful minister of the new covenant of mercy and love, he must be filled with love towards all whom Christ died to save. This love must be the ruling motive of his life. He must account it at all times a most blessed privilege to be allowed to draw water from the wells of salvation, and to give freely of it to the flock of Christ. Without this love he can

neither exhort, nor reprove, neither feed Christ's sheep, nor watch and pray for them, as he ought. With it, he finds delight in visiting the humble cottage, and conversing with its inmates. Where he might shrink from intruding himself, the love of Christ constrains him to go, and gives to his daily work a dignity and contentment that no other work possesses.

I. The Apostle addresses the Christian world as men who have for their part a work to do: "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost," indicates a constant daily work. The Church of Christ is often represented as an edifice, compacted of living stones, namely, individual believers. And the same figure is transferred from the Church collectively to its several members individually; so that each Christian is regarded as a sacred edifice or temple, and called upon to build himself up.

I have recently explained^b to you how Jesus Christ is the foundation not only of His Church, but also of each believer in Him. It will suggest itself, therefore, to all of you that the Apostle Jude, in bidding Christian believers build themselves up, must mean them to take Christ as their foundation. For no building

^b In a Sermon on 1 Cor. iii. 11,—“Other foundation can no man lay,” &c.

can stand without a foundation, and “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

It is not enough that your foundation should be firm ; you must *build* upon it. No one can venture to stand still in his Christian course. You are required to “work while it is called day, before the night cometh, when no man can work.” The grace of God is not supplied to those who seek not to *grow* in grace. Growth, as I have before pointed out^c to you, is an indispensable proof of life : and the true servant of Christ will endeavour to give this proof that he is alive unto God. He will give all diligence to “add to his faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity^d.” By this means he will strive to make his calling and election sure. Thus will he build himself up in his most holy faith.

As Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church, and each believer’s hope, so faith in Him must be the foundation of all our religion. You may remember that in the two first discourses which I addressed to you last month, I

^c In a Sermon on Heb. iv. 12,—“The Word of God is quick and powerful,” &c.

^d 2 Pet. i. 5—7.

endeavoured to set before you "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," as the great object of our faith, and centre of our knowledge; and to explain the doctrine of the Cross—that is, of the redemption of all mankind, who believe in Christ crucified, from the curse of sin. Let me now add a few words on the same subject.

Oh! that the ministers of the Gospel could speak with the tongues of angels about the cross of Christ, so as to move the hard, cold hearts of men. Oh! that we could shew in our preaching and in our lives some of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and exhibit the attractiveness of the Gospel. Oh! that we could so lift up Christ as that He should draw all men unto Him. Alas! our powers are feeble, and were they increased tenfold, the subject would far transcend them. But, blessed be God, each of you can ascertain for himself what is the nature of that love which was manifested on Calvary, when the Incarnate Son of God offered Himself up for the sins of the world. Each of you can search the Scriptures—can go daily to the fountain of living waters, and draw for yourselves. You need not that any human witness should testify to you of the manner of that love which the Father hath shewed us. The Word of God still speaks

to you—still says, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.” Behold Him continually, and see your own sins laid upon Him, until you are for ever freed from the burden of guilt, and can rejoice in the perfect liberty of the children of God,—a liberty which springs from their being “now no condemnation to them that believe.”

It is impossible to fix our eyes constantly on the cross without being drawn by it, and changed by it. By no surer means can we “build ourselves up in our most holy faith.” Those who have not laid the foundation must do so before they can “build up.” Those who have built up themselves and others, will still resort constantly to Him who is their foundation. In the Christian edifice, the foundation is the same as the topmost stone. We must begin believing, and end believing. From first to last we must go to the crucified Jesus, for He is both “the Author and the Finisher of our faith.” He is “the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” The work of our salvation is all of grace from beginning to end, and in Christ alone is the grace to be found whereby the building can be either begun or completed. Is our faith small? “A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench,” but support and

cherish them even unto the day when the topmost stone shall be brought forth with shoutings of triumph, crying, "Grace, grace unto it^e." Faith, however, there must be—a decided and conscious act of faith, as the beginning of our Christian course. As well might the builder expect to complete his building, and ensure it against mishaps, without having laid any foundation, as the Christian to be built up as a lively temple in the service of Christ without a secure foundation of faith in Him.

Why, then, do any delay—not knowing whether they really have a saving faith in Christ, or not? If you have advanced so far as to feel and acknowledge yourselves to be lost sinners, what ought you to do next? Surely, without delay, to wrestle with God until He gives you the *power* to exercise a saving faith in Jesus, knowing that delay is dangerous, forasmuch as without that faith you are not safe one moment, however good your resolutions or desires may be. *Almost* a Christian will not do; it must be *altogether*. What a simple thing is a saving faith! and yet how many pause short of the possession of it! What is it, but a conscious, simple, deliberate casting off of the burden of our sins—that fearful load

^e Zech. iv. 7.

which has power to crush us down to hell—upon Jesus? What is it, but the saying to Him, “Lord, I am lost—I cannot save myself; but because Thou hast promised to save me, I believe that Thou wilt. I therefore humbly claim and take to myself Thy offered forgiveness. I believe (because Thou commandest me to believe) that I, even I, am free from guilt before Thee; a reconciled, adopted, beloved child; not a child to-day, and a stranger to-morrow, but a child for ever. Inasmuch as Thy Word declares that he that believeth is justified from all things, I believe that I, even I, am justified for ever in Thy sight; and not only forgiven and justified, but in a measure sanctified; for inasmuch as Thou hast promised to give to all that believe a power within to become in heart and in life the sons of God, I here believe Thy promise, and accept the gift of *new life* within me.”

Would not such a simple act of faith, transacted solemnly between God and our own souls daily, until we feel the assurance of its acceptance, be a wonderful means of grace, beloved brethren?

Without this *closing* with Christ, this actual deed of ours, this taking Him at His word, we are not *safe*, and cannot be holy. Our faith is a “holy faith,” because the possession of it begins

at once to produce holiness in us. It is a faith which "purifies the heart," and "works by love." Oh! let not a day pass till you possess it. It is yours and mine *this moment*, if we will. Let us not be uncertain whether we have it or not. What! can we forget the consequences that the having it or not having it involve? Possessing it, we are safe for time and eternity; without it, we are still under condemnation—under the crushing, heavy curse of sin not forgiven.

In a recent discourse I insisted on the need of a change of heart. Here it is, my brethren. It is attained by a simple thing—by faith in the Son of God. Rest not, oh! rest not till you can say with St. Paul, "I *know* in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him."

How different is such a faith from a superstitious faith! from a faith which rests on outward acts or observances; or on a vague idea of the mercy of God, or on the intercession of other mediators with God than Christ! A faith which is not based on the revelation which God has given us of the way of reconciliation with Him, is not a holy faith. Rather, as it raises mere human inventions to the level of divine revelation, and exalts the creature to the dignity of the Creator, who is the one fit

object of prayer, it is an unholy faith. It is like the faith of the idolatrous worshippers of Baal, who cried to their idol from morning till evening, Oh ! Baal, hear us !

II. The Apostle exhorts the Church of Christ to an especial exercise of faith—"prayer in the Holy Ghost." The expression "in the Holy Ghost" may be used as it is in the book of Revelation, where we read that St. John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day,"—carried, that is, in thought and aspiration, from earth to heaven, realizing unseen things more intensely than the things that are seen : and as it is in Romans viii. 9, where the Apostle Paul draws a contrast between being "in the Spirit" and "in the flesh,"—"Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." And at no time can a man be said more truly to be in the Spirit, than when he is holding spiritual communion with God.

But it is more probable that "in the Holy Ghost" means "by," or "with the assistance of, the Holy Ghost;" as we read^f, that "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." All fervent and effectual prayer must be "in the Holy

^f Rom. viii. 26.

Ghost ;” for we need His powerful agency to raise our thoughts to God, and His inspiration to teach us both what we should pray for, and how we should pray for it.

Prayer is necessary to the Christian as a means of communication with God, and as the only way of expressing our wants to Him. It is also the Christian’s greatest privilege ; for as often as we pray in the Holy Ghost, we are admitted into the audience-chamber of the King of all the universe. Perseverance in prayer is an unfailling test of our earnestness about our salvation ; for no one would so impose upon himself as to spend many hours weekly, and a portion of every day, in praying to God about a matter in which he felt no concern, and where his only witness was God. Even if frequent use is made of public prayer, private prayer is sure to be neglected by the careless and the lukewarm.

There are many ways of praying, just as there are many ways of reading the Bible,—varying in sincerity and warmth from the mere lip-service which the formalist offers up without any realization of God’s presence, to the fervent outpouring of the heart that will hardly wait for words in its eagerness to unburden itself before the throne of God, and cast all its care upon Him.

Both public and private prayer ought to have one characteristic—that of heartiness—otherwise they can lead to no result but the hardening of the heart in unbelief. Whatever fervour solitary prayer may have, united prayer—especially about an object of common interest—is likely to have more. Great blessings are promised in Scripture to those who unite in prayer. Not only do we find the general advantages of union set forth, as in Ecclesiastes—“Two are better than one,” and “a threefold cord is not quickly broken^g ;” but our Lord makes the special promises,—“where two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that ye shall ask, it shall be done for you by My Father which is in heaven^h ;” and, “where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of themⁱ .”

These promises ought to encourage those who care for souls to unite in prayer for the parish and neighbourhood in which they live. The more earnest among us are too apt to waste our breath in regrets about the want of true religion around us—the breath which would be better spent in fervent intercession for our fellow-sinners. Instead of praying for

^g Eccl. iv. 9, 12.

^h Matt. xviii. 19.

ⁱ Ibid. 20.

our ministers, we are too much inclined to criticise them, forgetting that the minister is as dependent on his people, as his people on him, and that a praying people make a faithful minister. May you have grace given you to take the more charitable and more Christian course; and may you experience what wonderful results wait upon faithful, persevering prayer offered up for your parish and neighbourhood. Let me earnestly call upon all true and hearty Christians of this congregation to persevere in seeking the reviving showers of grace for the souls of their friends and neighbours. Do not be discouraged if your prayers remain unanswered at first; but do as Elijah did, when he prayed for rain. Six times he prayed without success, but after the seventh time his servant saw the "little cloud" arise which foretold a plentiful shower. So do you go again and again, till you see a little cloud. Even if it be no bigger than a man's hand, who knows but that a fertilizing shower will make glad the neighbourhood in which you dwell, and relieve its spiritual barrenness?

Oh! what joy this will be to you who have been grieved at seeing the godless lives so many in this place lead. How small a proportion of the population of this parish ever come with-

in the walls of this church, or even meet anywhere to pray! We may look around Sunday after Sunday, and ask, "Where are they?" Scattered, doubtless, about the highways and hedges. Of these it may be asked, as of the dry bones in the vision of Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones live?" dry, disjointed, bleaching bones heaped together in the valley of death! Our doubting hearts reply, as did the prophet, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." But the word sounds again "Come, O Spirit of the Lord, breathe upon these slain, and they shall live." Yes, verily, and they did live. Bone to bone they came together; flesh and sinews came upon them, and life came unto them, and they "stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army^k."

If such a work is ever to be wrought among the dry elements around you, how is it to be accomplished?

Dear brethren, I believe the beginning of it must be the earnest and united prayer of a few believing and loving souls among you. My sojourn with you has been short, but it has been long enough to bring me to the knowledge that there are a few among you who care for the souls of your fellow-men, and wish well to the Lord's Zion. In bidding you fare-

^k Ezek. xxxvii. 1—10.

well to-day, suffer me to leave with you a parting injunction. That injunction is, that you will pray regularly and constantly for the souls in this place; and that you will rest upon the promises of God in the matter, and look for an answer. He has promised that He will pour floods of water on the dry ground, and that the spiritual wilderness shall "blossom as the rose." And He who has promised is both able and willing to perform. Pray also for your appointed ministers, that "utterance may be given to them that they may open their mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel¹."

III. The Apostle exhorts you, and all believers, to "keep yourselves in the love of God." He does not call upon those whom he addresses to love the Lord their God, as a state of mind and affections to which they have not attained, but to *keep themselves* in the love of God. He wrote to men and women who had received the faith once delivered to the saints—and it was impossible for any who had so received it not to love God. Surely I may call upon some of *you* to keep yourselves in His love; not as though you received a new commandment, but an old, familiar one, of which you only need to be reminded.

¹ Ephes. vi. 19.

What is the meaning of the expression “the love of God?” It is twofold. It embraces love *of* God and love *to* God—His love to us, and our love to Him. The two are so connected, that our love to Him cannot exist without a conviction of His love to us. But His love to us existed long before we gave Him any return. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us^m.” “God commended His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for usⁿ.” How shall we keep ourselves in His love? If we have in any degree experienced the blessing of feeling assured that God loves us—if we have attained to any measure of grace, we shall be careful not to forfeit it. 1st. We shall meditate on the loving-kindness of God, which has been shewn in our creation, preservation, and above all, in our redemption by Jesus Christ. 2ndly. We shall endeavour to make Him the only return we can for His love—namely, by loving Him in return, and by affording the proof of love which our Saviour required from His disciples, saying, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.” 3rdly. As the corruption of our fallen nature hinders our doing the will of God, we shall seek, by prayer the aid of the Holy Spirit, beseeching Him to take away our

^m 1 John iv. 10.

ⁿ Rom. v. 8.

heart of stone, and give us a heart of flesh, to change our affections, and fix them on things above; that we may love God with all our heart and mind, and that we may hate sin, and resist our spiritual enemy, who would fain lead us into sin, that he might alienate our hearts from God. 4thly. We shall try, above all things, to realize by faith the exceeding love of God, as displayed to us personally—to look upon Him as our reconciled Father, and on ourselves as His children—cleansed from all our sins, and accepted in the Beloved. Unless we are able to appropriate to ourselves these unspeakable blessings, we cannot be said to be “rooted and grounded in love,” or “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, that” we may “be filled with all the fulness of God.”

IV. So try to “keep yourselves, beloved, in the love of God,” “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” After prescribing what should be your daily and hourly employment in this present time, the Apostle bids you reach forward to the future—“looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is, indeed, the Christian's best prospect, as we read in the Epistle of Paul to Titus: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us^p." We owe, therefore, all our hopes of salvation to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us enquire, what is His mercy, from which we hope such great things?

The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, to which you are exhorted to look, is, that in the day of judgment, when you shall be raised from the dead to give an account of the deeds which you have done; when one of two sentences awaits you—either a sentence of acquittal, or a sentence of condemnation—He will acknowledge you as His—as redeemed by Him, and purified from sin through His most precious blood; and that He will present you faultless before the throne of God, clothed in His righteousness, and fitted for the society of saints and angels,—above all, fit for the service of God; endowed with new powers, pure and holy in will, and thoughts, and affections; deemed worthy, for Christ's sake, to hymn the praises of the Almighty, and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb for ever and ever.

^p Titus iii. 5.

“Unto eternal life!” What a stupendous idea is eternity! One day in the courts of the Lord’s house—in the heavenly Jerusalem, would be more than an equivalent for all the suffering, and doubts, and fears that we have endured on earth. All these would be forgotten, when once we had seen the glory of the Lord, and had been admitted into His presence. Then we might acquiesce in a sentence that we should be no more, and that we should pass into nothingness. But our heavenly Father’s mercies are not so limited. To you who believe in Him, and fear Him, and love Him, He offers—not a day, but an eternity of bliss.

On the other hand, to those who reject His freely offered mercy He reserves in store, not one day’s exquisite pain, but an eternity of woe—misery upon misery, pain upon pain, torment upon torment. On this point Scripture does not permit us to doubt. We nowhere find a limited period of suffering spoken of for those who are condemned to hell-fire, but everywhere an eternity of punishment.

This being the case, beloved brethren, we shall all of us do well to ask ourselves, again and again, the question, whether we are in the way which leads to eternal life, and not in the way which leads to eternal punishment. If we are

to inherit eternal life, it is clear that we must be *in Christ*, for He is *the Life*.

This leads to a second question: How must we be *in Christ*? To be *in Christ* at the last great day, it is necessary that we should have received Him by faith, that we should have thrown ourselves upon Him, that we should have made Him our Master, our Friend and Saviour; that we should have died in His faith, and have been partakers of His resurrection.

Brethren, let me ask you most solemnly, as immortal beings, destined to an eternity of happiness or misery,—are you in Christ *now*, in such a way that you may look forward with a reasonable hope to be in Him at the day of His appearing to judge the earth?

What grounds have you to look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not rather for His wrath and vengeance?

Have you been merciful, that you hope to obtain mercy? Have you been pure in heart, that you hope to see God? Have you been peacemakers, that you should be called the children of God? Have you hungered and thirsted after righteousness, that you should be filled? Have you taken Jesus Christ for the foundation of your faith, and have you built upon Him? Have you continued “instant in prayer,” praying in the Holy Ghost? Have

you kept yourselves, and are you resolved to keep yourselves, in the love of God? Have you avoided all evil,—evil associates, evil occupations, evil thoughts,—all that would separate you from the love of God? Have you been earnest about the great work of your salvation? or have you been earnest about your week-day work, and cold and indifferent about the work of prayer and praise on the day which is set apart for the service of God? Have you abounded in love to the brethren? Have you chosen as your companions those in whom the love of God is? or have you chosen as the world chooses,—those who have the perishable gifts of beauty, or wit, or intellect, or knowledge, or worldly wisdom, or riches? Have you eagerly sought on earth for all who resemble, even in the faintest degree, your Master which is in heaven? Have you delighted in their conversation? Have you attempted to realize here on earth the communion of saints, in which you express your belief? Is your life here in any way a preparation for that which you hope to enter into? If not, how can you expect to find heaven the abode of joy and bliss which revelation teaches us it is? Why! if you have lived here below as if earth were your home, it must follow that in heaven you would find yourselves strangers. Oh! delay not, I beseech

you, to question your own hearts as to the grounds of your hope. And rest not, till your hearts return a decided and a true answer,—
“Our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved *us*, and gave Himself for *us*.”

Lastly, if you are really in Christ, you will bring to every work in which you engage a Christian, that is, a Christ-like, temper. There will be no more divisions among you, no jealousies, no heart-burnings, nothing of a sectarian nor censorious spirit, but the spirit of love, and peace, and holy joy.

This is the spirit in which you should approach the Table of the Lord, to which you are this day invited. Before you draw nigh to that feast of love you should lay aside all uncharitable and proud thoughts, and resolve henceforth to live peaceably with all men. Remember, in the prayers which you offer up at the throne of grace, after you have obeyed your Master's dying injunctions, and spiritually partaken of His Body and Blood, the promises which God has made to those who unite in prayer. May His Holy Spirit be with you, and dispose you to serious recollection of your own wants, and loving intercession for the souls of your brethren.

Above all, may He who has called you and redeemed you be present to each of you this

day. May each of you realize, as you never before have realized, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the surpassing love of Christ. And may you leave the Lord's Table strengthened and refreshed in spirit, renewed in grace and in the power of the Holy Ghost, and with the blessed assurance that you have in Christ Jesus present pardon for all your sins, and the promise of eternal life in the presence of the Father.

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen ^a.”

^a Jude 24, 25.

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