

The Death of Jesus Christ:

What are its uses and applications, by the Spirit, in the Scriptures?

G. V. Wigram.

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Part 1.

The death of the Lord was,

1, the expression of Israel's rejection of Him; and His way of getting by resurrection upon the new ground proper to the church. (Matt. 16: 21.)

2, As connected with the resurrection, it was His secret to the disciples till He took the ground proper to them as the church. (Matt. 17: 9.)

3, It was *man's* act — the Gentiles (Mark 10: 34; Luke 18: 33) did it, though the Jews might have first sought it: while His opening of it to His followers was the proof of His love to them. (Matt. 17: 22.)

4, Yea, of His God-like care and sympathy, knowing the while their wretched selfishness. (Matt. 20: 17-19.)

5, The desire of it was mentioned by Him as the proof of the nation Israel's rejection of Him. (Matt. 28: 38.)

6, But it was not the desire of the *people* only, but the planned counsel of the chief office-bearers both in religion and in state. (Matt. 26: 3, 4.)

7, In the anticipation of what was before Him, His soul was sorrowful even unto death. (Ver. 38.)

8, It was the deep, settled, unwavering desire of the heads of the Government, ecclesiastical and political. (Matt. 27: 1.)

9, Though they could find no plea in truth, nor even by false witnesses establish a fair appearance of a plea, but were obliged to make the Lord's grace and truth (that He was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed) the plea for His death. (Mark 14: 55-65.)

10, Against which the judge three times protested, inasmuch as both himself and Herod had found no fault in Him. (Luke 23: 13-22; John 19: 7.)

11, Nevertheless it is hurried to a close, though shown to be under the over-ruling hand of God in that the circumstances were predicted in prophecy, (Luke 23: 32.)

12, Yet He died not by the death of the cross, though He died upon the cross: His suffering was

cut short before the wanted time; for this, among other reasons that the scripture might be fulfilled, "not a bone of him shall be broken." (Mark 15: 44; John 19: 33.)

13, Their dread of its being reported He had obtained the victory over the grave and had risen leads them to protect the place where His body is laid by means which become unquestionable evidence of his resurrection. (Matt. 28: 64.)

14, Yet His victory over death and the grave by resurrection is fully evidenced: and that not only by their own guards. but by the disciples, and the angels also by whom it was first communicated to them. (Matt. 28: 7; Luke 24: 5.)

15, Though these disciples had heard, like many now, in vain the Lord's instruction concerning what was coming upon Him. (Luke 24: 20; John 20: 9.)

1. *The death of the Lord was the expression of Israel's rejection of Him, and His way of getting, by resurrection, upon that new ground proper to the church* — "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, *and be killed*, and be raised again the third day." (Matt. 16: 21.)

From WHAT time? From the time that, having experimentally discovered that the Jews were prepared to reject their Messiah, He had for the *first* time declared that "The knowledge of Himself as the Son of the living God, should become the foundation of a new kingdom, to be called the church." (Read vers. 16-20.) *His being killed*, therefore, is here to be looked at not only as in itself (as ver. 21) the expression of Jerusalem's rejection of Him, and of the hatred entertained against Him by false professors of that day; but also as connected with the church in the resurrection; for it was only by resurrection that Jesus got into a place where He could gather Jew and Gentile unto Him, as now gathered in the church.*

**'The Church,'* as spoken of here, does not mean simply "God's true people looked at as individuals." We know that God has always had true worshippers in the world — for there have always been on earth, since the fall, some that feared and loved God, but they were not called to be united visibly together. Half a dozen Gentiles *might* have been true worshippers of God and dwelling in Jerusalem, at a time when no Jews really erred about God — such Gentiles would have been parts of God's *elect* church, though cut off from the privileges of the outward worship of God's nation, and having no tie to bind them visibly together; for God's accredited worship was that of the Jewish nation. But after Christ died and rose, then God said He would gather together in one in every place those that feared and loved Him, and not accredit any form of worship any more save the union together in one of those who profess to know Jesus. And *the church* is here used by Christ as the name of this gathering together.

Let persons who think themselves as religious as those around them, see how the great grace of Jesus in being willing to be *killed*, proclaimed the utter vileness of all that looked fair in the accredited religion of that day. For where and by whom was the Lord slain? Let us observe also the effect its announcement had upon a true-hearted disciple by *reason of his ignorance*: "Then [ver. 22] Peter took him, and began to rebuke him"!!!*

*How sadly does ignorance always thus unfit us for sympathy with our Lord. There is a striking contrast on this subject, to which I would here revert: in Luke 9: 30, 31, we read, Two men, "Moses and Elias," appeared in glory, and spake of His decease (His *exodus*) which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, and in Mark 9: 10, it is added — "they [the disciples] kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean."

In the former of these passages we find the intelligence of heavenly manhood sympathising with the Lord in His bitter portion; and in the second, the want of intelligence of the infantine state finding sorrow and perplexity even in its own portion of glory which was to issue from that His bitter cup.

How gracious of Jesus to open the *interests* of His God and Father as soon as possible to the disciples! to tell them too the subject exercising His own mind, and to invite them thus to enter with Him into the sorrow into which His faithful service to His Father and tender love toward them was leading Him! Compare Mark 8:31; Luke 9: 22.

2. *As connected with the resurrection, it was His secret to His disciples, till He took the ground proper to them as the church.* - "As they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from *the dead*." (Matt. 17: 9.)

The next thing was to show His followers the glory and kingdom; compare Matt. 16: 28, and 2 Peter 1. A foretaste of the rich harvest to be reaped from His humiliation was thus given to them, to cheer and strengthen them in their sympathy with Him, and in their sorrowful anticipation of having themselves likewise to follow Him in it. For Jesus had said plainly (chap. 16: 24-26), that His followers' must share the humiliation with Him. Here, then, having shown them the fruits of His humiliation that they might be the better able to sympathise with Him, He tells them not to tell others of it until his humiliation being past, theirs would have to begin: compare Mark 9: 9. The vision presents the triumph of more than Jesus over death by glory, for Moses and Elias were there in it, as representatives of the church in that day of coming glory, for which we wait, at Christ's second coming. (2 Peter 1: 16-21.)

Surely the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!

3. *It was man's act — the Gentiles* (Mark 10: 34; Luke 18: 33) did it, though the Jews might have first sought it; while His opening of it to His followers was the proof of His love to them. — "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they *shall kill* him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry." (Matt. 17: 22.)

Thus did He again remind them of the burden that was upon His soul, and prepare them all for it; while at the same time He confirmed to the three who had been with Him in the mount, His reason for having taken them there, and guarded them all from trusting in man.

In Mark 9: 32, it is added, "But they understood not that saying [They shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, etc.,] and, were afraid to ask him."

In Mark 10: 34, it is said of the Gentiles, They shall mock and scourge, and shall spit upon *and shall kill him*; showing that the Gentiles are guilty not only of reproaching Him, but of His death; see also Luke 18: 33.

4. *Yea, of His God-like care and sympathy, knowing the while their wretched selfishness* "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him *to death*, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again." (Matt. 20: 17-19.)

What tender guardian care! what gracious solicitations for sympathy! what fixedness of purpose! what divine self-repose and self-possession is His with whom we have to do. Oh, how unlike to us —

and what patience of love! His eye seeing, while He so spake, the question which was going (ver. 20) to be preferred to Him for the two most honoured seats in His kingdom, and the anger, too, ready to rise in the other ten disciples against the two for whom the pre-eminence was sought — His own soul meanwhile saw that the glory was the fruit of the humiliation. (Read vers. 20-28.)

5. *The desire of it was mentioned by Him as the proof of the nation Israel's rejection of Him.* The next passage I would revert to is — "When the husbandmen saw the son they said . . . This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him." (Matt. 21: 38; compare Mark 12: 7, 8; Luke 20: 14, 15.)

Having arrived at Jerusalem, in the appointed way (Matt. 21: 9), riding on an ass, He was received there with shoutings, and "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" was rightly among the cries. But a little onward it appears that though the right words were used, they were wrongly used by them, for they used them only in a subordinate sense; for the words in their full import pointed out Jesus as Jehovah of Hosts — and so shall they hereafter be used; but they used them of Him simply as "the prophet of Nazareth," sent by God, and so come in His name, instead of Jehovah Himself, personally present in His own character and name.

He purges the temple (ver. 12); heals the sick in it (ver. 14.); and when the chief priests begrudge Him even the lower title of Son of David (ver. 15), He will not sleep in the city, but retires from it. (Ver. 17.) On the morrow in the fruitless fig tree, He typically curses Israel (ver. 19); meets and confounds the foolish question put in the temple, "By what authority doest thou these things?" etc.; and then in parables shows, first, the hypocrisy of the religion around Him (ver. 9-8), and then, secondly, its selfish independence and direct opposition to God in the parable whence I have quoted. (Ver. 33.)

Oh, what an awful picture is this of the character of those who have the form of godliness but deny the power of it! And how beautifully does it present the implicit obedience and self-renouncing devotedness of Him who was the true servant of God.

6. *But it was not the desire of the people only, but the planned counsel of the chief office-bearers both in religion and in state.* - "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest . . . Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him." (Matt. 26: 3, 4; Mark 14: 1; Luke 22: 2.)

Nothing short of His destruction could satisfy the malice, or still the fears of these, the conductors of His temple worship, and the rulers of His people; — as His people were in the last quotation shown by Him to be ready to kill Him, so here the same is shown in the chief leaders of the religion of that day.

7. *In the anticipation of what was before Him, His soul was sorrowful even unto death.* — "Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me." (Matt. 26: 38; Mark 14: 34.)

Had sorrow killed the Lord here, He would not have been its first victim but though many have died simply from anguish and the fear of coming trials, and though the sorrows of Jesus at this point of time were enough to have killed any man, Him it could not kill; for divine strength was in Him, and death in Him was reserved for a special purpose of grace and love; and though nature might thus faint, its cords could not break till His hour was come, and He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

8. *It was the deep, settled, unwavering desire of the heads of government, ecclesiastical and political.* — "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel

against Jesus to put him to death." (Matt. 27: 1.)

How painful a proof have we here of the deep, settled, unwavering desire of the chief priests and elders of the people for the Lord's death. And this is always God's way, even to cause such delay to man in his doings and labours as to give him time to see clearly the true character of the principle and motive on which he is acting. And this, I conceive, it is which so strikingly exhibits the patience of God, both in judgment and mercy and leaves those that walk in their own way without excuse, while oft (as doubtless. in this case) it is the preparation in the consciences of many of the transgressors for the outpouring of mercy.

"How unsearchable are his ways, and his judgments past finding out."

9. *Though they could find no plea in truth, nor even by false witnesses establish a fair appearance of a plea, but were obliged to make the Lord's grace and truth (that He was the Christ the Son of the Blessed) the plea for His death.* — "The chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together," etc. (Mark 14: 55-65.) It is deeply instructive, in comparing this with the two citations which will follow, to see how ecclesiastical apostasy is always the leader in insult to God, persecution to the people of God, and bloodthirsty cruelty — for, in truth, nothing so thoroughly sears the conscience, hardens the mind, and steels the heart, as the form of godliness without the power. The fuss and busy activity of outward religious worship and service, where grace and truth are not the rest of the mind and the stay of the heart, has ever destroyed even the kindlier feelings of humanity.

In this awful scene we have the failure of the attempt of the chief priests and rulers, not only to find any fault in Jesus worthy of death, but to establish even the appearance of it by false witnesses; and then the horrid wickedness of our nature exhibited in their making His true confession, that He was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, the ground of their clamorous concurrence.

Ah! wilful human nature! how wilt thou ever, when left to thyself, turn to thine own condemnation thy hatred of grace and truth: how dost thou hate that in which all that ever was most dear to God is found, that which is the only seed of hope to thyself or others.

10. *Against which the judge three times protested, inasmuch as both himself and Herod had found no fault in Him.* - "And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said . . . Behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. He said . . . the third time — Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him." (Luke 23: 13-22.) "By our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." (John 19: 7.)

It is striking how the want of all semblance of justice in the death of the Lord is brought out at every point. In the last quotation, we had the want of all evidence of guilt proved, in the failure of the ringleaders of the conspiracy in their attempt to get even false witness against Him, which might *seem* to hang well together. Here, where the conspiracy, in spite of this, is found before the judge, even he is constrained to confess that he can find no fault in Him; no nor even Herod, to whom he sent Him. Yea, and to this, his prisoner's innocence, he is constrained three times to bear witness. Nevertheless, the accusers were clamorous — and though their charge, as then advanced, was one apparently calculated only to alarm the judge, "that he said he was the Son of God," yet, in spite of all that reason might suggest against the Roman governor acting upon such a charge, or venturing to condemn the innocent One who laid such a claim, He is given up to be murdered. How strangely, in this sinful world, do things almost intuitively combine together against God — God's Son was in the world, the fallen

world, lying under Satan: as its prince, surely neither it nor he would allow God's Son a place in it, in its then state of alienation from God. The intelligence of man, reason, etc., etc., seem to man all important points in connection with man's conduct under given circumstances, but, in fact, these things do but lie upon the surface to beguile those that lean upon their own understandings and judge by the sight of the eye: to faith, the deeper governing principles are open, and it can see how these now, as in the case we are considering, will rule somehow or other, and, so far as this world is concerned, always act against God. The high priests, the elders, the people of Israel, Herod and Pontius Pilate, had each one of them the very strongest reason to pursue the opposite course, but, some in one way, some in another, all had their minds brought round by the master-mind that ruled them to murder the Lord. Poor, blind nature! How blind, though ever boasting of its power of perception and judgment!

11. Nevertheless it is hurried to a close, though shown to be under the over-ruling hand of God, in that the circumstances were predicted in prophecy. — "There were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death." (Luke 23: 32.)

Two things strike me here — first, the overruling hand of God in so leading their malice, which was all their own, as that they should fulfil the prophecy in Isaiah 53, in associating Jesus with the malefactors; secondly, the rapidity of the action, He is seized upon unlawfully one night, and, in spite of all Roman law and justice, executed the next day. Barabbas had not been so treated by man; neither were James, Peter, nor Paul afterwards allowed to be so treated. A longer interval at least was granted to them, though denied to Him who was the Prince of life.

12. Yet He died not by the death of the cross, though He died upon the cross. His suffering was cut short before the wonted time; for this, among other reasons, that the scripture might be fulfilled, "a bone of him shall not be broken" — "Pilate marvelled if he were already *dead*, and, calling the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while *dead*." (Mark 15: 44.) "When they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs." (John 19: 33.)

Rapid was man's wicked movement in its hurried enmity against the Lord to murder Him! And He yielded Himself to their hands; yet when all was accomplished that man could do, He was content and lingered not for the usual death of the cross — Having cried with a loud voice, He yielded up the ghost. In Psalm 69: 20, we read, Reproach hath broken my heart; and it seems as though this indeed was the immediate cause of the Lord's death. Sorrow upon sorrow had burst in upon Him, when, having cried with a loud voice, He ceased to breathe. That it was unusual for one crucified so soon to die, is evident from the first of the above quotations. And one reason for its being so is seen in the second; for it was written, "a bone of him shall not be broken" — so graciously had God, by the predictions of His prophets, set a stamp upon every step of the path through which His beloved was to pass; and thus not only showing how greatly He loved to ponder all those steps of the lonely way of His Son, but how anxiously He desired to give every confirmation possible to them that should draw near to Him through Jesus.

"Lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, he is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first." (Matt. 27: 64.)

Was this conscience at work, or was it the deeper plan of the enemy, forecasting what would be the issue, and trying to anticipate the report of the resurrection, and by such an anticipatory report to discredit it when it was really reported? That it was from beneath is too evident — and how completely in this, as in other things, does evil outwit itself. In guarding against the report of an event they gather witnesses to behold it. Yea, they make the seal fast and the guard sure, in the full complacency, doubtless, of their own minds; but both the one and the other became the unquestionable witnesses

against themselves in the result: for it is but a little onward and we read

"Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead: and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you." (Matt. 28: 7.) "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" (Luke 24: 5.)

But all their precautions were in vain — His was the mastery over death and the grave; and no sooner had He lain there the appointed time than its power was broken and the joyful news spread abroad — He is risen! Welcome news indeed to one who understands the resurrection for in it, as we shall see, the whole proof of the value and acceptance of His sacrifice was presented. It is a sorrowful thing to think how few now know the value and importance of the resurrection. I do not mean that they do not assent to it as a point in their creed — surely every Christian does — yet very few see it and know it themselves in the spirit before God, so as for it to be a reality with themselves, as in the presence of God, and not merely a point of mental agreement with men around them.

"Our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death." (Luke 24: 20.) "For as yet they knew not the scripture that he must rise again from the dead." (John 20: 9.)

The entire unpreparedness of the disciples for the event of His death, notwithstanding all that Jesus had said to them to prepare them for it, is evidenced by these two passages. Their heads full of Jewish notions and hopes about the land and themselves, there seemed no room for the words of the Lord with them, it was new truth to them, and instead of laying up in their hearts till further light might dawn upon it, it seems to be hardly attended to by them. Surely we may be warned by this; and the more so, as there is not the same excuse for such conduct in us as there was in them — Jews — and without that deeper gift of the Spirit proper to us as Christians — living too in the very day of transition from one dispensation to another — such a thing in them can be more accounted for than the almost similar state we find now in many, as to those truths which open to them from the word, or may be heard by them from others. Surely the truth which has been brought to light within the last thirty years in England from the word, has brought with it deep responsibility to all that have heard it. May the Lord deliver us from all blindness and hardness of heart!

Part 2.

1. Death, powerless to the Lord because it was revealed in scripture as His appointed passage into conferred blessing. (Acts 2: 23.)

2. His death and rejection the measure of Israel's sin. (Acts 3: 14, 15.)

3. Victory through the Lord, in resurrection over death, the preaching of the apostles, and that which offended the religionists of that day. (Acts 4: 2.)

4. His death and rejection laid home as the sin of the ecclesiastical rulers. (Acts 4: 10, 11.)

5. And so, to the apostles, that, which neutralised the commandments of the priests and rulers. (Acts 5: 29.)

6. Testified of by Stephen as the expression and climax of the nation Israel's ways before God. (Acts 7: 52.)

7. The special way of blessing to any beyond Israel. (Acts 8: 32.)

8. As connected with remission of sins to them that believe, and the office of Judge of quick and dead, the testimony which let. in the Gentiles by Peter. (Acts 10: 38.)

9. His death and resurrection to Israelites out of the land, and to Gentiles, the basis of fuller and more gracious testimony than to Jews in Jerusalem, compare Acts 17: 3. (Acts 13: 28, 34, 38.)

10. The resurrection of the Lord out of death, the proof of His being Judge of the world, and, therefore, the subject of derision to those wise in their own conceits. Acts 17: 31, 32.

11. The death of the Lord reckoned among men as His end, and the assertion of the resurrection by the apostles attributed to madness, and the whole considered a question subject to intellect. (Acts 25: 19.)

12. Testimony thereunto the sure place for the presence and power of the Spirit and of boldness. (Acts 26: 23.)

13. Victory over death the proof of Jesus being the Son of God, upon which all the church's blessing hangs. (Rom. 1: 4.)

14. And the pattern to which in principle every saint is conformed. (Rom. 4: 23.)

15. The death of Christ God's mode of commending His love toward us. In all our weakness, ungodliness, hostile character and sinfulness, God gave His Son to die for us, and thus are we reconciled. (Rom. 5: 6, 8.)

16. The Lord's death, that through which the saint is free from sin, grace counting us one with Him in it by the Spirit. (Rom. 6: 2-13.)

17. The Lord's death, in like manner, our exemption from the power and claim of the law. (Rom. 7: 4.)

18. The Lord's triumph through God over death, the pledge of the perfection of quickening power to them that have the Spirit. (Rom. 8: 11.)

19. His death the clearing from all condemnation, as the resurrection is the proof thereof. (Rom. 8: 34.)

20. Therein as the expression of God's grace is the contrast of the law, which was God's search into what was in man. (Rom. 10: 6-9.)

21. Christ's object herein the basis of the disciples' general conduct. (Rom. 14: 8.)

22. And His constraint in brotherly love. (Rom. 14: 15.)

1. "Him . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For DAVID speaketh concerning him," etc. (Acts 2: 23-25.) To the sin of Israel's cruel rejection of the Lord is here contrasted God's action toward Him so rejected. They slew Him, God raised Him: and then the cause of this, in the Lord's high personal glory. He loosed the pains of death *because it was not possible that He should be holden of it*. For David speaketh, etc. The hindrance to death's power, as here assigned, is not the innate power of the Lord, as we have it in Romans 1, declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, but the personal glory and dignity ascribed to Him by the counsel of God as the one witnessed of by the Spirit in David; and not in David only, but in all the scriptures. There is no truth more manifest to the spiritual mind, or more important to the student of scripture than this, that Jesus is the sum and substance of the Spirit's testimony in scripture. His name the clue and thread to what (if this is not seen) are to our poor foolish minds the mazes and obscurities of scripture. Reader, when you study scripture what do you look for in it? Testimony to Jesus, or something about yourself? If the latter, the book will be a dark book to you, for the saint's portion all

flows through Jesus; no scripture touches the saint save immediately through Jesus, and if you will thrust self forward to see how much can be forced to apply to it, so losing sight of Jesus as the centre of it all, you will find a poor — poor portion.

What I learn here is, death powerless to the Lord, because represented in scripture as His appointed passage into conferred blessing. May we adore the grace which in God counselled, and which in Christ undertook, and which in the Spirit revealed, such a path for Him to obtain a glory He could share with us.

2. "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." (Acts 3: 14, 15.) The sin of the nation Israel seems strikingly measured in this context. Israel's God, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of their fathers, had sent His Son Jesus Christ among them; they had betrayed Him, and denied Him, and prevented Pilate's desire to free Him. This one, whom they had denied, was the Holy One and the Just, though they had preferred a murderer to Him; and He was also the Prince of life, though they had killed Him. Everything which ought to have bound Israel broken and despised, and everything which could magnify their rejection of Him found in the act. And yet, as we see in the whole context, this very sin of theirs, this very slaying of the Prince of life, was but the occasion of fresh grace. As the rock, when smitten, poured forth its needed and refreshing streams in the wilderness, so here this murdered Prince of life is presented as the One through whom there were not only gifts of healing, but the present proffer to Israel of all those things of which God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. Who can see the lingering of the heart of this Prince of life, who, though rejected by Israel, still sent the first testimony of His most highly honoured servants to it with such proffers, and not be bowed down with the fulness of His grace and goodness? without seeing, indeed, that He was and is full of grace and truth?

3. "Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." (Acts 4: 2.) This chapter records the first movement of the ecclesiastical rulers against the truth after the resurrection. It says they were Sadducees: this, in measure, accounts for their hatred to the resurrection, but not entirely; for the doctrine here taught as the resurrection from the dead was not merely the general resurrection which their antagonist party the Pharisees held — which would have been rather the resurrection of the dead. This latter was simply that there would be a resurrection of the dead, that is, of all men, but the former was a much more specific and blessed thing, even that there was through Jesus a resurrection from among the dead — that is, the first resurrection. So that I conceive it was not the mere bruit ['report'] of the resurrection which these Sadducees feared might strengthen and be upheld by the faction to which they were opposed, but in addition thereto, the presenting so alluring and winning a hope before the people, one too so full of grace and blessedness as that God would grant to those that followed the banner of Christ here below to arise first, (1 Thess.) of which the resurrection of the Lord Himself was a sort of pledge and type. And this surely it is which is of such power to the saint when known, and which is so little known in our own day among the saints. How few comparatively even know or are established in the truth of the first resurrection. Reader, art thou? If not, surely thou hast overlooked *one* of the richest fruits of Jesus' resurrection and of God's grace, and hast one thick fold of the veil of nature's darkness still over thy mind.* And if this were more clearly preached, would not both the manifest tendency of it and the practical results in them that believe lead to more persecution? Nothing but this hope will give victory over the world, because nothing but it enables the Christian to see the worthlessness of the world.

*There are two little tracts connected with this subject — "Resurrection, not Death, the Hope of the Believer," and "The First Resurrection."

4. "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him doth this man stand here before you whole." (Acts 4: 10.) In Acts 2 we had Peter's testimony to the death and resurrection of Jesus as the only way of salvation for the remnant. In Acts 3 the same is again brought forward, as the only way by which the covenanted blessings of the nation can reach them; and in this fourth chapter, when brought up before the ecclesiastical rulers, their testimony is the same, presenting the miracle of the healed body of him that was lame, as the testimony of the grace of Him whom these builders in their folly had rejected. "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

How different was testimony in the apostles' day from what men count preaching now-a-days! They were content to make the simple statement of the few facts connected with the Lord, and to reiterate them in all simplicity of speech, leaving the matter then in the hand of the Spirit. The power was His, and if He gave witness with the word it was enough to quicken any soul, and in itself enough to draw forth the enmity of the heart of man where not bowed down by grace. Now the stores of intellect must be searched to deck and dress the truth, to commend it, if possible, to the flesh, and at all events to present something with it which the flesh can value and appreciate, so as to pardon in some measure the feeble covered statement of truth. It is singular that when the apostles, in the full power of the Spirit, should have thought the naked truth, pure and by itself, the best, men, at the close of the dispensation, should have discovered that there is danger in administering it without some medium of fleshly talent or wisdom.

5. "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." (Acts 5: 29-32.)

How simple and yet how beautiful is the spirit and conduct of the disciple as here exhibited in the apostles! They exhibit no self-will, they plead no liberty of their own to do as they like, they murmur not against the injustice exercised upon them; but they simply take their stand as in their known recognised responsibility to God. God was in all their thoughts; and the single eye toward Him could see no intricacy, no difficulty as to their conduct or course here below. In the first place, it could see this truth, and to the creature it is a universal truth — "We ought to obey God rather than men." *And how does this simplicity of subjection to God always clear the path for him that walks in it!* See it here. The eye which has just, in grateful dependence, looked up to God as its only guide and centre, next turns on these ecclesiastical rulers, and, gazing upon them in the light of God, and notwithstanding all the paraphernalia of priestly array, and the manifestation of power and rule, what does it read? — "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, *whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.*" Thus it detects, first their opposition to God in His works and ways — to the God of the fathers of the nation and to Jesus the Lord; then the character of the opposition, murderers and manslayers; and then the continued contrariety of their present conduct to the grace presented. "Him hath God exalted . . . to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness." These things alone would have sufficed to have shown to the eagle eye of faith, that the rulers' command, however apparently accredited, was powerless: but much more so, when this same single eye passes onward to measure and estimate the position and standing of themselves, the apostles. "And we are his witnesses . . . and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." Such passages surely are very precious, as showing the quick scent and keen eye of the fear of the Lord, and so presenting one of the great provisions God, has made for

the protection of those that are His. A provision, however, powerless, save when we really walk near to Him.

6. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." (Acts 7: 52.)

The death of Jesus, though the climax of Israel's sin, was not in character a new sin with them. The report of His coming had been enough, in times that were passed, to make that nation abhor and murder all the prophets sent to them. What an enmity this bespeaks! not only that when He appeared they should murder Him, but such inveterate rancour, that even, ere they saw Him, any one that prophesied of His coming was put to death! This their blood-thirsty subjection to him who had been a murderer from the beginning, is here charged home by Stephen upon the council as having been exhibited against the Lord, and as the nation's crowning sin. And him they murdered — the first martyr in the church. It may be well for us to remember that in Israel God was making trial of human nature as such — and therefore in their conduct we see what Gentiles would have done, had opportunity been given to them: for the trial in Israel was, as we have said, of human nature [our nature], as such.

7. "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter: and like a lamb dumb before her shearer, so opened he not his mouth." (Acts 8: 32.)

At every turn, under all circumstances of testimony, how does the humiliation of the Lord unto death stand prominently forward. In the case before us, the eunuch was reading Esaias when Philip was bidden to go and join himself to the chariot. In considering the last quotation we saw how the murderous spirit, which issued in the betrayal and murder of the Lord was the permanent trait in Israel's character, and if so of human nature. Here, on the contrary, the universal applicability of that death as a cure begins to open upon us. In itself the ground of Israel's rejection in nature, it was yet, through grace, the open door for the Lord to deal in grace with Israel. But grace was beyond promise, higher up, as it were, nearer the fountain-head, and as open to Gentiles in itself as to the Jews. The promises and covenants, they were Israel's; but grace, which alone secured them through the death of Jesus, knew no such restraints; and in this very context we get it, as it were, travelling in the gladdened heart of the eunuch into the far country of the Ethiopians, so bringing before us the first thoughts of that wider range, apart from Jerusalem, which grace was about to take. In the record of the preaching to the Samaritans, the fact of the preaching is merely stated, none of the particulars of it; but both here and in the next citation, where the circle of testimony is widening, the humiliation of the Lord unto death is distinctly mentioned. I think this observable: for the mercy to the Samaritans was in their being noticed at all by the Spirit; and as we see, from our Lord's conduct with the woman of Samaria, they were not reckoned as being altogether and entirely upon different ground to that on which Israel in His day stood: but to the Gentiles, as such, He had nothing to say until rejected unto death by Israel, whereby He gained in resurrection the place of blessing, whom He would.

8. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him . . . whom they [the Jews] slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly: not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10: 38-43.)

Such was, in part, the testimony of Peter to Cornelius and the Gentiles when first, through the

grace of God, he went to open their way into the kingdom. It is remarkable, that the office of the Lord, consequent upon death and resurrection, of being the appointed Judge of all men, is mentioned first by Peter here, and secondly by Paul at Athens — that is, in both cases when bearing testimony to the Gentiles. I think it important as showing how God's Spirit in testimony would ever act, upon the recognisable responsibility of those to whom He speaks. With the Jew there were other and greater, and nearer glories in the Messiah, the responsibilities of which they had neglected and despised, which therefore were taken up. With the Gentiles, no such deposit as the law or the oracles of God rested, and therefore we find, in the first chapter of Romans, creation and its testimony: here the office of Judge of quick and dead, together with the power of pardon in the Lord's name when received, and in Acts 17 creation, God's display of providence, combined with this same office of judge, pressed upon the attention of the Gentiles. It is of interest, as showing how God, while never leaving His own principles of judgment, does not arraign man upon them abstractedly, but brings them all to bear upon man's own mind and conscience, arguing each case as it were in the arena of man's own mind, so as to leave all, upon their own principles, without excuse. From the context before us it appears that Peter knew that Cornelius and they that were with him had heard of the life of Jesus, through whom God sent preaching peace. His death is presented as Israel's sin, and the contrast of God's estimate of Him raising Him from the dead and setting Him as Judge of all, yet as now speaking peace and forgiveness to them that received Him. It is a solemn thought, reader! that there is a judgment to come, and oh! how blessed a one, that He that is the ordained Judge is He through whose name is now preached remission of sins to all that believe, while surely the same is a most solemn and fearful thought to them that believe not, that they will meet in the person of the Judge the very one whose grace and truth they have despised and rejected.

9. "They that dwelt in Jerusalem . . . though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain." (Acts 18: 28.) "But God raised him from the dead." (Ver. 30.) "And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David." (Ver. 34.) "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Vers. 38, 39.)

In this context, we get the testimony, in part, of Paul; when sent forth with Barnabas, by the Holy Ghost, from Antioch for the preaching of the gospel, he was testifying, before the Jews of the dispersion, in Antioch in Pisidia. What heart-felt pity and unbounding grace, does this looking after Israel on the part of our God bespeak! Jerusalem had killed all the prophets; yet the Son would come to them if haply they might repent. Him they crucified, yet His pity and love they could not quench. Risen from the grave He sought no revenge upon His enemies, but in grace caused the word of the value of faith in His name to flow abroad "beginning at Jerusalem." Three times rejected in His witnesses, and so driven as it were out of the city, His eye is still in pity upon His kindred according to the flesh; and His grace allows not even the servant, whom He had formed as the Apostle of the Gentiles, to get his full range or proper sphere of service till Israel will have none of his testimony. The deep, the unwearied character of His love, while any door of hope remains untried is very precious!

It is remarkable, if we compare this scene and the auditory, presenting Jews, out of the land, and Gentiles, to see how much more full the testimony is to the blessedness of the results of the Lord's death and resurrection than where the testimony was given in Jerusalem. The reason is obvious. The evidence and facts of the case are stated, and the sin laid home upon Jerusalem, its inhabitants, and their rulers; but no charge of sin against those present (though all alike before God guilty of the fact) is pressed, but the glad tidings of the fulfilment of the promise made to the fathers announced, even of

Jesus risen from the grave. Gladsome news to Israelites, for it was on this wise God said, "I will give you the sure mercies of David" — though they knew it not, the blood of the covenant opening grace to them and securing every blessing of dominion, righteousness, and power to them — that blood, I say, flowed in the veins of Jesus while on earth. Gladsome news therefore to them that it had been poured forth and yet Himself risen in the power of an endless life because the Son of God, ready and able to dispense all the blessings which were His own as Son of David! and gladsome news to the poor Gentiles, in whatever way looked at, for when David's Son stands in glory, the distributor of these sure mercies, then shall be brought to pass the saying — "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people." And even ere that, to Israelites and Gentiles alike, there is this blessed word: "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

How completely, how perfectly does this, poor sinner, whoever thou art, meet thy case! the only door of hope, a door into immediate present rest! What words could be stronger than these — "and by him *all* that believe ARE *justified* from all things?" May God grant thee, reader, to know this as true of thyself. If thou believest in Him, "thou art justified from all things." What blessed grace! And if one who has believed in Him, but yet will not admit the value of belief in Him to be so great as this, even complete present justification from all things, if one such reads this, let such attend to the word which follows — the sure result of unbelief and the tendency of all those doubts which so many, in so ungracious a way, cherish, and God's sentence against them.

"Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

Compare also with this, Acts 17: 3: "Paul reasoned opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead."

10. "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." (Acts 17: 31.)

Such was part of the testimony of Paul, the apostle of the uncircumcision, to the Gentiles at Athens. The reference to the Lord in the character of "the judge" is of interest, as was noticed in connection with Acts 10: 38. There Peter, speaking to the Gentiles in measure acquainted with Jewish worship, presents Him as ordained Judge of quick and dead; here as a "Judge of the world in righteousness." The testimony begins with the declaration of God as Creator of the world and all things in it, and as witnessed thus by all His works as well in the originating of them as in the sustaining of them daily and hourly, and then passes on to the assertion before us.

The character of the Lord's resurrection (as is seen in Rom. 1) declared Him to be the Son of God with power: and to this Son, as we read in John, all judgment was committed. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:* that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." (John 5: 22.) In this way, the resurrection of the Lord becomes a pledge of the coming judgment to all: for His victory over death proved and showed who and what He was, even the eternal Son of the Father, and to Him belongs the judgment to come. How humbling the contrast between the thoughts of God and man! The victory of Jesus over the grave and death, and this victory, the way of all blessing to poor lost man, was God's high wisdom and glory. A full expression of divine

wisdom, and power, and grace was in it. The joy of God was in it, even of the Father; and He who was the Son rejoices in it, as meeting His Father's mind, fulfilling His own glory; the happy subject of testimony to the Spirit, the theme, triumph to His saints, and of praise to every power that loved Him. The blessed Spirit found rest and satisfaction there at last in connection with man and with mankind; the church also led by Him was tasting of its sweetness, and the proud persecuting Pharisee had left his all in the sense of the joy of it to go and tell the wondrous tale. But when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. Alas, poor nature! in self-sufficiency ready to laugh at that which God glories in; and even in its better and more decent mood postponing to some more convenient season the troublous matter where alone its peace with God, for time or eternity, could be found. And but for grace so should we have been; but that same distinguishing grace which reaches unto us was present then also, and we read "Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed." Blessed God of all grace, how is thine hand ever ready to save!

*I would suggest to those competent to judge, whether the truth I am endeavouring to trace is not built upon other passages rather than upon a literal translation of this text. I am inclined to render instead of "*whereof* he hath given assurance unto all men," thus, "having afforded proof to all men," in which case the passage would show not the Lord's resurrection to be a proof of His being the judge, which is sure truth however, but another equally sure truth, that the resurrection put Him in a place not peculiar to the Jews exclusively, but, as we shall see shortly, in a position quite above them, though through His grace never forgetful of them; a place moreover whence alone He could reach beyond Israel's coast, or give blessing deeper and more blessed than Israel's portion. It matters not much which way we read it, for both are true. How blessed it is to feel that no truth hangs upon criticism; but that all its parts to a humble Spirit-led saint are broadly stamped upon the very surface of scripture.

11. "But bad certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." (Acts 25: 19)

In this context Festus is explaining to Agrippa Paul's case; and we get in this, their intercourse, no unfair specimen of the world's estimate of the death and resurrection of the Lord: for what Festus in simplicity felt, they do practically likewise, so many as have not known the quickening power of the Spirit. Festus looked upon the death of the "one Jesus" as the close and end of the matter as to Him; and upon the assertion of Paul about resurrection as something peculiar to himself, and upon the whole matter as involving nice questions, connected with superstition, of which it was very hard to make anything definite, though from circumstances, it might be needful to twist and turn the subject about till something reason could lay hold of could be made of it. I fear greatly that professing Christendom knows the death and resurrection of the Lord much in the same way. *Circumstances* place the subject before nominal Christians, and their reason runs upon them and converses — yet always, like Festus, considering their connection with these subjects to be of an official character; they are *born* Christians, Christians by country, nationally believers, and so it is *unreasonable* quite to overlook these subjects — though they, alas, have conscience enough not to make them, as did Festus, so familiar as to be the topic of interest to any coming visitor. The poor worldling, and the poor (so called) evangelical, seem to me sadly represented by Festus and Agrippa. May our souls humbly adore the grace that has saved us from such hardness and such folly; and has placed us, through grace, with the third party in the scene — in fellowship with Paul, suffering for Jesus' sake.

12. "I continue witnessing that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first to rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26: 23.)

Called upon by Festus and Agrippa, Paul is here giving his testimony; in doing which he relates

his heavenly vision and call to the apostleship, and the result — that he, having obtained help of God, continued witnessing of that which was the burden of the prophets, and Moses, even "that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." How clear, how strong, how distinct the disciple's assurance when in testimony; how blessedly contrasted with the worldling in his estimate of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Surely, when we see the power of the Spirit in the apostle, in such positions, we may take courage, for the same Spirit who witnessed in him is ours, and is by very nature above all that can be found in circumstances to oppose him. And it is this which most especially strikes me in this context — the invincible boldness of Paul, though alone, when testifying to the death and resurrection of the Lord; though Festus might say with a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad," . . . or Agrippa but add, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;" and though there was none to stand by him, on earth, still, the Lord stood by him in power and might, because he stood near the Lord in witnessing to His death and resurrection.

13. "His [God's] Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. 1: 3, 4.)

The connection of this verse with the substance of the Epistle is very close. The Epistle might be entitled, to distinguish it from the other Epistle, as "a vindication of Christianity," for it not only presents a most comprehensive summary of all the doctrine connected with the dispensation, but also meets and answers all the difficulties which might arise upon the first observation of the entirely new ground taken by the dispensation. The epistle naturally divides itself into parts. The first, contained in Romans 1, 2, 3 to verse 10, shows, the entire fall, bankruptcy, and condemnation of nature. The second (containing Romans 3: 19 to end, and Romans 4, 5) argues the grace of God, through faith, as the mode God had chosen in which to show out His love. Part third (comprised in Romans 6, 7) argues the question of law as bearing upon one so found by faith of grace. Part fourth, Romans 8, the blessing, in all its fulness, into which such an one is brought. Part fifth (that is, Romans 9, 10, and 11), the bearing of this upon dispensation, in which it is shown that the Jewish dispensation passed, though the remnant according to the election in it, stood, and that so this dispensation likewise shall pass, making way for another, though God will not forget His own in it, thus establishing the difference, all important as it is, between God's objects in revealing grace upon earth, for time, and for eternity. He reveals it among men, and in time it proves how irreparable man is — no dispensation which grace has formed in man's hand has stood or will stand; but though such be in time the issue, in eternity it will be found that they that were in Christ have stood, and are there presented as fruits of its blessing. And then the epistle closes with part fifth, a beautiful outline of the duties of the saved.* To many a high-minded self-sufficient. Gentile, it never may have occurred that there was a difficulty, and that a very great one, likely to occur to any mind, as to God's dealing to all with the Gentiles upon an equal footing with the Jews. Alas, so high-minded are many that they would monopolise the whole interest of the Spirit in scripture to self, and entirely forget, not only God's ancient people, whose are the covenants, but the Lord Himself also, and hardly look at or care for any of His work, save that which bears upon self. Yet to one who knows how the Old Testament prophets are full of the testimony of the earthly glory of Messiah, in connection with the house of Israel and the land, surely the heavenly blessing now thrown open to both Jew and Gentile alike, must be a strange, and a new, and a wondrous thing. The case is argued at length as to dispensation in Romans 9, 10, and 11, but the whole principle of the answer as to God, and Israel, and us, is presented in these short words, "Jesus Christ . . . made of the seed of David according to the flesh — and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

*It has often struck me with admiration, that this epistle should have been addressed to Rome, containing as it does, so full and complete a refutation of all the many errors peculiar to the apostasy of that church. A more striking guard against Romanism, or refutation of it, could hardly have been penned — so far as concerns the soul of an individual.

Messiah, a Jew of the royal family of David, dead. And how so? Rejected by Israel — and in His death that glory bursting forth, which plainly told that He *was made* of the seed of David according to the flesh. For in death His glory shone forth as one that had life in Himself; and that He was the very Son of God was declared by the resurrection from the dead. Of none, save Him, could it ever be said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. Of no one could this ever be said save of Him, who being indeed Son of man, was at the same time very and indeed Son of God. Jesus rose not in the power of that life which is in the blood, but in the power of that which was and is His own as Son of God — as the life-giving Spirit. And this is what is referred to here; for though as man He was called "the Son of the Most High," as having been conceived by the virgin Mary, by the overshadowing of the power of the Holy Ghost — it is not that which is here referred to in this passage, but that deeper, and fuller, and more wondrous glory which was His, as the eternal Son — one in the Trinity; one with the Father and the Holy Ghost; God over all blessed for evermore: and His resurrection distinctly marked Him off from all others as the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness — His in Sonship. His being dead who was the heir of David's throne, showed the ground of Israel's rejection, while His resurrection set Him in a position to deal in grace with all whom He would; in that there was no kindred tie with earth, and though, indeed, the sure mercies of David were thus, and thus alone, secured; this was simply because Israel lay in the purpose of God to bless them; for the position obtained by resurrection was one binding Him by ties alone to God, and His purposes. I would notice, also, that the effulgence of the divine glory here brought out in Him, according to the spirit of holiness, was inseparable from the church's true standing. His death closed the door, for a time at least, on Israel; His resurrection set Him in a new place, where he could deal with things, not according to earthly order, but in prerogative grace, and that to Gentile equally with Jew; while that Sonship, according to the spirit of holiness, herein manifest, was the basis and formative principle of the church's hope, standing and blessing, as is most largely seen in Romans 8, and in the whole of the Ephesians.

Thus it was death which became the Lord's path into the position in which we know Him, and, in His victory over it, the means of manifesting that divine power and glory in Him, without which the church has no place, or portion, or even being.

14. "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4: 23.)

In this passage and chapter we may see the saints conforming to the principle exhibited in the Lord. He got into His position of blessing and of exercising the power of life-giving Spirit, through death by resurrection — in this it was that the power and glory that were in Him shined out. Now in this fourth chapter, we find the father of the faithful, as the representative of the whole family, assimilated in measure to the principle fully carried out in the Lord. And so is it with every believer. The promise is given to us in all the barrenness and unfruitfulness of surrounding circumstances, and the sentence of death passes over every means in us, or around: yea, but we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in Him that raised the dead. But Abraham's faith was *in God*, and nothing could touch or remove that; the deadness of Sarah's womb, the suggestion of

nature about his own great age; none of these things even came near to touch his faith. They might, indeed, have distracted him from faith, and led him to give up hope, if rested upon, but the ground of hope they could never touch; that was in God: God had promised, and He was faithful, and able, and true: but they did not prevent his faith, for it also was of God, and had, therefore, in it that resiliency of life, which being of God, gave it. Oh that the saints remembered this more surely, there would be less fear and trembling than there is in many, as the aspect darkens around them. Perhaps, with all its self-complacency about religion, there never was an age in which there was so little trust in God as the present! And how does Abraham's faith shame us: he had, as it were, only a promise to rest on, though it were the promise of the faithful and true God — the way *how* God could be just while dealing with a sinner and imputing righteousness to him, was not then fully opened — to us it is, and that as a thing once done and accomplished for ever. He was delivered on account of our offences, and has been raised on account of our justification, and, as it were, in the very presence of this past work, God says, Trust yourselves in all your wretchedness to Me, and I will clear you. Shame, shame, shame, on the unbelieving believers, who still doubt. Surely, to do so is not only to make God a liar, but to give a judgment, as it were, against the worth and value of that death and resurrection so presented, and to grieve the Spirit.

15. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." (Rom. 5: 6-10.)

Is there any who, in false humility, would doubt the love of God and Christ, *because* of what he is in himself? Let such an one read this passage, and see how, as it were, the Lord, the Spirit, gathers the group of them that are without strength, the ungodly, the enemies, sinners, as those to whom He would tell how, in the death of Jesus, God sought to *commend* His love to us. Wondrous, surely, the love as discovered in God towards us; but more wondrous still, how amid all the discouragements to it in us, it should yet not only not be able to shut itself up, but seek to *commend* itself to us. To how many an object does a man feel pity, aye and love too, to whom he will never attempt to communicate it, for to do so he would prove a desire of fellowship, and the recognition of power of response in the object loved; and surely our God's seeking to commend His love to us does tell His desire of fellowship, while, where it is made known, it gives the power, through grace, of response, and we, reconciled by the death of His Son, love Him because He first loved us.

16. "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reins in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are

alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." (Rom. 6: 2-13.)

The argument of Paul seems here to be towards the proving by God's estimate of the death of Christ for the church, and the church's fellowship by the Spirit in that estimate, that the church is free from sin, and so free as to have no pretext for continuing to live in it. If God's object, says he, was, that as sin hath reigned unto death even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, no one can say, We will continue in sin that grace may abound, And then the context quoted follows — the grand truth of which seems to be that our exemption from the charge and guilt of sin comes by God reckoning us *dead with Christ* by the Spirit: being planted in the likeness of His death, we were baptised thereinto and buried with Christ by baptism into death. That is, God, having given to us the Spirit of Christ Jesus, looks upon us as one with Him, and so imputes to us all that was true of Christ. Now He died under the charge and the power of sin imputed — but when He had died it had done its all, and being raised from the dead He dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him — for He liveth unto God. And now, if all this has been done by God to His Son for the church, let every member of it reckon himself dead indeed unto sin, so as neither to allow it to reign in the mortal body by obedience to its lusts, nor to yield the members of the body as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. The whole weight of the argument seems to me to turn upon *the mode* in which the church got her freedom from sin, in the power and guilt of it, even by being identified of God, through grace in the Spirit, with that which was the all that the charge and power of sin imputed could effect upon Christ Jesus.

This passage has often been taken as if it applied to the death of Christ as presented to the world. That such a view involves a complete violation of the characteristic marks of the whole context, as well as very unsound doctrine, is plain. Perhaps the saints do not look enough at the inseparable union of their blessing and the life of the Son of God. If we know Him we must have His Spirit, and this Spirit is the Spirit of the Son, and identifies us fully in all things with Him, so that God looks upon us by virtue of it, as having that true of us which personally was only true of Him whose Spirit we have received, and thus retrospectively we are said to have been crucified together with, died together with, and been buried together with, Him, as well as quickened together with Him: for though the life that was in the Lord was not fully manifested to man till the resurrection, when He became manifest the second Adam; yet I need not say that He was not intrinsically and personally, after the resurrection, other than what He was from the beginning, the only begotten Son of the Father, the Lord of all glory. The death of the Lord in this place seems presented as the place of the saints' and church's clearance from all the charge and power of sin.

17. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God," etc. (Rom. 7: 4.)

In the last citation the death of the Lord was shown as the means of clearing the church in principle, from under sin; here it is presented as having the same effect as to law, and on this simple ground, that the claim of the law having been met by Christ fully, they who are looked upon as one with Him are free from it. This to the individual believer is of immense importance in connection with obedience; for as long as the mind of the Christian turns to law, as though it still rested upon him, he will be under that which stirs up the evil of the flesh, and, God knows, we need not either that, or the sorrow consequent upon it, in addition to the difficulties of our walk. I would only further notice that the expression, "that ye should be married to another," should rather be "that you should be for another," for it refers to the saints' present connection with the Lord, and that is one of espousal, not yet marriage. And again, in verse 6, "that being dead wherein we were held should rather be "that we being

dead to that wherein we were held," as a closer and more literal rendering, as well as one more consistent with the sense of the context.

18. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. 8: 10, 11.)

What blessed consolation and comfort is here! Having in the seventh chapter traced the practical effect upon the mind, and its thought of regeneration as in a Jew, so regenerated, considering the question of law, and then shown how sorrow and depression were the result, here we find the apostle presenting, as it were, the same individual, with the question of law disposed of, in the blissful meditation upon the work of redemption wrought for us by Christ. The question of regeneration had turned his thought inward, and then the question of the spiritual character of the law had scared him: redemption lifts up his mind from self to Christ, to all accomplished by Him, and no condemnation established — and more than this, it meets the very thoughts awakened about the body of sin, and death in us proves that our bodies are so, or Christ need not have died; and throws the mind therefore not upon anything in self, but upon the faithfulness of God, who, having delivered Christ for our sins raised Him again. and will quicken into newness of life all those who make that death the ground of their acceptance before God. And thus, believer, as thou well knowest, is described both thine experience and thy hope as to thy body — it is dead because of sin; but it shall be quickened because the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwells in thee.

19. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8: 34.)

Oh, that the saints more simply understood the death of Jesus in this light! For then, instead of the uncertainty of guilt being removed, as we find in so many, there would be a clear, and steady, and abiding joy in their exemption from all death. No saint reads the death of Christ aright, but he who reads in it "no condemnation for me;" and this not simply as a surmise, or a hope, but with that certainty, as here expressed, as to enable him to challenge a condemner, while himself standing in the midst of those whom he knows not only seek to condemn but proffer those charges with indefatigable perseverance. Let Satan, let the world, let conscience condemn as they may and will, if their sentence is contrary to that of God, well may the believer say, "Who is he that condemneth?" And the more so, because the power of his heart in this challenge is not in the thought of innocence from sinfulness, but in the fact of the very fullest expression God could give, of having seen all his sin, yet met it and put it away, in and by the death of Christ. And He having died under sin once, now lives in resurrection, and His very life is the pledge and proof that there is no condemnation, and no one that believes in Him can say, "I am guilty still," without disparaging and denying the value of His sacrifice, and arraigning the truth and grace of God's testimony about it.

20. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart,. . . Who shall descend into the deep? that is to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? . . . If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. 10: 6-9.)

The substance of what was said upon the last quotation (namely, that the death of Jesus is, under God's estimate, the clearing of the believer from all condemnation), is here argued in a comparison of the principles of righteousness as proposed by the by-gone and by the present dispensation. The former, which was the law, was God searching man, and its word was, "Do this and live;" the latter, which is

grace, is God showing the exceeding riches of His own grace in the person of Christ, risen from the grave; teaching us sin not indirectly, that is, by giving a commandment, which sin in us has disabled us from keeping; but directly, that is, presenting His Son, in resurrection, as the One that has borne sin in His own body on the tree, and now is at His right hand, the pledge of acceptance. And so plainly and distinctly is He presented, that there can be no "Lo, here," or, "Lo, there," to them that know Him; neither a descending into the deep to see what has become of Him, nor an ascending into the height to bring Him down — for, risen and ascended there where He is, has He presented Himself to God for us, and our consciences, and to learn peace from seeing how God has made peace, and not to suppose that till we feel peace, God has not made peace. May God grant unto us all to walk in the light of this finished work, therein knowing our peace perfected for ever with God, and so becoming His servants.

21. "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: . . . for to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." (Rom. 14: 8, 9.)

There is a passage somewhat similar to this in Corinthians; yet with this characteristic difference between the two. This presents *the conduct* of the Christian with the basis of *Christ's object* in His death; that presents rather *the motive* in the Christian's mind resulting from the apprehension of *Christ's object* in His death. And this distinction is both worthy of observation, and of importance. For blessed as it is to have right motives for conduct, and a right understanding of what conduct becomes us, much more blessed is it to have fulfilled practically that which we see becomes us as disciples. And of this, as true in Himself, and them that are Christ's, the apostle here speaks, "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord." And does not this present a certainty of conduct, a steadfastness of purpose, and an accomplishment of desire, very unlike the Christianity current in our own day? Alas! how few servants of the Lord there are, compared with the number of saints; how few who can truly say as to their daily walk, "In all things more than conqueror through him that loved us." I would we might all think more of this, that practical obedience is that which the Lord looks for, and that rightness of motive and rightness of understanding as to what should be done, are of no value, save as means to an end — that is, as stimulating and guiding into outer obedience. I say, again, I would this might rest upon our minds; for it is a sad fact that many are satisfying themselves in having right motives, and clear understanding of what they should be instead of evidencing that they have these motives and this light by their actions.

22. "If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." (Rom. 14: 15.)

The preceding citation looked at the death of the Lord as the basis of the disciples' general conduct as before God; this presents it as the light in which the brotherhood is seen, and thereby presents both the constraint and the measure of our love to a brother in Christ. And how much need is there to pray that the memory of this may be revived among the saints; for in these many thoughts of doing this and doing that, alas! how sadly is the Lord's new commandment forgotten and neglected. Dear reader, if a saint let this be thine especial care before man — to show that indeed, thine eye can read in every, even the weakest saint, one for whom Christ Jesus died, and for whom thou also oughtest to be ready to lay down thy life also.

Part 3.

1. The death of Jesus, God's executed judgment against the law of leaven in us — because executed on Him, we are free from its guilt, and thereby called to purge out all practical leaven from

ourselves. (1 Cor. 5: 7.)

2. The Lord's death, as exhibited in the supper, the guard against the abuse of that which God has made the centre of the church's gathering upon earth. (1 Cor. 11: 26.)

3. The Lord's death, His only way of putting away our sins, and having the church in fellowship with Himself in resurrection. (1 Cor. 15: 1-7.)

4. The memory thereof, the Christian's stimulant to be ready to be always delivered unto death himself for Jesus' sake. (2 Cor. 4: 10.)

5. As (in the last context) His preparative for suffering, so also for doing all the will of Christ; yea, for living entirely to Him. (2 Cor. 5: 13.)

6. The Lord's death, the entire rupture and breaking up of all Jewish and earthly order, and blessing, and authority. (Gal. 1: 1.) And this on account of the imbecility thereof, through man's sin — for no righteousness could be found for man, but by and in the death of Christ. (Gal. 2: 21.)

7. The Lord's death, His clearance of the church from all charge against her, being the power of the judgment He bore for her, ere He rose into newness of life with her, in Him. (Eph. 1: 20.)

8. Jesus' death, the measure of His obedience, and the procuring cause of His redemption honours. (Phil. 2: 8.)

9. Conformity thereunto, the believer's path to glory as to outward experience (as in Rom. 4: 23, in the trial of faith). (Phil. 3: 10.)

10. The Lord's victory, in resurrection, over death, the precursor and mean of all resurrection. (Col. 1: 18.)

11. The Lord's death the means of our privilege of being reconciled unto God in Him, presented holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable in His sight. (Col. 1: 22.)

12. Fellowship in the benefits of the Lord's death and resurrection inseparable. If the believer can plead any benefit from the death, he has all benefit from the resurrection. (Col. 2: 12.)

13. This leads him into practical freedom from subjection and bondage to ordinances as of the world, and the conceits of man's mind about service and duty. (Col. 2: 20.)

14. The knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus, by God, from death, the church's and the saints' secret of power, and health, and strength. (1 Thess. 1: 9, 10.)

15. The death of Jesus, the pattern of what we have to expect from man while so standing. (1 Thess. 2: 15.)

16. And this to the saint is no sad commandment; for in the pattern he sees the judicial act whereby his own sins are for ever put away, and the pledge given to him of his coming in glory with Jesus. (1 Thess. 4: 14.) 17. For Jesus' death has been to him the mean of fellowship in the present life of the Lord, so as to enable him to live as in the power of his life, who is upon the Father's throne. (1 Thess. 5: 9, 10.)

1. "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." (1 Cor. 5: 7.)

There is much worthy of observation in this context. Every believer, as we see from Romans 8, has in him the carnal mind which is enmity against God, yet power withal provided for him to walk

contrary to it; for he knows that though this be so, yet he has also the spirit of life in Christ Jesus in him, and that God estimates him according to this — one with Jesus, and free from all condemnation through the death of the Lord upon the cross vicariously for the sin of the church. But these Corinthians not only had this evil in them, but had been walking according to it; and we find that fornication (and that of a very offensive kind) had been allowed. It is about the correcting the working of this leaven that Paul is here writing: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." Observe they had leaven in principle in them in nature, and this leaven moreover, had been allowed to work, and therefore the apostle was rebuking them: and yet he says, "as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Were they, then, at one and the same time, leavened and unleavened? Yes, in two different ways. In Christ they were, as we all (who are Christians) are, unleavened, for Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. This sacrifice has made atonement for the sin in us; and in His Person we find full unhindered access to God, to whose eye the principle of leaven in us is not counted as sin, so lone, as it be not allowed to work. In Christ they were unleavened; but this very thing brought with it the claim and responsibility to purge out the working of the old leaven. This they had neglected to do, and so in themselves not only they contained leaven, but had leaven working. The principle they could not purge out; the working they could, and were bound moreover to do. There were many offerings of the old sanctuary which typified this state in the church, such as loaves having leaven but baked; as having leaven, unfit to be offered up to God; yet as being baked leaven, in a state not able to work. Now, as it was the death of the lamb in the passover which was the sign for the leaven to be put out of the house, as it were, so truly, antitypically, it was the death of the Lord which did put the leaven out in principle, and as before God, from the church. "Ye are unleavened, for Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." And this, dear brethren, is universally the way of our God in teaching us obedience. You have a spiritual privilege in Christ, which requires you to act in practice in this way and that way. Oh! this is a loving way, in which He leads us on into the perfect liberty of His service. May we all then keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. A little, and not a grievous commandment is this, if we remember in whose house, and at whose cost, the Lamb has been provided, and we have eaten of it! Too poor, and our family truly too little, to provide a lamb, our lot in this matter has been thrown into the hands and house of another, according to the liberty given even to Israel of old. (Ex. 3: 4.) Our God has provided Himself a Lamb — truly one without spot and blemish — and in His house have we fed upon that Lamb. The door into this holiest is by a new and living way consecrated for us, even the rent veil of Jesus' flesh. Surely if in spirit, and by faith within the veil, feeding in blissful security in God's house (as one with Jesus) upon Him, as the Lamb slain and alive again for evermore, it is a little thing, in the ample and rich provision there found, to put away our own poor, stale, defiled, and defiling provender. And if we feel there is a little self-renunciation in so doing, what is it more than the children of this world do daily, in the hope of regaining health of body — giving up the food they love for, or exchanging it with, bitter, nauseous medicines? May we be wise in our generation, as they in theirs.

2. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." (1 Cor. 11: 26.)

The especial sins which drew from the Spirit the portion in which this is found, were these defiling the supper of the Lord, by making it a place of riotous eating and drinking, and neglect of brotherly love thereat. And both of these sins had their cure in the meaning of the supper, if rightly understood. Death, the Lord's death, the death of the Son of God, was God's estimate of man's way of choosing to please himself. In the supper, this too was presented as being the subject of mutual delight to God and the church; to God, because therein was the expression of His own grace and truth, and of

the inestimable value of His Son; to the church, because therein she found that by which alone she could rejoice in the holy justice of God, as being, through grace, for herself, though most strongly against her sins. And how, while so exercised in such delights, could so filthy a mean of self-pleasing be indulged? Impossible. Ere the body could be given to such scenes, the soul must needs have lost its fresh savour of the very truth of the supper. And, on the other hand, if the truth presented in the supper met man's passion in their very root and source of self-pleasing, how distinctly does the way in which that truth is presented correct the attendant sin of neglect of brotherly love. He died for the church collectively; and no man can know his own fellowship in the blessing, without having at the same time strongly brought to his mind those who are thus bound up in one bundle of life with Himself; and this most especially at the supper, where the many brethren are always assembled together in celebration.

These seem to have been the two sins at Corinth. But it is blessed to see how the Bible is a book of *principles*, and how, therefore, the failure in one instance brings in from the Spirit a correction to ten thousand others. Had man been looking at the case, he would have satisfied himself by setting the failure in practice to rights. Not so the Spirit; in doing this, he will so do it as to give the church a principle to guide her, not only in a case exactly similar, but also in others, in which, though the form of the evil may be different, the principle of it is the same; and therefore, he goes on (ver. 27), "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Here is the universal rule, as it were, of which the former is but one instance — eating this bread, and drinking this cup of the Lord unworthily. And then He first blessedly defines the church's mode of escape, "Let each examine himself, and so let, him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup;" and, secondly, guards what he has said, lest any (as so many have) should suppose that even this sin could unchristianise them. It is not so; if judged, they are chastened, that they may not be condemned with the world. If they fail, He fails not, and though it may be by chastening and discipline, yet will He keep His own in spiritual separation from the evil of the world, the ways of which, as well as its character, tend to judgment.

I would only further notice the expression, "Ye do *show* the Lord's death till he come" (ver. 26), as proving (like 1 Cor. 10: 16, 17, etc.) the supper as the rallying point of the saints' upon earth.

3. "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved . . . how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of about five hundred brethren at once . . . after that . . . of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all . . . of me also, as of one born out of due time." (1 Cor. 15: 1-8.)

The assertion I am about to make may seem to many strange (nevertheless I believe it to be truth), that great and general as is the profession of religion in our own day, so little and so rare is the understanding of the gospel, that not one out of ten of the religious would be able to give a simple and a scriptural answer to the question, "What is the gospel?" If any one calls this assertion in question, let him go into the coteries of his religious society, and try whether the question, simple as it is, will not elicit answers so various, as to prove that either there are many gospels, or that the one gospel is most strangely misrepresented in the minds of most. "The vagueness of the answer, when the question has been raised about this or that minister's preaching the gospel, also has often struck me forcibly. "Is the gospel preached where I attend? Oh yes! I thought you knew what an excellent, or what a pious, or what a devoted man our minister is," is a frequent reply, as though there were no such a thing as distinct truth in the world. And so, I believe, in many minds the case is, that there is no clear, simple, distinct truth known; but truth, instead of being known in that firm, unvarying form in which it has

been presented to us by God in the word, is looked at rather in the fickle, changeable forms in which it has been received by man, taught the fear of the Lord by the traditions of men. To illustrate what I mean, I would say, that in any mixed religious society, the mooted question such as, What is the gospel? would be felt to be throwing down the gauntlet, or perhaps something worse. The Baptist, the Wesleyan, the Independent, the Nationalist, each has his own points in connection with the subject peculiar to himself to be defended. True, he may tell you they are minor points of difference, and that essentially they all agree: but this is a mistake; for, in the first place, they are so far major points, as to constitute, practically, that which fills and holds the mind: and secondly, if you hear the answer, you will find it is not the same gospel at all which is stated. Moreover the effect of introducing the division of clergy and laity (a division which practically holds quite as much among Dissenters as in the Establishment), has been to make almost every Christian who is not pledged in some way by office to the work, to feel that the task of answering questions is not his; and I do believe, that three out of four of Christians you might meet, would feel this was one of the questions which it would be expedient thus to avoid answering. Not that I mean to say that they have not their own statements of the gospel, but that, in the known multiplicity of thoughts about it, they would rather not risk, as it would seem to them, entering upon controversy. Now it does seem to me a most gracious thing on the part of our God, to have given us such a testimony upon the subject, as for ever to set aside all reasonings thereupon; while if I have been right in my estimate of Christianity in our own days, most fully to exhibit its poverty. The statement to which I refer, is that which precedes these remarks. The way in which the apostle gets upon it is remarkable; not saying simply, now I declare unto you the gospel; but introducing it as connected with so many little circumstances affecting those to whom he wrote, as to give it the more point. "I declare unto you the gospel which I *preached unto you . . . which also ye have received . . . and wherein ye stand . . . by which also ye are saved*, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain . . . For, I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received," etc., etc. Such a way of introducing his subject was, in a peculiar way, calculated to call attention to it. And how blessed that subject! "That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time . . . so we preached, and so ye believed." This is the gospel! an artless simple tale of what befell Jesus. Observe, it is all about Jesus. The only actor, the only sufferer here is God. Man may be a spectator, and, through grace, a witness and a recipient, but the whole tale is about God, and his Christ. God, the Holy Ghost, had traced in the word many of the Father's thoughts about Jesus; and here we have this One anointed of the Father gleaning them all up for Himself, and fulfilling them all. Now, do let us remark how the whole action, from first to last, in the gospel, is God's, and how there is no place assigned to man in it, but that of standing still, and seeing or telling of what God wrought. If we look also a little closely at the text, we shall find the matter dividing itself naturally into four parts; the death, burial, resurrection and manifestation of the Lord. And I think I may justly say here, that the maintaining the proportions of the component parts of truth is not an unimportant matter. To make the ointment used in the sanctuary, not only was the presence of all the appointed ingredients needful, but due attention to the just proportions was requisite likewise. Surely, in like manner, we corrupt the truth, when, knowing all the parts of it, we give a prominence to any one of them beyond or less than that which the Holy Ghost in the word has; and, indeed, I do see truth now-a-days constantly so misused, and rendered of little effect. And is it not so with this very truth? The great stress which is now laid is upon the death of Jesus, so much stress, indeed, as almost to overlook the other three points: but here THE great stress is upon "the manifestation of the blessed Lord after the resurrection." even as

throughout the Acts we find the theme of testimony to have been Jesus and the resurrection. So strongly, indeed, does the apostle (Acts 17) seem to have pressed resurrection, that the poor ignorant ones to whom he spake thought that resurrection was a person as well as Jesus, saying (ver. 18), "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. Just so here, the great stress is upon his manifestation; for while his death, burial, and resurrection are each of them mentioned but once, his manifestation is repeated six times over — to Cephas, to the twelve, to five hundred brethren at once, to James, to all the apostles, to me also.

It is a blessed word, "that Christ died for *our* sins." I need hardly say that this is true only of the Christian; for though Christ bore the sin of the world, he is never spoken of as having died for its sins, the extent of the value of vicarious suffering being limited to the church; but yet to the intelligent Christian, the whole force and value of it is seen to be in the resurrection, for this is the proof of the success of the other. He was delivered on account of our sins, and (when they were all put away), raised on account of our justification; for if Christ be not raised from the dead, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. But Jesus is risen, and we know all our freedom, and liberation, and coming glory, as well as present privilege, to have been brought by Him through the narrow gate of His death, without which — his vicarious substitution — we, through sin, could not have shared in His joy; "for except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." And this is what the Spirit goes on to show out. (Ver. 12.) "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." I have quoted the whole of this context, because it seems most, blessedly to show how everything, as to the Christian, turns upon the Lord's resurrection from the dead. To man it may seem a little thing, for those who lived in times past to deny the resurrection; and a still less thing for those who live in times present, so to overlook it practically, as that orthodox faith does which is current about it, where men believe it rather because the church has laid it down as a thing to be believed, than because found in the word of God; but truly both the one and the other to the sound Christian are very fearful things. Resurrection is the fundamental doctrine of scripture, and involves the questions of God's estimate of Christ, of the personal glory of the Son, and the glory of all those offices, which by resurrection have been manifested as His, in which He is to display God's glory. I would press much the careful study of chapter 15 of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. It is divided into three parts; the first, the statement of the gospel (vers. 1-11); the second, the opening of the paramount importance of the Lord's resurrection; and third (from ver. 21 onward), the fruits, pleasant and blessed, of this resurrection, so presenting us with a most beautiful summary and outline of truth. And this stands upon the surface of it — the whole glory was Christ's in resurrection, that is, in newness of life, after having died for us, his Father's poor church, that we might share the glory with Him, and there in death He rolled off the heavy burden of our sins vicariously borne by Him, and then rose as the firstfruits, the pledge and pattern to us of victory over death and the grave.

4. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (2 Cor. 4: 10, 11.)

Two very different things are taught us here, yet the two blessedly united together, and in an order in sweet harmony with the rest of scripture: — The dying of Jesus as the indwelling thought of the believer, and the deliverance of the believer in circumstances always to death for Jesus' sake. Alas! how we forget Jesus dying here, and therefore how strange, oft, does that experience outwardly of the cross, and trial, and deliverance unto death of us always for Jesus' sake seem. Nothing but the memory ever fresh of Jesus' experience while in the world, can make a similar path a matter of course with the believer. But as surely as we are one with Him, one in spirit, and hope, and life, so surely must we have here in the world that which He had. May we then learn to bear about while in the body, the memory of His dying; and thereby learn to count upon being alway delivered unto death ourselves also for His sake.

5. "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. 5: 13-15.)

As in the last context, the memory of the Lord's death was presented as the Christian's power of being willing to be alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake — so here we have, on the other hand, the connection of the Lord's death with all the believer's conduct — for all his suffering and all his action alike grow up out of the Lord's death.

The passage is evidently a church portion, and should be more correctly read, "if one died for all, then all died;" for "then were all dead" means the church in Him. And observe how sweetly it all flows out — the love of Christ constrains us, ah, this is the secret of our happy obedience — service, not because the things we do are right in themselves, or because the saints around expect us so to act, or only because we know that such things are commanded us; but this blessedly given to us in the intelligence of love to Him who seeks and commands our obedience. His love constrains — a strong yet sweet power of restraint! and how, but by the blessed exercise of our souls in the privilege of reading the connection between the thoughts of His mind, and the love of His heart, as shown in His wondrous work. We thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died. Ah! this is judgment beyond that of mortal man's, for it traces the vital union between Christ and the church; sees them one with Him: sees them reaping, in present blessing, the fruits of the travail of His soul. None but the new mind can broach such judgments — "If he died, all died." But this is not all it can do; it can tell you also its estimate of His object herein, "and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again;" and then, having thus judged, it has told its own simple tale of the reason why it does His will. May it always be thus with us! Surely, such service is perfect freedom.

6. "Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)." (Gal. 1: 1.)

The apostleships of Peter and of Paul had their respective peculiarities and points of difference: Peter received his from the Lord while on earth; Paul his from the Lord in ascended glory. In the opening of this epistle his great desire seems to have been to prove that neither he nor his doctrine were, before God, subject to the work at Jerusalem; but, if anything, upon a higher and more glorious standing, though both entirely of grace. And this he sought to establish, not in pride or self-importance, but as showing the folly of those who having learned Christ from him had turned to Judaism. It could not be said of any of the other apostles, "not of man neither by men, but by Jesus Christ, and *God the Father, who raised him from the dead;*" for, to say the least, they were apostles before God the Father

had raised Jesus Christ from the dead: and the pre-eminence of glory as to Paul's apostleship will be found, by those who read the New Testament carefully, to attach itself also in a peculiar way to our standing, which is not, in any sort in nature, a Jewish one; but, every natural tie of connection with the Jews and with the earth having been broken by the crucifixion of the Lord, He, when raised from the dead by God the Father, has given Himself in resurrection and ascension-glory to the church. And this seems to me the Spirit's object in here introducing the subject of the Lord's death; namely, to show the entire rupture and breaking up of all Jewish and earthly order, and blessing, and authority.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Gal. 2: 21.)

The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. And the law could not give righteousness; it described health to the sick patient, but gave him neither medicine nor a cure — if it could have done so, there would evidently have been something good in man, and then why need Christ have died? But this was not so; and there could be nothing done for man, no righteousness found for him, but in and by the death of Jesus Christ. Oh, that we might cleave fast to grace, and get our hearts established therein and filled therewith: it is a sad thing even in this present day among the saints, to see how little *establishment* in grace there is. Believer! let it sink down into thy mind, that every question thou dost entertain, such as, "Am I accepted of God?" (for that is righteousness) goes to

ward frustrating the grace of God, toward making the death of Christ to have been in vain, and therefore must be false. And most clear — it is that if thou hast not acceptance of God (and there is no acceptance now but acceptance in the Beloved), then thou art entirely without any blessing, a lost thing, under judgment. Marvellous have been God's ways! Out of blessing in Eden man cast himself; and now he must either be blessed and loved together with Christ, the Son and Heir of all God's glory, or cursed and damned with Satan, the enemy of God and man. But we are not of those that are cursed, for we have known the *grace* of God, and seen in Israel's history the entire irremediableness, under the best circumstances, of man; and grace (the grace of God, which, when righteousness could not come by the law, caused Christ to die) is our plea and boast. May our hearts be filled therewith continually.

7. "That ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. . . and you who were dead in trespasses and sins . . . hath he raised up together and made sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 1: 18-20; Eph. 2: 1-6.)

The wondrous mystery of the union between Christ and the church is here presented to us, and the blessed truth that when God raised His Son from the dead, the church was raised *up together*, and made sit *together*, with Him in heavenly places. The truth here taught is not, as some would have it, that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is a type of the quickening of the soul from its death in trespasses and sins, but a much more blessed and marvellous display of grace; even that the whole body of the saints were seen by God in Christ Jesus, when He, Jesus, was raised from the dead: just as the rib which God took out of the side of Adam, and wherewith He builded the woman, was seen by God in Adam when Adam laid him down in sleep. And this blessed truth it is which meets the soul in its weakness; not setting it upon the unhappy question (as such a mis-explanation as I have referred to would) "How far am I quickened?" never honouring God's word and promises at all, by resting the whole matter upon experience of what is to be seen within, but upon rejoicing in God's blessed testimony that we were seen by him in Jesus, when Jesus rose from the dead and sat down at His right hand. And, surely, if we credit this assertion of our God, it must give strength and peace, as showing

how completely our blessing is secured; the whole work been finished, and seen to God as finished, now more than 1800 years: for observe if we were raised up together Christ was raised up 1800 years ago, therefore, so we must have been; aye, and made to sit *together* with Him even then in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Blessed and wonderful mystery, gracious and glorious privilege! how completely does faith herein meet all the reasonings and cavillings of nature, and how blessedly does it enable us to plead the death of our Lord as the answer to all the strivings and workings of death in us! We were raised up together with Him; we were morally dead, He judicially dead in our place, and when He arose we arose with Him; so likewise does it most blessedly enable us to use Christ in life, as our reservoir of life and blessing. And I would notice that, though men call this the mystic union of Christ and the church, it is a most true and real thing; not merely a union supposed or reckoned to exist by God, yet having, no real being, but contrariwise, a most true, and real, and substantive thing, being in the power and work of God the Holy Ghost, and through that new nature derived from Him in us made known to us.

8. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto *death*, even the *death* of the cross. *Wherefore*," etc. (Phil. 2: 8, 9.)

There is not, perhaps, a more deeply interesting portion in scripture than this; and, like all the rest of the word and thoughts of God, it has a fulness and unsearchableness about it which are altogether infinite. The outline of the matter it contains is, the presenting as a pattern to the believer, the humiliation of the Lord as His way into the glory which has been conferred upon Him, with this blessed additional thought, that such is that glory to Christ as to involve the fulness of power for all such service to the believer. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The first thing which may be noticed, as standing upon the very surface, is that the mind which was acted upon by the Lord, is presented to the believer as that on which he is to act. But then, secondly, we have the range of the Lord's obedience as connected with the church presented to us; and this ought to be noticed. The sphere of His service extended from the throne of the Father, where He was before the world was, down (through death upon the cross for atonement, with all the circumstances of the world, the flesh, and the devil connecting themselves with that death) to that full exercise of supremacy and power which He shall yet exercise over all things in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth. I would notice this particularly, because it is the obedience of the Lord herein which constitutes the church's righteousness; not His obedience simply in fulfilling Adam's duties as set in the garden of Eden, nor simply as a Jew in legal righteousness loving the LORD His God with all His heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and loving His neighbour as Himself: though, of course, that was true of Him, and formed a part of His obedience, even that which will constitute strict Jewish righteousness, and wherein as wrought by Messiah, the nation shall stand accepted. But the church, though she knows and surely glories in these things, knows much more; for the unction of the Spirit upon her eye has opened it to see these things afar off, higher and deeper and fuller and broader; even the Son leaving His own rightful place upon the Father's throne, and, through all the tissue and entanglement of things present, so acting as to put each one of them into the place of

subjection, and, as it shall be hereafter manifested, subjection to God; so that be it what it may, all things are to the glory of God. I would notice, thirdly, as connected more immediately with the course of thought I am endeavouring to pursue in this paper, the Lord's death. is here presented to us as at once the measure of His obedience, and the procuring cause of His redemption-honours. "He humbled himself [it is said], and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Surely none but He that can measure fully and aright the contrasts between that cross and the throne of God, whence He had come, can tell the extent of the obedience expressed in His bowing to it. True He saw the grace of His Father's heart in it, as the way for the revelation of His own character bringing glory to God in the highest, and in earth peace, good — will toward man; but while His own soul fed on these things, and the glory to Himself and the joy to the church, still the bitterness of the cup was in it, and all for Himself alone. At His proper and alone charge and cost the whole was to be effected — and He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And with Him it was no obedience as of constraint or of expediency; but to obey was all His heart's desire and the very thought of His mind: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." Blessed Lord! how does Thy perfect obedience shame us, yea, cause us to blush before Thee! Was obedience of such beauty in Thy sight, and Thy way in it so perfect and so complete; and shall it stand with us upon such low grounds as it does? Shall our ways in it continue weak, so uncertain? But not only is this obedience to us most humbling, as contrasted with ourselves; it is likewise most consoling and encouraging as connected with its reward from God, and with that which is involved in that reward. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This is the reward — the redemption-glory conferred on Jesus; and surely, as knowing our oneness with Him; that we are one spirit with the Lord — made for His glory — the church of God, which He loved and for which He gave Himself, that He might, in all the fulness of His, glory, present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, we must rejoice therein with exceeding joy and with great delight. And besides this joy in His reward, which we have as able (because we have the mind of Christ) to rejoice both in God's joy, and so honouring Him, and in His joy in having such a proof of His God and Father's love to share with the church (and He fully knows the joy of that word, in His own soul, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"); beyond this, I say, as well as beyond the blessed security His possessing such glory, with such a heart as He has, gives to us of blessing in ourselves — there is to us this comfort, that God is now acting in the church upon the principle of the glory so conferred on Jesus; and because He is, we have assured to us the full power, of serving the Lord.

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." This, as I have shown elsewhere, is just a showing of the church as the place in which the Lordship of Jesus is now displayed and recognised, in the power of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost — and enables me to say, because I know the counsel of the Lord and stand in it — "As all service is but a recognising of the Lordship of Jesus, for what service to which I am called can there be a deficiency of strength — seeing it is God that worketh in me to will and to do of his own good pleasure!" Alas! how do we come short here. Perhaps our failures are very much from looking at the Lord's death as in itself redemption, instead of His resurrection from death.; for this last it is which is as well the power to faith, as the real security of the blessings of redemption.

9. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." (Phil. 3: 10.)

How impossible is it to the natural mind to understand such passages as this! The most it can know of God, is as the God of nature; now, with this light, it must do one of two things, either recognise that there has been some great event intervening between His creation of the world and its present standing, in which view, attributing all the manifestly existing evil to such an event as the fall really was, it would surely, recognising God's goodness, calculate upon the present exercise of His power in behalf of those that serve and faithfully obey Him, to deliver them from the present evil; or, on the other hand, not adopting, indirectly from scripture, any such view about the fall, it must, gathering its judgment of God from the daily experience of the creation, most sadly misapprehend the real character of God, and suppose Him to take pleasure in the sorrows which sin and Satan brought into the world. Contrasted with both these views, the context before us presents God, in all the grace of His love, giving up His own Son to redeem from under the hand of Satan and the power of the fall, and yet, in His wisdom, so far from granting present deliverance to His servants from sorrow and trial, making it, because part of their association with His Son, a most especial part of His love toward them and proof of His favour for them. Such is the general instruction I should glean from this desire of the Spirit in the apostle to know Jesus, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death — the inseparableness of God's favour and suffering; at the same time it may be well to notice that there is clearly a stress upon "the fellowship of his sufferings" — suffering in itself not necessarily being the fulfilment of the Spirit's desire here expressed. As Peter expresses it, "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; . . . If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; . . . but let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him, glorify God on this behalf. . . . Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." There are two classes of sufferings, which may be ours as Christians: 1, Those which come upon us only because we are Christians, as persecution for His name's sake, and for testimony; 2, Those which, though they may be ours in common with the men of this world — the sufferings of fallen humanity — we yet bear for Christ's sake; for instance, a Christian may be subject, in common with others, to a great deal of oppression and tyranny, it may be — the worldling will bear it only just so far as his own advantage makes useful; the Christian will bear it all for Christ's sake — because he can say, "All things are of him who hath reconciled us. unto himself." This differs from the truth taught in Romans 4: 23, in that it presents trial of circumstances — that in Romans the trial of faith as the believer's portion. The passages (2 Cor. 4: 10; 2 Cor. 5: 13) present the same subject, only as connected with "the motives of the mind."

10. "He is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." (Col. 1: 18.)

That He should be pre-eminent in all things, was the good pleasure of God; but the church heartily coincides, as having the mind of the Spirit, that so it should be. Having received all things through Him, and knowing Him as her treasury of blessing, to magnify Him is to fill her with delight. Blessed position to find oneself in, blessed in its many points of contrast to the world — blessed point of agreement with the mind and will of God! And surely there never was either death or resurrection comparable to the Lord's; and His resurrection from death was the precursor and mean of the resurrection of all others; well, therefore, may it be said that in it also He had the pre-eminence! I say His resurrection was the precursor and mean of *all* resurrection, for surely the general resurrection at the last day, as much as the first resurrection of the saints, is owing to and flowing from the incarnation death, and resurrection of Jesus.

11. "And you . . . hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable." (Col. 1: 22.)

The apostle is here speaking (or rather the Spirit by the apostle) of the reconciliation of those Colossians who, in a double sense, as heathens, had been reconciled in the body of Christ's flesh through death, that they may be presented holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in His sight. In mind they had been alienated, and enemies by wicked works, but now had been reconciled in Him. The first part, their past experience, seems to refer to their state of mind; the second — their blessing in Christ, to the privilege true of them in Christ; the root and means, surely, when known, of a reconciled state of mind in them, yet a very distinct thing from it, though, through grace, ever connected in the believer with it. And oh, what a blessed thing it is, notwithstanding the memory of all the proofs in wicked works of years past, and the sense it may be, by the carnal mind still strong in us, of our natural enmity to, and alienation from, God; yet to know that in Him we are reconciled unto God — presented holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in His sight.

12. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him." (Col. 2: 12.)

The Spirit is here arguing the question of the full assurance of understanding, as found in connection with the mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ. And He presses this most gracious truth, that in place of the believer morally dead, Christ became judicially dead. And by the same grace, that actual union in the Spirit, whereby, through Christ's death, under judgment, the believer gets free from all charge; the same union, I say, makes him one with Jesus in resurrection and all its blessings. No benefit has the believer from Christ's death without full benefit from His resurrection; blessed truth this, and all security for him in Christ Jesus, and seen by God as his, out of himself, and in spite of all his weakness and infirmity, in the Beloved. The saints in our own day have most sadly separated Jesus and the resurrection, and tried to rest upon His death apart from this resurrection. The early Christians' salutation one to another is said to have been, "The Lord is risen." The Lord is dead, would have been no gospel; for if Christ is not risen, we are yet in our sins; and, be it remarked, that in pressing this we do not set aside, in any way, the Lord's death from the saint's thoughts, but contrariwise establish it, for there can be no resurrection where there was no death; but the important thing is to see, which can alone be when the two are kept together, what death was to the Lord — a thing most dreadful, as it might be, yet voluntarily undertaken and borne by Him, and which had no power whatsoever over Him, but over which, even when underlying it, He was more than conqueror.

13. "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances? (Col. 2: 20.)

Following up the same subject of the full assurance of understanding, the apostle here turns from the side of privilege to that of practice therewith connected. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish in the using), after the commandments and doctrines of men? How many poor weak believers are there just in this state! not walking as having their citizenship and conversation in heaven, but living down on earth, and in the world, and making their religion to consist very much in self-imposed ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of the foolish thoughts of themselves or other human minds, and not after scripture. Let such look well to it; such a state is not merely a loss of comfort to themselves, or a state of christian weakness or infirmity; it is a

state most inconsistent with the faith they profess; so that Paul could say, "How is this, if ye be dead with Christ?" It goes very close to prove that word of Paul as being true of them, "not holding the Head;" and savours most sadly of anything but grace and truth, show of wisdom it may have in will worship, and in false humility, and in vain neglecting of the body; but before God it is not in any honour, being, after all, to the satisfying of the flesh, and conformity to the world. Dear reader, is it so with thyself? If so, plead simply what Christ has done for thee, and so get thy mind enlightened in the full assurance of understanding, and thou wilt find power to live as one freed, by thy knowledge of thy death and resurrection with Jesus, from all such follies.

14. "To wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (1 Thess. 1: 10.)

There is a blessed fulness about the whole of this epistle, as indeed about which of the scriptures is there not? a divine fulness. Yet perhaps to us, in the close of this dispensation, some parts seem more sensibly to address themselves, and among others this in a most peculiar way. For this epistle to the Thessalonians shows how the hope of the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus, is the power of the church's strength and health, and forasmuch as we are daily learning more and more of the church's weakness, failure, and infirmity, this truth, so strikingly exhibited in this part of the word, becomes in a peculiar way commended to us. It is blessed to see, as elsewhere, how privilege and responsibility hang together. In no other epistles have we such a title of address to the saints used, as, "To the church which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ;" this was doubtless for the meeting of those shrinking feelings of nature, when the coming of the Lord is recognised as near, but the saints' true place before God, both now and then, not also borne in mind: and no one surely can read the epistle, and not be struck with both the character of the service of the Thessalonians, and the powerful exhortations of the apostle. This was the position they held, "serving the living and true God, and waiting for his Son from heaven." Blessed position! oh that the saints in these last days might return to it, at once and fully — you and I, dear reader, among the number. But mark, I pray you, the connection of this with what follows ". whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Aye, mark this, for this was the secret of the ability of these Christians to hold the position we admire and covet for ourselves. We cannot serve God unless we know Him as the creditor to whom we owe this debt — He raised Christ for us from the dead; He raised Him and set Him at His own right hand that we might have hope in God; hope that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory. This enables the soul to count itself, and to act, as a servant of the living and true God; this and this only enables it likewise to wait for His Son from heaven. So that we find the Lord's resurrection from death here presented to us as the power of the church's strength, and health, and service. Had He not died, our sins could not have been borne by Him, yea, and He could not have been raised; and had it not been God that raised Him from the dead, the deep sin of our hearts would not have been met; we could not have served God, nor waited in confidence for Him who is coming forth as God's avenger, if not knowing God to be our sure friend.

15. "The Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets." (1 Thess. 2: 15.)

The Spirit is here tracing the outline of the experience of those who, knowing themselves to, be of that church (made so of God) which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ, are serving the living and true God, and waiting for His Son from heaven. "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus; for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they may fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." Jesus

treated by His own like all the prophets — put to death — is then to be the saint's expectation, if, knowing his fellowship with that which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ, he really is serving God and waiting for His Son from heaven. I do not say, that because such things befall us not, therefore we are not Christians; but I do say, and with confidence, that the want of preparedness of mind, yea, and expectancy of such things among Christians, does show most painfully how far those things which are outside of God the Father and of the Lord, yea, often opposed to these, how far these things have gotten a wrong place in many of our hearts, even as they have leavened the whole lump of the professing body. And there is this too we may lay to heart, if not ready to be killed for Him, we are not ready to dig daily for Him. This may startle some who think they could give up much for the Lord, only reserving life; but I believe their calculation is in the flesh, and that there is no dying daily save in the Spirit in grace, and that where this is there is both the sense of innate weakness, and also preparedness for all surrender to the Lord. Religion not built upon grace, not based upon Jesus and the resurrection, not sustained by the Holy Ghost and the hope of the Lord's coming, may enable us to do many things, but sooner or later it will break down and show not our want of more religion but want of true religion altogether. This is a hard saying, but so are all those sayings which are the counterparts of the glorious privileges given us in Christ Jesus; and indeed I do not know but one thing that can nerve the soul for this, and that is a most simple yet blessed truth — part of the believer's portion in Christ Jesus; namely, that —

16. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." (1 Thess. 4: 14.)

And who that knows the church to be in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ, but must believe that Jesus died and rose again — since the Lord, in whom the church is, bears the form of the Lamb as it had been slain. The saint does and must believe this; but, oh most blessed grace! he cannot do so but by the Spirit, and simply because he does so he knows he has the Spirit, and therefore is one with Jesus: and so most simply and naturally it comes to pass that he can say, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." They are one with Him, bound up in one bundle of life with Jesus — no more two, but one; and that which God has joined together let no man put asunder. God has joined them — the church and Jesus. He will not put them asunder. Devils and the world cannot! Oh that we might, in more childlike simplicity, cleave to the portion our God has given to us, and walk worthy of it. A poor pitiful way it is to be one day filled with thoughts of union with Jesus, and therefore of the Father's love and our coming glory; and the next to be filled, through want of watchfulness or a little self-denial, with thoughts of the world and self and sin! May we learn that we are in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that therefore our portion here is to be dying daily; and may we be sustained therein, in patience of hope, knowing that if Jesus died and rose again, even so them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him, Amen and amen.

17. "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." (1 Thess. 5: 9, 10.)

This little word comes in as a very sweet little close to the testimony of the Spirit in this epistle to the subject we are considering. Some might, looking at the last quotation, covet to sleep in Jesus, but, as He goes on to show even in that context, when Jesus does come the sleeping and the waking shall be all together with Him; though as it is ever the way with our gracious Lord to show grace first and foremost to that which is in greatest weakness, "the dead in Christ shall rise first," here He proceeds to show how the matter He is anxious about is one of daily, hourly moment — and He does it by bringing in the gracious yet deep thought of God toward us. He hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain

salvation by our Lord Jesus; — this would have been most gracious, but how much more the opening to us of His own deep thoughts about the way in which the blessing came to us — "He died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." It is not simply the saint is to live to God or as Jesus lived, but "live together with him," which is just this, being a channel for that fulness, which is ours in God the Father and in Christ Jesus the Lord, to flow out by. Yea, even more wonderful still, what our reptile thoughts cannot attain to, to live together with Jesus — that the lives, that is, which we live in the body, should be in the power of His life who is seated at the Father's right hand. And thus in the saints, while in the world, is to be seen in their lives the verity and reality of their portion being in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. I would only add that while assuredly this takes in the question of putting off the body before, or remaining in the body until Jesus comes, it goes a great deal farther, even to that morning waking and evening sleeping, the natural extremes in our daily lives of the actings of our bodily service. God grant we may know the power of these things.

Part 4.

1. Death, the terminus of suffering as in the Lord, so to each saint. (2 Tim. 2: 8.)

- 2. Death, the object proposed in the humiliation, was the result of God's grace, and is presented for the church's admiration, as that by which Christ united the two extremes, namely, the divine glory which He saw in God, to be the church's, and the abject thralldom in which she lay under the devil; thereby redeeming the church from under the hand of the devil, destroying his power, and bringing her into the liberty of that divine nature which, in God, He saw to be hers (Heb. 2: 9-14.)

- 3. Death, the especial subject of the Lord's fear. (Heb. 5: 7.)

- 4. The redemption of transgression under the first covenant, and the ratification and confirmation of the second. (Heb. 9: 15, 16.)

- 5. That from which our Lord Jesus, as the great Shepherd of the sheep, was brought by the God of peace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, as the security to us of all power of obedience. (Heb. 13: 20.)

- 6. That, His victory over which, through the grace of God, was the begetting of us to a lively hope. (1 Peter 1: 3.)

- 7. That deliverance from which into glory, was God's claim upon the church for her faith and hope to rest in Himself. (1 Peter 1: 21.)

- 8. The death of Christ, God's sentence, and the believer's plea against the sins of the flesh. (1 Peter 3: 18.)

- 9. The Lord in victory over death the strength of the saint amid the wreck of apostasy. (Rev. 1: 5, 18; Rev. 2: 8.)

- 10. The leading thought of heaven and its hosts, and their measure of the worthiness of the Lamb. (Rev. 5: 6, 9, 12.)

- 11. Death, the Lord's title in connection with the book of life, and the exoneration of those who worship not the beast. (Rev. 13: 8.)

1. "Remember that Christ Jesus, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my

gospel.", (2 Tim. 2: 8.)

The leading thought of the Spirit's mind in this epistle seems to be the hardships to which the followers of Christ must expect to be subject; see 2 Tim. 1: 8, 12, etc., etc.; 2 Tim. 2: 3; 2 Tim. 3; 2 Tim. 4: 5, etc., accompanied by exhortations to patience therein. The citation is in harmony with this, the stress being, I conceive, laid upon the resurrection being *from the dead*. And if the Captain of our salvation had to suffer even unto death; if even He, who was of the seed of David, to whom all the promises in connection with Israel's glory belong, could only come at them by being rejected in death; if the blessedness of the gospel, Paul's joy, and Timothy's joy, and the joy of every saint, is the Lord's victory, *though slain* — surely suffering must be a most integral part of Christian experience. And Paul did suffer trouble, even as an evildoer, unto bonds, though the word of the Lord was not bound. Surely we greatly fail herein. Some few of us see it so far clearly as to be able to talk about it, though not all the saints, for many seem rather to think that ease and comfort here are our proper portion; yet of the few who can see that suffering is our portion here, how few have the loins of the mind girt up so as patiently to abide therein. Yet it is written, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." It is blessed to see the cause of our suffering and the rationale of it — the cause, says Paul (ver. 10), "I endure all things for the elects' sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory," — the rationale of it, "It is a faithful saying, for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him." And I would just notice, that while, in the context before us, Jesus' passage through death is His way into the possession of the promises of David, and the place of the testimony, death is likewise clearly marked as the extreme bourn, the terminus of suffering. The looking a little carefully at this, and at the blessed rest which to sleep in Jesus is to the believer, might give many a poor, weak, shrinking one, nerve and boldness to endure hardness as the good soldier of Christ; for our sufferings are not like Jesus', nor are ourselves like Him as to our capability of suffering; His sufferings were infinite even as His capability for suffering was infinite; and death came to Him, not simply as by the exhaustion of nature's powers — for then to Him it never could have come at all — but having fully accomplished His Father's will, He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. In nature little suffering drains all our strength, and we sink into blissful sleep through exhaustion and weakness, though not without direct permission of Him, without whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground; and the greatest suffering the greatest saint can bear is in truth but as nothing when measured aright, that is, when compared with Christ's. It is true our sufferings may seem to us great, and I believe all suffering does so while we are occupied with it; but this is owing to our inability to bear any in ourselves, and to the fact that as the Lord's object in sending suffering is to exercise us in dependence upon and submission to Him, He apportions the measure of strength for the suffering, to the measure of suffering; often, too, giving more sensible support under the greater than under the less afflictions, that we may learn in the little ones the nothingness of our own strength and competency, and in the greater and more trying scenes the grace of His love present with us, and how His strength is made perfect in weakness. Surely His ways are lovely, and gracious, and perfect; may we learn to mark and understand them more; and may this be the abiding thought of each saint, beloved of God, that he has a debt of love and gratitude to pay to God and Jesus, even the life which is left to him. We owe our life, our all, to Jesus, and His love covets earnestly the testimony of love from us; His love, I say, longs to receive from us the pledge and proof of our love to Him, and to see us hold life itself as something due to Him. His love is a jealous love; it cannot, because true love, rest without a return — yea, and that return of love from us is bound up in all the holy associations of the Lord's mind. Where did He learn His love toward us — was it not in His intercourse with the Father? There He saw love to the church; there He learnt to love her. But His jealousy of love to the Father makes Him heedful that there should be reciprocity of love in us — else would the Father's love be dishonoured. Moreover, His own love, though, if we may so say, guided

to the church by the counsel of the Father, is a genuine, true, and personal love. I speak of Christ's love; and true love, as I have said, rests not till it sees the response of love awakened. And it has been taught us — how? By the Holy Ghost shedding it abroad in our hearts, a sure and mighty and unfailling way. May we watch against the flesh and the world, and see that body, soul, and spirit are sanctified, wholly set apart for the Lord; and may we, in the sense of His love, and the way in which it was shown through death, be strong and faithful in the purpose of our souls to Him — not loving our lives unto the death. Father! for Jesus' sake, strengthen by thy Spirit the purpose of our souls to suffer all things.

2. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren . . . Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. 2: 9-14.) We cannot rightly understand the various parts of this context without looking at it as a whole; for it gives us a very beautiful summary or outline of the gracious purpose and work of God in behalf of the church, with the way wherein it has been accomplished. And there is much to be admired in the way in which it is first presented to us — for first of all is presented to us that which does in fact first of all meet our notice in the world, the object above all others worthy of attention, the humiliation of the Son, made a little lower than the angels; but why thus humbled? Why is He (of whom it is written, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," and again, "Worship him, all ye angels") made lower than the angel? — for the suffering of death. And what is the needs be for that? Was not God's blessedness and felicity perfect in itself? Was it not enough for Him to enjoy that which He had and was? Nature, man's nature, poor fallen nature may have such thoughts as these; but they are far removed from God's thoughts, as well in connection with others as with Himself. As to Himself, He never has been, nor can as God, be contented to rest, as it were, either in Himself or in His own; He lives to display His own glory, and loves to do so; and again, as to others, His creatures, He cannot rest without displaying to them, which can be done alone in works, that blessed character, and grace, and wisdom, and power, and goodness, the knowledge of which is enjoyment and delight to those who, being in dependence upon Him, enter into the understanding of that which He has ministered to them. But while this shows us why He acts (surely the very desire to act in Him is most blessed and gracious, for it is the desire of presenting, ever more and more clearly, that One, whom to glorify and to know is blessedness), the needs be for the humiliation in connection with His action, if for blessing in this world, is found in our sadly fallen state. For man to be met by God, as God, with His glory, would have been destruction. But God meets him as one with Him in the meek and lowly Jesus, the man of sorrow, though God manifested in the flesh. And yet, what avails even this meeting? True, they may thus be able to meet, and the glory of God being veiled awhile, poor man be enabled to stand in His presence, and hear His mind, and goodness; but alienated in heart from God, the very holy anxious care for God and man in Jesus only moves him to displeasure — it condemns him — it shows him what he should be and what he is not. But this was not all that was proposed in the humiliation; this was not even the object in it, but rather death was the object; which, while it teaches us the same blessed zeal in Jesus for God and man, does it in a way to lead us not to turn from the loveliness of His obedience to the loathsomeness of our disobedience, and then in self-condemnation, to hate Him as *the standard*, but rather to turn from all that is in us to the blessed grace in Him, who in that death put away our sins, and so filling our hearts, with the joy of restored favour to God, and our hands with the spoils of His victory, He leads us captive

in His love, rejoicing in Him and in His perfectness of obedience (for in that is our security). and so He makes us willing to condemn ourselves as self-convicted through the light of His love.

But after presenting us with this, the Spirit would lead us into the spring of it; for neither He nor Jesus would have us know the love of Jesus as a thing separate from God; and thus we have it here said, "That he, by *the grace of God*, should taste death for every man." This is most blessed — most blessed! His tasting death was "of God" — the God we had sinned against, the God we had to meet in judgment — of that God it was that Jesus tasted death for us. Well may it be said to be by grace. Surely it was an unmerited display of goodness — a free gift; for nothing could be seen by God in us (much as there was in Himself) which could have suggested such a thought. By grace I understand a free gift; a gift not merited, not deserved in any way, and that in God which leads Him to make such gifts the spontaneous rising and flowing of His own superabundant goodness; and such it was which in this case led to this mercy. Mercy and grace are not the same thing; for mercy is the overlooking of sin, and the communicating of goodness to what positively deserves wrath and judgment. Grace might be shown I conceive, to an unfallen angel; mercy or the pity of God, toward the rebellious only, to poor fallen man. And the form in which His free gift embodied itself toward us, was that of giving His Son to taste death for every man. But while we most surely have to adore His thoughts toward us herein, the next verse reminds us that He had thoughts about Himself too in the matter, and that in so acting He meant to put the church into the association with Himself in those thoughts concerning Himself in the matter. For we read, it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren; saying [and that too in the midst of glory], I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."

"It became him" — surely such expressions as this would lead us at once to look at the subjects in connection with which they are used, as presenting, in a peculiar way, the wisdom and grace of God, while they constrain us likewise to recognise the marvellous place the church is set in, as able to have such an appeal made to her. And such expressions are not rare or uncommon. In Luke 15 we have, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." In 1 Corinthians 2: 6, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them which are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." Again (Col. 1: 19), "For it pleased the Father [or, it was pleasing, that is, to Godhead] that in him should all fulness dwell;" and indeed there are many others of similar character which present that which is the expression of the divine mind for the church's admiration, thereby at once teaching her God and His ways, and that her own high calling is to possess the mind of Christ, which alone can enter into the admiration of that which was pleasing to God. And surely it becomes us with holy reverence to endeavour to trace what there was which "became" God in all these things. Now here we have it said, "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." The church is God's* church, and has been so from before the foundation of the world; in God the Son first saw her, and tracing, in the divine purpose and counsel, both the oneness in divine nature of God that sanctifieth, and the church so sanctified (for her new nature is derived from God as it is written, John 3: 6, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" and 2 Peter 1: 4, "partakers of the divine nature"), and the glory to which she was set apart, He was not ashamed to call them brethren. But the way in which these many sons were to be presented in glory was even then before the foundation of the

world, and therefore long before the fall, thus manifested as necessarily involving the captain of their salvation being perfected through sufferings.

*The expression "Church of Christ," though a very common one among men, is not, I believe, often found in scripture. There her common designation is the "church of God."

The humiliation of the Son, as Captain of salvation, was no merely remedial step brought in after the fall — no last resource of the benevolence of God to man, perversely departed from by him as far as possible, merely: these things it was truly; but to us, as able to enter into the deep things of God, it was also far more, even the settled purpose of the divine mind from before the fall and the foundation of the world, for all things are for God; and all things are by God; and so even the mystery of iniquity neither began nor has run its course, save by His permission and for the manifestation of His glory. The setting of the many sons in glory was not to be immediate — the mere expression and opening of an additional proof of His power and Godhead to the many displayed in creation: it was to be by redemption from evil; a presentation of the grace and patience of God in bright contrast with the dark wickedness of His adversary the devil, and of His amazing love in turning the hearts of many of those taken captive by him at his will, and then giving them escape from him. The sons were sons of redemption; and grace was to be the song and burden they should sing. The pit whence these sons were to be brought, and the object connected with their redemption thence (the revelation of salvation) seemed to have the needs be, to have constituted the propriety referred to in its being said, "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

And death — the Lord's death, thus became the wondrous link between the marvellous purpose and grace in God toward the many sons, and the monstrous position of thralldom and sin out of which they were to be redeemed. From the throne of God He stooped down in humiliation and suffering to earth, where He could meet and converse with those there known to Him as brethren; but He stooped lower still, even beneath that which was the burden that kept them bound there, the sense of which ever veiled their hearts in darkness and fear before God — death, the judgment of their sin and guilt: and in this there are these two distinct things, the grace, great and marvellous as it is of his becoming associated with us in our scene and circumstances of misery — "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same . . . for verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." And again, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." These and such like passages show us some of the gracious objects of the incarnation in humiliation as to the brethren.* He would become so associated with them as to learn all their sorrows, Himself the man of sorrows, the prince of grief, that they might have liberty before Him, and He power likewise to be touched with every feeling of infirmity. And the extent of His sorrows thus, and therefore of power of sympathy, is thus marked, Hebrews 5: 7; "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

*On the passage, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me," I would just remark, that

though we often hear people talking about Christ's *children* — this passage does not so call them, but contrariwise it is part of the apostle's argument that they are Christ's BRETHREN. God's children they were, and God, as their Father, and as His Father, gave and committed them to Him, and so He became their elder brother and guardian. I question whether the heavenly saints are ever spoken of as Christ's children.

The second object referred to has the devil more as its end. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." It is far too common for us to limit the scope of the divine objects to those one or two things in which we can trace our own individual interest; thus in effect making ourselves, and not Jesus, to be the centre of scripture. There are many portions which show us such is not the mind of Christ, presenting to us many varied and different objects accomplished by one and the same action in God. See for instance the parable of the sower, Matthew 13; the object of the testimony of the word of the kingdom is there shown to be not only the salvation of the church, or the manifestation of the true character of the seed in them who receive it into ground prepared; this is but *one* of the objects effected by the sowing of the good seed; besides this, it makes manifest the character of the birds of the air, that is the devil — and the unprofitable character of the stony ground, that is the flesh — and the injurious character of the thorns, that is the world. So that, while we might only look for that which concerns ourselves, we should see but one point of instruction here, and overlook those others of equal interest to the divine mind in the places, and of pre-eminent moment to us if following the Lord. The connection of the death of the Lord with Satan in like manner is too much overlooked, though the perception of it puts the church's freedom and liberty in a very clear and bright light. Having referred to this once before, when speaking of the blood, I shall here only briefly allude to it. The power of Satan against man was both in itself, and in its effect upon conscience, in the array of the character of God against fallen man, and the position he had taken by, and in the fall. Man was guilty and in rebellion, and against that Satan rejoiced to see the character of God ranged. Yea, and more than this, his power of death was by the just award of God; and upon every man that came into the world he could justly press it, for all had sinned: but when Jesus came, he had no claim or right over Him — against Him personally there was no sentence from God for sin; and when Satan touched Him he had exceeded his commission, and it became a just thing for the very God who had sanctioned his power of death, to sanction it no longer; justice and righteousness, which had been Satan's defence in the infliction of death, now, more loudly, called for vengeance; yea, and he had, like they of old of Gaza, taken captive one whom neither he nor his prison could hold — one that could up in the night and take the city gates upon his shoulders, leading captivity captive, and thus, by death, He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. The Lord's death, looked at vicariously, and as a matter between Him, and the Father, and the Spirit in the church, was the freedom of the church; but as looked at personally between God and Satan, it was Satan's death-warrant and sentence. "Now is the prince of this world judged," etc. But the matter stayed not there: the power of the jailer was destroyed, and the work effected, by means of which (as we see in Rev. 19 and Rev. 21) all his power and works shall be shortly crushed, the captives were free; and this same death which broke the jailer's arm and power it is, which delivers from his thralldom, and from the tyranny of fear, those who, all their lifetime, had been subject to bondage through fear of death; for seeing His death substituted for their judgment, death has ceased to be to them what it was, and has rather become the blessed rest of the weary pilgrim in his march through the world: and thus the Lord has gained the church from Satan now, and by His death stopped the power and force of his accusations for ever to them that believe, and

fitted them thus to become temples of the Holy Ghost, and to take their place outwardly and in conscious liberty among the sons of God.

3. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. 5: 7.)

What a contrast between this and the preceding portion! In that the Son, having marked the high calling and nature of the church in His Father's mind, is presented to us as coming down into the midst of her sorrows and captivity, by His own death to destroy him that had the power of death — that is the devil, and to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage: here the same blessed One is seen realising in His own person all the sorrow and anguish of the fear of death and, though heard, not delivered from it — "when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." Unasked, undesired, he came, in the deep sympathy of His own perfect soul, to remove the fear of death, and that too at His own proper charges, from those that were underlying it. But in this act and deed He had placed, Himself where all that love which was in the Father toward Him, could only act under restraint How wondrous is the love of God to the church, how marvellous the grace of Christ toward her. May we never forget either His love in thus tasting death for us, or the reality of the bitterness of the draught to His soul; and may we ever remember, that He having drank the cup, it remains not for us.

4. "For this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." (Heb. 9: 15-17.)

It is singular what confusion the translators of our, generally excellent, authorised version have made in some passages by needlessly rendering one and the same Greek word by a variety of English words. Thus the word *diatheke*, rendered uniformly throughout Hebrews 8 "*covenant*," is here rendered "testament;" *covenant* is surely the correct rendering. Probably they felt this in chapter 8, as seeing that to have rendered it *testament* would have been to make the law not a compact from God, ratified with the symbolic blood of bulls and goats, but (which it evidently is not) a testamentary deposition of the slain beast. Perhaps also in chapter 9, the verses before us formed their difficulty, and it was one which the more easily passed from the truth of the second covenant, so far at least as it has been applied to the church being a testamentary deposition of the Lord's; though this is not the meaning of the passage.

The passage would read much more simply thus: — "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of the thing covenanted over. For a covenant is of force upon the basis of dead things: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the thing covenanted over is alive. Whereupon, neither the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you."

Whereby we get a most simple truth presented to us about the confirmation of the covenant; and the death of the Lord presented us at once the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first covenant, and the ratification of the second covenant. The transgressions under the first covenant would just be the fruits of its imperative demands upon fallen man, in weakness and in rebellion before God; the more "do and live" is pressed upon him, the more will he feel both his own inability to do, and the motions of sin which are by the law: the second covenant acts in blessed contrast to this, as it is written in Hebrews 10: 16: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." And Oh, how wondrously full the value of the Lord's death! — at once the antitype of all the Mosaic and Levitical sacrifices! the redemption of transgressions under that covenant, and the power and virtue of that better compact of pure divine grace, wherein God pours forth out of His own abundant fulness, according to His estimate of the wants and necessities of His poor fallen creatures, and gives all blessings unto them that believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord!

5. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Heb. 13: 20, 21.)

These two verses cannot be separated, if we would have the comfort and the instruction our God would teach us by them; for it is the character in which our God is presented in the former, which forms the known security of the church's power for the service presented in the latter. And I would, *en passant*, notice here, how much those rob themselves and God of, who either separate privilege and precept, or overlook the different titles and names, under which God presents Himself, when seeking to instruct and guide the church. The call to be perfect in every good work to do His will, having that which is well-pleasing in God's sight wrought in us, would be a sorrow-quickenning thing if presented to us by itself, for it would be a draining demand upon nature for more than nature contains; but when it comes as a given character in God, wherein He has presented Himself as the worker of all blessing yea, the basis of all blessing in Himself raising the Lord, our Lord Jesus, from the dead, and that, too, in the character of the great Shepherd of the sheep, and through the blood of the everlasting covenant, it comes with joy and blessing, for rich is the cluster of mercies and blessings it brings along with it; and it is impossible to think of them and not to rest in Him who did them, as the doer and effectuator of all the other things which they seem to involve, suggest, and lead into. And thus the precept, instead of being a heavy, heart-breaking burden, becomes a blessed and refreshing consolation, because it throws us afresh off the resources of nature, upon the fulness of the grace and power of God.

6. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1: 3-5.)

Oh, that the saints were brought off their own dark fleshly experiences to rest more simply upon God and His work! "Surely there are comparatively but few who have learnt to tell the beads of mercy which are theirs in Christ; — "begotten again to a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." Is it not a precious string of rich gems? But whose are they? Surely they are the property of every believer! Yet they know it not; but too

many of them question and doubt, as though nothing were theirs; and why is this, but because instead of taking what God has done as their portion and security (that is, the experience of faith and the Spirit), they will look for evidences and testimonials inside themselves (which is the experience of unbelief and nature), whereby they never get a firm footing in grace at all. Blessed truth, that the resurrection of Jesus was our begetting again to a lively hope to all these blessings and glories. May the knowledge of this as a thing true, in God eternally true, lead us into perfect freedom, and holy joy and delight. For this will bring our poor dark hearts into the place of light, and peace, and gladness, and enable us to sine, for joy, and to find strength (for the joy of the Lord is His people's strength) to go forth and do His will.

7. "Christ manifest for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." (1 Peter 1: 20, 21.)

In Hebrews 13 we had a passage somewhat similar to this, only there God's conduct in graciously raising Him from the dead for us was the pledge of all power to us for service to God; here the same thing is presented, as showing that in God there is a basis and claim for our faith and hope. God raised Him from the dead, and God gave Him glory, and that for the sake of us who believe: now if this resurrection, as we have seen, is the begetting of us to a lively hope, with all the attendant blessings — what a blessed rest in Himself has God presented for our faith and hope! And surely, nothing but having these in God Himself will suffice. All and everything outside of God is variable and uncertain, but He changes not, and the faith and hope which are in Him cannot fail nor cease. I do think, in our own day, there is very little of faith and hope in God. What with wrong and erroneous views of the work of the Son, such as many have, imagining His work was not the result of, and the expression of, the Father's grace, but something brought in to move the Father; and what with the confounding together of the work of the Son and of the Spirit, and again, the confused notions about faith and the Spirit, it has come to pass that really very few have their faith and hope in God Himself. Reader, is it so with thee? A simple rest upon, and expectation from, God Himself, resulting from the knowledge of what He has proved Himself to be by the marvellous work He has done in raising Christ from the dead for the church, and giving her glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. And surely, this last clause shows that not only has He presented a basis for faith and hope in Himself but moreover, that He lays claim to have them there. Alas, our little faith, our little intelligence of service to One so gracious, so patient, so anxious in love toward us!

8. "It is better that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." (1 Peter 3: 17, 18.)

The force and meaning of this, when taken in connection with the few first verses of 1 Peter 4, is very plain, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: who shall give account to him that is ready to judge, the quick and the dead." No one, indeed, but one understanding the mystery of the union of Christ and the church can comprehend such things; but to such the argument is weighty and simple; Christ died for you on account and by reason of your flesh, therefore you must count it a thing crucified, and to be crucified with Him. And thus we are reminded here of the gracious way in which our God has given us His sentence against, and full estimate of, our flesh, and that in such a way as to

make His sentence necessarily the plea of every one that believes against the sins of the flesh. As connected with the death of the Lord, and the lesson thence to be derived by us, I shall here make no further remark; but as there are two parts of the context which have presented to many great difficulties, I would just make a remark or two, tending perhaps to throw some light upon the subject to many minds, and which seem to me connected with the meaning which, rightly or wrongly, I attach to the passages in question.

The argument, it will be observed, is especially addressed to the Jewish Christians (see the opening and course of the epistle), and at this part, from 1 Peter 3: 18 to 1 Peter 4: 7, turns upon the question of the effect of the knowledge of God's judgment upon a believer. This, to a Gentile mind, would have been comparatively a simple thing, requiring merely the enunciation of it. But to a Jewish mind the case was somewhat different, for it had before it, not only its own state as one that had been subjected to law, but likewise the case of the antediluvian world, concerning which it might raise a question, such as, whether the statement of the principle was so universal as to include them. And this question would arise, not from captiousness necessarily, for he that knows God and His ways aright, knows the uniformity of the principles of His conduct. It is this, as it seems to me, which leads Paul into his argument in Romans 5: 12-14; for he was ever careful, as we should be, to establish in the minds of those with whom he had to do, that God's ways were equal; and so he shows them there, that there having been no standard of right or wrong given to any body of people in the world, until the law came by Moses, did not at all touch the question of God's judgment as to man's real state. Until Moses, there had been no standard given in the world, and no God, present daily, to mark departure from this standard, and to bring it into present judgment for it; and after Moses this had been the case: nevertheless, though in the world there might be this difference, the prevalence of death from Adam to Moses, showed that God's estimate of them all was very much the same — all died.

In the same way Peter here seems to me to anticipate such thoughts arising, and in several of the verses in the context to be labouring to show that the principle he was stating was of universal applicability as to man. I should read and paraphrase it thus, "It is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing." For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just One for the many unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: and then, lest a Jew should say, as it seems to me, — "well, we see the needs-be of such a testimony and estimate to one who has been under the law, but what of those as to whose sin God bore no such testimony in themselves, as He had by the law to us Jews: say, the antediluvians?" Peter adds, and by the which Spirit (the very same whereby Christ was quickened), He went and preached (by Noah) unto the spirits (now) in prison; which formerly were disobedient, when the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, etc.

9. "Grace unto you and peace . . . from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead . . . I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death . . . These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive." (Rev. 1: 5, 18; Rev. 2: 8.)

The book of the Revelation is a very solemn and yet blessed book. It opens to us, in a peculiar way, the dark outline of the churches' departure from God, and gives many fearful details of the trials and difficulties the faithful few will have to meet with; in corresponding contrast most bright and blessed is the aspect in which the blessed Lord presents Himself.

"Grace unto you and peace . . . from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead."

The blessed Captain of Salvation having waded through all necessities and trials, and gained the shore, calling to those for whom He stemmed the mighty stream, to mark the place He held and this His present victory over all their very present trials after the full experience of them. And surely this is both blessed and gracious. For landed safely there, and now, care and thought no longer demanded from Him, for Himself and His God, the work being finished which He gave Him to do, His whole care and thought could be for the church; and who so fitted as He to sympathise with her as Himself, just come out of the conflict in which she still is? And the blessedness of this, His position, so held, for the church, shortly afterwards shines out; for when John fell at His feet as one that was dead when he saw Him — this was His gracious way: "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first. and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" is a blessed word; but how pre-eminently blessed is this presenting of the Lord in His risen glory, just returned from the conflict, as being for the church too. Jesus, manifested as God, with memory fresh as to all the details of the conflict for us, Himself having the mastery of them all, present to give us the same. May God realise the blessed thought to us, that in confidence of His possessing the keys of hades and of death, we may advance with all boldness under the immediate scrutiny of His eye. Strongly confirmatory of the view here taken of the object of the character thus assumed by the Lord, to my own mind at least, is the use of the same character in the address to the church of Smyrna, "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive."

Any one that carefully reads the letters to the seven churches, will see that not only are the insignia under which the Lord introduces Himself to them, respectively, different, but that likewise there is an internal harmony in each letter between the insignia adopted — the state of the church, and the promises or warnings given to it. It was, I believe, the peculiarly trying state of things at Smyrna, but the faithfulness of the church thereunder, which led the Lord Jesus, in addressing it, to take the same choice character in which He had introduced Himself to John in the first chapter, in the midst of his embarrassing feebleness, and by which, John, in opening the book, is led by the Spirit to introduce Christ, as sending with Him, which is, and which was, and which is to come, and with the seven spirits that are before His throne, grace and peace to them.

10. "In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth . . . Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth . . . Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

These three passages, in painful contrast to the world's course of thought give us Heaven's estimate of the Lamb *as it had been slain*. And, first, we have this as connected with the mind of God, and the settled ordered arrangements of the glory of the place.

"In the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had been slain." And not only do we find Him in this place of glory as to the throne of the Lord God Almighty, but even that throne itself sharing in His name, as oft afterwards the throne is called the throne of God and the Lamb. Then, secondly, we have the song of the elders (representatives of the church on earth) in full accordance with the mind of Him, before and around whose throne they

are hymning still the death of Jesus: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth." And then, thirdly and lastly, the full chorus of those whose minds are in full unison with the mind of heaven; "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."

Surely it ought to give us great boldness and liberty, when thinking of the glory that awaits us, and the place prepared for us, amid the many mansions of the Father's house; to see the place those grand and leading truths (which our present necessities and circumstances so press home upon our hearts and minds) hold in the hearts and minds of them that are there. If our sin, and sinfulness, and misery, and failure, make the death of Jesus, and His life from death, our one abiding constant resource, these things are better known, and more appreciated there, whither we go, than here. And, indeed, while from the flesh in us we may be more conscious of being driven to them by pressure of passing circumstances, and the evil in us and around, we must never forget, that the secret of our power to value them at all, is the mind of Christ, which we have from the Spirit; and this is the mind of heaven; so that in principle we, as those there, do rejoice in these things in their intrinsic value, though it may be that, amid much weakness, and infirmity, and failure, we may be more conscious of being driven to them by circumstances than drawn by their intrinsic preciousness.

11. "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. 13: 8.)

When will the end of grace be reached, love divine fathomed, or the value of the death of Jesus be fully, rightly known? Here we have it in a new and fresh light still. The book of life endorsed with His name, as "the Lamb that had been slain," and the connection in which this book is here presented, show us, moreover, that it is in this character that deliverance is found in Him for those who worship not the beast. Blessed Lord, how various is Thy love and glory, how precious the applications and uses to Thy saints of them, by the Spirit in Thy word! How wretched and ruinous the state and condition of those that know them not, amid that world, whence Thy grace has redeemed us to Thyself, that we, knowing our names written in Thy book of life, might be enabled to give ourselves wholly to Thee as Thy worshippers and servants. Amen, and Amen.