

Short Papers — Section 4 of 10.

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“ACCEPTED” AND “ACCEPTABLE”

“He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1: 6). “Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to Him” (2 Cor. 5: 9).

The two words which form the heading of this paper, though rendered by the same word in our Authorized Version, are not at all the same. The former has respect to the *person* of the believer, the later to his *practical ways*. The first refers to his standing, the second to his state. It is one thing to be accepted; it is quite another to be acceptable. The former is the fruit of God's free grace to us as sinners; the latter is the fruit of our earnest labor as saints, though most surely, it is only by grace we can do anything.

It is well that the Christian reader should thoroughly understand the distinction between these two things. It will preserve him effectively from legality on the one hand, and laxity on the other. It remains unalterably true of all believers, that God has made them accepted in the Beloved. Nothing can ever touch this. The very feeblest lamb in all the flock stands accepted in a risen Christ. There is no difference. The grace of God has placed them all on this high and blessed ground. We do not labor to be accepted. It is all the fruit of God's free grace. He found us all dead in trespasses and sins. We were morally dead, far off from God, hopeless, Godless, Christless, children of wrath, whether Jews or Gentiles. But Christ died for us, and God has co-quickenened, co-raised and co-seated us in Christ, and made us accepted in Him.

This is the inalienable, eternal standing of all without exception, who believe in the name of the Son of God. Christ in His infinite grace placed Himself judicially where we were morally, and having put away our sins and perfectly satisfied on our behalf the claims of divine righteousness, God entered the scene and raised Him from the dead, and with Him all His members as seen in His own eternal purpose, and to be called in due time and brought into the actual possession and enjoyment of the marvelous place of blessing and privilege, by the effective operation of the Holy Spirit.

Well may we take up the opening words of the Epistle to the Ephesians and say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” All praise to His name throughout the everlasting ages!

All believers, then, are accepted — perfectly and forever accepted — in the Beloved. God sees them in Christ and as Christ. He thinks of them as He thinks of Him; loves them as He loves Him. They are ever before Him in perfect acceptance in the blessed Son of His love, nor can anything or anyone ever interfere with this their high and glorious position which rests on the eternal stability of the grace of God, the accomplished work of His Son, and attested by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

But are all believers *acceptable* in their practical ways? Are all so conducting themselves that their dealings and doings will bear the light of the judgment-seat of Christ? Are all laboring to be agreeable to Him?

Christian reader, these are serious questions. Let us solemnly weigh them. Let us not turn away from the sharp edge of plain practical truth. The blessed apostle knew he was accepted. Did that make him lax, careless or indolent? Far from it. "We labor," he says, "to be *acceptable* to Him." The sweet assurance that we are *accepted* in Him is the ground of our labor to be acceptable to Him. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead. And He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5: 14-15).

All this is preeminently practical. We are called upon, by every argument which can bear sway over the heart and conscience, to labor diligently to be acceptable to our blessed and adorable Lord. Is there anything of legality in this? Not the slightest tinge. The very reverse. It is the holy superstructure of a devoted life, erected on the solid foundation of our eternal election and perfect acceptance in a risen and glorified Christ at God's right hand. How could there be the very smallest atom of legality here? Utterly impossible! It is all the pure fruit of God's free and sovereign grace from first to last.

But ought we not, beloved Christian reader, to arouse ourselves to attend to the claims of Christ as to practical righteousness? Should we not zealously and lovingly aim at giving Him pleasure? Are we to content ourselves with simply talking about our acceptance in Christ, while at the same time having no real earnest care as to the acceptability of our ways? God forbid! Yes, let us so dwell upon the rich grace that shines in the acceptance of our persons, that we may be led out in diligent and fervent effort to be found acceptable in our ways.

It is greatly to be feared that there is an appalling amount of unhallowed traffic in the doctrines of grace without any godly care as to the application of those doctrines to our practical conduct. How all this is to end, it would be hard to say, but most assuredly, there is an urgent call upon all who profess to be accepted in Christ to labor fervently to be acceptable to Him.

RELIEF FOR A BURDENED HEART

(A REPLY TO AN ANXIOUS ENQUIRER)

Your letter has interested us exceedingly. Few things lie nearer to the heart than the case of anxious and burdened spirits. The work of emancipating and soothing such is becoming more and more charming to us. Words cannot convey how intensely we long to be used as God's instruments in this most delightful work. We are fully persuaded that it is a work which lies very near the heart of Christ. How could we question this while hearkening to such words as these, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4: 18). And again "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11: 28). How precious is the thought of God sending His Son and anointing Him with the Holy Spirit, to preach glad tidings to the poor, to bring healing to the brokenhearted, sight to the blind, deliverance to the captive, liberty for the oppressed, rest for the weary! What unspeakable comfort for one who may find himself in any of these conditions!

Now dear friend, it seems very plain that you are a weary, heavy laden one, and as such, you are the very object for the gracious ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are one of those for whom He was sent and for whom He was anointed by the Holy Spirit. We have not the slightest doubt but that the root of the matter is in you. The very anxieties to which you give expression are, in our judgment, the evidence of a spiritual work in your soul. Not that we want you to build your peace upon this. God forbid! If all the angels in heaven and all the men upon earth were to give expression to their confidence in your Christianity, it might be a comfort and an encouragement to you, but could never

form the ground of your peace in the presence of a holy, sin-hating God. It matters little, comparatively, what men think about you: the question is, what does God think about you? He has found you out. He knows the worst about you; yet He loves you and gave His Son to die for you. Here is the only ground of a sinner's peace. God Himself has met your case. He has been glorified about your sins in the death of His Son. It does not matter the least what you are. You say you are sometimes at a loss to know in what light to regard yourself, whether as wholly unconverted or a backslider. The fact is, what you really want is to get to the end of yourself altogether. When you get there, you will find God in all the fullness of His grace as manifested in Christ. Surely to get to the end of oneself and find Christ, is the true way to find peace.

It seems to us that one special malady from which you are suffering is intense self-occupation. This is the case with thousands. It is quite true that the Spirit of God will exercise us about our condition and cause us to judge it, but then it is only for the purpose of leading us to the very bottom of it all, so we may find settled repose in the fullness and sufficiency of Christ. This kind of exercise is very good. We delight in seeing a soul under deep spiritual work — the deeper the better. We are of opinion that in spiritual farming, the deeper the furrow the stronger the root. We do not attach much value to a superficial work in the conscience. Although it is quite true that we are not saved by a process of exercise of heart or conscience, still we have frequently found that persons who easily and rapidly glided into a certain feeling of peace, were in danger of gliding as rapidly out of it and becoming as miserable as they had once been happy. Sin must be seen in its sinfulness, and the sooner it is thus seen the better, so that having it really judged in the conscience, we may lay hold of a full and precious Christ as God's answer to it all. When this is the case, the heart enjoys a more solid, abiding peace and is not subject to those variations of which so many complain.

But there is a kind of self-occupation into which Satan leads the awakened sinner for the purpose of keeping him from Christ. This must be carefully guarded against. We apprehend he has entangled your feet in this snare. The style and tone of your letter lead us to this conclusion. We most fully enter into your case. Indeed you possess our entire sympathy. We deeply respect the feeling which leads you to absent yourself from the Lord's Table in your present state of soul. We consider it vastly superior to the lightness, flippancy and heartless formality with which so many approach that sacred institution. Far be it from us to pen a single line which would have the effect of emboldening you to approach the Lord's Supper in an unhappy and untruthful condition of heart and conscience. But then we want you so to apprehend the gospel of the grace of God — the full forgiveness of your sins however magnified and multiplied, your complete justification through the death and resurrection of Christ. We want you so to see the application of all this to your own soul that you may be able, like the poor man in Acts 3, to rise from your crippled condition and enter into the temple, leaping and walking and praising God. Be assured of it, dearly beloved, this is your privilege. There is nothing to hinder your enjoyment this moment, except the unbelief and legality of your own spirit. The enemy would keep you occupied with yourself to keep you from Christ. Watch against this. It is the most hopeless, gloomy labor to be seeking for anything in yourself. Look off unto Jesus. You will find all you want in Him. May the power of the Holy Spirit fill your whole soul with the fullness and preciousness of Christ so you may get into and continue in that holy and happy liberty which is the proper portion of every child of God.

You will further bear with us when we tell you that we discern in your letter a great deal of the legal element. This is an evil which is hateful to the Spirit of God and subversive of your own peace and comfort. You want to get into and breathe the genial atmosphere of free grace — that grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. You have very unworthy thoughts of God's perfect, eternal and unchangeable love. You seem to measure God by the standard of

your own thoughts. You are reasoning from what you are to God, instead of believing what God is to you. This is a serious mistake, the mistake of many. We are all, more or less, prone to this grievous error. Very few live in the actual enjoyment of salvation by grace. There is the continual weighing of self in a legal balance. The principle of law is so deeply embedded in the heart, that nothing but the mighty power of the Spirit of God can deliver us from it and lead us into the practical understanding of that brief but most comprehensive statement of the apostle: "Ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6).

We hold it to be utterly impossible for a soul to enjoy settled peace so long as it is in any measure under the influence of this law-principle. There may be occasional gleams of sunshine, such as you describe in your own experience, but there never can be abiding gospel-peace as long as a single trace of the legal element is allowed to hold sway over the conscience. Abiding peace can only flow from a deep, thorough, practical sense of free grace, and that free grace acts towards the sinner on the settled ground of accomplished atonement.

Legality will always direct the eye inward upon self — yes, ever and only upon self. It will lead us to measure our standing before God by our own progress in personal holiness, our efforts, our services, our doings, our ways, our feelings, our something or other. All this produces spiritual darkness, gloomy uncertainty, mental bondage, intense soul-torture, depression, irritability, sourness of temper. And these things again react most prejudicially upon our whole moral being. They fling back their demoralizing influence upon the life and character. The hymn of joyous praise can only be occasionally sung. The supper feast — that most precious memorial of accomplished redemption — is abandoned, or if not abandoned, is gone through without freshness, anointing, power, elevation, or depth of spiritual tone. In this way, Christ is dishonored, the Holy Spirit is grieved, the testimony is marred, and the standard of practical Christianity greatly lowered. Moreover, the enemy, finding us in this condition of soul, cuts out ample work for us by acting in various ways upon our lusts and passions, which only gather strength from the very fact of our being under law, for as the apostle says, "The strength of sin is the law." Thus the soul's history is summed up in two words, namely "lust and law," and one is tossed like a ball from one to the other until free grace comes in and gives full deliverance from both. Grace gives you power over sin, but law gives sin power over you. Grace keeps you in the place of continual victory; law keeps you in the place of continual defeat.

May the Lord lead you and all His people into a clearer apprehension of grace, so that your peace may flow as a river, and the fruits of righteousness abound to the praise of His name!

We are not yet done with your letter, dear friend. We think we discern another feature in your case which tends to produce the spiritual depression of which you complain. If we mistake not, you are afflicted with an unhealthy, gloomy conscience. This is a sore evil, a heavy burden, a very great trial. We deeply feel for anyone laboring under this grievous malady, for it not only affects oneself, but all with whom one comes in contact. There is a wide difference indeed between a scrupulous or exacting conscience and a tender conscience. The former is governed by its own fears; the latter by the Word of God. The former induces feebleness and uncertainty in all one's ways; the latter, a holy stability and consistency. We can hardly conceive a more troublesome companion than a morbid, gloomy conscience. It is always creating difficulties for its possessor and placing stumbling-blocks in his way. But a tender conscience is invaluable. It resents only what ought to be resented. Its action is true and healthy. It does not morbidly seek out the cause of trouble and defilement, but being duly acted upon by the Word of God as applied by the Holy Spirit, it yields a true response and thus discharges with vigor its divinely appointed functions.

Think beloved, of all these things and seek to watch against them, and above all, believe against them. Get done with self-occupation, rise above your legal fears and cast away from you the workings of a morbid conscience. Be assured of it, these are three features in your case. They also are features of many a case — a self-occupied heart, a legal mind, a morbid conscience. Terrible evils! May the power of the Holy Spirit give you full deliverance from these three efficient agents of the devil! May He break every chain and give you to taste the true sweetness of spiritual liberty and communion of heart with a reconciled God and Father.

Do not any longer harass yourself with the questions, “Am I a converted person or am I a backslider?” You are in yourself a poor lost, unworthy, good-for-nothing creature. Yet God commends His love toward you in that He gave His only begotten Son to bear your curse and burden on the tree. Cast yourself on His boundless love, “a sea where none can sink.” See that all is done. The debt is paid. Satan is silenced. The law is magnified. Sin is put away. God is satisfied, yea, glorified. What more would you have? For what are you waiting? You may say to us, “I know all this.” You do say in your letter that you “can hardly expect to hear anything more than you have already read.” Well, we want you to make all this your own by simple, childlike faith. We want to drive you out of every legal lurking place into the full blaze of divine and everlasting love. Cast away from you, we beseech you, dear friend, all your legal reasonings and seek to exercise a believing mind that just takes God at His word and takes possession, without a question, of all that He gives. We do not want to heal your wound slightly; to cry “peace, peace, when there is no peace.” This would be cruelty rather than kindness. But we desire that you should “know the things which are freely given to you of God,” and which are as clearly revealed in the Word as they are freely given through grace. We long to see you as happy as the gospel of the grace of God is fitted to make you. Then you will be able to sing hymns of praise and take your seat at the table of the Lord in happy, holy, elevated communion and worship.

May the good Lord meet you in your present need! May He disperse, by the bright and blessed beams of His love, the dark cloud that has settled down upon your spirit, and fill you with all joy and peace in believing. To Him we do most affectionately commend you, praying Him to make use of what we have written in blessing to your precious soul, and His name shall have all the praise throughout the everlasting ages.

THREE PRECIOUS GIFTS

“I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish” (John 10).

“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6).

“He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8).

“Christ shall give thee light” (Eph. 5).

“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8: 6).

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Gal. 5: 1).

The scriptures quoted above — and they are only a few of the many that might be used — teach us that there are three things bestowed upon every soul that, through grace, simply and truly and heartily believes in Jesus. These are “Life” “Light” and “Liberty” — three most precious gifts, gifts in comparison with which all earthly riches, pleasures and distinctions are but as dust.

But there are many who ought to be in the full and settled enjoyment of these immense privileges who actually do not know they possess them at all. They consider it the height of presumption for any soul to think of possessing them. There are many sincere and earnest souls — truly converted children

of God — who, through bad teaching, self-occupation or legality, are thoroughly in the dark as to the very elements of Christianity, the simplest truths of the gospel. The dark atmosphere which enwraps Christendom so obscures the light of divine truth that they really do not know where they are or what they have got. In place of life, light and liberty, they are practically in the shadow of death, in darkness and bondage. They are robbed of those three precious gifts which God, in the fullness and riches of His grace, liberally bestows upon all who believe on the name of His only begotten Son.

It is for the special purpose of helping that large and interesting class of persons who are thus robbed and spoiled, that we have penned the few inspired sentences at the head of this paper. We affectionately entreat these souls to give earnest heed to them. We are not going to expound them nor enter upon a full statement of the doctrines indicated in them. Our object is rather to exhort than to expound. We long to see all the dear children of God in the full enjoyment of the things which are freely given them of God in Christ.

Let all such hear what our Lord Christ says, "I give unto My sheep eternal life." "Ah! yes," some exercised soul may say: "I quite see that all Christ's sheep have eternal life, but my soul-crushing difficulty is to know that I am a sheep of Christ. If only I knew that, I should count myself happy indeed."

Now this is a mistake. It is beginning at the wrong end. It is putting self and its feelings before Christ and His Word. Most surely, as long as one is doing this, he must be in doubt and darkness. It is utterly impossible to be otherwise. If it is something about myself I am called to feel or believe in order to be saved, then I never can have the settled knowledge or assurance of salvation. I must have something entirely outside and independent of myself, something divinely solid, something eternally stable, some settled and absolute truth, something true in itself apart from all my thoughts and feelings respecting it. In short, I must have God's own revelation to rest upon, or I never can know what abiding peace really is. It is the eternal truth of God, and that alone, which forms the real basis of the soul's peace — a basis which not all the powers of earth and hell, men and demons can ever disturb. It is by believing in Christ, and not by feeling or believing something about myself, that I get eternal life. He that believeth on the Son of God *has* eternal life.

Anxious reader, do ponder this. It is of the very deepest importance. It concerns the peace and rest of your soul. We would call your earnest attention to the weighty fact that what you are called upon to believe is not something about yourself, but something about Christ. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (John 6: 47). Do you simply and heartily believe in Jesus? Do you confide in Him? Are you thoroughly satisfied with Him? If so, you have eternal life, and you should from this moment, know it and rejoice in it. Our Lord does not say, "He that *feeleth* he is one of My sheep shall have eternal life." Nothing of the kind, nothing like it, nothing approaching to it. "He that believeth on Me." So also in that well-known passage in John 5. "Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me *hath* everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life."

Can anything be plainer than this? Every one who hears the word of Jesus and believes in the One who sent Him, is the happy possessor of eternal life, and shall never come into judgment. Hence it follows that if we don't have eternal life, we do not believe on the Son of God, we have not heard His Word, we do not believe in God at all. Thus it stands if we are to be governed by the veritable teaching and authority of our Lord Christ. Every true believer in Jesus has eternal life, and everyone who does not have eternal life is an unbeliever. So speaks the Word of the living God.

But the believer should know what he possesses. Of what use or value could it be for anyone to

be left a large fortune in Canada if he did not know anything about it? God would have us *know* what He has freely given us in Christ. The life is in Christ, so he that has Christ has the life, and he who has not life has not Christ. “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” Precious, all important word

Nor is it otherwise with respect to the second of our “three precious gifts.” As we get “life” so we get “light” in Christ. “He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” God would not give us life and leave us in the dark. This would not be like Him. He has given us His Son; and believing in Him, we get life. Then following Him, we get light — the light of life. Beautiful words! Words full of divine power! Liberating words for the soul that has been groping in darkness and the shadow of death! “The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.” And the proper sphere for the life which we now possess is the light in which we are called and privileged to walk.

The darkness is past, the shadows are gone, the clouds are rolled away, the dim twilight has given place to the full light of life streaming down into our souls and upon our path, enabling us to judge ourselves and our surroundings. We now can judge everything according to the true light that now shines within, upon and around us — shines from the Father, shines in the Son, shines in the power of the Holy Spirit, shines on the page of inspiration. Finally, it follows of blessed necessity that as we get “life” and “light,” so we get “liberty.” It is all in Christ. He quickens, He enlightens, He emancipates, He is our life, our light, our liberty. Blessed throughout all ages be His peerless name! “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” Surely it must be so. He would not give us life and leave us in the dark. He would not give us life and leave us in bondage or slavery. No, such is not His way. He sets us divinely and eternally free — free from guilt and condemnation, free from the dread of wrath and judgment to come, free from the fear of death, free from the present power of sin and from its future consequences. May the reader lay hold of these things in simple childlike faith, and join us in a note of fervent praise to the Giver of these “Three precious gifts.”

RESURRECTION

A correspondent requests special notice of Philippians 3: 11, “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead.” The point toward which the desires of the true Christian ever tend is resurrection-glory. It matters not to him by what way he is to reach that point. He longs to reach the glory “by any means.”

It may be that our friend finds difficulty in the word “if,” as though it implied a doubt in the mind of the apostle as to his reaching the end in safety. The apostle did not have any such thought in his mind. The idea is simply that he had the goal before him and he was eagerly pressing toward it. His vision was filled with it, his heart was set on it, and as to the “means” by which he was to reach it, he was quite indifferent.

It may be interesting to observe that the word which is rendered “resurrection” only occurs in this one passage and properly signifies “resurrection from among.” The Greek word *anastasis* (resurrection) occurs about 42 times in the New Testament and is applied to the broad fact of resurrection. But the word used in verse 11 is morally linked with the expression in Mark 9: 10, “Questioning one with another what rising from *among* the dead should mean.” The disciples would have found no difficulty in the thought of resurrection as such, seeing that every orthodox Jew believed in it. But a “rising from *among* the dead” was something strange to them. Hence their “questioning.”

Now, the proper hope of the Christian is not merely “resurrection of the dead,” but “resurrection from *among* the dead.” This makes a substantial difference. It completely sets aside the idea of a general simultaneous resurrection. To speak of a resurrection from *among* the dead, obviously implies

that all shall not rise together. Revelation 20: 5 teaches us that there will be a thousand years between the two resurrections, but it is important to see that the very word used by the apostle to express that resurrection for which he was looking, is quite different from that usually employed to set forth the general thought of resurrection. Why is this? Simply because he meant a special thing and he therefore used a special word — a word which occurs only in this one place.

It is deeply solemn to remember that the Lord's people will rise from their graves and leave behind them the ashes of the wicked dead for a thousand years longer. This thought may seem to be foolishness to the natural man, but Scripture teaches it and that is quite enough for the Christian. The resurrection of the Church will be upon the same principle and partake of the same character as the resurrection of Christ; it will be “a resurrection from among the dead.” May our hearts be set upon that glorious goal!

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

We have received earnest requests for help as to the solemn subject of the judgment seat of Christ. One dear friend writes thus: “I am in a difficulty. A dear friend is very unhappy in the thought that, at the judgment seat of Christ, every secret thought and every motive of the heart will be made manifest to all there. She has no fears or doubts as to her eternal salvation or the forgiveness of her sins, but she shrinks with horror from the thought of having the secrets of her heart manifested to all there.”

Another writes as follows: “Remembering those blessed and eternally-important truths in John 5: 24; 1 John 1: 7-9, 1 John 2: 12 and Hebrews 10: 1-17, I wish to know how you understand the following texts which I shall transcribe in full, to point out the particular words to which I refer.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5: 10). “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14: 12). “But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong he hath done: and there is no respect of persons” (Col. 3: 24-25).

“It is on the above texts that I am anxious to be correct as to interpretation and application. I have thought it probable that you would not regard it as trespassing on your time if I were to ask your opinion on the subject.”

We have been much interested in looking into the various reasons for the perplexity which seems to prevail in reference to the solemn subject of “the judgment seat of Christ.” The very passages which our correspondent quotes are so plain, so pointed and so definite on the question, that we have only just to take them as they stand and allow them to have their due weight upon the heart and conscience. “We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ.” “Every one of us must give account of himself to God.” “He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong he hath done.”

These are plain statements. Should we desire to weaken their force, to blunt their edge, to turn away their point? God forbid! We should rather seek to make a holy use of them by keeping a pressure upon nature in all its vanities, lusts and tempers. The Lord intended we should use these verses thus. He never intended that we should use them in a legal way to shake our confidence in Christ and His full salvation. We shall never come into judgment as to our sins. John 5: 24, Romans 8: 1 and 1 John 4: 17 are conclusive as to that point. But our *services* must come under the Master's eye. Every man's *work* shall be tried of what sort it is. The day will make everything manifest. All this is very solemn and should lead to great watchfulness and carefulness as to our works, ways, thoughts, words, motives and desires. The deepest sense of grace and the clearest apprehension of our perfect justification as sinners, will never weaken our sense of the deep solemnity of the judgment seat of Christ or lessen our desire so

to walk that we may be acceptable to Him.

It is well to see this. The apostle labored that he might be accepted. He kept his body under lest he should be disapproved. Every saint should do the same. We are already accepted in Christ, and as such, we labor to be accepted of Him. We should seek to give every truth its proper place. The way to do this is to be much in the presence of God and to view each truth in immediate connection with Christ. There is always a danger of making such a use of one truth as, practically, to displace some other truth. This should be carefully guarded against. We believe there will be a full manifestation of everyone and everything before the judgment seat of Christ. Everything will come out there. Things that looked very brilliant and praiseworthy, and that made a great noise among men down here, will all be burned up as so much “wood, hay and stubble.” Things that were blazed abroad and made use of to surround the names of men with a halo of human applause, will all be submitted to the searching action of “the fire” and much of them reduced to ashes.

The counsels of all hearts will be made manifest. Every motive, every purpose, every design will be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. The fire will try every man's work, and nothing will be stamped as genuine except that which has been the fruit of divine grace in our hearts. All mixed motives will be judged, condemned and burnt up. All prejudices, all erroneous judgments, all evil surmisings concerning others — all these and such like things will be exposed and cast into the fire. We shall see things then as Christ sees them, judge them as He judges them. No one will be better pleased than myself to see all my stubble consumed. Even now, as we grow in light, knowledge and spirituality, as we get nearer and more like Christ, we heartily condemn many things which we once deemed all right. How much more shall we do so when we stand in the full blaze of the light of the judgment seat of Christ?

Now, what should be the practical effect of all this upon the believer? To make him doubt his salvation? To leave him in a state of uncertainty as to whether he is accepted or not? To make him question his relationship to God in Christ? Surely not. What then? To lead him to walk in holy carefulness from day to day, as under the eye of his Lord and Master — to produce watchfulness, sobriety and self-judgment, to induce faithfulness, diligence and integrity in all his services and all his ways.

Take a simple illustration. A father leaves home for a time. When taking leave of his children, he appoints a certain work to be done and a certain line of conduct to be adopted during his absence. When he returns, he may have to praise some for their faithfulness and diligence, while he blames others for the very reverse. But does he disown the latter? Does he break the relationship? By no means. They are just as much his children as the others, though he faithfully points out their failure and censures them for it. If they have been biting and devouring one another instead of doing his will; if one has been judging another's work instead of attending to his own; if there has been envy and jealousy instead of an earnest-hearted carrying out of the father's intentions, all these things will meet with well-deserved censure. How could it be otherwise?

But then some 'shrink with horror from the thought of having the secrets of the heart manifested to all there.' Well, the Holy Spirit declares that “the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every man have praise of God” (1 Cor. 3: 9). He does not say *to whom* they shall be manifested; nor does this in the least affect the question, because every true-hearted person will be far more deeply concerned about the judgment of the Master than about the judgment of a fellow-servant. Provided I please Christ, I need not trouble myself much about man's judgment. If I am more troubled about the idea of having all my motives

exposed to the view of man than I am about their being exposed to the view of Christ, it is plain there must be something wrong. It proves I am occupied about myself. I shrink from the exposure of “my secret motives.” Then it is very plain that my secret motives are not right, and the sooner they are judged the better.

What difference would it make if all our sins and failures were made manifest to everybody? Are Peter and David any less happy because untold millions have read the account of their shameful fall? Surely not. They know that the record of their sins only magnifies the grace of God and illustrates the value of the blood of Christ, and hence they rejoice in it. Thus it is in every case. If we were more emptied of self and occupied with Christ, we should have more simple and correct thoughts about the judgment seat as well as about everything else.

May the Lord keep our hearts true to Himself in this the time of His absence, so that when He appears we may not be ashamed before Him! May all our works be so begun, continued and ended in Him, that the thought of having them duly weighed and estimated in the presence of His glory may not disturb our hearts! May we be constrained by the “love of Christ,” not by the fear of judgment, to live unto Him who died for us and rose again! We may safely and happily leave everything in His hands, seeing He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. We have no reason to fear, inasmuch as we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. The moment Christ appears we shall be changed into His image, pass into the presence of His glory, and there review the past. We shall look back from that high and holy elevation upon our course down here. We shall see things in a different light altogether. It may be we shall be astonished to find that many things of which we thought a great deal down here, will be found defective up there. On the other hand, many little things which were done in self-forgetfulness and love to Jesus, will be diligently recorded and abundantly rewarded. We shall also be able to see in the clear light of the Master's presence, many mistakes and failures which had never before come within the range of our vision. What will be the effect of all this? Just to evoke from our hearts loud and rapturous hosannas to the praise of Him who has brought us through all our toils and dangers, borne with all our mistakes and failures, and assigned us a place in His own everlasting kingdom, there to bask in the bright beams of His glory and shine in His image forever.

We shall not dwell further on this subject, but we trust sufficient has been said to relieve the minds of those dear friends who have consulted us on the point. We always regard it as a happy service to communicate on any question which may present difficulty to people's minds. We can truly say, our desire is to be a help and blessing to the souls of His people everywhere, and that the name of the Lord Jesus may be magnified.

WHAT IS A CASTAWAY?

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9: 27).

This passage has perplexed and troubled many an earnest heart. Many have argued thus, while pondering the above solemn scripture, “If such an one as Paul was uncertain as to the direction of his course, who then can be sure?” But was Paul uncertain as to the issue? By no means. The verse immediately preceding teaches us the very opposite: “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.” Paul knew quite well how the whole matter was to end, so far as he was concerned. He could say, “I know whom (not merely what) I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim. 2: 12). And again, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present,

nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8: 38-39).

These scriptures are amply sufficient to prove that Paul had not so much as a shadow of a doubt as to his eternal security. “I know,” “I am persuaded.” There is no doubt or uncertainty in such utterances. Paul knew better. His foundation was as stable as the throne of God. Whatever certainty Christ could give, that Paul possessed. We are fully convinced that, so far as Paul was concerned, from the moment the scales dropped from his eyes in the city of Damascus until he was offered up in the city of Rome, his heart never once harbored a single doubt, a single fear, a single misgiving. “He was troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” Yes, in the midst of all his conflict and trouble, he could say, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4: 17).

Paul had no doubts or fears as to the final issue. Neither should anyone who has truly come to Christ, inasmuch as He Himself has said, “Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out” (John 6: 37). No one who is really cast upon Christ, will ever be cast away from Him. This is a divine axiom, a fundamental truth, an eternal reality. Christ is responsible for every lamb in the flock. The counsels of God have made Him so; the love of His own heart has made Him so; the Holy Scriptures declare Him to be so. Not one of Christ's blood-bought lambs can ever be lost, not one can ever be cast away. They are all as safe as He can make them — as safe as Himself.

What then does Paul mean when he says, “Lest I myself should be a castaway?” If he does not mean to convey the idea of uncertainty as to his personal security in Christ, what then does he mean? I believe the expression applies not to his future, but his present service — not to his heavenly home, but his earthly path — not to his eternal privileges, but his present responsibilities. Paul was a servant as well as a son, so he exercised himself and kept his body in subjection, “lest that by any means he might be *disapproved of*,” the better translation of *castaway*. The body is a good servant, but a bad master. If not kept down, it will altogether disqualify the servant of Christ for the discharge of his high and holy responsibilities. A person may be a child of God and yet be “disapproved” as a servant of Christ. To be an efficient servant of Christ involves self-denial, self-judgment, self-emptiness, self control. *I do not become a child of God by these exercises, but most assuredly, I shall never be a successful servant of Christ without them.*

This distinction is very plain and very important. We are too prone to think that the question of our personal security is the only one of any importance to us. This is a mistake. God has secured that, and He tells us so, that with free hearts we may run the race, carry on the warfare, fulfill the service. We do not run, fight or work for life; we *have* life-eternal before we take a single step in the Christian race, strike a blow in the Christian warfare, or perform a single act of Christian service. A dead man could not run a race, but a living man must run “lawfully,” else he cannot be crowned. So also in reference to the servant of Christ. He must deny himself; he must keep nature down; he must keep his body in subjection, lest he be disapproved of and set aside as a servant unfit for the Master's work, a vessel not “meet for the Master's use.” A true believer can *never* lose his relationship to Christ or the eternal dignities and privileges connected therewith, but he can lose his present fitness for service. He may so act as to be disapproved of as a workman. Solemn thought!

We have in the person of John Mark an illustration of the principle laid down in 1 Corinthians 9: 27. In Acts 13: 5 John Mark was counted worthy to be associated with Paul in the ministry. In Acts 15: 38 he was disapproved, but in 2 Timothy 4: 11 he was again acknowledged as a profitable servant.

Now, Mark was as truly a child of God, a saved person, a believer in Christ, when Paul rejected him as a co-worker, as when he at first acknowledged him and finally restored him to confidence. In no case was the question of John Mark's personal salvation raised. It was altogether a matter of fitness for service. It is evident that the influence of natural affection had been allowed to act on Mark's heart to unfit him in Paul's judgment for that great work which he, as the steward of Christ, was carrying on.

If my reader will turn to Judges 7 he will find another example which strikingly illustrates our principle. What was the great question raised with respect to Gideon's company? Was it as to whether a man was an Israelite, a son of Abraham, a circumcised member of the congregation? By no means. What then? Simply as to whether he was a fit vessel for the service at hand. And what was it that rendered a man fit for such service? Confidence in God and self-denial! See verses 3 and 6. Those who were fearful were rejected (v. 3). And those who consulted their own ease were rejected (v. 7). Now, the 31,700 who were rejected were as truly Israelites as were the 300 who were approved, but the former were not fit servants; the latter were.

All this is easily understood. There is no difficulty if the heart does not make difficulties for itself. Many passages of the Word, which are designed to act on the conscience of the *servant*, are used to alarm the heart of the *child*; many that are only intended to admonish us in reference to our irresponsibility, are used to make us question our relationship.

May the Lord increase in us the grace of a discerning mind and enable us to distinguish between things that differ, so that while our hearts enter into the sweetness and tranquilizing power of those words, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out," our conscience may also feel the solemnity of our position as servants and recoil from everything that might cause us to be set aside as an unclean vessel which the Master cannot take up and use.

May we ever remember that, while as children of God, we are eternally safe, yet as servants of Christ, we may be disapproved of and set aside.

SELF-DENIAL

"If only we exercise a little self denial every day, we shall get on to heaven very comfortably." What a volume of wholesome practical truth in this brief utterance! The path of self-denial is the Christian's true path. "If any man," says Christ, "will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9: 23). It is not, "let him deny certain things belonging to himself." No, he must "deny himself," and this is a "daily" thing. Each morning, as we rise and enter afresh upon the pathway of daily life, we have the same grand and all-important work before us, namely, to deny self.

This hateful self will meet us at every step, for, although we know through grace that "our old man is crucified" — is dead and buried out of God's sight — still this is only as regards our standing in Christ, according to God's view of us. We know that self has to be denied, judged and subjugated every day, every hour, every moment. The principle of our standing must be worked out in practice. God sees us perfect in Christ. We are not in the flesh, but the flesh is in us, and it must be denied and kept by the power of the Spirit.

Be it remembered, it is not merely in its grossness that self must be denied, but in its refinement — not merely in its low habits, but in its cultivated tastes — not merely in its roughness and rudeness, but in its most polished and elegant forms. This is not always seen. It too often happens that, like Saul, we spare that which we consider "the best" and bring the edge of the sword to bear only upon "the vile and refuse." This will never do. It is self that must be denied. Yes, self in all its length and breadth —

not merely some branches, but the great parent stem — not merely some accessories of nature, but nature itself. It is a comparatively easy matter to deny certain things pertaining to self, while self is pampered and gratified all the time. I may deny my appetite to feed my religious pride. I may starve myself to minister to my love of money. I may wear shabby clothes while I pride myself in sumptuous furniture and splendid equipment. Hence, the need of being reminded that we must deny self.

Who can sum up all that is contained in this weighty word, self-denial? Self acts everywhere. In the closet, in the family, in the shop, in the railway car, in the street — everywhere, at all times and under all circumstances. It has its tastes and its habits, its prejudices, its likes and dislikes. It must be denied in all these. We may frequently detect ourselves liking our own image. This must be denied with uncommon decision.

Then again in matters of religion, we like those who suit us, who agree and sympathize with us, who admire our opinions or mode of propounding them. All this must be brought under the sharp edge of the knife of self-denial. If not, we may find ourselves despising some dear and honored Christian simply because of something which does not suit us. On the other hand, we may praise to the skies some hollow, worthless character, just because of some feature which we like. Indeed, of all the ten thousand shapes which self assumes, there is not one more hateful than that of religion. Clad in this garb it will make itself the center of a clique, confine its affections within that narrow enclosure, and call that Christian communion. From this contracted circle, it will diligently expel everyone who happens to have a single disagreeable point or angle. It will obstinately refuse to accommodate itself to the scruples and infirmities of others. As to these it will not yield a single hair's breadth, while at the same time, it will surrender any amount of truth to hold fellowship with its own image. All this is terrible and should be most diligently guarded against.

If my reader will study carefully 1 Corinthians 8: 10, he will find a most precious lesson on the subject of self-denial. The heading of this entire section might be thus worded, "*Any length in self-denial; not an inch in surrendering truth.*" This should ever be the Christian's motto. If it be merely a question of self, surrender all; if it be a question of truth, surrender nothing. "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor. 8: 13). Noble resolution! May we have grace to carry it out!

Again, "Though I be free from all, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.... I am made all things to all, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9: 19-22). "Let no man seek his own" — the very thing we are so ready to seek. "But every man another's wealth" — the very last thing we feel disposed to do.

It is important and very needful to observe that when the apostle declares that he was "made all things to all," it was entirely a matter of self-denial and not of self-indulgence. He neither indulged himself nor surrendered a single iota of the truth of God, but made himself servant to all for their good and God's glory. This is our model. May the Lord endow us with grace to imitate it! We are called to surrender not only our points and angles, prejudices and preferences, but also our personal rights for the profit of others. This is the Christian's daily business, and it is as he is enabled to discharge it that he will walk in the footsteps of Jesus and "get on comfortably to heaven."

SELF-JUDGMENT

There are few exercises more valuable or healthful for the Christian than self-judgment. I do not mean by this the unhappy practice of looking in upon oneself for evidences of life and security in Christ. This is terrible work to be at. To be looking at a worthless self instead of at a risen Christ, is as deplorable an occupation as we can conceive. The idea which many Christians seem to entertain in

reference to what is called self-examination, is truly depressing. They look upon it as an exercise which may end in their discovering that they are not Christians at all. This, I repeat, is most terrible work.

No doubt it is well for those who have been building upon a sandy foundation, to have their eyes opened to see the dangerous delusion. It is well for such as have been complacently wrapping themselves up in pharisaic robes, to have those robes stripped off. It is well for those who have been sleeping in a house on fire, to be roused from their slumbers. It is well for such as have been walking blindfold to the brink of some frightful precipice, to have the bandage removed from their eyes so they may see their danger, and retreat. No intelligent and well-regulated mind would think of calling in question the rightness of all this. But fully admitting the above, the question of true self-judgment remains wholly untouched. The Christian is never once taught in the Word of God to examine himself with the idea of finding out that he is not a Christian. The very reverse is the case, as I shall endeavor to show.

There are two passages in the New Testament which are sadly misinterpreted. The first is in reference to the celebration of the Lord's supper: "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11: 28-29). It is usual to apply the term "unworthily" in this passage, to *persons* doing the act, whereas, it really refers to the *manner* of doing it. The apostle never thought of calling in question the Christianity of the Corinthians. In fact, in the opening address of his epistle he looks at them as "the church of God which is in Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints" (or saints by calling). How could he use this language in 1 Cor. 1, and in 1 Cor. 11 call in question the worthiness of these saints to take their seat at the Lord's supper? Impossible. He looked upon them as saints, and as such, he exhorted them to celebrate the Lord's supper in a worthy manner. The question of any but true Christians being there is never raised, so it is utterly impossible that the word "unworthily" could apply to persons. Its application is entirely to the manner. The persons were worthy, but their manner was not. Therefore, they were called *as saints* to judge themselves as to their ways, else the Lord might judge them in their persons, as was already the case. In a word, it was as true Christians they were called to judge themselves. If they were in doubt as to that, they were utterly unable to judge anything. I never think of setting my child to judge as to whether he is my child or not, but I expect him to judge himself as to his habits. If he does not, I may have to do *by chastening*, what he ought to do by self-judgment. It is because I look upon him as my child that I will not allow him to sit at my table with soiled garments and disorderly manners.

The second passage occurs in 2 Corinthians 13: 3-5. "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me... examine yourselves." The rest of the passage is parenthetical. The real point is this. The apostle appeals to the Corinthians themselves as the clear proof that his apostleship was divine — that Christ had spoken in him, that his commission was from heaven. He looked upon them as true Christians, notwithstanding all their confusion. Inasmuch as they were seals to his ministry, that ministry must be divine. Hence, they ought not to listen to the false apostles who were speaking against him. Their Christianity and his apostleship were so intimately connected, that to question the one was to question the other. It is, therefore, plain that the apostle did not call upon the Corinthians to examine themselves with any such idea as the examination might show they were not Christians at all. Quite the reverse. In truth, it is as I were to show an expensive watch to a person and say, "Since you seek proof that the man who made this is a watchmaker, examine it."

Thus it is plain that neither of the above passages affords any warrant for that kind of self-examination for which some contend, which is really based upon a system of doubts and fears, and has no warrant whatever in the Word of God. The self-judgment to which I would call the reader's attention

is a totally different thing. It is a sacred Christian exercise of the most salutary character. It is based upon the most unclouded confidence as to our salvation and acceptance in Christ. The Christian is called to judge self because he is — not to see if he be — a Christian. This makes all the difference. Were I to examine self for a thousand years, I should never find it to be anything else than a worthless, ruined, vile thing — a thing which God has set aside and which I am called to reckon as “dead.” How could I ever expect to get any comforting evidences by such an examination? Impossible.

The Christian's evidences are not to be found in his ruined self, but in God's risen Christ. The more he can get done with the former and occupied with the latter, the happier and holier he will be. The Christian judges himself, judges his habits, judges his thoughts, words and actions, because he believes he is a Christian, not because he doubts it. If he doubts, he is not fit to judge anything. It is as knowing and enjoying the eternal stability of God's grace, the divine effectiveness of the blood of Jesus, the all-prevailing power of His advocacy, the unalterable authority of the Word, the divine security of the very feeblest of Christ's sheep. It is as entering by the teaching of God the Holy Spirit into these priceless realities, that the true believer judges himself. The human idea of self-examination is founded upon unbelief. The divine idea of self-judgment is founded upon confidence.

But, let us never forget that we are called to judge ourselves. If we lose sight of this, nature will soon get ahead of us and we shall make sorry work of it. The most devoted Christians have a mass of things which need to be judged, and if those things are not habitually judged, they will assuredly result in abundance of bitter work. If there be irritability or levity, pride or vanity, natural indolence or natural impulsiveness — whatever there be that belongs to our fallen nature, we must as Christians judge and subdue that thing. That which is abidingly judged will never get upon the conscience. Self-judgment keeps all our matters right and square, but if nature be not judged, there is no knowing how, when or where it may break out and produce keen anguish of soul and bring gross dishonor upon the Lord's name. The most grievous cases of failure and declension may be traced to the neglect of self-judgment in little things.

There are three distinct stages of judgment, namely self-judgment, church judgment and divine judgment. If a man judges himself, the assembly is kept clear. If he fail to do so, evil will break out in some shape or form and then the assembly is involved. If the assembly fail to judge the evil, then God must deal with the assembly. If Achan had judged the covetous thought, the assembly of Israel would not have become involved (Joshua 7). If the Corinthians had judged themselves in secret, the Lord would not to have had to judge the assembly in public (1 Cor. 11).

All this is deeply practical and soul-subduing. May all the Lord's people learn to walk in the cloudless sunshine of His favor, in the holy enjoyment of their relationship and in the habitual exercise of a spirit of self-judgment!

SELF-EMPTINESS

The fullness of God ever waits upon an empty vessel. This is a grand practical truth, very easily stated, but involving a great deal more than one might imagine. The entire Book of God illustrates this truth. The history of the people of God illustrates it; the experience of each believer illustrates it. Whether we study the Book of God or the ways of God — His ways with all and His ways with each — we have this most precious truth that “the fullness of God ever waits on an empty vessel.”

This holds good with respect to the sinner in his first coming to Christ, and it holds good with respect to the believer at every stage of his career, from the starting post to the goal.

In the first place, as regards the sinner in his first coming to Christ, what is this but the fullness of

God in redeeming love and pardoning mercy, waiting upon an empty vessel? The real matter is to get the sinner to take the place of an empty vessel. Once there, the whole question is settled. But what exercise, what struggling, what toil, what conflict, what fruitless efforts, what ups and downs, what vows and resolutions in thousands of cases before the sinner is really brought to take the place of an empty vessel and be filled with God's salvation! How marvelously difficult it is to get the poor legal heart emptied of its legality, that it may be filled with Christ! It will have something of its own to lean upon and cling to. Here lies the root of the difficulty. We can never "draw water from the wells of salvation" until we come there with empty vessels.

This is difficult work. Many spend years of legal effort before they reach the grand moral point of self-emptiness, even in its reference to the simple question of righteousness before God. When once they have reached that point, the matter is found to be so simple that the wonder is how they could have spent so long in getting hold of it and why they had never got hold of it before. There is never any difficulty found when the sinner really takes the ground of self-emptiness. The question, "Who shall deliver me?" is sure to be followed by the reply, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7).

Now, it will always be found that the more completely the sinner gets emptied of himself, the more settled his peace will be. If self and its doings, its feelings and its reasonings, be not emptied out, there will assuredly be doubts and fears, ups and downs, wavering and fluctuation, seasons of darkness and cloudiness afterwards. Hence the vital importance of seeking to make a clean riddance of self so that Christ, "the fullness of the Godhead bodily," may be known and enjoyed. It is the one who can most truthfully and experimentally say,

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,"

who can also adopt as his own that additional line,

"But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

It is ever thus. A full Christ is for an empty sinner, and an empty sinner for a full Christ. They are morally fitted to each other. The more I experience the emptiness, the more I shall enjoy the fullness. So long as I am full of self-confidence, so long as I am full of trust in my morality, my benevolence, my amiability, my religiousness, my righteousness, I have no room for Christ. All these things must be thrown overboard before a full Christ can be apprehended. It cannot be partly self and partly Christ. It must be either one or the other. One reason why so many are tossed up and down "in dark uncertainty" is because they still cling to some little bit of self. It may be a very little bit. They may not be trusting in any works of righteousness they have done, but still there is something of self retained and trusted in. It may be the very smallest possible atom of the creature — its state, its feelings, its mode of appropriating, its experiences, something or other of the creature kept in which keeps Christ out. It *must* be so, for if a full Christ were received, a full peace would be enjoyed. If a full peace be not enjoyed, it is only because a full Christ has not been received. This makes the matter as simple as possible.

Reader, do you fully understand this? Have you, as an empty sinner, come to Christ to be filled with His fullness, to be satisfied with His all-sufficiency, to find the solid rest of your heart and conscience in Him alone? Are you fully satisfied with Christ? I earnestly pray you to get this point settled! Is Christ enough for your heart, enough for your conscience, enough for your whole moral being? See that you make earnest, real, hearty work of it now. Are you resting wholly in Christ? Which is it, Christ alone or Christ and something else? Are you, in some secret chamber of your heart, hiding a little fragment of legality — some little atom of creature-confidence or element of self-righteousness? If so, you cannot enjoy true gospel-peace. It cannot be. Gospel-peace is the result of receiving a full

Christ into a heart that has learned its own emptiness. Christ is our peace. True peace is not a mere feeling in the mind. It is found in a divine, living, real Person, even Christ Himself, who having made peace by the blood of His cross, has become our peace in the presence of God. This peace can never be disturbed, inasmuch as He who is our peace, is “the same, yesterday, today and forever” (Heb. 13). Were it a mere feeling in the mind, it would prove as variable as the mercury in a barometer. If I am occupied with my feelings, I am not self-emptied. As a consequence, I cannot know the joy and peace which flow from being occupied only with Christ, for the fullness of God ever waits upon an empty vessel.

Thus much as to the application of our thesis to the case of a sinner in his first coming to Christ.

Secondly, let us see how it applies to a believer at every stage of his career. This is a deeply practical branch of our subject. We have very little idea at times of how full we are of self and the world. Hence, in one way or another, we have to be emptied from vessel to vessel. Like Jacob of old, we struggle hard and hold fast our confidence in the flesh, until at length the source of our strength is dried up and the ground of our confidence swept from under us. Then we are constrained to cry out,

“Other refuge have I none,

Clings my helpless soul to Thee.”

There can be no greater barrier to our peace and habitual enjoyment of God than our being filled with self-confidence. We must be emptied and humbled. God cannot divide the house with the creature. It is vain to expect it. Jacob had the hollow of his thigh touched so he might learn to lean upon God. The halting Jacob found his sure resource in Jehovah who only empties us of nature that we may be filled with Himself. He knows that just in so far as we are filled with self-confidence or creature-confidence, we are robbed of the deep blessedness of being filled with His fullness. Hence, in His great grace and mercy, He empties us out, that we may learn to cling in child-like confidence to Him. This is our only place of strength, victory and repose.

Someone has said, “I never was truly happy until I ceased to wish to be great.” This is a fine moral truth. When we cease to wish to be anything, when we are content to be nothing, then it is we taste what true greatness, true elevation, true happiness, true peace really is. The restless desire to be something or somebody is destructive of the soul's tranquility. The proud heart and ambitious spirit may pronounce this a poor, low, mean, contemptible sentiment, but when we have taken our place on the forms of the school of Christ and begun to learn of Him who was meek and lowly in heart — when we have drunk in any measure into the spirit of Him who made Himself of no reputation — we then see things quite differently. “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” The way to get up is to go down. This is the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine which He stated and is inscribed on His life. “And Jesus called a little child unto Him and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18: 2-4). This is the doctrine of heaven — the doctrine of self-emptiness. How unlike all that prevails down here in this scene of self-seeking and self-exaltation!

We have in the person of John the Baptist a true example of one who entered in some degree into the real meaning of self-emptiness. The Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who art thou? What sayest thou of thyself?” What was his reply? A self-emptied one! He said he was just “a voice.” This was taking his true place. “A voice” had not much to glory in. He did not say, “I am one crying in the wilderness.” No; he was merely “the voice of One.” He had no ambition to be anything more. This was self-emptiness. Observe the result. He found his engrossing object in Christ. “Again the

next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" What was all this but the fullness of God waiting on an empty vessel! John was nothing, Christ was all. Hence, when John's disciples left his side to follow Jesus, we may feel assured that no murmuring word, no accent of disappointed ambition or wounded pride escaped his lips. There is no envy or jealousy in a self-emptied heart. There is nothing touchy, nothing tenacious about one who has learned to take his true place. Had John been seeking his own things, he might have complained when he saw himself abandoned. But, my reader, when a man has found his satisfying object in "the Lamb of God," he does not care much about losing a few disciples.

We have a further exhibition of the Baptist's self-emptied spirit in John 3. "And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth and all come to Him." Here was a communication calculated to draw out the envy and jealousy of the poor human heart. But mark the noble reply of the Baptist: "A man can receive *nothing* except it be given him from heaven.... He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is *above all*." Precious testimony — a testimony to his own utter nothingness and to Christ's fullness, glory and peerless excellence! "A voice" was "nothing." Christ was high above all.

Oh! for a self-emptied spirit, "a heart free from itself," a mind delivered from all anxiety about one's own things! May we be more thoroughly delivered from self in all its detestable workings! Then could the Master use us, own us and bless us. Hearken to His testimony to John — the one who said of himself that he was nothing but a voice. "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11: 11). How much better to hear this from the Master than from the servant! John said, "I am a voice." Christ said he was the greatest of prophets. Simon Magus "gave out that himself was some great one." Such is the way of the world — the manner of man. John the Baptist, the greatest of prophets, gave out that he was nothing and that Christ was "above all." What a contrast!

May we be kept lowly and self-emptied so we may be continually filled with Christ. This is true rest, true blessedness. May the language of our hearts and the distinct utterance of our lives ever be, "Behold the Lamb of God."

SELF-CONTROL

The word "temperance" in 2 Peter 1: 6 means a great deal more than what is usually understood by that term. It is customary to apply the word "temperance" to a habit of moderation in reference to eating and drinking. No doubt it fully involves this, but it involves much more. Indeed, the Greek word used by the inspired apostle may be rendered "self-control." It gives the idea of one who has *self* habitually well reined in.

This is a rare and admirable grace, diffusing its hallowed influence over one's entire course, character and conduct. It not only bears directly upon one or two or twenty selfish habits, but upon self in all the length and breadth of that comprehensive and most odious term. Many a one who would look with proud disdain upon a glutton or a drunkard, may himself fail every hour in exhibiting the grace of self-control. True it is that gluttony and drunkenness should be ranked with the very vilest and most demoralizing forms of selfishness. They must be regarded as among the most bitter clusters that grow on that widespread tree. But self is a tree and not a mere branch of a tree or a cluster on a branch, and we should not only judge self when it works, but control it that it may not work.

Some may ask, "How can we control self?" The answer is blessedly simple: "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4). Have we not gotten salvation in Christ? Yes, blessed be

God, we have. And what does this wondrous word include? Is it mere deliverance from the wrath to come? Is it merely the pardon of our sins and the assurance of exemption from the lake that burns with fire and brimstone? It is far more than these, precious and priceless though they be. In a word, “salvation” implies a full and hearty acceptance of Christ as my “wisdom” to guide me out of folly's dark and devious paths, into paths of heavenly light and peace; as my “righteousness” to justify me in the sight of a holy God; as my “sanctification” to make me practically holy in all my ways; and as my “redemption” to give me final deliverance from all the power of death, and entrance upon the eternal fields of glory.

Hence, it is evident that “self-control” is included in the salvation which we have in Christ. It is a result of that practical sanctification with which divine grace has endowed us. We should carefully guard against the habit of taking a narrow view of salvation. We should seek to enter into all its fullness. It is a word which stretches from everlasting to everlasting and takes in, in its mighty sweep, all the practical details of daily life. I have no right to talk of salvation of my soul in the future while I refuse to know and exhibit its practical bearing upon my conduct in the present. We are saved, not only from the guilt and condemnation of sin, but as fully from the power, the practice and the love of it. These things should never be separated, nor will they be by anyone who has been divinely taught the meaning, the extent and the power of that precious word “salvation.”

Now, in presenting to my reader a few practical sentences on the subject of self-control, I shall contemplate it under the three following divisions, namely the thoughts, the tongue and the temper. I take it for granted that I am addressing a saved person. If my reader be not that, I can only direct him to the one true and living way, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16). Put your whole trust in Him and you shall be as safe as He is Himself. Now I shall proceed to deal with the practical and much-needed subject of self-control.

First, as to our thoughts and the habitual government thereof. I suppose there are few Christians who have not suffered from evil thoughts — those troublesome intruders upon our most profound privacy, those constant disturbers of our mental repose that so frequently darken the atmosphere around us and prevent us from getting a full, clear view upward into the bright heaven above. The Psalmist could say, “I hate vain thoughts.” No wonder. They are truly hateful and should be judged, condemned and expelled. Someone, in speaking of the subject of evil thoughts, has said, “I cannot prevent birds from flying over me, but I can prevent their alighting upon me. In like manner, I cannot prevent evil thoughts being suggested to my mind, but I can refuse them a lodging therein.”

But how can we control our thoughts? No more than we could blot out our sins or create a world. What are we to do? Look to Christ. This is the true secret of self-control. He can keep us, not only from the lodging, but also from the *suggestion* of the evil thoughts. We could no more prevent the one than the other. He can prevent both. He can keep the vile intruders, not only from getting in, but even from knocking at the door. When the divine life is in energy — when the current of spiritual thought and feeling is deep and rapid, when the heart's affections are intensely occupied with the Person of Christ — vain thoughts do not trouble us. It is only when spiritual indolence creeps over us that evil thoughts — vile and horrible issue — come in upon us. Then our only resource is to look straight to Jesus. We might as well attempt to cope with the marshalled hosts of hell, as with a horde of evil thoughts. Our refuge is in Christ. He is made unto us sanctification. We can do all things through Him. We have just to bring the name of Jesus to bear upon the flood of evil thoughts, and He will most assuredly give full and immediate deliverance.

However, the more excellent way is to be preserved from the suggestions of evil by the power of

pre-occupation with good. When the channel of thought is decidedly upward, when it is deep and well formed, free from all curves and indentations, then the current of imagination and feeling, as it gushes up from the deep fountains of the soul, will naturally flow onward in the bed of that channel. This is unquestionably the more excellent way. May we prove it in our own experience. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4: 8-9). When the heart is fully engrossed with Christ, the living embodiment of all those things enumerated in verse 8, we enjoy profound peace, unruffled by evil thoughts. This is true self-control.

Secondly, as to the tongue, that influential member so fruitful in good, so fruitful in evil — the instrument whereby we can either give forth accents of soft and soothing sympathy or words of bitter sarcasm and burning indignation. How deeply important is the grace of self-control in its application to such a member! Mischief, which years cannot repair, may be done by the tongue in a moment. Words which we would give the world to recall, may be uttered by the tongue in an unguarded moment. Hear what the inspired apostle says on this subject: “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind. But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3: 2-8).

Who then can control the tongue? “No man” can do it, but Christ can, and we have only to look to Him in simple faith. This implies both the sense of our own utter helplessness and His all-sufficiency. It is utterly impossible that we could control the tongue. As well might we attempt to stem the ocean's tide, the mountain torrent or the Alpine avalanche. How often, when suffering under the effects of some blunder of the tongue, have we resolved to command that unruly member somewhat better next time, but our resolution proved to be like the morning cloud that passes away, and we had only to retire and weep over our lamentable failure in the matter of self-control. Why was this? Simply because we undertook the matter in our own strength or at least without a sufficiently deep consciousness of our own weakness. This is the cause of constant failure. We must cling to Christ as a babe clings to its mother. Not that our clinging is of any value; still we must cling. Thus alone can we successfully bridle the tongue. Let us remember at all times the solemn searching words of the same apostle James, “If any one (man, woman or child) among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain” (James 1: 26). These are wholesome words for a day like the present when there are so many unruly tongues abroad. May we have grace to attend to these words! May their holy influence appear in our ways!

The third point to be considered is the temper, which is intimately connected with both the tongue and the thoughts. Indeed, all three are very closely linked. When the spring of thought is spiritual and the current heavenly, the tongue is only the active agent for good, and the temper is calm and unruffled. Christ dwelling in the heart by faith regulates everything. Without Him, all is worse than worthless. I may possess and exhibit the self-command of a Socrates and all the while be wholly ignorant of the

“self-control” of 2 Peter 1: 6. The latter is founded on “faith;” the former on philosophy — two totally different things. We must remember that the word is “Add to your faith.” This puts faith first as the only link to connect the heart with Christ, the living source of all power. Having Christ and abiding in Him, we are enabled to add “courage, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love.” Such are the precious fruits that flow from abiding in Christ. But I can no more control my temper than my tongue or my thoughts, and if I set about it, I shall be sure to break down every hour. A mere philosopher without Christ may exhibit more self-control as to tongue and temper than a Christian, if he abides not in Christ. This ought not to be and would not be if the Christian simply looked to Jesus. It is when he fails in this that the enemy gains the advantage. The philosopher without Christ seems to succeed in the great business of self-control only that he may be the more effectively blinded as to the truth of his condition and carried headlong to eternal ruin. But Satan delights to make a Christian stumble and fall, only that he may thereby blaspheme the precious name of Christ.

Christian reader, let us remember these things. Let us look to Christ to control our thoughts, our tongue and our temper. Let us “give all diligence.” Let us think how much is involved. “If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” This is deeply solemn. How easy it is to drop into a state of spiritual blindness and forgetfulness! No amount of knowledge, either of doctrine or the letter of Scripture, will preserve the soul from this awful condition. Nothing but “the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” will avail. This knowledge is increased in the soul by “giving all diligence to add to our faith” the various graces to which the apostle refers in the above eminently practical and soul-stirring passage. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

PROVISION FOR PERILOUS TIMES

(Read 2 TIMOTHY)

It is of the greatest importance for the servant of Christ in all ages to have a clear, deep, abiding, influential sense of his position, his path, his portion and his prospects — a divinely wrought apprehension of the ground which he is called to occupy, the sphere of action which is thrown open to him, the divine provision made for his comfort and encouragement and strength and guidance, and the brilliant hopes held out to him. There is considerable danger of our being allured into a mere region of theory and speculation, of opinion and sentiment, of dogmas and principles. The freshness of first love is frequently lost by contact with the men and things of what may be called “the religious world.” The lovely freshness of early personal Christianity is often destroyed by a wrong use of the machinery of religion, if we may be allowed to use such a term.

In the kingdom of nature, it frequently happens that some stray seed has dropped into the ground, taken root and sprung up into a tender plant. The hand of man had nothing to do with it. God planted it, watered it and made it grow. He assigned it its position, gave it its strength and covered it with beautiful freshness. By and by, man intruded upon its solitude and transplanted it to his own artificial enclosure, there to wither and droop. Thus it is too often with the plants of God's spiritual kingdom. They are often injured by man's rude hand. They would be far better if left to the sole management of the Hand that planted them. Young Christians frequently suffer immensely from not being left to the exclusive training of the Holy Spirit and the exclusive teaching of Holy Scripture. Human management is almost sure to stunt the growth of God's spiritual plants. It is not that God may not use men as His

instruments in watering, culturing and caring for His precious plants. He assuredly may and does, but then, it is *God's* culture and care, not man's. This makes all the difference. The Christian is God's plant. The seed which produced him was divine. It was directed and planted by God's own hand, and that same hand must be allowed to train it.

Now, what is true of the individual believer is equally true of the Church as a whole. In 1 Timothy, the Church is looked at in its original order and glory. It is there viewed as “the House of God,” “the Church of the living God,” “the pillar and ground of the truth.” Its officebearers, its functions and its responsibilities are there minutely and formally described. The servant of Christ is instructed as to the mode in which he is to conduct himself in the midst of such a hallowed and dignified sphere. Such is the character, such the scope and object of Paul's First Epistle to Timothy.

But in the Second Epistle, we have something quite different. The scene is entirely changed. The house which in the first epistle was looked at in its rule, is here contemplated in its ruin. The Church as an economy set up on the earth, had like every other economy, utterly failed. Man fails in everything. He failed amid the beauty and order of Paradise. He failed in that favored land “that flowed with milk and honey, the glory of all lands.” He failed amid the rare privileges of the gospel dispensation, and he will fail amid the bright beams of millennial glory. Compare Genesis 3; Judges 2; Acts 20: 29; 3 John 9; Revelation 1: 2 and 20: 7-9.

The remembrance of this will help us in understanding 2 Timothy. It may very properly be termed “a divine provision for perilous times.” The apostle seems to be weeping over the ruins of that once beautiful structure. Like the weeping prophet, he beholds “the stones of the sanctuary poured out in the top of every street.” He calls to remembrance the tears of his beloved Timothy. He is glad to have even one sympathizing bosom into which to pour his sorrows. All who were in Asia had turned away from him. He was left to stand alone before Caesar's judgment seat. Demas forsook him. Alexander the coppersmith did him much evil. All around him, so far as man was concerned, looked gloomy and dark. He begs of his beloved Timothy to bring him his cloak, his books and his parchments. All is strongly marked. “Perilous times” are anticipated. “A form of godliness without the power” — the mantle of profession thrown over the grossest abominations of the human heart — men not able to endure sound doctrine, heaping to themselves teachers after their own lusts, having itching ears which must needs be tickled by the fabulous and baseless absurdities of the human mind. Such are the features of 2 Timothy. Who can fail to notice them? Who can fail to see that our lot is cast in the very midst of the evils and dangers here contemplated? Is it not well to have a clear perception of these things? Why should we desire to blind our eyes to the truth? Why deceive ourselves with vain dreams of increasing light and spiritual prosperity? Is it not far better to look the true condition of things straight in the face? Assuredly; and so much the more when the selfsame epistle which so faithfully points out “the perilous times,” fully unfolds the divine provision.

Why should we imagine that man under the Christian dispensation would prove any better than man under all the dispensations which have gone before, or under the millennial dispensation which is yet to follow? Would not analogy, even in the absence of direct and positive proof, lead us to expect failure under this present economy as well as under all the others? If we, without exception, find judgment at the close of all the other dispensations, why should we look for anything else at the close of this? Let my reader ponder these things and then accompany me while I seek by the grace of God to unfold some of the divine provisions for “perilous times.”

I do not attempt to expound this most touching and interesting epistle in detail. This would be impossible in this short article. I shall merely single out one point from each of the four chapters into

which the epistle has been divided. These are, first, “unfeigned faith” (2 Tim. 1: 5); secondly, “the sure foundation” (2 Tim. 2: 19); thirdly, “the Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3: 15); and fourthly, “the crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4: 8). The man who knows anything of the power of these things, is divinely provided for “perilous times.”

First, as to “the unfeigned faith” — that priceless possession. The apostle says, “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.” Here we have something above and beyond everything ecclesiastical — something which one must have before he is introduced to the Church, and which will stand good though the Church were in ruins around him. This unfeigned faith connects the soul immediately with Christ in the power of a link which must of necessity be prior to all ecclesiastical associations, however important they may be — a link which shall endure when all earthly associations shall have been dissolved forever. We do not get to Christ through the Church. We get to Christ first, and then to the Church. Christ is our life, not the Church. No doubt, church fellowship is most valuable, but there is something above and beyond it, and it is of that something that “unfeigned faith” takes possession. Timothy had this faith dwelling in him before ever he entered the house of God. He was connected with the God of the house previous to his manifested association with the house of God.

It is well to be clear as to this. We must never surrender the intense individuality which characterizes “unfeigned faith.” We must carry it with us through all the scenes and circumstances, the links and associations of our Christian life and service. We must not traffic in mere church position or build upon religious machinery or be borne up by a routine of duty, or cling to the worthless props of sectarian sympathy or denominational preference. Let us cultivate those fresh, vivid and powerful affections which were created in our heart when first we knew the Lord. Let the beautiful blossom of our spring-time be succeeded, not by barrenness and sterility, but by those mellow clusters which spring from realized connection with the root.

Too often it is otherwise. Too often the earnest, zealous, simple-hearted young Christian is lost in the bigoted, narrow-minded member of a sect, or the intolerant defender of some peculiar opinion. The freshness, softness, simplicity, tenderness and earnest affection of our young days are rarely carried forward into the advanced stages of vigorous manhood and mature old age. Very frequently, one finds a depth of tone, a richness of experience, of moral elevation in the early stages of the Christian life which too soon gives place to a chilling formalism in one's personal ways, or a mere energy in the defense of some barren system of theology. How rarely are those words of the Psalmist realized, “They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing” (Ps. 42: 14).

The truth is, we all want to cultivate more diligently an “unfeigned faith.” We want to enter with more spiritual vigor, into the power of the link which binds us, individually, to Christ. This would render us “fat and flourishing,” even in old age. “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.” We suffer materially by allowing what is called Christian fellowship to interfere with our personal connection and communion with Christ. We are far too prone to substitute fellowship with man for fellowship with God — to walk in the footsteps of our fellow, rather than in the footsteps of Christ — to look around rather than upward for sympathy, support and encouragement.

These are not the fruits of “unfeigned faith.” Quite the opposite. That faith is as blooming and

vigorous amid the solitudes of a desert as in the bosom of an assembly. Its immediate, all-engrossing business is with God Himself. "It endures as seeing Him who is invisible." It fixes its earnest gaze upon things unseen and eternal. "It enters into that within the veil." It lives amid the unseen realities of an eternal world. Having conducted the soul to the feet of Jesus, there to get a full and final forgiveness of all its sins through His most precious blood, it bears it majestically onward through all the windings and labyrinths of desert life, and enables it to bask in the bright beams of millennial glory.

Thus much as to this first precious item in the divine provision for "perilous times" — this "unfeigned faith." No one can ever get on without it, let the times be peaceful or perilous, easy or difficult, rough or smooth, dark or bright. If a man be destitute of this faith, deeply implanted and diligently cultivated in him, he must sooner or later break down. He may be urged on for a time by the impulses of surrounding circumstances and their influence. He may be propped up and borne along by his co-religionists. He may float down along the stream of religious profession. But most assuredly, if he be not possessed of "unfeigned faith," the time is rapidly approaching when it will be all over with him forever. The "perilous times" will soon rise to a head. Then will come the awful crisis of judgment, from which none can escape except the happy possessors of "unfeigned faith." God grant my reader may be one of these! If so, all is eternally safe.

Secondly, we shall now consider "the sure foundation." "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2: 9). In the midst of all the "trouble," the "hardness," the "striving about words," the "profane and vain babblings," the errors of "Hymenaeus and Philetus" — in the midst of all these varied features of the "perilous times," how precious to fall back upon God's sure foundation. The soul that is built upon this, in the divine energy of "unfeigned faith," is able to resist the rapidly rising tide of evil — is divinely furnished for the most appalling times. There is a fine moral link between the unfeigned faith in the heart of man and the sure foundation laid by the hand of God. All may go to ruin. The Church may go to pieces and all who love the Church may have to sit down and weep over its ruins, but there stands that imperishable foundation laid by God's own hand, against which the surging tide of error and evil may roll with all its fury and have no effect, except to prove the eternal stability of that Rock and of all who are built thereon.

"The Lord knoweth them that are His." There is abundance of false profession, but the eye of Jehovah rests on all those who belong to Him. Not one of them is, or ever can be forgotten by Him. Their names are engraven on His heart. They are as precious to Him as the price He paid for them, and that is nothing less than the "precious blood" of His own dear Son. No evil can befall them. No weapon formed against them can prosper. "The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." What rich, what ample provision for "perilous times!" Why should we fear? Why should we be anxious? Having "unfeigned faith within and God's foundation beneath, it is our happy privilege to pursue, with tranquilized hearts, our upward and onward way in the assurance that all is and shall be well.

"I know My sheep," He cries,
"My soul approves them well:
Vain is the treacherous world's disguise,
And vain the rage of hell."

It has been well said that the seal on God's foundation has two sides. One bears the inscription, "The Lord knoweth them that are His"; the other, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart

from iniquity.” The former is as peace-giving as the latter is practical. Let the strife and confusion be ever so great, let the storm rage and the billow arise, let the darkness thicken, let all the powers of earth and hell combine, “the Lord knoweth them that are His.” He has sealed them for Himself. The assurance of this is calculated to maintain the heart in profound repose, let the “times” be ever so “perilous.”

But, let us never forget that each one who “names the name of Christ” is solemnly responsible to “depart from iniquity” wherever he finds it. This is applicable to all true Christians. The moment I see anything that deserves the epithet of “iniquity,” be it what or where it may, I am called upon to “depart from” that thing. I am not to wait till others see with me, for what may seem to be “iniquity” to one, may not seem to be so to another. Hence, it is entirely a personal question. “Let every one.” The language used in this epistle is very personal, very strong, very intense. “If a man purge himself.” “Flee also youthful lusts.” “From such turn away.” “Continue thou.” “I charge thee.” “Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions.” “Of whom be thou aware also.” These are solemn, earnest, weighty words — words which distinctly prove that our lot is cast in times when we must not lean upon the arm or gaze upon the countenance of our fellow.

We must be sustained by the energy of an “unfeigned faith” and by our personal connection with the “sure foundation.” Thus shall we be able, let others do or think as they will, to “depart from iniquity,” to “flee youthful lusts.” We shall be able to “turn away” from the adherents of a powerless “form of godliness,” wherever we find them, and to “beware” of every “Alexander the coppersmith.”* If we permit our feet to be moved from the rock, if we surrender ourselves to the impulse of surrounding circumstances and influences, we shall never be able to make headway against the special forms of evil and error in these “perilous times.”

{*I suppose there has never been a "Nehemiah" without a "Sanballat," or an "Ezra" without a "Rehum;" or a "Paul" without an "Alexander."}

Our third point is “the Holy Scriptures” — that precious portion of every “man of God.” “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly* furnished unto *all* good works” (2 Tim. 3: 14-17). Here we have rich provision for “perilous times.” We need a thorough knowledge of the One from “whom we have learned” an accurate, personal, experimental acquaintance with “Holy Scripture,” that pure fountain of divine authority, that changeless source of heavenly wisdom which even a child may possess, and without which a wise man must err.

If a man be not able to refer all his thoughts, all his convictions, all his principles to God as their living source, to Christ as their living center, and to “the Holy Scriptures” as their divine authority, he will never be able to get on through “perilous times.” A second-hand faith will never do. We must hold truth directly from God, through the medium and on the authority of “the Holy Scriptures.” God may use a man to show me certain things in the Word, but I do not hold them from man but from God. It is “knowing of *whom* thou hast learned.” When this is the case I am able, through grace, to get on through the thickest darkness and through all the devious paths of this wilderness world. Inspiration's heavenly lamp emits a light so clear, so full, so steady, that its brightness is only made the more manifest by the surrounding gloom. “The man of God” is not left to drink of the muddy streams that flow along the channel of human tradition. With the vessel of “unfeigned faith,” he sits beside the ever-gushing

fountain of “Holy Scripture” to drink of its refreshing waters to the full satisfaction of his thirsty soul.

It is worthy of remark that, although the inspired apostle was fully aware when writing his first epistle, of Timothy's “unfeigned faith” and of his knowledge from childhood's earliest dawn of “the Holy Scriptures,” yet he does not allude to these things until, in his second epistle, he contemplates the appalling features of the “perilous times.” The reason is obvious. It is in the very midst of the perils of “the last days” that one has the most urgent need of “unfeigned faith” and “the Holy Scriptures.” We cannot get on without them. When all around is fresh and vigorous — when all are borne onward as by one common impulse of genuine devotedness — when every heart is full to overflowing of deep and earnest attachment to the Person and cause of Christ — when every countenance beams with heavenly joy — then it is comparatively easy to get on.

But the condition of things contemplated in 2 Timothy is the very reverse of all this. It is such, that unless one is walking closely with God in the habitual exercise of “unfeigned faith” — in the abiding realization of the link which connects him indissolubly with “the foundation of God” — and in clear, unquestionable, accurate knowledge of “the Holy Scriptures,” he must make shipwreck. This is a deeply solemn consideration, well worth my reader's undivided, prayerful attention. The time has arrived when each one must follow the Lord according to his measure. “What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.” These words fall on the ear with unique power as one seeks to make his way amid the ruins of everything ecclesiastical.

Let me not be misunderstood. It is not that I would detract in the smallest degree from the value of true church fellowship or from the divine institution of the Assembly and all the privileges and responsibilities attaching thereto. Far be the thought. I most fully believe that Christians are called to seek the maintenance of the very highest principles of communion. Moreover, we are warranted from the epistle which now lies open before us, to expect that, in the darkest times, the “purged vessel” will be able to “follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2: 22).

All this is plain and has its due place and value, but it in no wise interferes with the fact that each one is responsible to pursue a path of holy independence, without waiting for the approval, sympathy, support, or company of his fellow. True, we are to be deeply thankful for brotherly fellowship when we can get it on true ground. Of such fellowship no words can tell the worth. Would that we knew more of it! The Lord increase it to us a hundred fold! But let us never stoop to purchase fellowship at the heavy price of giving up all that is “lovely and of good report.” May the name of Jesus be more precious to our hearts than all beside. And may our happy lot be cast on earth with all those who *truly* love His name, as it shall be throughout eternity in the regions of unfading light and purity, above.

Fourthly, a closing word as to “the crown of righteousness.” “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also who love His appearing” (2 Tim. 4: 6-8). Here, the venerable pilgrim takes his stand on the summit of the spiritual Mount Pisgah and with undimmed eye, surveys the bright plains of glory. He sees the crown of righteousness glittering in the Master's hand. He looks back over the course which he had run, and over the battlefield whereon he had fought. He stands on the confines of earth and in the very midst of the ruins of that Church whose rise and progress he had watched with such intense eagerness, and over whose decline and fall he had poured forth the tears of tender though disappointed affection, and he fixes his eye on the goal of immortality which no power of the enemy can prevent his reaching in

triumph. Whether it were by Caesar's axe that he was to reach that goal or by any other means, it mattered not to one who was able to say, "*I am ready.*" What true greatness! What moral grandeur! What noble elevation is here!

Yet there was nothing of the ascetic in this incomparable servant, for though his vision was filled with the crown of righteousness, though he is ready to step like a conqueror into his triumphal chariot, he nevertheless feels it perfectly right to give detailed directions about his cloak and books. This is divinely perfect. It teaches us that the more vividly we enter into the glories of heaven, the more faithfully shall we discharge the functions of earth. The more we realize the nearness of eternity, the more effectively shall we order the things of time.

Such, beloved reader, is the ample provision made by the grace of God for "the perilous times" through which you and I are now passing. "Unfeigned faith" — "The sure foundation" — "The Holy Scriptures" — and "The crown of righteousness." May the Holy Spirit lead us into a deep sense of the importance and value of these things! May we love the appearing of Jesus and earnestly look out for that cloudless morning when "the righteous Judge" shall place a diadem of glory upon the brow of each one who really loves His appearing!