

## Glad Tidings

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*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* John 3: 16.

There are some passages in Holy Scripture which seem to contain in a line or two, an entire volume of most precious truth. The verse which we have just penned is one of such. It is part of our Lord's memorable discourse with Nicodemus, and it embodies, in a condensed form, a very full statement of Gospel truth — a statement which may well be termed "Glad Tidings."

It should ever be born in mind, both by preachers, and those to whom they preach, that one grand object of the gospel is to bring God and the sinner together in such a way as to secure the sinner's eternal salvation. It reveals a *Saviour God* to a *lost man*. In other words it presents God to the sinner in the very character that the sinner needs. A Saviour is precisely what suits the lost, just as a lifeboat suits a drowning man, or a physician a sick man, or bread a hungry man. They are fitted the one for the other, and when God as a Saviour, and man as a lost sinner, meet together, the whole question is settled for ever. The sinner is saved, because God is a Saviour. He is saved according to the perfection which belongs to God, in every character He wears, in every office He fills, in every relationship He sustains. To raise a question as to the full and everlasting salvation of a believing soul, is to deny that God is a Saviour. So it is in reference to justification. God has revealed Himself as a Justifier, and hence the believer is justified according to the perfection which attaches to God in that character. If a single flaw could be detected in the title of the very weakest believer, it would be a dishonour to God as a Justifier. Grant me but this, that God is my Justifier, and I argue, in the face of every opposer and every accuser, that I am, and must be, perfectly justified.

And, on the same principle, grant me but this, that God has revealed Himself as a Saviour, and I argue, with unclouded confidence and holy boldness, that I am, and must be, perfectly saved. It does not rest upon aught in me, but simply and entirely upon God's revelation of Himself. I know He is perfect in everything; and, therefore, perfect as my Saviour. Hence, I am perfectly saved, inasmuch as the glory of God is involved in my salvation. "There is no God else beside Me: a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me." What then? "*Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else*" (Isa. 45: 21-22). One believing *look* from a lost sinner to a just God and a Saviour, secures eternal salvation. "*Look!*" How simple! It is not "Work" — "Do" — "Pray" — "Feel" — no; it is simply "Look." And what then? Salvation — everlasting life. It must be so, because God is a Saviour; and the precious little word "look" fully implies all this, inasmuch as it expresses the fact that the salvation which I want is found in the One to whom I look. It is all there, ready for me, and one look secures it — secures it forever — secures it for *me*. It is not a thing of to-day or to-morrow; it is an eternal reality. The bulwarks of salvation behind which the believer retreats have been erected by God Himself — the Saviour-God, on the sure foundation of Christ's atoning work; and no power of earth or hell can ever shake them. "Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief Corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded" (Isa. 28: 16; 1 Peter 2: 6).

But let us now turn directly to the profound and comprehensive passage which forms the special subject of this paper. In it, most assuredly, we listen to the voice of a Saviour-God — the voice of Him who came down from Heaven to reveal God in such a way as He had never been revealed before. It is a

marvellously blessed fact that God has been fully revealed in this world — revealed, so that we — the writer and the reader of these lines — may know Him, in all the reality of what He is — know Him, each for himself, with the utmost possible certainty, and have to do with Him, in all the blessed intimacy of personal communion.

Think of this! Think, we beseech you, of this amazing privilege. You may know God for yourself, as *your* Saviour, *your* Father, *your* own very God. You may have to do with Him; you may lean upon Him, cling to Him, walk with Him, live and move and have your being in His own most blessed presence, in the bright sunshine of His loving countenance, under His own immediate eye.

This is life and peace. It is far more than mere theology or systematic divinity. These things have their value, but, be it remembered, a man may be a profound theologian, an able divine, and yet live and die without God and perish eternally. Solemn, awful, overwhelming thought! A man may go down to hell, into the blackness and darkness of an eternal night, with all the dogmas of theology at his fingers' ends. A man may sit in the professor's chair, stand in the pulpit and at the desk; he may be looked up to as a great teacher and an eloquent preacher: hundreds may sit at his feet and learn, thousands may hang on his lips and be enraptured, and, after all, he himself may descend into the pit, and spend a dismal, miserable eternity in company with the most profane and immoral.

Not so, however, with one who knows God as He is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. Such a one has gotten life eternal. "This," says Christ, "is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17: 3). It is not life eternal to know theology or divinity. A man may sit down to the study of these, as he would to study law or medicine, astronomy or geology, and all the while know nothing of God, and therefore be without divine life, and perish in the end.

So also as to mere religiousness. A man may be the greatest devotee in the world. He may most diligently discharge all the offices, and sedulously attend upon all the ordinances of systematic religion; he may fast and pray; hear sermons and say prayers; be most devout and exemplary; and all the while know nothing of God in Christ; yea, he may live and die without God, and sink into hell forever. Look at Nicodemus. Where could you find a better sample of religious human nature than in him? A man of the Pharisees, a ruler, of the Jews, a master in Israel; one, moreover, who seemed to discern in the miracles of our Lord the clear proofs of His divine mission; and yet the word to him was, "Ye must be born again." We have no need, surely, to go farther than this to prove that a man may be not only religious, but actually a guide and a teacher of others, and yet not have divine life in his soul.

But it is not so with one who knows God in Christ. Such a one has life and an object. He has God Himself for his priceless portion. This is divine. It lies at the very foundation of personal Christianity and true religion. It is above and beyond everything. It is not, we repeat, mere theology, divinity, or religiousness; it is God Himself, known, trusted, and enjoyed. It is a grand, unmistakable reality. It is the soul of theology, the groundwork of divinity, the life of true religion. There is nothing in all this world like it. It is something which must be *felt* in order to be known. It is acquaintance with God, confidence in Him, and enjoyment of Him.

Now, it may be that the reader is disposed to ask, "How can I possess this priceless treasure? How can I know God for myself, in this living, saving, powerful manner? If it be true that without this personal knowledge of God I *must* perish eternally, then how am I to obtain it? What am I to do, what am I to be, in order to know God?" The answer is, God has revealed Himself. If He had not, we may say with decision that nothing that we could do, nothing that we could be, nothing in us or of us, could possibly make us acquainted with God. If God had not manifested Himself, we should have remained

forever in ignorance of Him and perished in our ignorance. But, seeing that He has come forth from the thick darkness and showed Himself, we may know Him according to the truth of His own revelation, and find, in that knowledge, everlasting life, and a spring of blessedness at which our ransomed souls shall drink throughout the golden ages of eternity.

We know of nothing which so clearly and forcibly proves man's utter incompetency to do aught towards procuring life, as the fact that the possession of that life is based upon the knowledge of God: and this knowledge of God must rest upon the *revelation* of God. In a word, to know God is life, to be ignorant of Him is death.

But where is He to be known? This is, in very deed, a grave question. Many a one has had to cry out, with Job, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him." Where is God to be found? Am I to look for Him in creation? Doubtless, His hand is visible there; but ah! that will not do for me. A Creator-God will not suit a lost sinner. *The hand of power* will not avail for a poor, guilty wretch like me. I want a *heart of Love*. Yes, I want a heart that can love me in all my guilt and misery. Where can I find this? Shall I look into the wide domain of providence — the widely extended sphere of God's government? Has God revealed Himself there in such a way as to meet me, a poor lost one? Will providence and government avail for one who knows himself to be a hell-deserving sinner? Clearly not. If I look at these things, I may see what will perplex and confound me. I am short-sighted and ignorant, and wholly unable to explain the ins and outs, the bearings and issues, the why and the wherefore, of a single event in my own life, or in the history of this world. Am I able to explain all about the loss of *The London*? Can I account for the fact that a most valuable life is suddenly cut short, and an apparently useless one prolonged? There is a husband and the father of a large family; he seems perfectly indispensable to his domestic circle and yet, all in a moment, he is cut down, and they are left in sorrow and destitution; while, on the other hand, yonder lies a poor bed-ridden creature, who has outlived all her relations, and is dependent on the parish, or on individual benevolence. She has lain there for years, a burden to some, no use to any. Can I account for this? Am I competent to interpret the voice of Providence in this deeply mysterious dispensation? Certainly not. I have nothing in or of myself wherewith to thread my way through the mazes of the labyrinth of what is called providence. I cannot find a Saviour-God there.

Well, then, shall I turn to the law — to the Mosaic economy — the Levitical ceremonial? Shall I find what I want there? Will a Lawgiver, on the top of a fiery mount, wrapped in clouds and thick darkness, sending forth thunders and lightnings, or hidden behind a veil — will such a One avail for me? Alas! I cannot meet Him — I cannot answer His demands nor fulfil the conditions. I am told to love Him with all my heart, with all my mind, and with all my strength; but I do not know Him. I am blind and cannot see. I am alienated from the life of God, an enemy by wicked works. Sin has blinded my mind, blunted my conscience, and hardened my heart. The devil has completely perverted my moral being, and led me into a state of positive rebellion against God. I want to be renewed in the very source of my being ere I can do what the law demands. How can I be thus renewed? Only by the knowledge of God. But God is not revealed in the law. Nay, He is hidden — hidden behind an impenetrable cloud, an unrent veil. Hence I cannot know Him there. I am compelled to retire from that fiery mount, and from that unrent veil, and from the whole economy of which these were the characteristic features, the prominent objects, still crying out, "Oh! that I knew where I might find Him." In a word, then, neither in creation, nor in providence, nor in the law, is God revealed as "a just God and a Saviour." I see a God of power in creation: a God of wisdom in providence; a God of justice in the law; a God of love *only* in the face of Jesus Christ. "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself*" (2 Cor. 5: 19).

To this stupendous fact we call the reader's earnest attention; that is, if he be one who does not yet

know the Lord. It is of the very last possible importance that he be clear as to this. Without it there can be nothing right. To know God is the first step. It is not merely knowing some things about God. It is not unrenewed nature turning religious, trying to do better, endeavouring to keep the law. No; it is none of these things. It is God, known in the face of Jesus Christ. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This is the deep and blessed secret of the whole matter. The reader, so far as his natural condition is concerned, is in a state of darkness. There is not so much as a single ray of spiritual light. He is, spiritually and morally, just what creation was physically before that sublime and commanding utterance fell from the lips of the Almighty Creator, "Let there be light." All is dark and chaotic, for the "god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4: 4-6).

Here are two things; namely, the god of this world blinding the mind, and seeking to hinder the inshining of the precious, life-giving beams of the light of God's glory; and, on the other hand, God, in His marvellous grace, shining in the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Thus all hinges upon the grand reality of the knowledge of God. Is there light? It is because God is known. Is there darkness? It is because God is not known. No doubt there are various measures in the experience and exhibition of this light: but there is light, because there is the knowledge of God. So also there may be various forms of darkness; some more hideous than others; but there is darkness because God is not known. The knowledge of God is light and life. Ignorance of God is darkness and death. A man may enrich himself with all the treasures of science and literature; but if he does not know God, he is in the darkness of primeval night. But, on the other hand, a man may be profoundly ignorant of all human learning; but if he knows God, he walks in broad day-light.

In the passage of Scripture which is engaging our attention, namely, John 3: 16, we have a very remarkable illustration of the character of the entire Gospel of John, and especially the opening chapters. It is impossible to meditate upon it without seizing this interesting fact. In it we are introduced to God Himself, in that wondrous aspect of His character and nature, as loving *the world* and giving His Son. In it, too, we find, not only the "world" as a whole, but the individual sinner, under that most satisfactory title of "whosoever." Thus God and the sinner are together — God, *loving* and *giving*; and the sinner, *believing* and *having*. It is not God judging and exacting; but God loving and giving. The former was law; the latter, grace; that was Judaism; this, Christianity. In the one, we see God demanding obedience in order to have life; in the other, we see God giving life as the only basis of obedience. In the one, we see man struggling for life, but never obtaining it; in the other, we see man receiving life as a free gift, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the contrast between the two systems — a contrast which cannot be too deeply pondered. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1: 17).

But let us mark the way in which this is unfolded in our text. "God so loved the world." Here we have the wide aspect of the love of God. It is not confined to any particular nation, tribe, caste, or family. It embraces the whole world. God is love; and, being so, it is not a question of the fitness or worthiness of the object of His love. It is what He is. He is love, and He cannot deny Himself. It is the very energy and activity of His nature. The heart may have many a question, many an exercise as to its state and condition before God, and very right it should have them. The Spirit Himself may produce such exercises and raise such questions; but, after all, the grand truth shines forth in all its lustre, "God is love." Whatever we are, whatever the world is, that is what God is; and we know that the truth as to God forms the deep and rich substratum which underlies the whole system of Christianity. The soul may pass through deep and sore conflict, under the sense of its own wretchedness; there may be many

doubts say, and fears; many dark and heavy clouds; weeks, months, or years may be spent under the law, in one's inward self-consciousness, and that, moreover, long after the mere intellect has yielded its assent to the principles and doctrines of evangelical truth. But, after all, we must be brought into direct personal contact with God Himself — with what He is — with His nature and character, as He has revealed Himself in the gospel. We have to acquaint ourselves with Him, and He is love.

Observe, it does not say merely that God is loving, but that He is *love*. It is not only that love is an attribute of His character, but it is the very activity of His nature. We do not read that God is justice, or holiness; He is just and He is holy; but it would not express the full and blessed truth to say that God is loving; He is much more, He is love itself. Hence, when the sinner — "whosoever" he be, it matters not — is brought to see his own total and absolute ruin, his hopeless wretchedness, his guilt and misery, the utter vanity and worthlessness of all within and around him, (and there is nothing in the whole world that can satisfy his heart, and nothing in his heart that can satisfy God, or satisfy even his own conscience) when these things are opened in any measure to his view, then is he met by this grand substantial truth that "God is love," and that He so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son.

Here is life and rest for the soul. Here is salvation, full, free, and everlasting, for the poor, needy, guilty, lost one; — salvation resting not upon anything in man or of man, upon aught that he is or can be, aught that he has done or can do, but simply upon what God is and has done. God *loves* and *gives*, and the sinner *believes* and *has*. This is far beyond creation, government, or law. In creation, God spake and it was done. He called worlds into existence by the word of His mouth. But we hear nothing, throughout the entire record of creation, of God loving and giving.

So as to government, we see God ruling in unsearchable wisdom, amid the armies of Heaven, and among the children of men: but we cannot comprehend Him. We can only say as to this subject, that:

God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.  
Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs,  
And works His sovereign will.

Finally, as to the law, it is, from beginning to end, a perfect system of command and prohibition — a system perfect in its action as testing man, and making manifest his entire alienation from God. "The law worketh wrath." And again, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." But what could such a system do in a world of sinners? Could it give life? Impossible. Why? Because man could not fulfil its holy requirements. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, then verily, righteousness should have been by the law." But no; the law was a ministration of death and condemnation. (See 2 Cor. 3.) The only effect of the law, to anyone who is under it, is the pressure of death upon the soul, and of guilt and condemnation upon the conscience. It cannot possibly be otherwise with an honest soul under the law.

What, then, is needed? Simply this, the knowledge of the love of God, and of the precious gift which that love has bestowed. This is the eternal groundwork of all. Love, and the gift of love. For, be

it observed and ever remembered, that God's love could never have reached us save through the medium of that gift. God is holy, and we are sinful. How could we come near Him? How could we dwell in His holy presence? How could sin and holiness ever abide in company? Impossible. Justice demands the condemnation of sin; and if love will save the sinner, it must do so at no less a cost than the gift of the only-begotten Son. Darius loved Daniel, and laboured hard to save him from the lions' den; but his love was powerless because of the unbending law of the Medes and Persians. He spent the night in sorrow and fasting. He could weep at the mouth of the den; but he could not save his friend. His love was not mighty to save. If he had offered himself to the lions instead of his friend, it would have been morally glorious; but he did not. His love told itself forth in unavailing tears and lamentations. The law of the Persian kingdom was more powerful than the love of the Persian king. The law, in its stern majesty, triumphed over an impotent love which had nothing but fruitless tears to bestow upon its object.

But the love of God is not like this — eternal and universal praise to His name! His love is mighty to save. It *reigns* through righteousness. How is this? Because "God *so* loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." The law had declared in words of awful solemnity. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Was this law less stern less majestic, less stringent, than the law of the Medes and Persians? Surely not. How then, was it to be disposed of? It was to be magnified and made honourable, vindicated and established. Not one jot or tittle of the law could ever be set aside. How, then, was the difficulty to be solved? Three things had to be done: the law had to be magnified; sin condemned; the sinner saved. How could these grand results be reached? We have the answer in two bold and vivid lines from one of our own poets:

"On Jesus' cross this record's graved,  
Let sin be damned, and sinners saved.

Precious record! May many an anxious sinner read and believe it! Such was the amazing love of God, that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. His love cost Him nothing less than the Son of His bosom. When it was a question of creating worlds, it cost Him but the word of His mouth: but when it was a question of loving a world of sinners, it cost His only-begotten Son. The love of God is a holy love, a righteous love, a love acting in harmony with all the attributes of His nature, and the claims of His throne. "Grace *reigns*, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Christ Jesus our Lord." The soul can never be set at liberty till this truth be fully laid hold of. There may be certain vague hopes in the mercy of God, and a measure of confidence in the atoning work of Jesus, all true and real so far as it goes; but true liberty of heart cannot possibly be enjoyed until it is seen and understood that God has glorified Himself in the manner of His love toward us. Conscience could never be tranquillised, nor Satan silenced, if sin had not been perfectly judged and put away. But "God *so* loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." What depth and power in the little word "so"!

It may here be needful to meet a difficulty which often occurs to anxious souls, in reference to the question of appropriation. Thousands have been harassed and perplexed by this question, at some stage or other of their spiritual history; and it is not improbable that many who shall read these pages may be glad of a few words on the subject. Many may feel disposed to ask, "How am I to know that this love, and the gift of love, are intended for *me* ? What warrant have I for believing that 'everlasting life' is for *me*? I know the plan of salvation; I believe in the all-sufficiency of the atonement of Christ for the forgiveness and justification of all who truly believe. I am convinced of the truth of all that the Bible declares. I believe we are all sinners, and moreover, that we can do nothing to save ourselves — that we need to be washed in the blood of Jesus, and to be taught and led by the Holy Ghost, ere we can

please God here, and dwell with Him hereafter. All this I fully believe, and yet I have no assurance that I am saved, and I want to know on what authority I am to believe that my sins are forgiven and that I have everlasting life."

If the foregoing be, in any measure, the language of the reader — if it be, at all, the expression of his difficulty, we would, in the first place, call his attention to two words which occur in our precious text (John 3:16), namely, "*world*" and "*whosoever*." It seems utterly impossible for anyone to refuse the application of these two words. For what, let us ask, is the meaning of the term "*world*"? What does it embrace? or, rather, what does it not embrace? When our Lord declares that "God so loved the world," on what ground can the reader exclude himself from the range, scope, and application of this divine love? On no other ground whatever, unless he can show that he alone belongs not to the world, but to some other sphere of being. If it were declared that "the world" is hopelessly condemned, could anyone making a part of that world avoid the application of the sentence! Could he exclude himself from it? Impossible. How then can he — why should he — exclude himself, when it is a question of God's free love, and of salvation by Christ Jesus?

But, further, we would ask, What is the meaning, what is the force of the familiar word, "*whosoever*"? Assuredly it means "*anybody*", and if anybody, why not the reader? It is infinitely better, infinitely surer, and more satisfactory to find the word "whosoever" in the gospel than to find my own name there, inasmuch as there may be a thousand persons in the world of the same name; but "whosoever" applies to me as distinctly as though I were the only sinner on the face of the earth.

Thus, then, the very words of the gospel message — the very terms used to set forth the glad tidings, are such as leave no possible ground for a difficulty as to their application. If we listen to our Lord in the days of His flesh, we hear such words as these: "God so loved the *world* that He gave His only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Again, if we listen to Him after His resurrection, we hear these words, "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*" (Mark 16). And lastly, if we listen to the voice of the Holy Ghost sent from a risen, ascended, and glorified Lord, we hear such words as these: "The same Lord over all is rich unto *all* that call upon Him. For *whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10: 12-13).

In all the above-cited passages we have two terms used, one general, the other particular, and both together so presenting the message of salvation as to leave no room whatever for anyone to refuse its application. If "all the world" is the scope, and "every creature" is the object of the precious gospel of Christ, then, on what ground can anyone exclude himself? Where is there authority for any sinner out of hell to say that the glad tidings of salvation are not for him? There is none. Salvation is as free as the air we breathe — free as the dewdrops that refresh the earth — free as the sunbeams that shine upon our pathway; and if any attempt to limit its application, they are neither in harmony with the mind of Christ, nor in sympathy with the heart of God.

But it may be that some of our readers would, at this stage of the subject, feel disposed to ask us, "How do you dispose of the question of election?" We reply, "Very simply, by leaving it where God has placed it, namely, as a landmark in the inheritance of the spiritual Israel, and not as a stumbling-block in the pathway of the anxious inquirer." This we believe to be the true way of dealing with the deeply important doctrine of election. The more we ponder the subject, the more thoroughly are we convinced that it is a mistake on the part of the evangelist or preacher of the gospel to qualify his message, hamper his subject, or perplex his hearers, by the doctrine of election or predestination. He has to do with lost sinners in the discharge of his blessed ministry. He meets men where they are, on the broad ground of

our common ruin, our common guilt, our common condemnation. He meets them with a message of full, free, present, personal, and eternal salvation — a message which comes fresh, fervent, and glowing from the very bosom of God. His ministry is, as the Holy Ghost declares in 2 Cor. 5, "a ministry of reconciliation," the glorious characteristics of which are these, "God in Christ" . . . "reconciling the world unto Himself" . . . "not imputing their trespasses"; and the marvellous foundation of which is, that God has made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Does this trench, in the smallest degree, upon the blessed and clearly established truth of election? By no means. It leaves it, in all its integrity and in its full value, as a grand fundamental truth of Holy Scripture exactly where God has placed it; not as a preliminary question to be settled ere the sinner comes to Jesus, but as a most precious consolation and encouragement to him when he has come. This makes all the difference. If the sinner be called upon to settle beforehand the question of his election, how is he to set about it? Whither is he to turn for a solution? Where shall he find a divine warrant for believing that he is one of the elect? Can he find a single line of Scripture on which to base his faith as to his election? He cannot. He can find scores of passages declaring him to be lost, guilty and undone — scores of passages to assure him of his total inability to do aught in the matter of his own salvation — hundreds of passages unfolding the free love of God, the value and efficacy of the atonement of Christ, and assuring him of a hearty welcome to come *Just as he is*, and make God's blessed salvation his own. But if it be needed for him to settle the prior question of his predestination and election, then is his case hopeless, and he must, in so far as he is in earnest, be plunged in black despair.

And is it not thus with thousands at this moment through the misapplication of the doctrine of election? We fully believe it is, and hence our anxiety to help our readers by setting the matter in what we judge to be the true light before their minds. We believe it to be of the utmost importance for the anxious inquirer to know that the standpoint from which he is called to view the cross of Christ is not the standpoint of election, but of conscious ruin. The grace of God meets him as a lost, dead, guilty sinner; not as an elect one. This is an unspeakable mercy, inasmuch as he knows he is the former, but cannot know that he is the latter until the gospel has come to him in power. "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." How did he know it? "Because our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. 1: 4-5). Paul preached to the Thessalonians as lost sinners; and when the gospel had laid hold of them as lost, he could write to them as elect.

This puts election in its right place. If the reader will turn for a moment to Acts 17, he will there see how Paul discharged his business as an evangelist amongst the Thessalonians: "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ." So, also, in that passage at the opening of 1 Cor. 15: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures" (ver. 1-4).

From this passage, and many others which might be quoted, we learn that the apostle preached not merely a doctrine, but a person. He did not preach election. He taught it to saints, but never

preached it to sinners. This should be the evangelist's model at all times. We never once find the apostles preaching election. They preached Christ — they unfolded the goodness of God — His loving-kindness — His tender mercy — His pardoning love — His gracious readiness to receive all who come in their true character and condition as lost sinners. Such was their mode of preaching, or, rather, such was the mode of the Holy Ghost in them; and such, too, was the mode of the blessed Master Himself. "*Come unto Me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will *give you rest*." "If *any man thirst*, let him come unto Me and drink." "Him that cometh to Me I will *in no wise cast out*" (Matt. 11; John 6-7).

Here are no stumbling-blocks in the way of anxious inquirers — no preliminary questions to be settled — no conditions to be fulfilled — no theological difficulties to be solved. No, the sinner is met on his own ground — met as he is — met just now. There is rest for the weary, drink for the thirsty, life for the dead, pardon for the guilty, salvation for the lost. Do these free invitations touch the doctrine of election? Assuredly not. And what is more, the doctrine of election does not touch them. In other words, a full and free gospel leaves perfectly untouched the grand and all-important truth of election; and the truth of election, in its proper place, leaves the gospel of the grace of God on its own broad and blessed base, and in all its divine length, breadth, and fullness. The gospel meets us as lost, and saves us; and then, when we know ourselves as saved, the precious doctrine of election comes in to establish us in the fact that we can never be lost. It never was the purpose of God that poor anxious souls should be harassed with theological questions or points of doctrine. No; blessed forever be His name, it is His gracious desire that the healing balm of His pardoning love, and the cleansing efficacy of the atoning blood of Jesus, should be applied to the spiritual wounds of every sin-sick soul. And as to the doctrines of predestination and election, He has unfolded them in His Word to comfort His saints, not to perplex poor sinners. They shine like precious gems on the page of inspiration, but they were never intended to lie as stumbling-blocks in the way of earnest seekers after life and peace. They are deposited in the hand of the teacher to be unfolded in the bosom of the family of God; but they are not intended for the evangelist, whose blessed mission is to the highways and hedges of a lost world. They are designed to feed and comfort the children, not to scare and stumble the sinner. We would say, and that with real earnestness, to all evangelists, Do not hamper your preaching with theological questions of any sort or description. Preach Christ. Unfold the deep and everlasting love of a Saviour-God. Seek to bring the guilty, conscience-smitten sinner into the very presence of a pardoning God. Thunder, if you please, if so led, at the conscience — thunder loud at sin — thunder forth the dread realities of the great white throne, the lake of fire, and everlasting torment; but see that you aim at bringing the guilt-stricken conscience to rest in the atoning virtues of the blood of Christ. Then you can hand over the fruits of your ministry to the divinely qualified, to be instructed in the deeper mysteries of the faith of Christ. You may rest assured that the faithful discharge of your duty as an evangelist will never lead you to trespass on the domain of sound theology.

And to the anxious inquirer we would say with equal earnestness, Let nothing stand in your way in coming this moment to Jesus. Let theology speak as it may, you are to listen to the voice of Jesus, who says, "*Come unto Me*." Be assured there is no hindrance, no difficulty, no hitch, no question, no condition. You are a lost sinner, and Jesus is a full Saviour. Put your trust in Him, and you are saved forever. Believe in Him, and you will know your place amongst the "elect of God" who are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son." Bring your sins to Jesus and He will pardon them, cancel them by His blood, and clothe you in a spotless robe of divine righteousness. May God's Spirit lead you now to cast yourself simply and entirely upon that precious, all-sufficient Saviour!

We will now notice, very briefly, three distinct evils resulting from a wrong application of the doctrine of election, namely:

1. The discouragement of really earnest souls, who ought to be helped on in every possible way. If such persons are repulsed by the question of election, the result must be disastrous in the extreme. If they are told that the glad tidings of salvation are only for the elect — that Christ died only for such, and hence only such can be saved — that unless they are elect they have no right to apply to themselves the benefits of the death of Christ: if, in short, they are turned from Jesus to theology — from the heart of a loving, pardoning God to the cold and withering dogmas of systematic divinity, it is impossible to say where they may end; they may take refuge either in superstition on the one hand, or in infidelity on the other. They may end in high church, broad church, or no church at all. What they really want is Christ, the living, loving, precious, all-sufficient Christ of God. He is the true food for anxious souls.

2. But, in the second place, careless souls are rendered more careless still by a false application of the doctrine of election. Such persons, when pressed as to their state and prospects, will fold their arms and say, "You know I cannot believe unless God give me the power. If I am one of the elect, I must be saved; if not, I cannot. I can do nothing, but must wait God's time." All this false and flimsy reasoning should be exposed and demolished. It will not stand for a moment in the light of the judgement-seat of Christ. Each one will learn there that election furnished no excuse whatever, inasmuch as it never was set up by God as a barrier to the sinner's salvation. The word is "*Whosoever* will, let him take the water of life *freely*." The very same form of speech and style of language which removes the stumbling-block from the feet of the anxious inquirer snatches the plea from the lips of the careless rejecter. No one is shut out. All are invited. There is neither barrier on the one hand, nor a plea on the other. All are made welcome; and all are responsible. Hence, if any one presumes to excuse himself for refusing God's salvation, which is as clear as a sunbeam, by urging God's decrees, which are entirely hidden, he will find himself fatally mistaken.

3. And now, in the third and last place, we have frequently seen with real sorrow of heart the earnest, loving, large-hearted evangelist damped and crippled by a false application of the truth of election. This should be most carefully avoided. We hold that it is not the business of the evangelist to preach election. If he is rightly instructed, he will *hold* it; but if he is rightly directed, he will not *preach* it.

In a word, then, the precious doctrine of election is not to be a stumbling-block to the anxious — a plea for the careless — a damper to the fervent evangelist. May God's Spirit give us to feel the adjusting power of truth!

Having thus briefly endeavoured to clear away any difficulty arising from the misuse of the precious doctrine of election, and to show the reader, "*whosoever*" he be, that there is no hindrance whatever to his full and hearty acceptance of God's free gift, even the gift of His only-begotten Son, it now only remains for us to consider the result, in every case, of this acceptance, as set forth in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here, then, we have the result in the case of every one who believes in Jesus. He shall never perish, but possesses everlasting life. But who can attempt to unfold all that is included in this word "perish"? What mortal tongue can set forth the horrors of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"? We believe, assuredly, that none but the One who used the Word, in speaking to Nicodemus, can fully expound it to anyone; but we feel called upon to bear our decided and unequivocal testimony as to what He has taught on the solemn truth of eternal punishment. We have occasionally referred to this subject, but we believe it demands a formal notice; and inasmuch as the word "*perish*" occurs in the passage which has been occupying our

thoughts, we cannot do better than call the reader's attention to it.

It is a serious and melancholy fact that the enemy of souls and of the truth of God is leading thousands, both in Europe and America, to call in question the momentous fact of the everlasting punishment of the wicked. This he does on various grounds, and by various arguments, adapted to the habits of thought and moral condition and intellectual standpoint of individuals. Some he seeks to persuade that God is too kind to send anyone to a place of torment. It is contrary to His benevolent mind and His beneficent nature to inflict pain on any of His creatures.

Now, to all who stand, or affect to stand, upon this ground of argument, we would suggest the important inquiry, "What is to be done with the sins of those who die impenitent and unbelieving?" Whatever there may be in the idea that God is too kind to send sinners to hell, it is certain that He is too holy to let sin into Heaven. He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity" (Hab. 1: 13). God and evil cannot dwell together. This is plain. How, then, is the case to be met? If God cannot let sin into Heaven, what is to be done with the sinner who dies in his sins? He must perish! But what does this mean? Does it mean annihilation — that is, the utter extinction or blotting out of the very existence of body and soul? Nay, this cannot be. Many would like this, no doubt. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," would, alas, suit many thousands of the sons and daughters of pleasure who think only of the present moment, and who roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongue. There are millions on the surface of the globe who are bartering their eternal happiness for a few hours of guilty pleasure, and the crafty foe of mankind seeks to persuade such that there is no such place as hell, no such thing as the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; and in order to obtain a footing for this fatal suggestion, he bases it upon the plausible and imposing notions of the kindness of God.

Do not believe the arch-deceiver. Remember, God is holy. He cannot let sin into His presence. If you die in your sins you must perish, and this word "perish" involves, according to the clear testimony of Holy Scripture, eternal misery and torment in hell. Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith, in His solemn description of the judgement of the nations: "Then shall the King say also to them on His left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into *everlasting* fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). And while you harken to these awfully solemn accents, remember that the word translated "everlasting" occurs seventy times in the New Testament, and is applied as follows: "Everlasting fire" — "eternal life" — "everlasting punishment" — "eternal damnation" — "everlasting habitations" — "the everlasting God" — "eternal weight of glory" — "everlasting destruction" — "everlasting consolation" — "eternal glory" — "eternal salvation" — "eternal judgement" — "eternal redemption" — "the eternal Spirit" — "eternal inheritance" — "everlasting kingdom" — "eternal fire."

Now, we ask any candid, thoughtful person, upon what principle can a word be said to mean *eternal* when applied to the Holy Ghost or to God, and only *temporary* when applied to hell-fire or the punishment of the wicked? If it means eternal in the one case, why not also in the other? We have just glanced at a Greek concordance, and we should like to ask, Would it be right to mark off some half-dozen passages in which the word "everlasting" occurs, and write opposite to each these words: "Everlasting here only means for a time"? The very thought is monstrous. It would be a daring and blasphemous insult offered to the volume of inspiration. No, be assured of it, you cannot touch the word "everlasting" in one case without touching it also in all the seventy cases in which it occurs. It is a dangerous thing to tamper with the Word of the living God. It is infinitely better to bow down under its holy authority. It is worse than useless to seek to avoid the plain meaning and solemn force of that word "perish" as applied to the immortal soul of man. It involves, beyond all question, the awful, the ineffably awful reality of burning forever in the flames of hell. This is what Scripture means by "perishing." The votary of pleasure, or the lover of money, may seek to forget this. They may seek to

drown all thought of it in the glass or in the busy mart. The sentimentalist may rave about the divine benevolence; the sceptic may reason about the possibility of eternal fire; but we are intensely anxious that the reader should rise from this paper with the firm and deeply wrought conclusion and hearty belief that the punishment of all who die in their sins will be eternal in hell as surely as the blessedness of all who die in the faith of Christ will be eternal in the heavens. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost would most assuredly have used a different word, when speaking of the former, from that which He applies to the latter. This, we conceive, is beyond all question.

But there is another objection urged against the doctrine of eternal punishment. It is frequently said, "How can we suppose that God would inflict eternal punishment as a penalty for a few short years of sin?" We reply, It is beginning at the wrong end to argue in this way. It is not a question of time as viewed from man's standpoint, but of the gravity of sin itself as looked at from God's standpoint. And how is this question to be solved? Only by looking at the Cross. If you want to know what sin is in God's sight, you must look at what it cost Him to put it away. It is by the standard of Christ's infinite sacrifice, and by that alone, that you can rightly measure sin. Men may compare their few years with God's eternity; they may compare their short span of life with that boundless eternity that stretches beyond; they may seek to put a few years of sin into one scale, and an eternity of woe and torment into the other, and thus attempt to reach a just conclusion: but it will never do to argue thus. The question is, Did it require an infinite atonement to put away sin? If so, the punishment of sin must be eternal. If nothing short of an infinite sacrifice could deliver from the consequences of sin, those consequences must be eternal.

In a word, then, we must look at sin from God's point of view, and measure it by His standard, else we shall never have a just sense of what it is or what it deserves. It is the height of folly for men to attempt to lay down a rule as to the amount or duration of the punishment due to sin. God alone can settle this. And, after all, what was it that produced all the misery and wretchedness the sickness and sorrow, the death and desolation, of well-nigh six thousand years? Just *one* act of disobedience — the eating of a forbidden fruit. Can man explain this? Can human reason explain how one act produced such an overwhelming amount of misery? It cannot. Well, then, if it cannot do this, how can it be trusted when it attempts to decide the question as to what is due to sin? Woe be to all those who commit themselves to its guidance on this most momentous point!

Ah, reader, you must see that God alone can estimate sin and its just deserts, and He alone can tell us all about it. And has He not done so? Yes, verily, He has measured sin in the cross of His Son; and there, too, He has set forth in the most impressive manner what it deserves. What, think you, must that be that caused the bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" If God forsook His only-begotten Son when He was made sin, must He not also forsake all who are found in their sins? But how can they ever get rid of them? We believe the conclusion is unavoidable. We consider that the infinite nature of the atonement proves unanswerably the doctrine of eternal punishment. That peerless and precious sacrifice is at once the foundation of our eternal life and of our deliverance from eternal death. It delivers from eternal wrath and introduces to eternal glory. It saves from the endless misery of hell and procures for us the endless bliss of Heaven. Thus, whatever side of the Cross we look at, or from whatever side we view it, we see eternity stamped upon it. If we view it from the gloomy depths of hell or from the sunny heights of Heaven, we see it to be the same infinite, eternal, divine reality. It is by the Cross we must measure both the blessedness of Heaven and the misery of hell. Those who put their trust in that blessed One who died on the cross obtain everlasting life and felicity. Those who reject Him must sink into endless perdition.

We do not by any means pretend to handle this question theologically, or to adduce all the

arguments that might be advanced in defence of the doctrine of eternal punishment; but there is one further consideration which we must suggest to the reader as tending to lead him to a sound conclusion and that is the immortality of the soul. "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." The fall of man in nowise touched the question of the soul's immortality. If, therefore, the soul is immortal, annihilation is impossible. The soul must live forever. Overwhelming thought! Forever! Forever! Forever! The whole moral being sinks under the awful magnitude of the thought. It surpasses all conception and baffles all mental calculation. Human arithmetic can only deal with the finite. It has no figures by which to represent a never-ending eternity. But the writer and the reader must live throughout eternity either in that bright and blessed world above or in that terrible place where hope can never come.

May God's Spirit impress our hearts more and more with the solemnity of eternity, and of immortal souls going down into hell. We are deplorably deficient in feeling as to these weighty realities. We are daily thrown in contact with people, we buy and sell and carry on intercourse in various ways with those who must live forever, and yet how rarely do we seek occasion to press upon them the awfulness of eternity and the appalling condition of all who die without a personal interest in the blood of Christ!

Let us ask God to make us more earnest, more solemn, more faithful, more zealous in pleading with souls, in warning others to flee from the wrath to come. We want to live more in the light of eternity, and then we shall be better able to deal with others.

It only remains for us now to ponder the last clause of the fruitful passage of Scripture which has been under consideration (John 3: 16). It sets forth the positive result, in every case, of simple faith in the Son of God. It declares, in the simplest and clearest way, the fact that every one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is a possessor of everlasting life. It is not merely that his sins are blotted out; that is blessedly true. Nor is it merely that he is saved from the consequences of his guilt, which is equally true. But there is more. The believer in Jesus has a new life, and that life is in the Son of God. He is placed upon a new footing altogether. He is no longer looked at in the old Adam condition, but in a risen Christ.

This is an immense truth, and one of deepest possible moment. We earnestly pray the reader's calm and prayerful attention while we seek, in some feeble way, to present to him what we believe to be wrapped up in the last clause of John 3: 16.

There is in the minds of many a very imperfect sense of what we get by faith in Christ. Some seem to view the atoning work of Christ merely as a remedial measure for the sins of our old nature — the payment of debts contracted in our old condition. That it is all this we need not say; blessed be God for the precious truth. But it is much more. It is not merely that the sins are atoned for, but the nature which committed them is condemned and set aside by the cross of Christ, and is to be "*reckoned*" dead by the believer. It is not merely that the debts contracted in the old condition are cancelled, but the old condition itself is completely ignored by God, and is to be so accounted by the believer.

This great truth is doctrinally unfolded in 2 Cor. 5, where we read, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (ver. 17). The apostle does not say, "If any man be in Christ he is pardoned — his sins are forgiven — his debts paid." All this is divinely true; but the statement just quoted goes very much farther. It declares that a man in Christ is a new creation altogether. It is not the old nature pardoned, but completely set aside, with all its belongings, and a new creation introduced in which there is not a single shred of the old. "All things are become new; and all things are of God."

Now this gives immense relief to the heart. Indeed, we question if any soul can enter into the full liberty of the gospel of Christ until he lay hold, in some measure, of the truth of the "new creation." There may be a looking to Christ for pardon, a vague hope of getting to Heaven at the last, a measure of reliance on the goodness and mercy of God — there may be all this, and yet no just sense of the meaning of "everlasting life," no happy consciousness of being "a new creation" — no understanding of the grand fact that the old Adam nature is entirely set aside, the old condition in which we stood done away in God's sight.

But it is more than probable that some of our readers may be at a loss to know what is meant by such terms as "the old Adam nature" — "the old condition" — "the flesh" — "the old man," and such like. These expressions may fall strangely on the ears of those for whom we specially write; and we certainly wish to avoid shooting over the heads of our readers. As God is our witness, there is one thing we earnestly desire, one object which we would ever keep before our minds, and that is the instruction and edification of our readers; and therefore we would rather run the risk of being tedious than make use of phrases which convey no clear or intelligible idea to the mind. Such terms as "the old man" — "the flesh," and the like, are used in Scripture in manifold places: for example, in Rom. 6 we read, "Our *old man* is crucified with Him Christ], that *the body of sin* might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (ver. 6).

Now what does the apostle mean by the "old man"? We believe he means man as in that Adam nature which we inherited from our first parents. And what does he mean by "the body of sin"? We believe he means the whole system or condition in which we stood in our unregenerate, unrenewed, unconverted state. The old Adam, then, is declared to be crucified — the old condition of sin is said to be destroyed (annulled) — by the death of Christ. Hence the soul that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is privileged to know that he — his sinful, guilty self — is looked upon by God as dead and set aside completely. He has no more existence as such before God. He is dead and buried.

Observe, it is not merely that our sins are forgiven, our debts paid, our guilt atoned for; but the man in the nature that committed the sins, contracted the debts, and incurred the guilt, is put forever out of God's sight. It is not God's way to forgive us our sins and yet leave us in the same relations in which we committed them. No; He has, in His marvellous grace and vast plan, condemned and abolished forever, for the believer, the old Adam relationship, with all its belongings, so that it is no longer recognized by Him. We are declared, by the voice of holy Scripture to be "crucified" — "dead" — "buried" — "risen" with Christ. God tells us we are so, and we are to "*reckon*" ourselves to be so. It is a matter of faith, and not of feeling. If I look at myself from *my* standpoint, or judge by my feelings, I shall never, can never understand this truth. And why? Because I feel myself to be just the same sinful creature as ever. I feel that there is sin in me; that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing; that my old nature is in nowise changed or improved; that it has the same evil tendencies as ever, and, if not mortified and kept down by the gracious energy of the Holy Spirit, it will break out in its true character.

And it is just here, we doubt not, that so many sincere souls are perplexed and troubled. They are looking at themselves, and *reasoning* upon what they see and feel, instead of resting in the truth of God, and *reckoning* themselves to be what God tells them they are. They find it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile what they feel in themselves with what they read in the Word of God — to make their inward self-consciousness harmonise with God's revelation. But we must remember that faith takes God at His Word. It ever thinks with Him on all points. It believes what He says because He says it. Hence, if God tells me that my old man is crucified, that He no longer sees me as in the old Adam state, but in a risen Christ, I am to believe, like a little child, what He tells me, and walk in the faith of it from day to day. If I look in at myself for evidences of the truth of what God says, it is not

faith at all. Abraham "considered not his own body, now dead, when he was about an hundred years old; neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4: 19-20).

This is the great principle which underlies the whole Christian system. "Abraham believed God," not something about God, but God Himself. This is faith. It is taking God's thoughts in place of our own. It is, in short allowing God to think for us.

Now, when we apply this to the subject before us, it makes it most simple. He that believeth in the Son of God hath everlasting life. Mark, it is not he that believeth something about the Son of God. No, it is he that believeth in Himself. It is a question of simple faith in the person of Christ; and everyone that has this faith is the actual possessor of everlasting life. This is the direct and positive statement of our Lord in the Gospels. It is repeated over and over again. Nor is this all. Not only does the believer thus possess eternal life, but by the further light which the Epistles throw upon this grand question he may see that his old self — that which he was in nature — that which the apostle designates "the old man" — is accounted by God dead and buried. This may be difficult to understand; but the reader must remember he must believe not because he understands, but because it is written in God's Word. It is not said, "Abraham understood God." No; but he "believed God." It is when the heart believes that light is poured in upon the understanding. If I wait till I understand in order to believe, I am leaning to my own understanding, instead of committing myself in childlike faith to God's Word.

Reader, ponder this! You may say you cannot understand how your sinful self can be looked upon as dead and gone while you feel its workings, its heavings, its tossings, its tendencies, continually within you. We reply, or rather God's eternal Word declares, that if your heart believes in Jesus, then is all this true for you, namely, you *have* eternal life; *you are* justified from all things; *you are* a new creation; old things *are* passed away; *all things are* become new; and *all things are* of God. In a word, you are "*in Christ*," and "*as He is, so are you in this world*" (1 John 4: 17).

And is not this a great deal more than the mere pardoning of your sins, the cancelling of your debts, or the salvation of your soul from hell? Assuredly it is. And suppose we were to ask you on what authority you believe in the forgiveness of your sins. Is it because you feel, realize, or understand? Nay; but because it is written, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10: 43). "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1: 7). Well, then, upon precisely the same authority you are to believe that your old man has been crucified, that you are not in the flesh, not in the old creation, not in the old Adam relation; but that, on the contrary, you are viewed by God as actually in a risen and glorified Christ — that He looks upon you as He looks upon Christ.

True it is — alas, how true! — the flesh is in you, and you are still here, as to the fact of your condition, in this old world, which is under judgement. But then, hear what your Lord saith, when speaking about you to His Father: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And again, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

Hence, therefore, if you will just bow to God's Word, if you will reason not about what you see in yourself, and feel in yourself, and think of yourself, but simply *believe* what God says, you will enter into the blessed peace and holy liberty flowing from the fact that you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; not in the old creation, but in the new; not under law, but under grace; not of the world, but of God. You have passed clean off the old platform which you occupied as a child of nature and a member of the first Adam, and you have taken your place on a new platform altogether as a child of God and a member of Christ.

All this is vividly prefigured by the deluge and the ark, in the days of Noah. (See Gen. 6 - 8.) "And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, *The end of all flesh is come before Me*; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Here, then, was, in type, the end of the old creation. All was to pass under the waters of judgement. What then? "Make thee an ark of gopher wood." Here we have set forth a figure of the new thing. That ark, floating peacefully over the dark abyss of waters, was a type of Christ, and the believer in Him. The old world, together with man, was buried beneath the waves of judgement, and the only object that remained was the ark — the vessel of mercy and salvation, riding in safety and triumph over the billows. Thus it is now, in truth and reality. There is nothing before the eye of God but a risen, victorious and glorified Christ, and His people linked with Him. The end of *all* flesh has come before God. It is not a question of some very gross forms of "flesh" or of nature, of that merely which is "vile and refuse." No; it is "the *end of all*." Such is the solemn, sweeping verdict; and then — what? A risen Christ. Nothing else. All in Him are seen by God as He is seen. All out of Him are under judgement. It all hinges upon this one question. "Am I in or out of Christ?" What a question!

Are you in Christ? Do you believe in His name? Have you given Him the confidence of your heart? If so, you have "eternal life" — you are "a new creature" — "old things are passed away." God does not see a single shred of the old thing remaining for you. "All things are become new, and all things are of God." You may say you do not *feel* that old things are all passed away. We reply, God says they are, and it is your happy privilege to *believe* what He says, and "*reckon*" yourself to be what He declares you are. God speaks according to that which is true of you in Christ. He does not see you in the flesh, but in Christ. There is absolutely nothing before the eye of God but Christ: and the very weakest believer is viewed as part of Christ, just as your hand is a part of your body. You have no existence before God apart from Christ — no life — no righteousness - no holiness — no wisdom — no power. Apart from Him, you have nothing, and can be nothing. In Him you have all and are all, He says; you are thoroughly identified with Christ. Marvellous fact! Profound mystery! Most glorious truth! It is not a question of attainment or of progress. It is the settled and absolute standing of the feeblest member of the Church of God. True, there are various measures of intelligence, experience, and devotedness; but there is only one life, one standing, one position before God, and that is Christ. There is no such thing as a higher or lower Christian life. Christ is the believer's life, and you cannot speak of a higher or a lower Christ. We can understand the higher stages of Christian life; but there is no spiritual intelligence in speaking of a higher Christian life.

This is a grand truth, and we earnestly pray that God the Spirit may open it fully to the mind of the reader. We feel assured that a clearer understanding thereof would chase away a thousand mists, answer a thousand questions, and solve a thousand difficulties. It would not only have the effect of giving settled peace to the soul, but also of determining the believer's position in the most distinct way. If Christ is my life — if I am in Him and identified with Him, then not only do I share in His acceptance with God, but also in His rejection by this present world. The two things go together. They form the two sides of the one grand question. If I am in Christ and as Christ before God, then I am in Christ and as Christ before the world: and it will never do to accept the result of this union before God and refuse the result of it as regards the world. If we have the one, we must have the other likewise.

All this is fully unfolded in John 17. There we read on the one hand, "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and *hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me*" (ver. 22-23). And, on the other hand, we read, "I have given them

Thy Word; and *the world hath hated them*, because they are not of this world, even as I am not of the world" (ver. 14). This is as plain and positive as anything can be. And be it remembered that, in this wondrous Scripture, our Lord is not speaking merely of the apostles, but, as He says, of "them also who shall believe on Me through their word," that is, of all believers. Hence it follows that all who believe in Jesus are one with Him as accepted above, and one with Him as rejected below. The two things are inseparable. The Head and the members share in one common acceptance in Heaven, and in one common rejection upon earth. Oh that all the Lord's people entered more into the truth and reality of this! Would that we all knew a little more of the meaning of fellowship with a Heaven-accepted, earth-rejected Christ!