

Startling Questions

by J. C. Ryle

Table of Contents

[Where Art Thou?](#)

[Are You an Heir?](#)

[Shall You Be Saved?](#)

[How Readeest Thou?](#)

[What Think You of the Cross?](#)

[Have You Assurance?](#)

Where Art Thou?

“Make me to know my transgression and my sin.”—Job 13:22

“Cleanse me from my sin.”—Psalm 51:2

>“The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”—1 John 1:7

<“Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood.”—Romans 3:25

READER,—

The question which forms the title of this tract ought to stir up many thoughts in your heart. It concerns every man and woman born into the world. You ought never to rest till you can give it a satisfactory answer.—“WHERE ARE YOUR SINS?”

I ask you this day to look this question in the face. I ask you to give me your attention for a few minutes, while I try to enforce it on your conscience. A time draws nigh when the question *must* be answered. The hour cometh when all other questions shall seem like a drop of water in comparison with this. We shall not say, “Where is my money?”—or, “Where are my lands?”—or, “Where is my property?” Our only thought will be, “My sins! my sins!—Where are my sins?”

Reader, I am going to offer you a few remarks, which may help to throw light on the mighty question which is before your eyes. My heart's desire and prayer to God is this, that this tract may be greatly useful to your soul. I entreat you to give it fair reading. Do not put it in the fire; do not tear it in pieces. Read it: read it! Read it to the end! Who can tell but the Holy Ghost may employ this tract for the saving of your soul

I. My first remark is this. *You have many sins*. I say this boldly, and without the least hesitation.

I know not who you are, or how the time past of your life has been spent. But I know, from the Word of God, that every son and daughter of Adam is a great sinner in the sight of God. There is no exception: it is the common disease of the whole family of Adam, in every quarter of the globe. From the king on his throne, to the beggar by the roadside,—from the landlord in his hall, to the labourer in his cottage,—from the fine lady in her drawing-room, to the humblest maid-servant in the kitchen,—from the clergyman in the pulpit, to the little child in the Sunday-school,—we are all by nature guilty, guilty: guilty in the sight of God. “In many things we offend all.”—“There is none righteous: no, not one.”—“All have sinned,” “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (James iii. 2; Rom.10; v. 12; 1 John i. 8.) It is useless to deny it. We have all sinned many sins!

Reader, do you doubt the truth of these words? Then go and examine the law of God, as expounded by the Son of God Himself. Read with attention the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. See how the commandments of God apply to our words as well as to our actions, and to our thoughts and motives, as well as to our words. Know that “the Lord seeth not as man seeth: man looketh at the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh at the heart.” In His sight the very “thought of foolishness is sin.” (1 Sam. xvi. 7; Prov. xxiv. 9.)

And now turn to the history of *your own life*, and try it by the standard of this holy law. Think of the days of your childhood, and all your waywardness, and selfishness, and evil tempers, and perversity, and backwardness to that which is good.—Remember the days of your youth,—your self-will, your pride, your worldly inclinations, your impatience of control, your longing after forbidden things.—Call to mind your conduct since you came to man's estate, and the many departures from the right way, of which you have been guilty every year.—Surely, in the face of your life's history, you will not stand up and say, “I have not sinned!”

And then turn to the history of *your own heart*. Consider how many evil things have gone through it, of which the world knows nothing at all.—Remember the thousands of sinful imaginations, and corrupt ideas, which your heart has entertained, even while your outward conduct has been correct, moral, and respectable.—Think of the vile thoughts, and deceitful intentions, and false motives, and malicious, envious,

spiteful feelings, which have walked up and down in your inward man, while those nearest to you never dreamed or guessed what was going on.—Surely, in the face of your heart's history, you will not stand up and say, "I have not sinned!"

Reader, once more I ask you, Do you doubt what I am saying? Do you doubt whether you have sinned many sins?—Then go and examine the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. Read the concluding portion of that chapter, which describes the proceedings of the *judgment day*. Note carefully the grounds on which the wicked, at the left hand, are condemned to everlasting fire. No mention is made of great open acts of wickedness which they have committed. They are not charged with having murdered, or stolen, or borne false witness, or committed adultery. They are condemned for *sins of omission!* The mere fact that they have left undone things which they ought to have done, is sufficient to ruin their souls for ever. In short, a man's sins of omission alone are enough to sink him into hell!

And now look at yourself by the light of this wonderful passage of Scripture. Try to remember the countless things you have left undone, which you might have done, and have left unsaid, that you might have said. The acts of self-denying kindness, which you might have performed, but have neglected,—how many they are! The good you might have done, and the happiness you might have caused, at very little trouble to yourself,—how vast is the amount of it! Surely, in the face of our Lord's teaching about sins of omission, you will not stand up and say, "I have not sinned!"

Reader, once more I ask, Do you doubt the truth of what I am saying? I think it quite possible that you do. I know something of man's exceeding blindness to his own natural state. Listen to me once more, whilst I ply your conscience with another argument. Oh, that God may open your eyes, and show you what you are!

Sit down, and take pen and paper, and count up the sins that you have probably sinned since you first knew good from evil. Sit down, I say, and *make a sum*. Grant for a moment that there have been, on an average, fifteen hours in every twenty-four during which you have been awake, and an active and accountable being.—Grant for a moment that in each one of these fifteen hours you have sinned only two sins. Surely you will not say that this is an unfair supposition. Remember, we may sin against God in thought, word, or deed. I repeat, it cannot be thought an extreme thing to suppose that in each waking hour you have, in thought, or word, or deed, sinned two sins. And now add up the sins of your life, and see to what sum they will amount.

At the rate of fifteen waking hours in a day, you have sinned every day thirty sins!—At the rate of seven days in a week, you have sinned two hundred and ten sins every week!—At the rate of four weeks in every month, you have sinned eight hundred and forty sins every month!—At the rate of twelve months in every year, you have sinned ten thousand and eighty sins every year!—And, in short, not to go further with the

calculation, every ten years of your life you have sinned, at the lowest computation, more than ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND SINS!

Reader, I do beseech you to look calmly at this sum. I defy you to disprove its correctness. I ask you, on the contrary, whether I have not entirely understated your case? I appeal to you, as an honest person, whether it be not true, that many an hour, and many a day in your life, you have sinned incessantly? I ask you confidently, whether the sum would not be far more correct if the total number of your sins was multiplied ten-fold?—Oh, cease from your self-righteousness! Lay aside this proud affectation of “not being so very bad,” in which you are trying to wrap yourself up. Be bold enough to confess the truth. Listen not to that old liar, the devil. Surely in the face of that damning sum which I have just cast up, you will not dare to deny that “you have many sins.”

I leave this part of my subject here, and pass on. I sadly fear that many a reader will run his eye over what I have been saying, and remain unconvinced and unmoved. I have learned by mournful experience that the last thing a man finds out and understands, is his own state in the sight of God. Well saith the Holy Ghost, that we are all by nature “blind,” and “deaf,” and “dumb,” and “asleep,” and “beside ourselves,” and “dead!” Nothing, nothing, nothing will ever convince man of sin but the power of the Holy Ghost. Show him hell, and he will not flee from it; show him heaven, and he will not seek it; silence him with warnings, and yet he will not stir; prick his conscience, and yet he will remain hard. Power from on high must come down and do the work. To show man what he really is, needs the Holy Spirit of God.

Reader, if you have any feeling of your own sinfulness, you ought to thank God for it. That very sense of weakness, wickedness, and corruption, which perhaps makes you uncomfortable, is in reality a token for good, and a cause for praise. The first step towards being really good, is to feel *bad*. The first preparation for heaven, is to know that we deserve nothing but *hell*. Before we can be counted righteous we must know ourselves to be miserable *sinner*s. Before we can have inward happiness and peace with God, we must learn to be ashamed and confounded because of our manifold transgressions. Before we can rejoice in a well-grounded hope, we must be taught to say, “Unclean! unclean! God, be merciful to me a sinner!”

Reader, if you love your soul, beware of checking and stifling this inward feeling of your own sinfulness. I beseech you, by the mercies of God, do not trample on it, do not crush it, do not take it by the throat and refuse to give it your attention. Beware of taking the advice of worldly men about it. Treat it not as a case of low-spirits, disordered health, or anything of the kind. Beware of listening to the devil’s counsel about it. Do not try to drown it in drink and revelling; do not try to drive over it with horses, and dogs, and carriages, and field-sports; do not try to purge it away by a course of card-parties, and balls, and concerts. Oh, reader, if you love your soul, do

not, do not treat the first sense of sin in this miserable fashion. Do not commit spiritual suicide,—do not murder your soul!

Go rather and pray God to show you what this feeling of sin means. Ask Him to send the Holy Spirit to teach you what you are, and what He would have you to do. Go and read your Bible, and see whether there is not just cause for your being uncomfortable, and whether this sense of being “wicked and bad” is not just what you have a right to expect. Who can tell but it is a seed from heaven which is one day to bear fruit in Paradise in your complete salvation? Who can tell but it is a spark from heaven which God means to blow up into a steady and shining light? Who can tell but it is a stone from above before which the devil’s kingdom in your heart is to go down, and a stone which shall prove the first foundation of a glorious temple of the Holy Ghost?—Happy indeed is that man or woman who can go along with my first remark, and say, “IT IS TRUE: I HAVE MANY SINS.”

II. My second remark is this. *It is of the utmost importance to have our sins cleansed away.*

I say this boldly and confidently. I am aware of the multitude of things which are thought “important” in the world, and receive the first and best of men’s attentions. But I know well what I am saying. I am bold to say that my Master’s business deserves to be placed before all other business; and I learn from my Master’s book that there is nothing of such importance to a man as to have his sins forgiven and cleansed away.

Remember, reader, *there is a God above you.* You see Him not in the city. Hurry and bustle, trade and commerce, appear to swallow up men’s minds. You see Him not in the country. Farming and labouring go on in regular course, and seed time and harvest never fail. But all this time there is an eternal Eye looking down from heaven and seeing all that man do: an eye that never slumbers, and never sleeps. Yes! there is not only a Queen, and a government, and a landlord, and a master, to be remembered: there is One higher, far higher than all these, who expects His dues to be paid. That One is the most high God.

This God is a God of infinite *holiness*. He is of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity, and cannot bear that which is evil. He sees defects and infirmities where you see none. In His sight the very heavens are not clean.—He is a God of infinite *knowledge*. He knows every thought, and word, and action of every son of Adam’s children: there are no secrets hid from Him. All that we think, and say, and do, is noted down and recorded in the book of His remembrance.—He is a God of infinite *power*. He made all things at the beginning. He orders all things according to His will. He casts down the Kings of this world in a moment. None can stand against Him when He is angry.—Above all, He is a God in whose hands are our lives and all our concerns. He first gave us being. He has kept us alive since we were born. He will remove us when He sees fit,

and reckon with us according to our ways. Such is the God with whom we have to do.

Reader, think of these things. Surely when you consider you will be afraid. Surely you will see it is of the utmost importance to have your sins cleansed away. Surely you will inquire, “How do matters stand between me and God?”

Remember, furthermore, that *death is before you*. You cannot live always. There must be an end, one day, of all your scheming and planning, and buying and selling, and working and toiling. A visitor will come to your house who will take no denial. The king of terrors will demand admission, and serve you with notice to quit. Where are the rulers and kings who governed millions a hundred years ago? Where are the rich men who made fortunes and founded houses? Where are the landlords who received rents, and added field to field? Where are the labourers who ploughed the land and reaped the corn? Where are the clergymen who read services and preached sermons? Where are the children who played in the sunshine as if they would never be old? Where are the old men who leaned on their sticks and gossiped about the days when they were young? There is but one answer. They are all dead: dead, dead! Strong, and beautiful, and active as they once were, they are all dust and ashes now. Mighty and important as they all thought their business, it all came to an end. And we are travelling in the same way! A few more years, and we also shall be lying in our graves!

Reader, think of these things. Surely when you consider your latter end you will not think the cleansing away of sin a light matter. Surely you will see something in the question, “Where are your sins?” Surely you will consider, “How am I going to die?”

Remember, furthermore, that *resurrection and judgment await you*. All is not over when the last breath is drawn and your body becomes a lump of cold clay. No: all is not over! The realities of existence then begin. The shadows will have passed away for ever. The trumpet shall one day sound, and call you forth from your narrow bed; the graves shall be rent asunder, and their tenants shall be summoned forth to meet God; the ears that would not obey the church going bell shall be obliged to obey that summons; the proud wills that would not submit to listen to sermons shall be compelled to listen to the judgment of God. The great white throne shall be set: the books shall be opened. Every man, woman, and child, shall be arraigned at that great assize. Every one shall be judged according to his works. The sins of every one shall be answered for. And every one shall receive his eternal portion either in heaven or in hell!

Reader, think of these things. Surely in remembrance of that day you must allow that the subject I am upon deserves attention. Surely you must confess that it is of the utmost importance to have your sins cleansed away. Surely you will consider, “How am I going to be judged?”

I must speak out what is upon my mind. I feel great sorrow and trouble of heart about many men and women in the world. I fear for many who live in this so called Christian land; I fear for many who profess and call themselves Christians; I fear for many who go to church or chapel every Sunday and have a decent form of religion; I fear that they do not see the immense importance of having their sins cleansed away. I can see plainly that there are many other things which they think far more *important*. Money, and land, and farms, and horses, and carriages, and dogs, and meat, and drink, and clothes, and houses, and marriages, and families, and business, and pleasure,—these, these are the sort of things which many evidently think the “first things.” And as for the forgiveness and cleansing away of their sins, it is a matter which has only the second place in their thoughts.

See the man of business, as he pores over his ledger and account books, and runs his eye over the columns of figures. See the man of pleasure, as he tears over the country with his horses and dogs, or rushes after excitement at the races, the theatre, the card party, or the ball. See the poor thoughtless labourer, as he carries off his hard-earned wages to the public house, and wastes them in ruining both body and soul. See them all, how thoroughly they are in earnest! See them all, how they throw their hearts into what they are doing!—And then mark them all at church next Sunday: listless, careless, yawning, sleepy, and indifferent, as if there were no God, and no devil, and no Christ, and no heaven, and no hell! Mark how evident it is that they have left their hearts outside the church! Mark how plain it is that they have no real interest in religion! And then say whether it be not true that many know nothing of the importance of having their sins cleansed away. Oh, reader, take heed lest this be the case with you!

Reader, do you feel anything of the importance of being forgiven? Then, in the name of God, I call upon you to encourage that feeling more and more. This is the point to which we desire to bring all people’s souls. We want you to understand that religion does not consist in professing certain outward duties, and going through certain outward forms. It consists in being reconciled to God, and enjoying peace with Him. It consists in having our sins cleansed away, and knowing that they are cleansed. It consists in being brought back into friendship with the King of kings, and living in the sunshine of that friendship.—Listen not to those who would fain persuade you that if you only “go to church” regularly you will of course go to heaven. Settle it rather in your mind, that true saving religion, such as the Bible teaches, is another kind of thing altogether. The very foundation of real Christianity is to know that you have many sins, and deserve hell,—and to feel the importance of having these sins cleansed away, in order that you may go to heaven.

Happy, says the world, are they who have plenty of property and fine houses! Happy are they who have carriages, and horses, and servants, and large balances at their bankers, and great troops of friends! Happy are they who are clothed in purple and

fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, who have nothing to do but to spend their money and enjoy themselves!—Yet what is the real value of such happiness? It gives no solid, real satisfaction, even at the time of enjoyment. It endures but for a few years. It only lasts till death comes in, like the hand at Belshazzar's feast, and breaks up all. And then, in too many cases, this so-called happiness is exchanged for ETERNAL MISERY IN HELL.

“Blessed,” says the Word of God, “are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered! Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity!—Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven! Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted! Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled!” (Psalm xxxii. 1, 2; Matt. v. 2, &c.)—Their blessedness shall never come to an end: their happiness is no summer-dried fountain, just failing when need is the sorest; their friends are no summer swallows, forsaking them, like Adonijah's guests, the first moment that the trumpet sounds. Their sun shall never go down. Their joy shall bud in time, and bloom in eternity. Theirs, in a word, is true happiness, for it is *for evermore*.

Reader, do you believe what I am saying? It is all true. You will see one day whose words shall stand, the words of man or the Word of God. Be wise in time. Settle it in your heart this very hour, that the most important thing that man can attend to is the cleansing and forgiveness of his sins.

III. My third remark is this. *You cannot cleanse away your own sins.*

I make this statement boldly and confidently. Startling as it sounds to the natural heart, I lay it down as a piece of undeniable Scriptural truth. In spite of all the Pharisees, and Roman Catholics, and Socinians, and Deists, and idolaters of human reason and human power, I unhesitatingly repeat my assertions.—Man's sins are many and great. It is of the utmost importance that these sins should be cleansed away. Man's guilt in the sight of God, is enormous. Man's danger of hell, after he dies, is imminent and tremendous. And yet man cannot cleanse away his own sins. It is written, and it is true, “By deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (Rom. iii. 20.)

It will not cleanse away your sins *to be sorry for them*. You may mourn over your past wickedness, and humble yourself in sackcloth and ashes. You may shed floods of tears, and acknowledge your own guilt and danger. You may,—you must,—you ought to do this. But you will not by so doing wipe out your transgressions from the book of God. SORROW CANNOT MAKE ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

The convicted criminal in a court of justice is often sorry for his offences. He sees the misery and ruin they have brought upon him. He mourns over his folly in not listening to advice and in giving way to temptation. But the judge does not let him off

because he is sorry. The deed has been done: the law has been broken; the penalty has been incurred. The punishment must be inflicted, notwithstanding the criminal's tears.—Reader, this is precisely your position in the sight of God. Your sorrow is right, and good, and proper. But your sorrow has no power whatever to cleanse away your sins. It needs something more than penitence to take the burden off your heart.

It will not cleanse away your sins *to mend your life*. You may reform your conduct, and turn over a new leaf: you may break off many evil habits, and take up many good ones; you may become, in short, an altered man in all your outward behaviour. You may,—you must,—you ought, to do so. Without such change no soul ever was saved. But you will not, by so doing, wipe away one particle of your guilt in God's sight. REFORMATION MAKES NO ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

The bankrupt tradesman, who owes ten thousand pounds and has not ten shillings to pay, may resolve to become a reformed character. After wasting his whole substance in riotous living, he may become steady, temperate, and respectable. It is all right and proper that he should be so: but this will not satisfy the claims of those to whom he owes money. Once more I say, this is precisely your case by nature in the sight of God. You owe him ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay. To-day's amendments are all very well, but they do not wipe away yesterday's debts.—It requires something more than amendment and reformation to give you a light heart and to set your conscience free.

It will not cleanse away your sins *to become diligent in the use of the forms and ordinances of religion*. You may alter your habits about Sunday, and attend services from morning to night: you may take pains to hear preaching on week-days, as well as on Sundays; you may receive the Lord's Supper on every possible occasion, and give alms, and keep fasts. It is all very well as far as it goes. It is a right and proper thing to attend to your religious duties. But all the means of grace in the world will never do you any good so long as you trust in them as saviours. They will not bind up the wounds of your heart, and give you inward peace. FORMALITY CANNOT MAKE ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

A lantern on a dark night is a very useful thing. It can help the traveller to find his way home; it can preserve him from losing his path, and keep him from falling into danger. But the lantern itself is not the traveller's fireside. The man who is content to sit down in the road by the side of his lantern, must never be surprised if he dies of cold. Reader, if you try to satisfy your conscience with a formal attendance on means of grace, you are no wiser than this traveller. It needs something more than formality to take the burden from your conscience, and to give you peace with God.

It will not cleanse away your sins *to look to man for help*. It is not in the power of any child of Adam to save another's soul. No bishop, no priest, no ordained man of any

Church or denomination has power to forgive sins: no human absolution, however solemnly conferred, can purge that conscience which is not purged by God. It is well to ask the counsel of the ministers of the Gospel when the conscience is perplexed. It is their office to help the labouring and heavy-laden, and to show them the way of peace. But it is not in the power of any minister to deliver any man from his guilt. We can only show the path that must be followed: we can only point out the door at which every one must knock. It requires a hand far stronger than that of man to take the chains off conscience, and set the prisoner free.

The bankrupt who asks a bankrupt to set him up in business again is only losing time; the pauper who travels off to a neighbour pauper, and begs him to help him out of difficulties, is only troubling himself in vain. The prisoner does not beg his fellow-prisoner to set him free; the shipwrecked sailor does not call on his shipwrecked comrade to place him safe ashore. Help in all these cases must come from some other quarter: relief in all these cases must be sought from some other hand. Reader, it is just the same in the matter of cleansing away your sins. So long as you seek it from man, whether man ordained or man not ordained, you seek it where it cannot be found. You must go further: you must look higher. You must turn elsewhere for comfort. It is not in the power of any man on earth or in heaven to take the burden of sin from off a brother's soul. "None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give a ransom for him." (Psalm xlix. 7.)

Reader, thousands in every age have tried to cleanse themselves from their sins in the ways I have now described, and have tried in vain. Thousands, I doubt not, are trying at this very moment, and find themselves "nothing bettered, but rather worse." They are climbing up a steep precipice of ice, toiling hard and yet slipping backwards as fast as they climb.—They are pouring water into a cask full of holes, labouring busily, and yet no nearer the end of their work than when they began.—They are rowing a boat against a rapid stream, plying the oar diligently, and yet in reality losing ground every minute.—They are trying to build up a wall of loose sand, wearing themselves out with fatigue, and yet seeing their work roll down on them as fast as they throw it up.—They are striving to pump dry a sinking ship: the water gains on them and they will soon be drowned.—Such is the experience, in every part of the world, of all who think to cleanse themselves from their sins. Reader, be warned to-day. Do not be one of them.

Beware, I do entreat you, of quack medicines in religion. Beware of supposing that penitence, and reformation, and formality, and priest-craft, can ever give you peace with God. They cannot do it. It is not in them. The man who says they can must be ignorant of two things. He cannot know the length and breadth of human sinfulness: he cannot understand the height and depth of the holiness of God. There never breathed the man or woman on earth who tried to cleanse himself from his sins, and in so doing obtained relief.

Reader, if you have found out this truth by experience, be diligent to impart it to others. Show them as plainly as you can their guilt and danger by nature. Tell them, with no less plainness, the immense importance of having their sins forgiven and cleansed away. But then warn them not to waste time in seeking to be cleansed in unlawful fashions. Warn them against the specious advice of “Mr. Legality” and his companions, so vividly described in “Pilgrim’s Progress.” Warn them against false remedies and sham medicines for the soul. Send them to the old wicket-gate, described in Scripture, however hard and rough the way may seem. Tell them it is “the old path and the good way,” and that, whatever men may say, it is the only way to obtain cleansing of our sins.

IV. The fourth remark I have to make is this. *The blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse away all your sins.*

Reader, I enter on this part of my tract with a thankful heart. I bless God that after setting before you the awful nature of your spiritual disease, I am able to set before you an almighty remedy. But I feel it needful to dwell upon this remedy for a few minutes. A thing of such wondrous efficacy as this blood ought to be clearly understood: there should be no vagueness or mystery in your ideas about it. When you hear of the “blood of Christ” you ought thoroughly to comprehend what the expression means

The blood of Christ is that life-blood which Jesus shed when He died for sinners upon the cross. It is the blood which flowed so freely from His head pierced with thorns, and His hands and feet pierced with nails, and His side pierced with a spear, in the day when He was crucified and slain. The quantity of that blood may very likely have been small; the appearance of that blood was doubtless like that of our own: but never since the day when Adam was first formed out of the dust of the ground, has any blood been shed of such deep importance to the whole family of mankind.

It was blood that had been *long covenanted and promised*. In the day when sin came into the world, God mercifully engaged that “the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.” One born of woman should appear one day, and deliver the children of Adam from Satan’s power. That Seed of the woman was our Lord Jesus Christ. In the day that He suffered on the cross, He triumphed over Satan and accomplished redemption for mankind. When Jesus shed His life-blood on the cross, the head of the serpent was bruised, and the ancient promise was fulfilled.

It was blood that had been *long typified and prefigured*. Every sacrifice that was offered up by patriarchs, was a testimony of their faith in a greater sacrifice yet to come; every shedding of the blood of lambs and goats under the Mosaic law was meant to foreshadow the dying of the true Lamb of God for the sin of the world. When Christ was crucified, these sacrifices and types received their full accomplishment.

The true sacrifice for sin was at length offered; the real atoning blood was at length shed. From that day the offerings of the Mosaic law were no longer needed. Their work was done. They might be laid aside.

It was blood which was of *infinite merit and value* in the sight of God. It was not the blood of one who was nothing more than a singularly holy man, but of one who was God's own fellow, very God of very God. It was not the blood of one who died involuntarily, as a martyr to truth, but of one who voluntarily undertook to be the Substitute and Proxy for mankind, to bear their sins and carry their iniquities. It made atonement for man's transgressions; it paid man's enormous debt to God; it provided a way of righteous reconciliation between sinful man and his holy Maker; it made a road from heaven to earth, by which God could come down to man, and show mercy; it made a road from earth to heaven, by which man could draw near to God, and yet not feel afraid. Without it there could have been no remission of sin. Through it God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. From it a fountain has been formed, wherein sinners can wash and be clean to all eternity.

Reader, this wondrous blood of Christ, applied to your conscience, can cleanse you from all sin. It matters nothing what your sins may have been, "Though they be as scarlet they may be made like snow. Though they be red like crimson they can be made like wool." (Isaiah i. 18.) From sins of youth and sins of age,—from sins of ignorance and sins of knowledge,—from sins of open profligacy and sins of secret vice,—from sins against law and sins against Gospel,—from sins of head, and heart, and tongue, and thought, and imagination,—from sins against each and all of the ten commandments,—from all these the blood of Christ can set us free. To this end was it appointed; for this cause was it shed; for this purpose it is still a fountain open to all mankind. That thing which you cannot do for yourself can be done in a moment by this precious fountain. **YOU CAN HAVE ALL YOUR SINS CLEANSED AWAY.**

In this blood all *the dead saints* have been cleansed hitherto, who are now waiting the resurrection of the just. From Abel, the first of whom we read, down to the last who has fallen asleep to-day, they have all "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14.) Not one has entered into rest by his own works and deservings; not one has made himself clean before God by his own goodness and his own strength. They have all "overcome by the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. xii. 11.) And their testimony in Paradise is clear and distinct: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." (Rev. v. 9)

By this blood all *the living saints* of God have peace and hope now; by it they have boldness to enter into the holiest; by it they are justified and made nigh to God; by it their consciences are daily purged and filled with holy confidence. About it all believers are agreed, however much they may differ on other matters. Episcopalians

and Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists,—all are agreed that the blood of Christ is that only thing that can cleanse the soul.—All are agreed that in ourselves we are “wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” But all are agreed that in the blood of Christ the chief of sinners can be made clean.

Reader, would you like to know what we ministers of the Gospel are ordained to do? We are not set apart for no other end than to read services, and administer sacraments, and marry people, and bury the dead. We are not meant to do nothing more than show you the church, or ourselves, or our party. We are set for the work of showing men the blood of Christ; and except we are continually showing it, we are no true ministers of the Gospel.

Reader, would you like to know what is our heart’s desire and prayer for the souls to whom we minister? We want to bring them to the blood of Christ. We are not content to see our churches filled, and our ordinances well attended, our congregations numerous, and our cause outwardly flourishing. We want to see men and women coming to the great Fountain for sin and uncleanness, and washing their souls in it that they may be clean. Here only is rest for the conscience. Here only is peace for the inward man. Here only is a cure for spiritual diseases Here only is the secret of a light and happy heart. No doubt we have within us a fountain of evil and corruption; but, blessed be God, there is another Fountain of greater power still,—even the precious blood of the Lamb: and, washing daily in that other Fountain, we are clean from all sin.

V. The fifth, and last remark I have to make, is this. *Faith is absolutely necessary, and the only thing necessary, in order to give you an interest in the cleansing blood of Christ.*

Reader, I ask your special attention to this point. A mistake here is often ruinous to a man’s soul. It is a great tear at the root of your Christianity if you do not clearly see the true way of union between Christ and the soul.—That way is faith.

Church-membership and reception of the sacraments are no proof that you are washed in Christ’s blood. Thousands attend a Christian place of worship, and receive the Lord’s Supper from the hands of Christian ministers, and yet show plainly that they are not cleansed from their sins. Beware of despising means of grace, if you have any desire to be saved. But never, never forget that Church-membership is not faith.

Faith is the one thing needful in order to give you the benefit of Christ’s cleansing blood. He is called a “propitiation through faith in His blood.” “He that believeth on Him hath everlasting life.” “By Him all that believe are justified from all things.” “Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The wisdom of the whole world will never provide a better answer to an anxious inquirer

than that which Paul gave to the Philippian jailer: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”—“Art thou convinced of sin?” says the Gospel. “Dost thou really see that thou hast many sins, and art deserving of hell? Dost thou renounce all hope of cleansing thyself from thy sins by thine own power? Then thou art just the man for whom the Gospel provides comfort. Behold the atoning blood of Christ! Only trust in it, and this day thou shalt be freely pardoned. Only believe, and this very moment thy sins shall be cleansed away.”—It is only “Believe and have.” It is only “Believe and be clean.” Let those who will call such doctrine rant and enthusiasm. I am bold to call it by another name. It is the “glorious Gospel” of the grace of God.

Reader, I ask you not to misunderstand my meaning in thus speaking of faith. I do not tell you that faith is the only mark of the man whose sins are cleansed away. I do not say that the faith which gives a man an interest in Christ’s atoning blood, is ever found alone. Saving faith is no barren, solitary grace. It is always accompanied by repentance and personal holiness.—But this I say confidently, that in the matter of giving the soul an interest in Christ, faith is the only thing required. In the matter of justification before God, faith, I repeat emphatically, stands entirely alone. Faith is the hand that lays hold on Christ. Faith begins, faith carries on, faith keeps up the claim which the sinner makes on the Saviour. By faith we are justified. By faith we bathe our souls in the great Fountain for sin. By faith we go on obtaining fresh supplies of pardoning mercy all through our journey. By faith we live, and by faith we stand.

Reader, *nothing whatever besides this faith* is required, in order to your complete justification and cleansing from all sin. Let this sink deeply into your mind. Where is the man that desires to enjoy real comfort from the Gospel? Seek, I do entreat you, to have clear and simple views of the nature of saving faith. Beware of those dark, and confused, and muddy notions of faith, by which so many distress their souls. Dismiss from your mind the idea that faith is a mere act of the intellect. It is not assent to doctrines or articles; it is not belief of “Paley’s Evidences” or “Pearson on the Creed.” It is simply the grasp of a contrite heart on the outstretched hand of an Almighty Saviour,—the repose of a weary head on the bosom of an Almighty Friend.—Cast away all idea of work, or merit, or doing, or performing, or paying, or giving, or buying, or labouring, in the act of believing on Christ. Understand that faith is not giving, but taking,—not paying, but receiving,—not buying, but being enriched. It is the eye that looks to the brazen serpent, and looking obtains life and health; it is the mouth that drinks down the reviving medicine, and drinking receives strength and vigour for the whole body; it is the hand of the drowning man which lays hold on the rope thrown to him, and laying hold enables him to be drawn up from the deep water safe and sound. This, and nothing more than this, is the true idea of saving faith. This, and this only, is the faith that is required to give you an interest in the blood of Christ. Believe in this way, and your sins are at once cleansed away!

Reader, *nothing whatever except this faith* will ever give you an interest in Christ’s

atoning blood. You may go daily to Christ's church; you may often use Christ's name; you may bow the head at the name of Jesus; you may eat of the bread and wine which Christ commanded to be received. But all this time, without faith, you have neither part nor lot in Christ: without faith, so far as you are concerned, Christ's blood has been shed in vain.

I desire to enter my solemn protest against the modern notions which prevail on this solemn subject. I protest against the opinion which many now maintain, that any are saved by Christ excepting those who *believe*. There is much vague talk in some quarters about the Fatherhood of God and the love of God, as if we who are called "Evangelical" denied these glorious truths. We do not deny them at all: we hold them as strongly as any. We give place to no man in this matter. But we utterly deny that God is the spiritual Father of any excepting those who are His *children by faith* in Christ Jesus. We utterly deny that men have a right to take comfort in God's love, except they *believe* on Him through whom that love has been manifested, even His dear Son. The atoning blood of the Son of God is the grand exhibition of God's love towards sinners. The sinner who desires to be saved, must have personal dealings with Him who shed that blood. By personal faith he must wash in it; by personal faith he must drink of it; by personal faith he must put in his own claim to all its blessings: without this faith there can be no salvation.

Reader, would you know the main objects that we ministers have in view in our preaching? We preach that you may *believe*. Faith is the thing that we desire to see produced in your souls; faith is the thing that, once produced, we desire to see growing. We rejoice to see you coming regularly to hear the Gospel; we rejoice to see an orderly, well-behaved congregation of worshippers: but faith, faith, faith,—is the grand result which we long to see in your souls. Without faith we cannot feel comfortable about you; without faith you are in imminent danger of hell. According to your faith will be the strength of your Christianity; according to the degree of your faith will be the increase of your peace and hope, and the closeness of your walk with God. Reader, you will not wonder that there is nothing we care for so much as your believing.

I hasten to bring my remarks to a conclusion. I have tried to show you five things, and have endeavoured to set them before you in plain language

(1) I have told you that you have many sins. (2) I have told you that it is of the utmost importance to have these sins cleansed away. (3). I have told you that you cannot cleanse away your own sins. (4) I have told you that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. (5) I have told you that faith only is needful, but absolutely needful, to give you any interest in Christ's blood; I have told you what I am firmly persuaded is God's own truth,—the truth on which I desire myself to live and die. I pray God that the Holy Ghost may apply this truth with mighty power to many souls.

Reader, I will wind up all this subject by three words of parting application. Our years are passing quickly away. The night cometh, when no man can work. Yet a little time and our place in another world will be settled to all eternity. A few more years, and we shall be either in heaven or in hell. Surely this fact alone ought to set us thinking. Bear with me while I try to turn your thoughts in a profitable direction; bear with me while, as a friend and brother, I try to talk to you about your soul.

1. My first word of application shall be a *question*. I address it to all into whose hands this tract may fall, without distinction or exception. It is a question which concerns deeply every man, woman, and child in the world, whatever be their rank or station; it is the question which forms the title of this tract

“Where are your sins?”

Reader, remember, I do not ask you what you call yourself in religion; I do not ask you where you go,—or whom you hear,—or to what party you belong,—or what are your peculiar opinions about Church or Dissent. I leave such matters alone. I am weary to see the enormous waste of time of which multitudes are yearly guilty in respect to these matters: I am for the realities and substance of Christianity; I want to fix your attention on the things which will look important in the hour of death and at the last day. And I say boldly, that one of the first questions which demand your notice, is the question of my tract:—*“Where are your sins?”*

I am not asking what you intend, or mean, or hope, or resolve to aim at, at some future time; I leave all that to children and fools. To-morrow is the devil’s day, but today is God’s. And here, as in God’s sight, this very day, while you are reading my tract, I ask you to find an answer to my question: *“Where are your sins?”*

Reader, I ask you to mark what I am going to say. I say it calmly, deliberately, advisedly, and with consideration: I tell you that at this moment there are only two places in which your sins can be, and I defy the wisdom of the world to find out a third. Either your sins are UPON YOURSELF, unpardoned, unforgiven, uncleansed, unwashed away,—sinking you daily nearer to hell! Or else your sins are UPON CHRIST, taken away, forgiven, pardoned, blotted out and cleansed away by Christ’s precious blood! I am utterly unable to see any third place in which a man’s sins can possibly be; I am utterly unable to discover any third alternative. Forgiven or unforgiven,—pardoned or not pardoned,—cleansed away or not cleansed,—this, according to the Bible, is the exact position of every one’s sins. Reader, how is it with you? *“Where are your sins?”*

I do pray you to lay this question to heart, and never to rest till you can give it an answer; I do entreat you to examine your own state,—to prove your own spiritual condition,—and to find out how matters stand between you and God. Let the time past

suffice for trifling and indecision about your soul.

Give it up,—give it up,—give it up for ever. Let the time past suffice for a mere formal, aimless, meaningless, comfortless religion. Lay it aside,—lay it aside,—lay it aside for ever. Be real; be thorough; be in earnest. Deal with your soul as a reasonable being; deal with it as one who feels that eternal interests are at stake; deal with it as one who has made up his mind, and is determined to live in suspense no longer. Oh, resolve this very day to find an answer to my question: “*Where are your sins?*” *Are they on yourself, or are they on Christ?*

2. My second word of application shall be *an invitation*. I address it to all who feel unable to give a satisfactory answer to the question of my tract; I address it to all who feel sinful, and lost, and condemned, and unfit to die. It is that invitation which is the glory of the Gospel. I say to you, “*Come to Christ, and be cleansed in His blood without delay.*”

I know not what you may have been in your past life: it matters nothing. You may have broken every commandment under heaven; you may have sinned with a high hand against light and knowledge; you may have despised a father’s warnings and a mother’s tears; you may have run greedily into every excess of riot, and plunged into every kind of abominable profligacy; you may have turned your back entirely on God, His day, His house, His ministers, His word, I say again, it matters nothing. Do you feel your sins? Are you sick of them? Are you ashamed of them? Are you weary of them? Then *come to Christ* just as you are, and Christ’s blood shall make you clean.

I see you lingering, and doubting, and fancying the news too good to be true; I hear the devil whispering in your ear, “You are too bad; you are too wicked to be saved.” I charge you, in God’s name, not to give way to such doubts. I remind you that Satan always was a liar. One time he told you it was “too soon” for religion: and now he tells you it is “too late.” I tell you confidently, that Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him; I tell you confidently, that He has received, cleansed, and pardoned thousands as bad as you: He never changes. Only come to Him, and His blood shall cleanse you from all sin.

I can well fancy that you feel at a loss, and know not what to do; I can well believe that you do not see which way to turn, or what step to take, or in what manner to follow out my counsel. *I bid you go and say so to the Lord Jesus Christ!* I bid you seek some quiet solitary place, and pour out your heart before Him: tell Him that you are a poor miserable sinner; tell Him that you know not how to pray, or what to say, or what to do. But tell Him that you have heard something about His blood cleansing a man from all sin, and entreat Him to think on you, and cleanse your soul. Oh, reader, take this advice,—and who can tell but you may say one day, “The blood of Christ does indeed cleanse a man from all sin.”

Reader, for the last time I offer my invitation. I stand in the life-boat alongside the wreck to which you are clinging, and I entreat you to come in. The day is far spent; the night is coming on; the clouds are gathering; the waves are rising. Yet a little time and the old wreck of this world will go to pieces. Come into the life-boat; come in and be safe: come to the blood of Christ; wash, and be clean: come with all your sins to Christ, and cast them on Him He will bear them away; He will cleanse then; He will pardon them. Only believe and be saved.

3. My last word shall be *an exhortation*. I address it to all who have been taught by the Spirit to feel their sins, and have fled to the hope set before them in the Gospel; I address it to all who have discovered the grand truth that they are guilty sinners, and have washed in the blood of Christ in order to have their sins cleansed away. That exhortation shall be short and simple. I bid them “cling to Christ.”

Cling to Christ, I say: and never forget your debt to Him. Sinners you were, when you were first called by the Holy Ghost, and fled to Jesus. Sinners you have been, even at your bed, from the day of your conversion. Sinners you will find yourselves to your dying hour, having nothing to boast of in yourselves. Then cling to Christ.

Cling to Christ, I say: and make use of His atoning blood every day. Go to Him every morning as your morning sacrifice, and confess your need of His salvation. Go to Him every night, after the bustle of the day, and plead for fresh absolution. Wash in the great Fountain every evening, after all the defilement of contact with the world. “He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet.” But his feet he needs to wash. (John xiii. 10.)

Cling to Christ, I say: and show the world how you love Him. Show it by obedience to His commandments. Show it by conformity to His image. Show it by following His example. Make your Master’s cause lovely and beautiful before men, by your own holiness of temper and conversation. Let all the world see, that he who is much forgiven is the man who loves much, and that he who loves most is the man who does most for Christ. (Luke vii. 47.)

Cling to Christ, I say: and have high thoughts of the atonement made by His blood upon the cross. Think highly of His incarnation and His example,—think highly of His miracles and His words,—think highly of His resurrection, and intercession, and coming again. But think highest of all of Christ’s sacrifice and the propitiation made by His death. Contend earnestly for the old faith concerning His atonement. See, in the old doctrine that He died as a substitute for sinners, the only solution of a thousand passages in the Old Testament, and a hundred passages in the New. Never, never be ashamed to let men know that you derive all your comfort from the atoning blood of Christ, and from His substitution for you on the cross.

Cling to Christ, I say lastly: and make much of the old foundation truths concerning salvation by His blood. These are the old friends to which our souls will turn at last in the hour of our departure. These are the ancient doctrines on which we shall lean back our aching heads, when life is ebbing away and death is in sight. We shall not ask ourselves then whether we have been Episcopalians or Presbyterians, Churchmen or Dissenters. We shall not find comfort then in new-fangled notions and human inventions,—in baptism and churchmembership,—in sects and parties,—in ceremonies and forms. Nothing will do us good then but the blood of Christ. Nothing will support us then but the witness of the Spirit, that in the blood of Jesus we have washed, and by that blood have been made clean.

Reader, I commend these things to your notice. If you never knew these things before, may you soon become acquainted with them! If you have known them in time past, may you know them better for time to come! We can never know too well the right answer to the mighty question,—“*Where are your sins?*”

Are You an Heir?

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God. For you didn't receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him." (Romans 8:14-17)

As soon as you have read the verses of Scripture before your eyes, I invite you to consider a very solemn question—Are you an heir of glory?

Mark well what I am asking. I am not speaking of matters which only concern the rich, the great, and the noble. I do not ask whether you are an heir to money or lands. I only ask whether you are an heir of glory.

The inheritance I speak of is the only inheritance really worth having. All others are unsatisfying and disappointing. They bring with them many cares. They cannot cure an aching heart. They cannot lighten a heavy conscience. They cannot keep off family troubles. They cannot prevent sicknesses, bereavements, separations, and deaths. But there is no disappointment among the heirs of glory.

The inheritance I speak of is the only inheritance which can be kept forever. All others must be left in the hour of death, if they have not been taken away before. The owners

of millions can carry nothing with them beyond the grave. But it is not so with the heirs of glory. Their inheritance is eternal.

The inheritance I speak of is the only inheritance which is within everybody's reach. Most men can never obtain riches and greatness, though they labor hard for them all their lives. But glory, honor, and eternal life, are offered to every man freely, who is willing to accept them on God's terms. "Whoever will," may be an heir of glory.

Reader, if you wish to have a portion of this inheritance, you must be a member of that one family on earth to which it belongs, and that is the family of all true Christians. You must become one of God's children on earth, if you desire to have glory in heaven. I write to persuade you to become a child of God this day, if you are not one already. I write to persuade you to make it sure work that you are one, if at present you have only a vague hope, and nothing more. None but true Christians are the children of God. None but the children of God are heirs of glory. Give me your attention, while I try to unfold to you these things, and to show you the lessons which the verses you have already read contain.

I. Let me show you the relation of all true Christians to God. They are "sons of God."

II. Let me show you the special evidences of this relation. True Christians are "led by the Spirit." They have "the Spirit of adoption." They have the "witness of the Spirit." They "suffer with Christ."

III. Let me show you the privileges of this relation. True Christians are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," and shall be "glorified together" with Him.

I. First let me show you the relation of all true Christians to God. They are God's "SONS."

I know no higher and more comfortable word that could have been chosen. To be servants of God—to be subjects, soldiers, disciples, friends—all these are excellent titles. But to be the sons of God, is a step higher still. What says the Scripture? "The servant abides not in the house for ever—but the son abides ever." (John 8:35.)

To be son of the rich and noble in this world—to be son of the princes and kings of the earth—this is reckoned a privilege. But to be a son of the King of kings, and Lord of lords—to be a son of the High and Holy One, who inhabits eternity—this is something higher still. And yet this is the portion of every true Christian.

The son of an earthly parent looks naturally to his father for affection, maintenance, provision, and education. There is a home always open to him. There is a love which no bad conduct can completely extinguish. All these are things belonging even to the sonship of this world. Think then how great is the privilege of that poor sinner who

can say of God, "He is my Father."

But HOW can sinful men like you and I become sons of God? When do they enter into this glorious relationship? We are not the sons of God by nature. We are not born so when we come into the world. No man has a natural right to look to God as his Father. It is a vile heresy to say that he has. Men are said to be born poets and painters—but men are never born sons of God. The Epistle to the Ephesians tells us, "You were by nature children of wrath, even as others." (Ephes. 2:3.) The Epistle of John says, "the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil—whoever does not righteousness is not of God." (1 John 3:10.) The Catechism of the Church of England wisely follows the doctrine of the Bible, and teaches us to say, "By nature born in sin, and children of wrath." Yes! we are all rather children of the devil, than children of God. Sin is indeed hereditary, and runs in the family of Adam. Grace is anything but hereditary, and holy men have not, as a matter of course, holy sons. How then, and when does this mighty change and translation come upon men? When and in what manner do sinners become the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty?

Men become sons of God in the day that the Spirit leads them to believe on Jesus Christ for salvation, and not before. What says the Epistle to the Galatians? "You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:36.) What says the Epistle to the Corinthians? "Of him are you in Christ Jesus." (1 Cor. 1:30.) What says the Gospel of John? "As many as received Christ, to them gave the power (or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name." (John 1:12.) Faith unites the sinner to the Son of God, and makes him one of His members. Faith makes him one of those in whom the Father sees no spot, and is well pleased. Faith marries him to the beloved Son of God, and entitles him to be reckoned among the sons. Faith gives him fellowship with the Father and the Son. Faith grafts him into the Father's family, and opens up to him a room in the Father's house. Faith gives him life instead of death, and makes him instead of being a servant, a son. Show me a man who has this faith in Christ, and whatever be his Church, or denomination, I say that he is a son of God.

Reader, this is one of those points you should never forget. You and I know nothing of a man's sonship until he believes. No doubt the sons of God are foreknown and chosen from all eternity, and predestinated to adoption. (Ephes. 1:5.) But, remember, it is not until they are called in due time, and believe—it is not until then that you and I can be certain they are sons of God. It is not until they repent and believe, that the angels of God rejoice over them. The angels cannot read the book of God's election. They know not who are His hidden ones in the earth. They rejoice over no man until he believes. But when they see some poor sinner repenting and believing, then there is joy among them—joy that one more brand is plucked from the burning, and one more son and heir born again to the Father in heaven. But once more I say, you and I know nothing certain about a man's sonship to God until he believes on Christ.

Reader, I warn you to beware of the delusive notion, that all men and women are alike children of God, whether they have faith in Christ or not. It is a wild theory which many are clinging to in these days—but one which cannot be proved out of the Word of God. It is a perilous dream, with which many are trying to soothe themselves—but one from which there will be a fearful waking up at the last day.

That God, in a certain sense, is the universal Father of all mankind, I do not pretend to deny. He is the Great First Cause of all things. He is the Creator of all mankind, and in Him alone, all men, whether Christians or heathens, live and move, and have their being. All this is unquestionably true. In this sense Paul told the Athenians, a poet of their own had truly said, "We are His offspring." (Acts 17:28.) But this sonship gives no man a title to heaven. The sonship which we have by creation, is one which belongs to stones, trees, beasts, or even to the devils—as much as to us.

That God loves all mankind with a love of pity and compassion, I do not deny. His tender mercies are over all His works. He is not willing that any should perish—but that all should come to repentance. He has no pleasure in the death of him that dies. All this I admit to the full. In this sense our Lord Jesus tells us, "God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish—but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.)

But that God is a reconciled and pardoning Father to any but the members of His Son Jesus Christ, and that any are members of Jesus Christ who do not believe on Him for salvation—this is a doctrine which I utterly deny. The holiness and justice of God are both against the doctrine. They make it impossible for sinful men to approach God, excepting through a mediator. They tell us that outside of Christ, God is a consuming fire. The whole system of the New Testament is against the doctrine. That system teaches that no man can claim interest in Christ, unless he will receive Him as his Mediator, and believe on Him as his Savior. Where there is no faith in Christ, it is presumptuous folly to say that a man may take comfort in God as His Father. God is a reconciled Father to none but the members of Christ.

It is nonsense to talk of the view I am now upholding as narrow-minded and harsh. The Gospel sets an open door before every man. Its promises are wide and full. Its invitations are earnest and tender. Its requirements are simple and clear. Only believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and whoever you are, you shall be saved. But to say that proud men, who will not bow their necks to the easy yoke of Christ, and worldly men, who are determined to have their own way and their sins—to say that such men have a right to claim an interest in Christ, and a right to call themselves sons of God, is absurdity indeed. God offers to be their Father—but He does it on certain distinct terms—they must draw near to Him through Christ. Christ offers to be their Savior—but in doing it He makes one simple requirement—they must commit their souls to Him, and give Him their hearts. They refuse the terms, and yet dare to call God their

Father! They scorn the requirement, and yet dare to hope that Christ will save them! God is to be their Father—but on their own terms! Christ is to be their Savior—but on their conditions! What can be more unreasonable? What can be more proud? What can be more unholy than such a doctrine as this? Beware of it, reader, for it is a common doctrine in these latter days. Beware of it, for it is often speciously put forward, and sounds beautiful and charitable in the mouths of poets, novelists, sentimentalists, and tender-hearted women. Beware of it, unless you mean to throw aside your Bible altogether, and set up yourself to be wiser than God. Stand fast on the old Scriptural ground. No sonship to God without Christ! No interest in Christ without faith!

I wish there was not so much cause for giving warnings of this kind. I have reason to think they need to be given clearly and unmistakably. There is a school of theology rising up in this day, which appears to me most eminently calculated to promote infidelity, to help the devil, and to ruin souls. It comes to us like Joab to Amasa, with the highest professions of charity, liberality, and love. God is all mercy and love, according to this theology—His holiness and justice are completely left out of sight! Hell is never spoken of in this theology—its talk is all of heaven! Damnation is never mentioned—it is treated as an impossible thing—all men and women are to be saved! Faith, and the work of the Spirit, are refined away into nothing at all! Everybody who believes anything has faith! Everybody who thinks anything has the Spirit! Everybody is right! Nobody is wrong! Nobody is to blame for any action he may commit! It is the result of his position! It is the effect of circumstances! He is not accountable for his opinions, any more than for the color of his skin! He must be what he is! The Bible of course is a very imperfect book! It is old-fashioned! It is obsolete! We may believe just as much of it as we please, and no more! Reader, of all this theology, I warn you solemnly to beware. In spite of big swelling words about "liberality," and "charity," and "broad views," and "new lights," and "freedom from bigotry," and so forth, I do believe it to be a theology that leads to hell.

Facts are directly against the teachers of this theology. Let them climb to the tops of mountains, and mark the traces of Noah's flood. Let them go to the shores of the Dead Sea, and look down into its mysterious bitter waters. Let them observe the wandering Jews, scattered over the face of the world. And then let them tell us, if they dare, that God is so entirely a God of mercy and love, that he never does, and never will punish sin.

The conscience of man is directly against these teachers. Let them go to the bedside of some dying child of the world, and try to comfort him with their doctrines. Let them see if their vaunted theories will calm his gnawing, restless anxiety about the future, and enable him to depart in peace. Let them show us, if they can, a few well-authenticated cases of joy and happiness in death without Bible promises—without conversion—and without that faith in the blood of Christ, which Scriptural theology

enjoins. Alas, when men are leaving the world, conscience makes sad work of these new systems. Conscience is not easily satisfied in a dying hour, that there is no such thing as hell.

Every reasonable conception that we can form of a future state is directly against these teachers. Imagine a heaven which would contain all mankind! Imagine a heaven in which holy and unholy, pure and impure, good and bad, would be all gathered together in one confused mass! What point of union would there be in such a company? What common bond of sympathy and brotherhood? What common delight in a common service? What concord, what harmony, what peace, what oneness of spirit could exist? Surely the mind revolts from the idea of a heaven in which there would be no distinction between the righteous and the wicked—between Pharaoh and Moses, between Abraham and the Sodomites, between Paul and Nero, between Peter and Judas Iscariot, between the man who dies in the act of murder or drunkenness and men like Baxter, Wilberforce, and M'Cheyne! Surely an eternity in such a miserable, confused crowd, would be worse than annihilation itself! Surely such a heaven would be no better than hell!

The interests of all holiness and morality are directly against these teachers. If all men and women alike are God's children, whatever is the difference between them in their lives, and all are alike going to heaven, however different they may be from one another here in the world—where is the use of laboring after holiness at all? What motive remains for living soberly, righteously, and godly? What does it matter how men conduct themselves, if all go to heaven, and nobody goes to hell? Surely the very heathen of Greece and Rome could teach us something better and wiser than this? Surely a doctrine which is subversive of holiness and morality, and takes away all motives to exertion, carries on the face of it the stamp of its origin. It is of earth—and not of heaven. It is of the devil—and not of God.

The Bible is against these teachers all through. Hundreds and thousands of texts might be quoted which are diametrically opposed to their theories. These texts must be rejected summarily, if the Bible is to square with their views. There may be no reason why they should be rejected—but to suit the theology I speak of, they must be thrown away. At this rate the authority of the whole Bible is soon at an end. And what do they give us in its place? Nothing—nothing at all! They rob us of the bread of life, and do not give us in its stead so much as a stone!

Reader, once more I warn you to beware of this theology. I charge you to hold fast the doctrine which I have been endeavoring to uphold in these pages. Remember what I have said, and never let it go. No inheritance of glory without sonship to God! No sonship to God without an interest in Christ! No interest in Christ without your own personal faith! This is God's truth. Never forsake it.

Who now among the readers of this volume desires to know whether he is a son of God? Ask yourself this day—and ask it as in God's sight, whether you have repented and believed. Ask yourself whether you are experimentally acquainted with Christ, and united to Him in heart. If not, you may be very sure you are no son of God. You are not yet born again. You are still in your sins. Your Father in creation, God may be—but your reconciled and pardoning Father, God is not. Yes, though church and world may agree to tell you to the contrary—though clergy and laity unite in flattering you! Their opinions are worth nothing in the sight of God. Let God be true and every man a liar. Without faith in Christ you are no son of God—you are not born again.

Who is there among the readers of this volume, who desires to become a son of God? Let that person see his sin, and flee to Christ for salvation, and this day he shall be placed among the children. Only acknowledge your iniquity, and lay hold of the hand that Jesus holds out to you this day, and sonship, with all its privileges, is your own. Only confess your sins, and bring them unto Christ, and God is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. This very day old things shall pass away, and all things become new. This very day you shall be forgiven, pardoned, accepted in the beloved. This very day you shall have a new name given to you in heaven. You did take up this book a child of wrath. You shall lie down tonight a child of God. Mark this, if your professed desire after sonship is sincere—if you are truly weary of your sins, and have really something more than a lazy wish to be free—there is real comfort for you. It is all true. It is all written in Scripture, even as I have written it down. I dare not raise barriers between you and God. This day I say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be a son, and be saved.

Who is there among the readers of this volume, that is a son of God indeed? Rejoice, I say, and be exceeding glad of your privileges. Rejoice, for you have good cause to be thankful. Remember the words of the beloved Apostle—"Behold what manner of love the father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." (1 John 3:1.) How wonderful, that heaven should look down on earth—that the holy God should set His affections on sinful man, and admit him into His family! What though the world does not understand you! What though the men of this world laugh at you, and cast out your name as evil! Let them laugh, if they will. God is your Father. You have no need to be ashamed. The Queen can create a nobleman. The bishops can ordain clergymen. But Queen, Lords, and Commons—bishops, priests, and deacons—all together cannot, of their own power, make one son of God, or one of greater dignity than a son of God. The man that can call God his Father, and Christ his elder Brother—that man may be poor and lowly, yet he never need be ashamed.

II. Let me show you, in the second place, the special EVIDENCES of the true Christian's relation to God.

How shall a man make sure work of his own sonship? How shall he find out whether

he is one that has come to Christ by faith and been born again? What are the marks, and signs, and tokens, by which the sons of God may be known? This is a question which all who love eternal life ought to ask. This is a question to which the verses of Scripture I am asking you to consider, like many others, supply an answer.

1. The sons of God, for one thing, are all led by His Spirit. What says the Scripture? "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. 8:14.)

They are all under the leading and teaching of a power which is Almighty, though unseen—even the power of the Holy Spirit. They no longer turn every man his own way and walk every man in the light of his own eyes, and follow every man his own natural heart's desire. The Spirit leads them. The Spirit guides them. There is a movement in their hearts, lives, and affections, which they feel, though they may not be able to explain, and a movement which is always more or less in the same direction.

They are led away from sin—away from self-righteousness—away from the world. This is the road by which the Spirit leads God's children. Those whom God adopts He teaches and trains. He shows to them their own heart. He makes them weary of their own ways. He makes them long for inward peace.

They are led by Christ. They are led to the Bible. They are led to prayer. They are led to holiness. This is the beaten path along which the Spirit makes them to travel. Those whom God adopts He always sanctifies. He makes sin very bitter to them. He makes holiness very sweet.

It is the Spirit who leads them to Sinai, and first shows them the law, that their hearts may be broken. It is He who leads them to Calvary, and shows them the cross, that their hearts may be bound up and healed. It is He who leads them to Pisgah, and gives them distant views of the promised land, that their hearts may be cheered. When they are taken into the wilderness, and taught to see their own emptiness, it is the leading of the Spirit. When they are carried up to Tabor, and lifted up with glimpses of the glory to come, it is the leading of the Spirit. Each one of God's sons is the subject of these leadings. Each one yields himself willingly to them. And each one is led by the right way, to bring him to a city of habitation.

Reader, settle this down in your heart, and do not let it go. The sons of God are a people led by the Spirit of God, and always led more or less in the same way. Their experience will tally wonderfully when they compare notes in heaven. This is one mark of sonship.

2. Furthermore, all the sons of God have the feelings of adopted children towards their Father in heaven. What says the Scripture? "For you did not receive the spirit of

slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba! Father!" (Rom. 8:15.)

The sons of God are delivered from that slavish fear of God, which sin begets in the natural heart. They are redeemed from that feeling of guilt, which made Adam hide himself in the trees of the garden, and Cain go out from the presence of the Lord. They are no longer afraid of God's holiness, and justice, and majesty. They no longer feel as if there was a great gulf and barrier between themselves and God—and as if God was angry with them, and must be angry with them, because of their sins. From these chains and fetters of soul, the sons of God are delivered.

Their feelings towards God are now those of peace and confidence. They see Him as a Father reconciled in Christ Jesus. They look on Him as a God whose attributes are all satisfied by their great Mediator and Peacemaker, the Lord Jesus—as a God who is just, and yet the justifier of everyone that believes on Jesus. As a Father, they draw near to Him with boldness. As a Father, they can speak to Him with freedom. They have exchanged the spirit of bondage for that of liberty, and the spirit of fear for that of love. They know that God is holy—but they are not afraid. They know that they are sinners—but they are not afraid. Though holy, they believe that God is completely reconciled. Though sinners, they believe they are clothed all over with Jesus Christ. Such is the feeling of the sons of God.

I allow that some of them have this feeling more vividly than others. Some of them carry about scraps and remnants of the old spirit of bondage to their dying day. Many of them have fits and paroxysms of fear returning upon them at intervals. Very few of the sons of God could be found who would not say, if cross-examined, that since they knew Christ they have had very different feelings towards God, from what they ever had before. They feel as if something like the old Roman form of adoption had taken place between themselves and their Father in heaven. They feel as if He had said to each one of them, "Will you be my son?" and as if their hearts had replied, "I will."

Reader, try to grasp this also, and hold it fast. The sons of God are a people who feel towards God in a way that the children of the world do not. They feel no more slavish fear towards Him. They feel towards Him as a reconciled parent. This then is another mark of sonship.

3. But again, the sons of God have the witness of the Spirit in their conscience. What says the Scripture? "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." (Rom. 8:16.)

They have all got something within their hearts, which tells them there is a relationship between themselves and God. They feel something which tells them that old things are passed away, and all things become new—that guilt is gone—that peace

is restored—that heaven's door is opened, and hell's door is shut. They have, in short, what the children of the world have not—a felt, positive, reasonable hope. They have what Paul calls the "seal" and "pledge" of the Spirit. (2 Cor. 1:22; Ephes. 1:13.)

Reader, I do not for a moment deny that this witness of the spirit is exceedingly various in the extent to which the sons of God possess it. With some it is a loud, clear, ringing, distinct testimony of conscience—"I am Christ's and Christ is mine." With others it is a little feeble, stammering whisper, which the devil and the flesh often prevent being heard. Some of the children of God speed on their course towards heaven under the full sails of assurance. Others are tossed to and fro all their voyage, and will scarcely believe they have got true faith. But take the least and lowest of the sons of God. Ask him if he will give up the little bit of religious hope which he has attained? Ask him if he will exchange his heart, with all its doubts and conflicts, its fightings, and fears—ask him if he will exchange that heart for the heart of the downright worldly and careless man? Ask him if he would be content to turn round and throw down the things he has got hold of, and go back to the world? Who can doubt what the answer would be? "I cannot do that," he would reply. "I do not know whether I have faith—I do not feel sure I have got grace—but I have got something within me I would not like to part with." And what is that "something"? I will tell you. It is the witness of the Spirit.

Reader, try to understand this also. The sons of God have the witness of the Spirit in their consciences. This is another mark of sonship.

4. One thing more let me add. All the sons of God take part in suffering with Christ. What says the Scripture? "And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him." (Rom. 8:17.)

All the children of God have a cross to carry. They have trials, troubles, and afflictions to go through for the Gospel's sake. They have trials from the world—trials from the flesh—and trials from the devil. They have trials of feeling from relations and friends—hard words, hard conduct, and hard judgment. They have trials in the matter of character—slander, misrepresentation, mockery, insinuation of false motives—all these often rain thick upon them. They have trials in the matter of worldly interest. They have often to choose whether they will please man, and lose glory; or gain glory and offend man. They have trials from their own hearts. They have each generally their own thorn in the flesh—their own home-devil, who is their worst foe. This is the experience of the sons of God.

Some of them suffer more, and some less. Some of them suffer in one way, and some in another. God measures out their portions like a wise physician, and cannot err. But never, I believe, was there one child of God who reached paradise without a cross.

Suffering is the diet of the Lord's family. "Whom the Lord loves He chastens." "If you be without chastisement, then are you illegitimate children, and not sons." "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God." (Heb. 12:6, 8; Acts 14:22.) When Bishop Latimer was told by his landlord that he had never had a trouble, "Then," said he, "God cannot be here."

Suffering is a part of the process by which the sons of God are sanctified. They are chastened to wean them from the world, and make them partakers of God's holiness. The Captain of their salvation was made perfect through sufferings, and so are they. There never yet was a great saint who had not either great afflictions or great corruptions. Well said Philip Melancthon, "Where there are no cares, there will generally be no prayers."

Reader, try to settle this down into your heart also. The sons of God have all to bear a cross. A suffering Savior has suffering disciples. The Bridegroom was a man of sorrows. The bride must not be a woman of pleasures, and unacquainted with grief. Blessed are those who mourn. Let us not murmur at the cross. This also is a sign of sonship.

Reader, I warn you never to suppose that you are a son of God unless you have the Scriptural marks of sonship. Beware of a sonship without evidences. Again I say, Beware. When a man has no leading of the Spirit to show me—no Spirit of adoption to tell of—no witness of the Spirit in his conscience—no cross in his experience—is this a son of God? God forbid that I should say so! His spot is not the spot of God's children. He is no heir of glory.

Tell me not that you have been baptized and taught the Catechism of the Church of England, and therefore must be a child of God. I tell you that the 'parish register' is not the book of life. I tell you that to be styled a child of God, and called regenerate in infancy by the faith and charity of the Prayer-book, is one thing—but to be a child of God indeed, another thing altogether. Go and read that Catechism again. It is a "death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness," which makes men children of grace. Unless you know these by experience, you are no son of God.

Tell me not that you are a member of the Church, and so must be a son. I answer that the sons of the Church are not necessarily the sons of God. Such sonship is not the sonship of the eighth of Romans. That is the sonship you must have, if you are to be saved.

And now, I doubt not some reader of these pages will want to know if he may not be saved without the witness of the Spirit.

I answer, if you mean by the witness of the Spirit, the full assurance of hope, you may

be so saved without question. But if you want to know whether a man can be saved without any inward sense, or knowledge, or hope of salvation, I answer that ordinarily he cannot. I warn you plainly to cast away all indecision as to your state before God, and to make your calling sure. Clear up your position and relationship. Do not think there is anything praiseworthy in always doubting. Leave that to the Papist. Do not imagine it wise to be ever living on "debatable ground." "Assurance," said old Dodd, the Puritan, "may be attained, and what have we been doing all our lives since we became Christians if we have not attained it?"

I doubt not some true Christians who read this volume will think their evidence of sonship is too small to be good, and will write bitter things against themselves. Let me try to cheer them. Who gave you the feelings you possess? Who made you hate sin? Who made you love Christ? Who made you long and labor to be holy? Whence did these feelings come? Did they come from nature? There are no such products in a natural man's heart. Did they come from the devil? He would gladly stifle such feelings altogether. Cheer up, and take courage. Fear not, neither be cast down. Press forward, and go on. There is hope for you after all. Strive. Labor. Seek. Ask. Knock. Follow on. You shall yet see that you are the sons of God.

III. Let me show you, in the last place, the PRIVILEGES of the true Christian's relation to God.

Nothing can be conceived more glorious than the prospects of the sons of God. The words of Scripture which head this tract, contain a rich mine of good and comfortable things. "If we are children," says Paul, "we are heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ—to be glorified together with Him." (Rom. 8:17.)

True Christians, then, are "heirs,"—something is prepared for them all which is yet to be revealed.

They are "heirs of God." To be heirs of the rich on earth is something. How much more then is it to be son and heir of the King of kings!

They are "joint-heirs with Christ." They shall share in His majesty, and take part in His glory. They shall be glorified together with Him.

And this, remember, is for all the 'children'. Abraham took care to provide for all his children—and God takes care to provide for His. None of them are disinherited. None will be cast out. None will be cut off. Each shall stand in his lot, and have a portion in the day when the Lord brings many sons to glory.

Reader, who can tell the full nature of the inheritance of the saints in light? Who can describe the glory which is yet to be revealed, and given to the children of God? Words fail us. Language falls short. Mind cannot conceive fully, and tongue cannot express

perfectly—the things which are comprised in the glory yet to come upon the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Oh, it is indeed a true saying of the Apostle John! "It does not yet appear what we shall be." (1 John 3:2.)

The very Bible itself only lifts the veil a little which hangs over this subject. How could it do more? We could not thoroughly understand more if more had been told us. Our constitution is, as yet, too earthly—our understanding is, as yet, too carnal to appreciate more, if we had it. The Bible generally deals with the subject in 'negative terms', and not in positive assertions. It describes what there will not be in the glorious inheritance, that thus we may get some faint idea of what there will be. It paints the absence of certain things, in order that we may drink in a little the blessedness of things present. It tells us that the inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and fades not away. It tells us that the crown of glory fades not away. It tells us that the devil is to be bound, that there shall be no more night, and no more curse, that death shall be cast into the lake of fire, that all tears shall be wiped away, and that the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick." And these things are glorious things indeed! No corruption! No fading! No withering! No devil! No curse of sin! No sorrow! No tears! No sickness! No death! Surely the cup of the children of God will indeed run over!

But, reader, there are 'positive things' told us about the glory yet to come upon the heirs of God, which ought not to be kept back. There are many sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comforts in their future inheritance, which all true Christians would do well to consider. There are cordials for fainting pilgrims in many words and expressions of Scripture, which you and I ought to lay up against time of need.

Is KNOWLEDGE pleasant to us now? Is the little that we know of God, and Christ, and the Bible, precious to our souls, and do we long for more? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture? "Then shall I know, even as also I am known." (1 Cor. 13:12.) Blessed be God, there will be no more disagreements among believers! Episcopalians and Presbyterians—Calvinists and Arminians—Millenarians and Anti-millenarians—friends of Establishments and friends of the voluntary system—advocates of infant baptism and advocates of adult baptism—all will at length see eye to eye. The former ignorance will have passed away. We shall marvel to find how childish and blind we have been.

Is HOLINESS pleasant to us now? Is sin the burden and bitterness of our lives? Do we long for entire conformity to the image of God? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture? Christ gave Himself for the Church, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." (Ephes. 5:27.) Oh, the blessedness of an eternal good-bye to sin! Oh, how little the best of us do at present! Oh, what unutterable corruption sticks, like tar, to all our motives, all our thoughts, all our words, all our actions! Oh, how many of us, like Naphtali, are

goodly in our words—but, like Reuben, unstable in our works! Thank God, all this shall be changed!

Is REST pleasant to us now? Do we often feel faint, though pursuing? Do we long for a world in which we need not be always watching and warring? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture? "There remains a rest for the people of God." (Heb. 4:9.) The daily, hourly conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil, shall at length be at an end. The enemy shall be bound. The warfare shall be over. The wicked shall at last cease from troubling. The weary shall at length be at rest. There shall be a great calm.

Is SERVICE pleasant to us now? Do we find it sweet to work for Christ, and yet groan, being burdened by a feeble body? Is our spirit often willing—but hampered and clogged by the poor weak flesh? Have our hearts burned within us when we have been allowed to give a cup of cold water for Christ's sake, and have we sighed to think what unprofitable servants we are? Let us take comfort. We shall be able to serve perfectly in glory, and without weariness. What says the Scripture? "They serve Him day and night in His temple." (Rev. 7:15.)

Is SATISFACTION pleasant to us now? Do we find the world empty? Do we long for the filling up of every void place and gap in our hearts? We shall have it perfectly in glory. We shall no longer have to mourn over cracks in all our earthen vessels—and thorns on all our roses—and bitter dregs in all our sweet cups. We shall no longer lament with Jonah over withered gourds. We shall no longer say with Solomon, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." We shall no longer cry with aged David, "I have seen an end of all perfection." What says the Scripture? "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness." (Psalm 17:15.)

Is COMMUNION WITH THE SAINTS pleasant to us now? Do we feel that we are never so happy as when we are with the excellent of the earth? Are we never so much at home as in their company? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture? "The Son of Man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which work iniquity." "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds." (Matt. 13:41; 24:31.) Praised be God! We shall see all the saints of whom we have read in the Bible, and in whose steps we have tried to walk. We shall see apostles, prophets, patriarchs, martyrs, reformers, missionaries, and ministers, of whom the world was not worthy. We shall see the faces of those we have known and loved in Christ on earth, and over whose departure we shed bitter tears. We shall see them more bright and glorious than they ever were before. And best of all, we shall see them without hurry and anxiety, and without feeling that we only meet to part again. In glory there is no death, no parting, no farewell!

Is COMMUNION WITH CHRIST pleasant to us now? Do we find His name precious to us? Do we feel our hearts burn within us at the thought of His dying love? We shall have perfect communion with Him in glory. "We shall ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:17.) We shall be with Him in paradise. We shall see His face in the kingdom. These eyes of ours will behold those hands and feet which were pierced with nails, and that head which was crowned with thorns. Where He is, there will the sons of God be. When He comes, they will come with Him. When He sits down in His glory, they will sit down by His side. Blessed prospect indeed!

I am a dying man in a dying world! All before me is dark! The world to come is a harbor unknown! But Christ is there, and that is enough. Surely if there is rest and peace in following Him by faith on earth, there will be far more rest and peace when we see Him face to face. If we have found it good to follow the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, we shall find it a thousand times better to sit down in our eternal inheritance with our Joshua in the promised land.

Ah, reader, if you are not yet among the sons and heirs, I do pity you with all my heart. How much you are missing! How little true comfort you are enjoying! There you are, struggling on, and toiling in the fire, and wearying yourself for mere earthly ends—seeking rest, and finding none—chasing shadows, and never catching them—wondering why you are not happy, and yet refusing to see the cause—hungry and thirsty, and empty, and yet blind to the plenty within your reach. Oh, that you were wise! Oh, that you would hear the voice of Jesus, and learn of Him!

Reader, if you are one of those who are sons and heirs, you may well rejoice and be happy. You may well wait, like the boy Patience in Pilgrim's Progress. Your best things are yet to come. You may well bear crosses without murmuring. Your light affliction is but for a moment. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed. When Christ our life appears, then you also shall appear with Him in glory. You may well not envy the transgressor and his prosperity. You are the truly rich! Well said a dying believer in my own parish, "I am more rich than I ever was in my life." You may say, in the spirit of Mephibosheth, when David returned to Jerusalem, "Let the world take all, my King is coming again in peace." You may say as Alexander said when he gave all his riches away, and was asked what he kept for himself, "I have hope."

You need not be cast down by sickness. The eternal part of you is safe and provided for, whatever happens to your body. You may well look calmly on death. It opens a door between you and your inheritance. You may well not sorrow exclusively over the things of the world—over partings and bereavements—over losses and crosses. The day of gathering is before you. Your treasure is beyond reach of harm. Heaven is becoming every year more full of those you love, and earth more empty. Glory in your inheritance. It is all yours if you are a son of God. "If we are children, then we are

heirs."

And now, reader, in concluding this subject, let me ask you, Whose child are you? Are you the child of nature, or the child of grace? Are you the child of the devil, or the child of God? You cannot be both at once. Which are you?

Settle the question, reader, for you must die at last either one or the other. Settle it, reader, for it can be settled, and it is folly to leave it doubtful. Settle it, for the time is short, and the world is getting old, and you are fast drawing near to the judgment seat of Christ. Settle it, for death is near, the Lord is at hand; and who can tell what a day may bring forth? Oh, that you would never rest until the question is settled! Oh, that you may never feel satisfied until you can say, "I have been born again. I am a son of God."

Reader, if you are not a son and heir of God, let me entreat you to become one without delay. Would you be rich? There are unsearchable riches in Christ. Would you be noble? You shall be a king. Would you be happy? You shall have a peace which passes understanding, and which the world can never give, and never take away. Oh, come out, and take up the cross, and follow Christ! Come out from among the thoughtless and worldly, and hear the Word of the Lord—"I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:18.)

Reader, if you are a son of God, I beseech you to walk worthy of your Father's house. I charge you solemnly to honor Him in your life—and above all to honor Him by implicit obedience to all His commands, and hearty love to all His children. Labor to travel through the world like a child of God, and heir of glory. Let men be able to trace a family likeness between you and Him that begat you. Live a heavenly life. Seek things that are above. Do not seem to be building your nest below. Behave like a man who seeks a city out of sight, whose citizenship is in heaven, and who would be content with many hardships until he gets home.

Labor to feel like a son of God in every condition in which you are placed. Never forget you are on your Father's ground so long as you are here on earth. Never forget that a Father's hand sends all your mercies and crosses. Cast every care on Him. Be happy and cheerful in Him. Why indeed are you ever sad if you are the King's son? Why should men ever doubt when they look at you, whether it is a pleasant thing to be one of God's children?

Labor to behave towards others like a son of God. Be blameless and harmless in your day and generation. Be a peacemaker among all you know. Seek for your children, sonship to God above everything else. Seek for them an inheritance in heaven, whatever else you do for them. No man leaves his children so well provided for, as he

who leaves them sons and heirs of God.

Persevere in your Christian calling, if you are a son of God, and press forward more and more. Be careful to lay aside every weight, and the sin which most easily besets you. Keep your eyes steadily fixed on Jesus. Abide in Him. Remember that without Him you can do nothing, and with Him you can do all things. Watch and pray daily. Be steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord. Settle it down in your heart, that not a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, shall lose its reward, and that every year you are so much nearer home.

Yet a little time and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Then shall be the glorious liberty, and the full manifestation of the sons of God. Then shall the world acknowledge that they were the truly wise. Then shall the sons of God at length come of age. Then shall they no longer be heirs in expectancy—but heirs in possession. And then shall they hear with exceeding joy, those comfortable words, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" (Matt. 25:34.) Surely that day will make amends for all!

That all who read these pages may see the value of the inheritance of glory, and be found at length in possession of it—is my heart's desire and prayer.

Shall You Be Saved?

"Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because I tell you, many will try to enter and won't be able." Luke 13:23-24

"Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in by it. How narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way that leads to life! Few are those who find it." Matthew 7:13-14

I take it for granted that every reader of this paper calls himself a Christian. You would not like to be reckoned a deist, or an infidel. You profess to believe the Bible to be true. The birth of Christ the Savior—the death of Christ the Savior—the salvation provided by Christ the Savior, all these are facts which you have probably never doubted. But, after all, will Christianity like this profit you anything at last? Will it do your soul any good when you die? In one word—Shall you be saved?

It may be you are now young, healthy and strong. Perhaps you never had a day's illness in your life, and scarcely know what it is to feel weakness and pain. You scheme and plan for future years, and feel as if death was far away, and out of sight.

Yet, remember, death sometimes cuts off young people in the flower of their days. The strong and healthy of the family do not always live the Longest. Your sun may go down before your life has reached its mid-day. Yet a little while, and you may be lying in a narrow, silent home, and the daisies may be growing over your grave! And then, consider—Shall you be saved?

It may be you are rich and prosperous in this world. You have money, and all that money can command. You have "honor, love, obedience, troops of friends." But, remember, "riches are not forever." You cannot keep them longer than a few years. "It is appointed unto people once to die, and after this the judgment." (Prov. 27:24; Heb. 9:27.) And then, consider—Shall you be saved?

It may be you are poor and needy. You have scarcely enough to provide food and raiment for yourself and family. You are often distressed for lack of comforts, which you have no power to get. Like Lazarus, you seem to have "bad things" only, and not good. But, nevertheless, you take comfort in the thought that there will be an end of all this. There is a world to come, where poverty and need shall be unknown. Yet, consider a moment—Shall you be saved?

It may be you have a weak and sickly body. You hardly know what it is to be free from pain. You have so long parted company with health, that you have almost forgotten what it is like. You have often said in the morning, "Would God it were evening,"—and in the evening, "Would God it were morning." There are days when you are tempted by very weariness to cry out with Jonah, "It is better for me to die than to live." (Jonah 4:3.) But, remember, death is not all. There is something else beyond the grave! And then, consider—Shall you be saved?

If it was an easy thing to be saved, I would not write as I do in this volume. But is it so? Let us see.

If the common opinion of people of the world as to the number of the saved was correct, I would not trouble people with searching and hard questions. But is it so? Let us see.

If God had never spoken plainly in the Bible about the number of the saved, I might well be silent. But is it so? Let us see.

If experience and facts left it doubtful whether many or few would be saved, I might hold my peace. But is it so? Let us see.

There are four points which I propose to examine in considering the subject before us.

I. Let me explain what it is to be saved.

II. Let me point out the mistakes which are common in the world about the number of the saved.

III. Let me show what the Bible says about the number of the saved.

IV. Let me bring forward some plain facts as to the number of the saved.

A calm examination of these four points, in a day of wide-spread carelessness about vital religion, will be found of vast importance to our souls.

I. First of all let me explain what it is to be saved. This is a matter that must be cleared up. Until we know this, we shall make no progress. By being "saved" I may mean one thing, and you may mean another. Let me show you what the Bible says it is to be "saved," and then there will be no misunderstanding. To be saved, is not merely to profess and call ourselves Christians. We may have all the outward parts of Christianity, and yet be lost after all. We may be baptized into Christ's Church—go to Christ's table—have Christian knowledge—be reckoned Christian men and women—and yet be dead souls all our lives, and at last, in the judgment day, be found on Christ's left hand, among the goats! No—this is not salvation! Salvation is something far higher and deeper than this. Now what is it?

(a) To be saved, is to be delivered in this present life from the GUILT of sin, by faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior. It is to be pardoned, justified, and freed from every charge of sin, by faith in Christ's blood and mediation. Whoever with his heart believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, is a saved soul. He shall not perish. He shall have eternal life. This is the first part of salvation, and the root of all the rest. But this is not all.

(b) To be saved, is to be delivered in this present life from the POWER of sin, by being born again, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. It is to be freed from the hateful dominion of sin, the world, and the devil, by having a new nature put in us by the Holy Spirit. Whoever is thus renewed in the spirit of his mind, and converted, is a saved soul. He shall not perish. He shall enter into the glorious kingdom of God. This is the second part of salvation. But this is not all.

(c) To be saved, is to be delivered in the day of judgment, from all the awful CONSEQUENCES of sin. It is to be declared blameless, spotless, faultless, and complete in Christ, while others are found guilty, and condemned forever. It is to hear those comfortable words, "Come, you who are blessed!" While others are hearing those fearful words, "Depart, you who are cursed!" (Matt. 25:34, 41.) It is to be owned and confessed by Christ, as one of His dear children and servants, while others are disowned and cast off forever. It is to be pronounced free from the portion of the wicked—the worm which never dies, the fire which is not quenched—the weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, which never ends. It is to receive the reward prepared

for the righteous, in the day of Christ's second coming—the glorious body—the kingdom that is incorruptible—the crown that fades not away—and the joy that is for evermore. This is complete salvation. This is the "redemption" for which true Christians are bid to look and long. (Luke 21:28.) This is the heritage of all men and women who believe and are born again. By faith they are saved already. In the eye of God their final salvation is an absolutely certain thing. Their names are in the book of life. Their mansions in heaven are even now prepared. But still there is a fullness of redemption and salvation which they do not attain to while they are in the body. They are saved from the guilt and power of sin—but not from the necessity of watching and praying against it. They are saved from the fear and love of the world—but not from the necessity of daily fighting with it. They are saved from the service of the devil—but they are not saved from being vexed by his temptations. But when Christ comes the salvation of believers shall be complete. They possess it already in the bud. They shall see it then in the flower.

Such is salvation. It is to be saved from the guilt, power, and consequences of sin. It is to believe and be sanctified now, and to be delivered from the wrath of God in the last day. He who has the first part in the life that now is, shall undoubtedly have the second part in the life to come. Both parts of it hang together. What God has joined together, let no man dare to put asunder. Let none dream he shall ever be saved at last, if he is not born again first. Let none doubt, if he is born again here, that he shall assuredly be saved hereafter.

Let it never be forgotten that the chief object of a minister of the Gospel is to set forward the salvation of souls. I lay it down as a certain fact that he is no true minister who does not feel this. Talk not of a man's ordination! All may have been done correctly, and according to rule. He may wear a black coat, and be called a "reverend" man. But if the saving of souls is not the grand interest—the ruling passion—the absorbing thought of his heart—he is no true minister of the Gospel—he is a hireling, and not a shepherd. Congregations may have called him—but he is not called by the Holy Spirit. Bishops may have ordained him; but not Christ.

For what purpose do people suppose that ministers are sent forth? Is it merely to wear ecclesiastical vestments—and read the services—and preach a certain number of sermons? Is it merely to administer the sacraments, and officiate at weddings and funerals? Is it merely to get a comfortable living, and be in a respectable profession? No, indeed! we are sent forth for other ends than these. We are sent to turn people from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. We are sent to persuade people to flee from the wrath to come. We are sent to draw people from the service of the world to the service of God—to awaken the sleeping, to arouse the careless—and "by all means to save some." (1 Cor. 9:22.)

Think not that all is done when we have set up regular services, and persuaded people

to attend them. Think not that all is done, when full congregations are gathered, and the Lord's table is crowded, and the parish school is filled. We want to see manifest work of the Spirit among people—an evident sense of sin—a lively faith in Christ—a decided change of heart—a distinct separation from the world—a holy walk with God. In one word, we want to see souls saved! And we are fools and impostors—blind leaders of the blind, if we rest satisfied with anything less.

After all the grand object of having a religion is to be saved. This is the great question that we have to settle with our consciences. The matter for our consideration is not whether we go to church or chapel—whether we go through certain forms and ceremonies—whether we observe certain days, and perform a certain number of religious duties. The matter is whether, after all, we shall be "saved." Without this all our religious doings are weariness and labor in vain.

Never, never let us be content with anything short of a saving religion. Surely to be satisfied with a religion which neither gives peace in life, nor hope in death, nor glory in the world to come—is childish folly.

II. Let me, in the second place, point out the MISTAKES which are common in the world about the number of the saved.

I need not go far for evidence on this subject. I will speak of things which every man may see with his own eyes, and hear with his own ears.

I will try to show that there is a wide-spread delusion abroad about this matter, and that this very delusion is one of the greatest dangers to which our souls are exposed.

(a) What then do people generally think about the spiritual state of others while they are alive? What do they think of the souls of their relatives, and friends, and neighbors, and acquaintances? Let us just see how that question can be answered.

They know that all around them are going to die, and to be judged. They know that they have souls to be lost or saved. And what, to all appearance, do they consider their end is likely to be?

Do they think those around them are in danger of hell? There is nothing whatever to show they think so. They eat and drink together; they laugh, and talk, and walk, and work together. They seldom or never speak to one another of God and eternity—of heaven and of hell. I ask anyone, who knows the world, as in the sight of God, is it not so?

Will they allow that anybody is wicked or ungodly? Never, hardly, whatever may be his way of life. He may be a breaker of the Sabbath; he may be a neglecter of the Bible; he may be utterly without evidence of true religion. His friends will often tell you, "It

does not matter! He has a good heart at the bottom, and is not a grossly wicked man."

I ask anyone, who knows the world, as in God's sight, is it not so? And what does all this prove? It proves that people flatter themselves there is no great difficulty in getting to heaven. It proves plainly that people are of opinion that most people will be saved.

(b) But what do people generally think about the spiritual state of others after they are dead? Let us just see how this question can be answered.

People allow, if they are not infidels, that all who die have gone to a place of happiness, or of misery. And to which of these two places do they seem to think the greater part of people go, when they leave this world?

I say, without fear of contradiction, that there is an unhappily common fashion of speaking well of the condition of all who have departed this life. It matters little, apparently, how a man has behaved while he lived. He may have given no signs of repentance, or faith in Christ; he may have been ignorant of the plan of salvation set forth in the Gospel; he may have shown no evidence whatever of conversion or sanctification; he may have lived and died like a creature without a soul. And yet, as soon as this man is dead, people will dare to say that he is "probably happier than ever he was in his life." They will tell you complacently, that "he has gone to a better world." They will shake their heads gravely, and say they "hope he is in heaven." They will follow him to the grave without fear and trembling, and speak of his death afterwards as "a blessed change for him." They may have disliked him, and thought him a bad man while he was alive; but the moment he is dead they turn round in their opinions and say they trust he is gone to heaven! I have no wish to hurt anyone's feelings. I only ask anyone, who knows the world—Is it not true?

And what does it all prove? It just supplies one more awful proof that people are determined to believe it is an easy business to get to heaven. People will have it that most people are saved.

(c) But again, what do people generally think of ministers who preach fully the doctrines of the New Testament? Let us see how this question can be answered.

Send a clergyman into a parish who shall "declare all the counsel of God," and "keep back nothing that is profitable." Let him be one who shall clearly proclaim justification by faith—regeneration by the Spirit—and holiness of life. Let him be one who shall draw the line distinctly between the converted and the unconverted, and give both to sinners and to saints their portion. Let him frequently produce out of the New Testament a plain, unanswerable description of the true Christian's character. Let him show that no man who does not possess that character can have any reasonable

hope of being saved. Let him constantly press that description on the consciences of his hearers, and urge upon them repeatedly that every soul who dies without that character will be lost. Let him do this, ably and affectionately, and after all, what will the result be?

The result will be, that while some few repent and are saved, the great majority of his hearers will not receive and believe his doctrine. They may not oppose him publicly. They may even esteem him, and respect him as an earnest, sincere, kind-hearted man, who means well. But they will go no further. He may show them the express words of Christ and His Apostles; he may quote text upon text, and passage upon passage—it will be to no purpose. The great majority of his hearers will think him "too strict," and "too close," and "too particular." They will say among themselves, that the world is not so bad as the minister seems to think—and that people cannot be so good as the minister wants them to be—and that after all, they hope they shall be all right at the last! I appeal to any minister of the Gospel, who has been any length of time in the ministry, whether I am not stating the truth. Are not these things so?

And what does it prove? It just makes one more proof that people generally are resolved to think that salvation is not a very hard business, and that after all most people will be saved.

Now what solid reason can people show us for these common opinions? Upon what Scripture do they build this notion, that salvation is an easy business, and that most people will be saved? What revelation of God can they show us, to satisfy us that these opinions are sound and true?

They have none—literally none at all. They have not a text of Scripture which, fairly interpreted, supports their views. They have not a reason which will bear examination. They speak smooth things about one another's spiritual state, just because they do not like to admit that there is danger. They build up one another into an easy, self-satisfied state of soul, in order to soothe their consciences and make things pleasant. They cry "Peace, peace," over one another's graves, because they want it to be so, and would gladly persuade themselves that so it is. Surely against such hollow, foundationless opinions as these, a minister of the Gospel may well protest.

The plain truth is that the world's opinion is worth nothing in matters of religion. About the price of an ox, or a horse, or a farm, or the value of labor—about wages and work—about money, cotton, coals, iron and corn—about arts, and sciences, and business—about railways, and commerce, and trade, and politics—about all such things the people of the world may give a correct opinion. But we must beware, if we love life, of being guided by man's judgment in the things that concern salvation. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." (1 Cor. 2:14.)

Let us remember, above all, that it never will do to think as others do, if we want to get to heaven. No doubt it is easy work to "go with the crowd" in religious matters. It will save us much trouble to swim with the stream and tide. We shall be spared much ridicule—we shall be freed from much unpleasantness. But let us remember, once for all, that the world's mistakes about salvation are many and dangerous. Unless we are on our guard against them we shall never be saved.

III. Let me show, in the third place, what the Bible says about the number of the saved.

There is only one standard of truth and error to which we ought to appeal. That standard is the Holy Scripture. Whatever is there written we must receive and believe; whatever cannot be proved by Scripture we ought to refuse.

Can any reader of this paper subscribe to this? If he cannot, there is little chance of his being moved by any words of mine. If he can, let him give me his attention for a few moments, and I will tell him some solemn things.

Let us look, then, for one thing, at one single text of Scripture, and examine it well. We shall find it in Matthew 7:13, 14. "Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in by it. How narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way that leads to life! Few are those who find it." Now these are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are the words of Him who was very God, and whose words shall never pass away. They are the words of Him who knew what was in man—who knew things to come, and things past—who knew that He should judge all people at the last day. And what do those words mean? Are they words which no man can understand without a knowledge of Hebrew or Greek? No—they are not! Are they a dark, unfulfilled prophecy, like the visions in Revelation, or the description of Ezekiel's temple? No—they are not! Are they a deep mysterious saying, which no human intellect can fathom? No—they are not! The words are clear, plain, and unmistakable. Ask any laboring man who can read, and he will tell you so. There is only one meaning which can be attached to them. Their meaning is, that many people will be lost—and few will be saved.

Let us look, in the next place, at the whole history of mankind as respects religion, as we have it given in the Bible. Let us go through the whole four thousand years, over which the history of the Bible reaches. Let us find, if we can, one single period of time at which godly people were many, and ungodly people were few.

How was it in the days of Noah? The earth we are told expressly was "filled with violence." The imagination of man's heart was only "evil continually." (Gen. 6:5, 12.) "All flesh had corrupted his way." The loss of paradise was forgotten. The warnings of God, by Noah's mouth, were despised. And at length, when the flood came on the

world and drowned every living thing, there were but eight people who had faith enough to flee for refuge to the ark! And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it in the days of Abraham, and Isaac, and Lot? It is evident that in the matter of religion they stood very much alone. The family from which they were taken was a family of idolaters. The nations among whom they lived were sunk in gross darkness and sin. When Sodom and Gomorrah were burned there were not five righteous people to be found in the four cities of the plain. When Abraham and Isaac desired to find wives for their sons, there was not a woman in the land where they sojourned to whom they could wish to see them married. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with Israel in the days of the Judges? No one can read the book of Judges, and not be struck with the sad examples of man's corruption which it affords. Time after time we are told of the people forsaking God, and following idols. In spite of the plainest warnings, they joined affinity with the Canaanites, and learned their works. Time after time we read of their being oppressed by foreign kings, because of their sins, and then miraculously delivered. Time after time we read of the deliverance being forgotten, and of the people returning to their former sins, like the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with Israel in the days of the Kings? From Saul, the first king, down to Zedekiah, the last king, their history is a melancholy account of backsliding, and declension, and idolatry—with a few bright exceptional periods. Even under the best kings there seems to have been a vast amount of unbelief and ungodliness, which only lay hid for a season, and burst out at the first favorable opportunity. Over and over again we find that under the most zealous kings "the high places were not taken away." Mark how even David speaks of the state of things around him, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." (Psalm 12:1.) Mark how Isaiah describes the condition of Judah and Jerusalem, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the crown of the head, there is no soundness in it." "Except the Lord of Armies had left unto us a very small remnant, we would have been as Sodom, and would have been like unto Gomorrah." (Isaiah 1:5-9.) Mark how Jeremiah describes his time, "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, if there be any that executes judgment, that seeks the truth, and I will pardon it." (Jer. 5:1.) Mark how Ezekiel speaks of the people of his times, "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is

to me become dross—all they are brass, and iron, and tin and lead in the midst of the furnace—they are even the dross of silver." (Ezek. 22:17, 18.) Mark what he says in the sixteenth and twenty-third chapters of his prophecy about the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with the Jews when our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth? The words of Saint John are the best account of their spiritual state, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (John 1:11.) He lived as no one born of woman had ever lived before—a blameless, harmless, holy life. "He went about doing good." (Acts 10:38.) He preached as no one ever preached before. Even the officers of his enemies confessed, "Never man spoke like this man." (John 7:46.) He did miracles to confirm His ministry, which, at first sight, we might have fancied would have convinced the most hardened. But, notwithstanding all this, the vast majority of the Jews refused to believe Him. Follow our Lord in all His travels over Palestine, and you will always find the same story. Follow Him into the city, and follow Him into the wilderness; follow Him to Capernaum and Nazareth, and follow Him to Jerusalem; follow Him among Scribes and Pharisees, and follow Him among Sadducees and Herodians—everywhere you will arrive at the same result. They were amazed—they were silenced—they were astonished—they wondered—but very few became disciples! The immense proportion of the nation would have none of His doctrine, and crowned all their wickedness by putting Him to death. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with the world in the days of the Apostles? If ever there was a period when true religion flourished it was then. Never did the Holy Spirit call into the fold of Christ so many souls in the same space of time. Never were there so many conversions under the preaching of the Gospel as when Paul and his fellow-laborers were the preachers. But still, it is plain from the Acts of the Apostles, that true Christianity was "everywhere spoken against." (Acts 28:22.) It is evident that in every city, even in Jerusalem itself, true Christians were a small minority. We read of perils of all kinds which the Apostles had to go through—not only perils from without—but perils from within—not only perils from the heathen—but perils from false brethren. We hardly read of a single city visited by Paul where he was not in danger from open violence and persecution. We see plainly, by some of his epistles, that the professing Churches were mixed bodies, in which there were many rotten members. We find him telling the Philippians a painful part of his experience, "Many walk, of whom I tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things." (Philip. 3:18, 19.) And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to this question. There can be no doubt what that answer must be.

I ask any honest-minded unprejudiced reader of the volume to weigh well the lessons of the Bible which I have just brought forward. Surely they are weighty and solemn, and deserve serious attention.

Let no one think to evade their force by saying that the Bible only tells the story of the Jews. Think not to comfort yourself by saying that "perhaps the Jews were more wicked than other nations, and many people were probably saved among other nations, though few were saved among the Jews." You forget that this argument goes against you. You forget that the Jews had light and privileges which the Gentiles had not, and with all their sins and faults, were probably the holiest and most moral nation upon earth. As to the moral state of people among the Assyrians, and Egyptians, and Greeks, and Romans, it is fearful to think what it must have been. But this we may be sure of, that if many were ungodly among the Jews, the number was far greater among the Gentiles. If few were saved in the green tree, alas, how much fewer must have been saved in the dry!

The sum of the whole matter is this—the Bible and the people of the world, speak very differently about the number of the saved. According to the Bible, few will be saved—according to the people of the world, many. According to the people of the world few are going to hell—according to the Bible few are going to heaven. According to the people of the world salvation is an easy business—according to the Bible the way is narrow and the gate is strait. According to the people of the world few will be found at last seeking admission into heaven when too late—according to the Bible many will be in that sad condition, and will cry in vain, "Lord, Lord, open to us." Yet the Bible was never wrong yet. The most unlikely and improbable prophecies about Tyre, Egypt, Babylon, and Nineveh, have all come true to the letter. And as in other matters, so it will be about the number of the saved. The Bible will prove quite right and the people of the world quite wrong.

IV. Let me show, in the last place, some plain facts about the number of the saved.

I ask particular attention to this part of the subject. I know well that people flatter themselves that the world is far better and wiser than it was 1800 years ago. We have churches, and schools, and books. We have civilization, and liberty, and good laws. We have a far higher standard of morality in society than that which once prevailed. We have the power of obtaining comforts and enjoyments which our forefathers knew nothing of. Steam, and gas, and electricity, and chemistry, have effected wonders for us. All this is perfectly true. I see it, and I am thankful. But all this does not diminish the importance of the question—Are there few or many of us likely to be saved?

I am thoroughly satisfied that the importance of this question is painfully overlooked. I am persuaded that the views of most people about the quantity of unbelief and sin in

the world, are utterly inadequate and incorrect. I am convinced that very few people, whether ministers or private Christians, at all realize how few there are in a way to be saved. I want to draw attention to the subject, and I will therefore bring forward a few plain facts about it.

But where shall I go for these facts? I might easily turn to the millions of heathen, who in various parts of the world are worshiping they know not what. But I shall not do so. I might easily turn to the millions of Muhammadans who honor the Koran more than the Bible, and the false prophet of Mecca more than Christ. But I shall not do so. I might easily turn to the millions of Roman Catholics who are making the Word of God of no effect by their traditions. But I shall not do so. I shall look nearer home. I shall draw my facts from the land in which I live, and then ask every honest reader whether it be not strictly true that few are saved.

I invite any intelligent reader of these pages to imagine himself in any parish in Protestant England or Scotland at this day. Choose which you please, a town parish, or a country parish—a great parish or a small one. Let us take our New Testaments in our hands. Let us sift the Christianity of the inhabitants of this parish, family by family, and man by man. Let us put on one side anyone who does not possess the New Testament evidence of being a true Christian. Let us deal honestly and fairly in the investigation, and not allow that anyone is a true Christian, who does not come up to the New Testament standard of faith and practice. Let us count every man a saved soul in whom we see something of Christ—some evidence of true repentance—some evidence of saving faith in Jesus, some evidence of real evangelical holiness. Let us reject every man in whom, on the most charitable construction, we cannot see these evidences, as one "weighed in the balances, and found lacking." Let us apply this sifting process to any parish in this land, and see what the result would be.

(a) Let us set aside, first of all, those people in a parish who are living in any kind of open sin. By these I mean such as fornicators, and adulterers, and liars, and thieves, and drunkards, and cheats, and revilers, and extortioners. About these I think there can be no difference of opinion. The Bible says plainly, that "those who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5:21) Now will these people be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind—In their present condition they will not.

(b) Let us set aside, in the next place, those people who are Sabbath-breakers. I mean by this expression, those who seldom or never go to a place of worship, though they have the power, those who do not give the Sabbath to God—but to themselves—those who think of nothing but doing their own ways, and finding their own pleasure upon Sundays. They show plainly that they are not fit for heaven! The inhabitants of heaven would be company they could not like. The employments of heaven would be a weariness to them, and not a joy. Now will these people be saved? The answer is clear to my mind—In their present condition they will not.

(c) Let us set aside, in the next place, all those people who are careless and thoughtless professors. I mean by this expression, those who attend many of the outward ordinances of religion—but show no signs of taking any real interest in its doctrines and substance. They care little whether the minister preaches the Gospel or not. They care little whether they hear a good sermon or not. They would care little if all the Bibles in the world were burned. They would care little if an Act of Parliament were passed forbidding anyone to pray. In short, religion is not the "one thing needful" with them. Their treasure is on earth. They are just like Gallio, to whom it mattered little whether people were Jews or Christians—he "cared for none of these things." (Acts 18:17.) Now will these people be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind In their present condition they will not.

(d) Let us set aside, in the next place, all those who are formalists and self-righteous. I mean by this expression, those who value themselves on their own regularity in the use of the forms of Christianity, and depend either directly or indirectly on their own doings for their acceptance with God. I mean all who rest their souls on any work but the work of Christ, or any righteousness but the righteousness of Christ. Of such the Apostle Paul has expressly testified, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.", "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (Rom. 3:20; 1 Cor. 3:11.) And dare we say, in the face of such texts, that such as these will be saved? The answer is plain to my own mind—In their present condition they will not.

(e) Let us set aside, in the next place, all those who know the Gospel with their heads—but do not obey it with their hearts. These are those unhappy people who have eyes to see the way of life—but have not will or courage to walk in it. They approve sound doctrine. They will not listen to preaching which does not contain it. But the fear of man, or the cares of the world, or the love of money, or the dread of offending relations, perpetually holds them back. They will not come out boldly, and take up the cross, and confess Christ before people. Of these also the Bible speaks expressly, "Faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone." "To him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin." "If any man is ashamed of Me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." (James 2:17; 4:17; Luke 9:26.) Shall we say that such as these will be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind—In their present condition they will not.

(f) Let us set aside, in the last place, all those who are hypocritical professors. I mean by that expression, all those whose religion consists in talk and high profession, and in nothing besides. These are they of whom the prophet Ezekiel speaks, saying, "With their mouth they show much love—but their heart goes after their covetousness." "They profess that they know God—but in works they deny Him." "They have a form of godliness—but they have not the power of it." (Ezek. 33:31; Titus 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:5.)

They are saints at church, and saints to talk to in public. But they are not saints in private, and in their own homes; and worst of all, they are not saints in heart. There can be no dispute about such people. Shall we say that they will be saved? There can only be one answer—In their present condition they will not.

And now, after setting aside these classes which I have described, I ask any sensible thinking reader to tell me how many people in any parish in England will there be left behind? How many, after sifting a parish thoroughly and honestly—how many men and women will remain who are in a way to be saved? How many true penitents—how many real believers in Christ, how many truly holy people will there be found? I put it to the conscience of every reader of this volume to give an honest answer, as in the sight of God. I ask you whether, after sifting a parish with the Bible in the fashion described, you can come to any conclusion but this, that few people—sadly few people, are in a way to be saved?

It is a painful conclusion to arrive at—but I know not how it can be avoided. It is a fearful and tremendous thought, that there should be so many churchmen in England, and so many dissenters, so many seat-holders, and so many pew-renters, so many hearers, and so many communicants—and yet, after all, so few in a way to be saved! But the only question is, Is it not true? It is vain to shut our eyes against facts. It is useless to pretend not to see what is going on around us. The statements of the Bible and the facts of the world we live in will lead us to the same conclusion—Many are being lost, and few being saved!

(a) I know well that many do not believe what I am saying, because they think there is an immense quantity of death-bed repentance. They flatter themselves that multitudes who do not live religious lives will yet die religious deaths. They take comfort in the thought that vast numbers of people turn to God in their last illness and are saved at the eleventh hour. I will only remind such people that all the experience of ministers is utterly against the theory. People generally die just as they have lived. True repentance is never too late—but repentance deferred to the last hours of life is seldom true. A man's life is the surest evidence of his spiritual state, and if lives are to be witnesses, then few are likely to be saved.

(b) I know well that many do not believe what I am saying, because they imagine that it contradicts the mercy of God. They dwell on the love to sinners which the Gospel reveals. They point to the offers of pardon and forgiveness which abound in the Bible. They ask us if we maintain, in the face of all this, that only few people will be saved. I answer, I will go as far as anyone in exalting God's mercy in Christ—but I cannot shut my eyes against the fact that this mercy profits no man so long as it is wilfully refused. I see nothing lacking, on God's part, for man's salvation. I see room in heaven for the chief of sinners. I see willingness in Christ to receive the most ungodly. I see power in the Holy Spirit to renew the most ungodly. But I see, on the other hand, desperate

unbelief in man—he will not believe what God tells him in the Bible. I see desperate pride in man—he will not bow his heart to receive the Gospel as a little child. I see desperate sloth in man—he will not take the trouble to arise and call upon God. I see desperate worldliness in man—he will not loose his hold on the poor perishable things of time, and consider eternity. In short, I see the words of our Lord continually verified, "You will not come unto Me, that you might have life" (John 5:40), and therefore I am driven to the sorrowful conclusion that few are likely to be saved.

(c) I know well that many will not believe what I am saying, because they refuse to observe the evil there is in the world. They live in the midst of a little circle of good people—they know little of anything that goes on in the world outside that circle. They tell us the world is a world which is rapidly improving and going on to perfection. They count up on their fingers the number of good ministers whom they have heard and seen in the last year. They call our attention to the number of religious societies, and religious meetings, to the money which is subscribed, to the Bibles and tracts which are being constantly distributed. They ask us if we really dare to say, in the face of all this, that few are in the way to be saved. In reply, I will only remind these amiable people, that there are other people in the world besides their own little circle, and other men and women besides the chosen few whom they know in their own congregation. I entreat them to open their eyes, and see things as they really are. I assure them there are things going on in this country of ours of which they are at present in happy ignorance. I ask them to sift any parish or congregation in England, with the Bible, before they condemn me hastily. I tell them, if they will do this honestly, they will soon find that I am not far wrong, when I say that few are likely to be saved.

(d) I know well that many will not believe me, because they think such a doctrine very narrow-minded and exclusive. I utterly deny the charge. I disclaim any sympathy with those Christians who condemn everybody outside their own church, and appear to shut the door of heaven against everybody who does not see everything with their eyes. Whether Roman Catholics, or Episcopalians, or Free Churchmen, or Baptists, or Plymouth Brethren—whoever does anything of this kind, I reckon him a narrow-minded man. I have no desire to shut up the kingdom of heaven against anyone. All I say is, that none will enter that kingdom, except converted, believing, and holy souls; and all I take on myself to assert is, that both the Bible and facts combine to prove that such people are few.

(e) I know well that many will not believe what I am saying, because they think it a gloomy, uncharitable doctrine. It is easy to make vague, general assertions of this kind. It is not so easy to show that any doctrine deserves to be called "gloomy and uncharitable" which is scriptural and true. There is a spurious charity, I am afraid, which dislikes all strong statements in religion, a charity which would have no one interfered with—charity which would have everyone let alone in his sins—a charity

which, without evidence, takes for granted that everybody is going to be saved—a charity which never doubts that all people are going to heaven, and seems to deny the existence of such a place as hell. But such charity is not the charity of the New Testament, and does not deserve the name. Give me the charity which tries everything by the test of the Bible, and believes nothing and hopes nothing that is not sanctioned by the Word. Give me the charity which Paul describes to the Corinthians—the charity which is not blind, and deaf, and stupid—but has eyes to see and senses to discern between him that fears God and him that fears Him not. Such charity will rejoice in nothing but "the truth," and will confess with sorrow that I tell nothing but the truth when I say that few are likely to be saved.

(f) I know well that many will not believe me, because they think it presumptuous to have any opinion at all about the number of the saved. But will these people dare to tell us that the Bible has not spoken plainly as to the character of saved souls? And will they dare to say that there is any standard of truth except the Bible? Surely there can be no presumption in asserting that which is agreeable to the Bible. I tell them plainly that the charge of presumption does not lie at my door. I say that he is the truly presumptuous man who, when the Bible has said a thing clearly and unmistakably, refuses to receive it.

(g) I know, finally, that many will not believe me, because they think my statement extravagant, and unwarrantable. They regard it as a piece of fanaticism, unworthy of the attention of a rational man. They look on ministers who make such assertions, as weak-minded people, and lacking in common sense. I can bear such imputations unmoved. I only ask those who make them to show me some plain proof that they are right and I am wrong. Let them show me, if they can, that anybody is likely to get to heaven whose heart is not renewed, who is not a believer in Jesus Christ, who is not a spiritually-minded and holy man. Let them show me, if they can, that people of this description are many, compared with those who are not. Let them, in one word, point to any place on earth where the great majority of the people are not ungodly, and the truly godly are not a little flock. Let them do this, and I will grant they have done right to disbelieve what I have said. Until they do this, I must maintain the sorrowful conclusion—that few people are likely to be saved.

And now it only remains to make some practical application of the subject of this paper. I have set forth as plainly as I can the character of saved people. I have shown the painful delusions of the world as to the number of the saved. I have brought forward the evidence of the Bible on the subject. I have drawn from the world around us plain facts in confirmation of the statements I have made. May the Lord grant that all these solemn truths may not have been exhibited in vain!

I am quite aware that I have said many things in this paper which are likely to give offence. I know it. It must be so. The point which it handles is far too serious and

heart-searching to be otherwise than offensive to some. But I have long had a deep conviction that the subject has been painfully neglected, and that few things are so little realized as the comparative numbers of the lost and saved. All that I have written, I have written because I firmly believe it to be God's truth. All that I have said, I have said, not as an enemy but as a lover of souls. You do not count him an enemy who gives you a bitter medicine to save your life. You do not count him an enemy who shakes you roughly from your sleep when your house is on fire. Surely you will not count me an enemy because I tell you strong truths for the benefit of your soul. I appeal, as a friend, to every man or woman into whose hands this volume has come. Bear with me, for a few moments, while I say a few last words to impress the whole subject on your conscience.

(a) Are there few saved? Then, shall you be one of the few? Oh, that you would see that salvation is the one thing needful! Health, and riches, and titles, are not needful things. A man may gain heaven without them. But what shall the man do who dies not saved! Oh, that you would see that you must have salvation now, in this present life, and lay hold upon it for your own soul! Oh, that you would see that "saved" or "not saved" is the grand question in religion! High Church or Low Church, Churchman or Dissenter, all these are trifling questions in comparison. What a man needs in order to get to heaven is an actual personal interest in Christ's salvation. Surely, if you are not saved, it will be better at last never to have been born!

(b) Are there few saved? Then, if you are not one of the few already, strive to be one without delay. I know not who and what you are—but I say boldly, Come to Christ and you shall be saved. The gate that leads to life may be strait—but it was wide enough to admit Manasseh, and Saul of Tarsus—and why not you? The way that leads to life may be narrow—but it is marked by the footsteps of thousands of sinners like yourself. All have found it a good way. All have persevered, and got safely home at last. Jesus Christ invites you. The promises of the Gospel encourage you. Oh, strive to enter in without delay!

(c) Are there few saved? Then, if you are doubtful whether you are one of the few, make sure work at once, and be doubtful no more. Leave no stone unturned in order to ascertain your own spiritual state. Be not content with vague hopes and trusts. Rest not on warm feelings and temporary desires after God. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Oh, give me leave to say, that if you are content to live on uncertain about salvation, you live the maddest life in the world! The fires of hell are before you—and you are uncertain whether your soul is saved. This world below must soon be left—and you are uncertain whether you have a mansion prepared to receive you in the world above. The judgment will soon be set—and you are uncertain whether you have an Advocate to plead your cause. Eternity will soon begin—and you are uncertain whether you are prepared to meet God. Oh, sit down this day, and study the subject of salvation! Give God no rest until uncertainty has disappeared, and you have

got hold of a reasonable hope that you are saved.

(d) Are there few saved? Then, if you are one of the saved, be thankful. Chosen and called of God—while thousands around you are sunk in unbelief; seeing the kingdom of God—while multitudes around you are utterly blind; delivered from this present evil world—while crowds are overcome by its love and fear; taught to know sin, and God, and Christ—while numbers, to all appearance as good as you, live in ignorance and darkness! Oh, you have reason every day to bless and praise God! Whence came this sense of sin, which you now experience? Whence came this love of Christ—this desire after holiness—this hungering after righteousness—this delight in the Word? Has not free grace done it, while many a companion of your youth still knows nothing about it, or has been cut off in his sins? You ought indeed to bless God! Surely Whitefield might well say, that one anthem among the saints in heaven will be "Why me, Lord? Why did You choose me?"

(e) Are there few saved? Then, if you are one, do not wonder that you often find yourself standing alone. I dare believe you are sometimes almost brought to a standstill, by the corruption and wickedness that you see in the world around you. You see false doctrine abounding. You see unbelief and ungodliness of every description. You are sometimes tempted to say, "Can I really be in the right in my religion? Can it really be that all these people are in the wrong?" Beware of giving way to thoughts like these. Remember, you are only having practical proof of the truth of your Master's sayings. Think not that His purposes are being defeated. Think not that His work is not going forward in the world. He is still taking out a people to His praise. He is still raising up witnesses to Himself, here and there, all over the world. The saved will yet be found to be a "multitude that no man can number," when all are gathered together at last. (Rev. 7:9.) The earth will yet be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. All nations shall serve Him—all kings shall yet delight to do Him honor. But the night is not yet spent. The day of the Lord's power is yet to come. In the meantime all is going on as He foretold 1800 years ago—many are being lost and few saved.

(f) Are there few saved? Then, if you are one, do not be afraid of having too much godliness. Settle it down in your mind that you will aim at the highest degree of holiness, and spiritual-mindedness, and consecration to God—that you will not be content with any low degree of sanctification. Resolve that, by the grace of God, you will make Christianity beautiful in the eyes of the world. Remember that the children of the world have but few patterns of true religion before them. Endeavor, as far as in you lies, to make those few patterns recommend the service of your Master. Oh, that every true Christian would recollect that he is set as a lighthouse in the midst of a dark world, and would labor so to live that every part of him may reflect light, and no side be dim!

(g) Are there few saved? Then, if you are one, use every opportunity of trying to do

good to souls. Settle it down in your mind that the vast majority of people around you are in dreadful danger of being lost forever. Work every engine for bringing the Gospel to bear upon them. Help every Christian enterprise for plucking brands from the burning. Give liberally to every Society which has for its object, the spread the everlasting Gospel. Throw all your influence heartily and unreservedly into the cause of doing good to souls. Live like one who thoroughly believes that time is short and eternity near—the devil strong and sin abounding—the darkness very great and the light very small—the ungodly very many and the godly very few—the things of the world mere transitory shadows, and heaven and hell the great substantial realities.

Alas, indeed, for the lives that many believers live! How cold are many, and how frozen—how slow to do decided things in religion, and how afraid of going too far—how backward to attempt anything new—how ready to discourage a good movement—how ingenious in discovering reasons why it is best to sit still—how unwilling ever to allow that "the time" for active exertion is come—how wise in finding fault—how shiftless in devising plans to meet growing evils! Truly a man might sometimes think, when he looks at the ways of many who are counted believers, that all the world was going to heaven, and hell was nothing but a lie.

Let us all beware of this state of mind! Whether we like to believe it or not, hell is filling fast. Christ is daily holding out His hand to a disobedient people. Many are in the broad way that leads to destruction! Few are in the way that leads to life! Many, many are likely to be lost. Few, few are likely to be saved.

Once more I ask every reader, as I asked at the beginning of this paper—Shall you be saved? If you are not saved already, my heart's desire and prayer to God is, that you may seek salvation without delay. If you are saved, my desire is that you may live like a saved soul—and like one who knows that saved souls are few.

"Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in by it. How narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way that leads to life! Few are those who find it." Matthew 7:13-14

How Readest Thou?

"Study the Scriptures" (John 5:39).

"How do you read it?" (Luke 10:26).

Next to praying there is nothing so important in practical religion as Bible-reading. God has mercifully given us a book which is "able to make [us] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). By reading that book we may learn what to believe, what to be, and what to do; how to live with comfort, and how to die

in peace. Happy is that man who possesses a Bible! Happier still is he who reads it! Happiest of all is he who not only reads it, but obeys it, and makes it the rule of his faith and practice!

Nevertheless it is a sorrowful fact that man has a sad ability to abuse God's gifts. His privileges, and power, and abilities, are all ingeniously perverted to other ends than those for which they were bestowed. His speech, his imagination, his intellect, his strength, his time, his influence, his money—instead of being used as instruments for glorifying his Maker—are generally wasted, or employed for his own selfish ends. And just as man naturally makes a bad use of his other mercies from God, so he does of the written Word. One sweeping charge may be brought against the whole of Christendom, and that charge is neglect and abuse of the Bible.

To prove this charge we have no need to look elsewhere: the proof lies at our own doors. I have no doubt that there are more Bibles in our country at this moment than there ever were since the world began. There is more Bible buying—and Bible selling—more Bible printing and Bible distributing—than ever was since we were a nation. We see Bibles in every bookstore, Bibles of every size, price, and style—large Bibles, and small Bibles—Bibles for the rich, and Bibles for the poor. There are Bibles in almost every house in the land. But all this time I fear we are in danger of forgetting, that to "have" the Bible is one thing and to "read" it quite another.

This neglected Book is the subject about which I address the readers of this paper today. Surely it is no small thing what you are doing with the Bible. Surely, when the plague is spreading in other lands, you should search and see whether the plague-spot is on you. Give me your attention while I supply you with a few plain reasons why every one who cares for his soul ought to value the Bible highly, to study it regularly, and to make himself thoroughly acquainted with its contents.

I. In the first place, "there is no knowledge absolutely needful to a man's salvation, except a knowledge of the things which are to be found in the Bible."

We live in days when the words of Daniel are fulfilled before our eyes: "Many will go here and there to increase knowledge" (Daniel 12:4). Schools are multiplying every where you look. New colleges are set up. Old Universities are reformed and improved. New books are continually coming out. More is being taught—more is being learned—more is being read than there ever was since the world began. It is all good. I rejoice at it. An ignorant population is a perilous and expensive burden to any nation. It is a ready prey to the first who may arise to entice it to do evil. But this I say—we must never forget that all education a man's head can receive will not save his soul from hell, unless he knows the truths of the Bible.

A man "may have immense learning and yet never be saved." He may be master of half the languages spoken around the globe. He may be acquainted with the highest and deepest things in heaven and earth. He may have read books till he is like a walking encyclopedia. He may be familiar with the stars of heaven—the birds of the air—the beasts of the earth, and the fishes of the sea. He may be able, like Solomon, to "describe plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls, and also teach about animals and birds, reptiles and fish" (1 Kings 4:33). He may be able to lecture on all the secrets of fire, air, earth, and water. And yet, if he dies ignorant of Bible truths, he dies a destitute man! Chemistry never silenced a guilty conscience. Mathematics never healed a broken heart. All the sciences in the world never soothed a dying man. No earthly philosophy ever supplied hope in death. No natural theology ever gave peace in the prospect of meeting a holy God. All these things are of the earth and can never raise a man above the earth's level. They may enable a man to strut and fret his little time here on earth with a more dignified manner of walking than his fellow-mortals, but they can never give him wings, and enable him to soar towards heaven. He that has the largest share of them, will find in time that without Bible knowledge he has no lasting possession. Death will make an end of all his attainments, and after death they will do him no good at all.

A man "may be a very ignorant man, and yet be saved." He may be unable to read a word, or write a letter. He may know nothing of geography beyond the bounds of his own city or county, and be utterly unable to say which is nearest to England, Paris or New York. He may know nothing of arithmetic, and not see any difference between a million and a thousand. He may know nothing of history, not even of his own land, and be quite ignorant whether his country is headed up by a Tribal Chief or by Queen Elizabeth. He may know nothing of science and its discoveries—and whether Julius Caesar won his victories with gunpowder, or the apostles had a printing press, or the sun orbits around the earth—may be matters about which he has not an idea. And yet, if that very man has heard Bible truth with his ears and believed it with his heart, he knows enough to save his soul. He will be found in the end with Lazarus in heaven, while his scientific fellow-creature, who has died unconverted, is lost forever.

There is much talk in these days about science and "useful knowledge." But a knowledge of the Bible is the one knowledge that is needful and eternally useful. A man may get to heaven without money, learning, health, or friends, but without Bible knowledge he will never get there at all. A man may have the mightiest of minds, and a memory stored with all that strong mind can grasp—and yet, if he does not know the things of the Bible, his soul is damned forever. Woe! woe! woe to the man who dies in ignorance of the Bible!

This is the Book about which I am addressing the readers of these pages today. It is no light matter "what you do with such a book." It concerns the life of your soul. I summon you, I charge you to give an honest answer to my question. What are you

doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

II. In the second place, "there is no book in existence written in such a manner as the Bible."

The Bible is "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). In this respect it is utterly unlike all other writings. God taught the writers of it what to say. God put into their minds thoughts and ideas. God guided their pens in writing down those thoughts and ideas. When you read it, you are not reading the self-taught compositions of poor imperfect men like yourself, but the words of the eternal God. When you hear it, you are not listening to the erring opinions of short-lived mortals, but to the unchanging mind of the King of kings. The men who were employed to write the Bible did not speak themselves. They "spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). All other books in the world, however good and useful in their way, are more or less defective. The more you look at them the more you see their defects and blemishes. The Bible alone is absolutely perfect. From beginning to end it is "the Word of God."

I will not waste time by attempting any long and labored proof of this. I say boldly, that the Book itself is the best witness of its own inspiration. It is the greatest standing miracle in the world. He that dares to say the Bible is not inspired must give an explanation why he believes this, if he can. Let him explain the peculiar nature and character of the Book in a way that will satisfy any man of common sense. The burden of proof seems to my mind to lie on him.

It proves nothing against inspiration, as some have asserted, that the writers of the Bible have each different style. Isaiah does not write like Jeremiah, and Paul does not write like John. This is perfectly true, and yet the works of these men are not a bit less equally inspired. The waters of the sea have many different shades. In one place they look blue, and in another green. And yet the difference is due to the depth or shallowness of the part we see, or to the nature of the bottom. The water in every case is the same salt sea. The breath of a man may produce different sounds according to the character of the instrument on which he plays. The flute, the bagpipe, and the trumpet, have each their peculiar note. And yet the breath that calls forth the notes is in each case one and the same. The light of the planets we see in heaven is extremely various. Mars, and Saturn, and Jupiter, each have a individual color. And yet we know that the light of the sun, which each planet reflects, is in each case one and the same. Just in the same way the books of the Old and New Testaments are all inspired truth, and yet the aspect of that truth varies according to the mind through which the Holy Spirit makes it flow. The handwriting and style of the writers differ enough to prove that each had a distinct individual being; but the Divine Guide who dictates and directs the whole is always one. All are inspired. Every chapter, and verse, and word, is from God.

Oh, that men who are troubled with doubts, and thoughts about inspiration, would calmly examine the Bible for themselves! Oh, that they would take the advice which was the first step to Augustine's conversion, "Pick it up and read it! Pick it up and read it!" How many difficulties and objections would vanish away at once like mist before the rising sun! How many would soon confess, "The finger of God is here! God is in this Book, and I did not know it."

This is the Book about which I address the readers of this paper. Surely it is no light matter "what you are doing with this Book." It is no light thing that God should have caused this Book to be "written to teach us," and that you should have before you "the very words of God" (Romans 3:2; 15:4). I charge you, I summon you to give an honest answer to my questions. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it at all? How do you read it?

III. In the third place, "no book in existence contains such important matter as the Bible."

Time would fail me if I were to enter fully into all the great things which are to be found in the Bible, and only in the Bible. It is not by any sketch or outline that the treasures of the Bible can be displayed. It would be easy to fill a volume with a list of the exceptional truths it reveals, and yet the half of its riches would be left untold.

How glorious and soul-satisfying is the description it gives us of God's plan of salvation, and the way by which our sins can be forgiven! The coming into the world of Jesus Christ, the God-man, to save sinners—the redemption He has accomplished for man by His suffering, in our place, the just for the unjust—the complete payment He has made for our sins by His own blood—the justification of every sinner who simply believes on Jesus—the readiness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to receive, pardon, and save to the uttermost—how unspeakably grand and comforting are all these truths! We would know nothing of them without the Bible.

How comforting is the account it gives us of the great Mediator of the New Testament—the man Christ Jesus! Four times over His picture is graciously drawn before our eyes. Four separate witnesses tell us of His miracles and His ministry—His sayings and His actions—His life and His death—His power and His love—His kindness and His patience—His ways, His words, His works, His thoughts, His heart. Blessed be God, there is one thing in the Bible which the most prejudiced reader can hardly fail to understand, and that is the character of Jesus Christ!

How encouraging are the examples the Bible gives us of good people! It tells us of many who were of like passions with ourselves—men and women who had cares, crosses, families, temptations, afflictions, diseases, like ourselves—and yet "through faith and patience inherited what has been promised," and got safely home (Hebrews

6:12). It keeps back nothing in the history of these people. Their mistakes, their weaknesses, their conflicts, their experience, their prayers, their praises, their useful lives, their happy deaths—all are fully recorded. And it tells us the God and Savior of these men and women is still the same today as yesterday, and still waits to be gracious.

How instructive are the examples the Bible gives us of bad people! It tells us of men and women who had light and knowledge and opportunities like ourselves, and yet hardened their hearts, loved the world, clung to their sins, would have their own way, despised reproof, and ruined their own souls forever. And it warns us that the God who punished Pharaoh, and Saul, and Ahab, and Jezebel, and Judas, is a God who never changes, and that there is a real hell.

How precious are the promises which the Bible contains for the use of those who love God! There is hardly any possible emergency or condition for which it does not have a word of hope and encouragement. And it tells men that God loves to be put in remembrance of these promises, and that if He has said He will do something, His promise will certainly be fulfilled.

How blessed are the hopes which the Bible holds out to the believer in Christ Jesus! Peace in the hour of death—rest and happiness on the other side of the grave—a glorious body in the morning of the resurrection—a full and triumphant acquittal in the day of judgment—an everlasting reward in the kingdom of Christ—a joyful meeting with the Lord's people in the day of gathering together—these, these are the future prospects of every true Christian. They are all written in the book—in the book which is all true.

How striking is the light which the Bible throws on the character of man! It teaches us what men may be expected to be and do in every position and occupation of life. It gives us the deepest insight into the secret springs and motives of human actions, and the ordinary course of events under the control of human agents. It is the true "judge of the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). How deep is the wisdom contained in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastics! I can correctly understand an old Christian saying, "Give me a candle and a Bible and shut me up in a dark dungeon, and I will tell you everything that the whole world is doing."

All these are things which men could find nowhere except in the Bible. We probably do not have the least idea how little we would know about these things if we did not have the Bible. We hardly know the value of the air we breathe, and the sun which shines on us, because we have never known what it is to be without them. We do not value the truths on which I have been just now dwelling, because we do not realize the darkness of men to whom these truths have not been revealed. Surely no tongue can fully tell the value of the treasures this one volume contains. Well might old John

Newton say that some books were copper books in his estimation, some were silver, and a few were gold but the Bible alone was like a book all made up of bank-notes.

This is the Book about which I address the reader of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. It is no light matter in what way you are using this treasure. I charge you, I summon you to give an honest answer to my question—What are you doing with the

Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

IV. In the fourth place, "no book in existence has produced such wonderful effects on mankind at large as the Bible."

(a) This is the Book whose doctrines turned the world upside down in the days of the Apostles.

Many centuries have now passed away since God sent forth a few Jews from a remote corner of the earth to do a work which according to man's judgment, must have seemed impossible. He sent them out at a time when the whole world was full of superstition, cruelty, lust, and sin. He sent them out to proclaim that the established religions of the earth were false and useless, and must be forsaken. He sent them out to persuade men to give up old habits and customs, and to live different lives. He sent them out to do battle with the most perverted idolatry, with the vilest and most disgusting immorality, with a bigoted priesthood, with sneering philosophers, with an ignorant population, with bloody-minded emperors, with the whole influence of Rome. Never was there an enterprise for all appearances more unrealistic and less likely to succeed!

And how did He arm them for this battle? He gave them no worldly weapons. He gave them no worldly power to compel agreement, and no worldly riches to bribe belief. He simply put the Holy Spirit into their hearts, and the Scriptures into their hands. He simply commanded them to expound and explain, to require compliance and to publish the doctrines of the Bible. The preacher of Christianity in the first century was not a man with a sword and an army to frighten people, or a man with a license to be sensual, to allure people, like the priests of the shameful idols of the Hindus. No, he was nothing more than one holy man with one holy book.

And how did these men of one book prosper? In a few generations they entirely changed the face of society by the doctrines of the Bible. They emptied the temples of the heathen gods. They starved out idolatry and left it high and dry like a stranded ship. They brought into the world a higher condition of morality between man and man. They raised the character and position of woman. They altered the standard of purity and decency. They put an end to man's cruel and bloody customs, such as the

gladiatorial fights—there was no stopping the change. Persecution and opposition were useless. One victory after another was won. One bad thing after another melted away. Whether men liked it or not, they were slowly affected by the movement of the new religion and drawn within the whirlpool of its power.

The earth shook, and their rotten shelters fell to the ground. The flood rose, and they found themselves obliged to rise with it. The tree of Christianity swelled and grew, and the chains they had thrown around it to arrest its growth, snapped like string. And all this was done by the doctrines of the Bible! Talk about great victories! What are the victories of Alexander, and Caesar, and Napoleon, compared with those I have just mentioned? For magnitude, for completeness, for results, for permanence, there are no victories like the victories of the Bible.

(b) This is the Book which turned Europe upside down in the days of the glorious Protestant Reformation.

No man can read the history of Christendom as it was five hundred years ago, and not see that darkness covered the whole professing Church of Christ, even a darkness that could be felt. So great was the change which had come over Christianity, that if an apostle had risen from the dead he would not have recognized it, and would have thought that heathenism had revived again. The doctrines of the Gospel lay buried under a dense mass of human traditions. Penances, and pilgrimages, and indulgences, relic-worship, and image-worship, and saint-worship, and worship of the Virgin Mary, formed the sum and substance of most people's religion. The Church was made an idol. The priests and ministers of the Church usurped the place of Christ. And by what means was all this miserable darkness cleared away? By simply bringing forth once more the Bible.

It was not merely the preaching of Luther and his friends, which established Protestantism in Germany. The great weapon which overthrew the Roman Catholic Church's power in that country, was Luther's translation of the Bible into the German tongue. It was not merely the writings of English Reformers which threw down Roman Catholicism in England. The seeds of the work carried forward were first sown by Wycliffe's translation of the Bible many years before. It was not merely the quarrel of Henry VIII and the Pope of Rome, which loosened the Pope's hold on English minds. It was the royal permission to have the Bible translated and set up in churches, so that every one who wanted might read it. Yes! it was the reading, and circulation of the Scripture which mainly established the cause of Protestantism in England, in Germany, and Switzerland. Without it the people would probably have returned to their former bondage when the first reformers died. But by the reading of the Bible the public mind became gradually leavened with the principles of true religion. Men's eyes became thoroughly open. Their spiritual understandings became thoroughly enlarged. The abominations of Roman Catholicism became distinctly visible. The

excellence of the pure Gospel became a rooted idea in their hearts. It was then in vain for Popes to thunder forth excommunications. It was useless for Kings and Queens to attempt to stop the course of Protestantism by fire and sword. It was all too late. The people knew too much. They had seen the light. They had heard the joyful sound. They had tasted the truth. The sun had risen on their minds. The scales had fallen from their eyes. The Bible had done its appointed work within them, and that work was not to be overthrown. The people would not return to Egypt. The clock could not be pushed back again. A mental and moral revolution had been effected, and mainly effected by God's Word. Those are the true revolutions which the Bible effects. What are all the revolutions which France and England have gone through, compared to these? No revolutions are so bloodless, none so satisfactory, none so rich in lasting results, as the revolutions accomplished by the Bible!

This is the book upon which the well-being of nations has always hinged, and with which the best interests of everyone in Christendom at this moment are inseparably tied. By the same proportion that the Bible is honored or not, light or darkness, morality or immorality, true religion or superstition, liberty or tyranny, good laws or bad, will be found in a nation. Come with me and open the pages of history, and you will read the proofs in times past.

Read it in the history of Israel under the Kings. How great was the wickedness that then prevailed! But who can wonder? The law of the Lord had been completely lost sight of, and was found in the days of Josiah thrown aside in a corner of the temple. (2 Kings 22:8). Read it in the history of the Jews in our Lord Jesus Christ's time. How awful the picture of Scribes and Pharisees, and their religion! But who can wonder? The Scripture was "nullified for the sake of man's tradition" (Matthew 15:6). Read it in the history of the Church of Christ in the middle ages. What can be worse than the accounts we have of its ignorance and superstition? But who can wonder? The times were very dark, when men did not have the light of the Bible.

This is the Book to which the civilized world is indebted for many of its best and most praiseworthy institutions. Few probably are aware how many good things that men have adopted for the public benefit, of which the origin may be clearly traced to the Bible. It has left lasting marks wherever it has been received. From the Bible are drawn many of the best laws by which society is kept in order. From the Bible has been obtained the standard of morality about truth, honesty, and the relations of man and wife, which prevails among Christian nations, and which—however feebly respected in many cases—makes so great a difference between Christians and heathen. To the Bible we are indebted for that most merciful provision for the poor working man, the Lord's Day of rest—Sunday. To the influence of the Bible we owe nearly every humane and charitable institution in existence. The sick, the poor, the aged, the orphan, the insane, the retarded, the blind, were seldom or never thought of before the Bible influenced the world. You may search in vain for any record of

institutions for their aid in the histories of Athens or of Rome. Yes! there are many who sneer at the Bible, and say the world would get on well enough without it, who don't think how great are their own obligations to the Bible. Little does the unbeliever think, as he lies sick in some of our great hospitals, that he owes all his present comforts to the very book he despises. Had it not been for the Bible, he might have died in misery, uncared for, unnoticed and alone. Truly the world we live in is unconscious of its debts. The day of judgment, I believe, will reveal the full amount of benefit conferred upon mankind by the Bible.

This wonderful book is the subject about which I address the reader of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. The swords of conquering Generals—the ship in which Nelson led the fleets of England to victory—the hydraulic press which raised the tubular bridge at the Menai; each and every of these are objects of interest as instruments of great power. The Book I speak of this day is an instrument a thousand-fold mightier still. Surely it is no light matter whether you are paying it the attention it deserves. I charge you, I summon you to give me an honest answer this day—What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

V. In the fifth place, "no book in existence can do so much for every one who reads it with an open heart, as the Bible."

The Bible does not profess to teach the wisdom of this world. It was not written to explain geology or astronomy. It will neither instruct you in mathematics, nor in natural philosophy. It will not make you a doctor, or a lawyer, or an engineer.

But there is another world to be thought of besides that world in which man now lives. There are other ends for which man was created, besides making money and working. There are other interests which he is meant to attend to, besides those of his body, and those interests are the interests of his soul. It is the interests of the immortal soul which the Bible is especially able to promote. If you want to know law, you may study Blackstone or Sugden. If you would know astronomy or geology, you may study Herschel and Lyell. But if you would know how to have your soul saved, you must study the written Word of God.

The Bible is "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). It can show you the way which leads to heaven. It can teach you everything you need to know, point out everything you need to believe, and explain everything you need to do. It can show you what you are—a sinner. It can show you what God is—perfectly holy. It can show you the great giver of pardon, peace, and grace—Jesus Christ. I have read of an Englishman who visited Scotland in the days of Blair, Rutherford, and Dickson, three famous preachers, and heard all three in succession. He said that the first showed him the majesty of God—the second showed

him the beauty of Christ—and the third showed him everything in his heart. It is the glory and beauty of the Bible that it is always teaching these three things more or less, from the first chapter of it to the last.

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, "is the grand instrument by which souls are first converted to God." That mighty change is generally begun by some text or doctrine of the Word, brought home to a man's conscience. In this way the Bible has worked moral miracles by the thousands. It has made drunkards become sober—immoral people become pure—thieves become honest and violent-tempered people become meek. It has wholly altered the course of men's lives. It has caused their old things to pass away, and made all their ways new. It has taught worldly people to seek first the kingdom of God. It has taught lovers of pleasure to become lovers of God. It has taught the stream of men's affections to run upwards instead of running downwards. It has made men think of heaven, instead of always thinking of earth, and live by faith, instead of living by sight. It has done all this in every part of the world. It is still all being accomplished. What are the Roman Catholic miracles which weak men believe, compared to all this, even if they were true? Those are the truly great miracles which are constantly being worked by the Word.

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, is "the chief means by which men are built up and strengthened in the faith," after their conversion. It is able to make them pure, to sanctify them, to train them in righteousness, and to thoroughly equip them for every good work. (Psalm 119:9; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Spirit ordinarily does these things by the written Word; sometimes by the Word read, and sometimes by the Word preached, but seldom, if ever, without the Word. The Bible can show a believer how to walk in this world so as to please God. It can teach him how to glorify Christ in all the relationships of life, and can make him a good leader, employee, subordinate, husband, father, or son. It can enable him to bear misfortunes and loss without murmuring, and say, "It is well." It can enable him to look down into the grave, and say, "I will fear no evil" (Psalm 23:4). It can enable him to think about judgment and eternity, and not feel afraid. It can enable him to bear persecution without flinching and to give up liberty and life rather than deny Christ's truth.

Is he weary in soul? It can awaken him.

Is he mourning? It can comfort him.

Is he erring? It can restore him.

Is he weak? It can make him strong.

Is he in the company of the unbeliever? It can keep him from evil.

Is he alone? It can talk with him. (Psalm 6:22).

All this the Bible can do for all believers—for the least as well as the greatest—for the richest as well as the poorest. It has done it for thousands already, and is doing it for thousands every day.

The man who has the Bible, and the Holy Spirit in his heart, has everything which is absolutely necessary to make him spiritually wise. He needs no priest to break the bread of life for him. He needs no ancient traditions, no writings of the Fathers, no voice of the Church, to guide him into all truth. He has the well of truth open before him, and what more can he want? Yes! though he be shut up alone in a prison, or cast on a desert island—though he never sees a church, or minister again—if he only has the Bible, he has got the infallible guide, and needs no other. If he only has the will to read that Bible properly, it will certainly teach him the road that leads to heaven. It is here alone that infallibility resides. It is not in the Church. It is not in the Councils. It is not in ministers. It is only in the written Word.

(a) I know well that many say they have found no saving power in the Bible.

They tell us they have tried to read it, and have learned nothing from it. They can see in it nothing but burdensome and abstract things. They ask us what we mean by talking of its power.

I answer, that the Bible no doubt contains some difficult things, or else it would not be the book of God. It contains things hard to comprehend, but only hard because we do not have the understanding of mind to comprehend them. It contains things above our reasoning powers, but nothing that might not be explained if the eyes of our understanding were not feeble and dim. But is not an acknowledgment of our own ignorance the very cornerstone and foundation of all knowledge? Must not many things be taken for granted in the beginning of every science, before we can proceed one step towards acquaintance with it? Do we not require our children to learn many things of which they cannot see the meaning at first? And ought we not then to expect to find "deep things" when we begin studying the Word of God, and yet to believe that if we persevere in reading it the meaning of many of them will one day be made clear? No doubt we ought so to expect, and so to believe. We must read with humility. We must take much on trust. We must believe that what we don't know now, we will know later, some part in this world, and all in the world to come.

But I ask that man who has given up reading the Bible because it contains hard things, whether he did not find many things in it easy and plain? I put it to his conscience whether he did not see great landmarks and principles in it all the way through? I ask him whether the things needful to salvation did not stand out boldly before his eyes, like lighthouses. What should we think of the captain of a steamer who came, at night,

into the entrance of the Channel, and claimed that he did not know every parish, and village, and creek, along the British coast? Should we not think him a lazy coward, when the lights on the Lizard, and Eddystone, and the Start, and Portland, and St. Catherine's, and Beachy Head, and Dungeness, and the Forelands, were shining forth like so many lamps, to guide him up to the river? Should we not say, Why did you not steer by the great leading lights? And what should we say to the man who gives up reading the Bible because it contains hard things, when his own state, and the path to heaven, and the way to serve God, are all written down clearly and unmistakably, as with a sunbeam? Surely we ought to tell that man that his objections are no better than lazy excuses, and do not deserve to be heard.

(b) I know well that many raise the objection, that thousands read the Bible and are not a bit the better for their reading.

And they ask us, when this is the case, what becomes of the Bible's boasted power?

I answer, that the reason why so many read the Bible without any benefit is plain and simple—they do not read it in the right way. There is generally a right way and a wrong way of doing everything in the world; and just as it is with other things, so it is in the matter of reading the Bible. The Bible is not so entirely different from all other books as to make it of no importance in what spirit and manner you read it. It does not do any good, as a matter of course, by merely running our eyes over the print, any more than Baptism and the Lord's Supper do any good by the mere virtue of our receiving them. It does not ordinarily do any good, unless it is read with humility and earnest prayer. The best engine that was ever built is useless if a man does not know how to operate it. The best sundial that was ever constructed will not tell its owner the time of day if he is so ignorant as to put it in the shade. Just as it is with that engine, and that sundial, so it is with the Bible. When men read it without benefit, "the fault is not in the Book, but in themselves."

I tell the man who doubts the power of the Bible, because many read it, and are no better for the reading, that the abuse of a thing is no argument against the use of it. I tell him boldly, that never did man or woman read that book in a childlike persevering spirit—like the Ethiopian eunuch, and the Bereans (Acts 8:28; 17:11), and miss the way to heaven. Yes, many will be exposed to shame in the day of judgment; but there will not rise up one soul who will be able to say, that he went thirsting to the Bible, and found in it no living water—he searched for truth in the Scriptures, and searching did not find it. The words which are spoken of Wisdom in the Proverbs are strictly true of the Bible: "If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:3-5).

This wonderful Book is the subject about which I address the readers of this paper this

day. Surely it is no light matter "what you are doing with the Bible." What should you think of the man who in time of cholera despised a sure prescription for preserving the health of his body? What must be thought of you if you despise the only sure prescription for the everlasting health of your soul? I charge you, I entreat you, to give an honest answer to my question. What do you do with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

VI. In the sixth place, "the Bible is the only standard by which all questions of doctrine or of duty can be tested."

The Lord God knows the weakness and infirmities of our poor fallen understandings. He knows that, even after conversion, our perceptions of right and wrong are extremely vague. He knows how artfully Satan can overlay error with an appearance of truth, and can dress up wrong with plausible arguments, till it looks like right. Knowing all this, He has mercifully provided us with an unerring standard of truth and error, right and wrong, and has taken care to make that standard a written book—the Scripture.

No one can look around the world, and not see the wisdom of such a provision. No one can live long, and not find out that he is constantly in need of a counselor and adviser—of a rule of faith and practice, on which he can depend. Unless he lives like a beast, without a soul and conscience, he will find himself constantly assailed by difficult and puzzling questions. He will be often asking himself, What must I believe? and what must I do?

(a) The world is full of difficulties about points of doctrine. The house of error lies close alongside the house of truth. The door of one is so like the door of the other that there is continual risk of mistakes.

Does a man read or travel much? He will soon find the most opposite opinions prevailing among those who are called Christians. He will discover that different persons give the most different answers to the important question, What must I do to be saved? The Roman Catholic, the Protestant, and the Mormon each will assert that he alone has the truth. Each will tell him that safety is only to be found in his party. Each says, "Come with us." All this is puzzling. What will a man do?

Does he settle down quietly in some church here at home? He will soon find that even in our own land the most conflicting views are held. He will soon discover that there are serious differences among Christians as to the comparative importance of the various parts and articles of the faith. One man thinks of nothing but Church government—another of nothing but sacraments, services, and forms—a third of nothing but preaching the Gospel. Does he apply to ministers for a solution? He will perhaps find one minister teaching one doctrine, and another another. All this is

puzzling. What will a man do?

There is only one answer to this question. A man must make the Bible alone his rule. He must receive nothing and believe nothing which is not according to the Word. He must try all religious teaching by one simple test—Does it square with the Bible? What does the Scripture say?

I pray to God that the eyes of the Christians of this country were more open on this subject. I pray to God that they would learn to weigh sermons, books, opinions, and ministers, in the scales of the Bible, and to value all according to their conformity to the Word. I pray to God that they would see that it matters little who says a thing. The question is—Is the thing said Scriptural? If it is, it ought to be received and believed. If it is not, it ought to be refused and cast aside. I fear the consequences of that submissive acceptance of everything which "the preacher" says, which is so common among many Christians. I fear lest they be led where they know not where, like the blinded Syrians, and awake some day to find themselves in the power of Rome. (2 Kings 6:20). Oh, that men would only remember for what purpose the Bible was given to them!

I tell Christians that it is nonsense to say, as some do, that it is arrogant to judge a minister's teaching by the Word. When one doctrine is proclaimed in one church, and another in another, people must read and judge for themselves. Both doctrines cannot be right, and both ought to be tried by the Word. I charge them, above all things, never to suppose that any true minister of the Gospel will dislike his people measuring all he teaches by the Bible. On the contrary, the more they read the Bible, and prove all he says by the Bible, the better he will be pleased. A false minister may say, "You have no right to use your private judgment: leave the Bible to us who are ordained." A true minister will say "Search the Scriptures, and if I do not teach you what is Scriptural, do not believe me." A false minister may cry, "Listen to the Church," and "Listen to me." A true minister will say, "Listen to the Word of God."

(b) But the world is not only full of difficulties about points of doctrine, it is equally full of difficulties about points of "practice."

Every professing Christian, who wishes to act conscientiously, must know that it is so. The most puzzling questions are continually arising. He is tried on every side by doubts as to the line of duty, and can often hardly see what is the right thing to do.

He is tried by questions connected with the management of his "worldly calling," if he is in business or in trade. He sometimes sees things going on that are of a very doubtful character—things that can hardly be called fair, straightforward, truthful, and things that you would not want done to you. But then everybody in business does these things. They have always been done in the most respectable houses. There

would be no carrying on of a profitable business if they were not done. They are not things distinctly named and prohibited by God. All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions about worldly amusements. Horse Races, and balls, and operas, and theaters, and card parties, are all very doubtful methods of spending time. But then he sees numbers of great people taking part in them. Are all these people wrong? Can there really be such mighty harm in these things? All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions about the education of his children. He wishes to train them up morally and religiously, and to remember their souls. But he is told by many sensible people, that young persons will be young—that it is not right to check and restrain them too much, and that he ought to attend shows, and children's parties, and give children's balls himself. He is informed that this noble person, or that lady of rank, always does so, and yet they are considered religious people. Surely it cannot be wrong. All this is very puzzling. What is he to do?

There is only one answer to all these questions. A man must make the Bible his rule of conduct. He must make its leading principles the compass by which he steers his course through life. By the letter or spirit of the Bible he must test every difficult point and question. "To the law and to the testimony! What does the Scripture say?" He ought to care nothing for what other people may think right. He ought not to set his watch by the clock of his neighbor, but by the watch of the Word.

I charge my readers solemnly to act on the maxim I have just laid down, and to adhere to it rigidly all the days of their lives. You will never repent of it. Make it a leading principle never to act contrary to the Word. Do not care for the charge of being overly strict, and a person of needless precision. Remember you serve a strict and holy God. Do not listen to the common objection that the rule you have laid down is impossible, and cannot be observed in such a world as this. Let those who make such an objection speak out plainly, and tell us for what purpose the Bible was given to man. Let them remember that by the Bible we will all be judged at the last day, and let them learn to judge themselves by it here, lest they be judged and condemned by it on Judgment Day.

This mighty rule of faith and practice is the book about which I am addressing the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter "what you are doing with the Bible." Surely when danger is near on the right hand and on the left, you should consider what you are doing with the safeguard which God has provided. I charge you, I beg you, to give an honest answer to my question. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

VII. In the seventh place, "the Bible is the book which all true servants of God have always lived by and loved."

Every living thing which God creates requires food. The life that God imparts needs sustaining and nourishing. It is true with animal and vegetable life—with birds, beasts, fishes, reptiles, insects, and plants. It is equally true with spiritual life. When the Holy Spirit raises a man from the death of sin and makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus, the new principle in that man's heart requires food, and the only food which will sustain it is the Word of God.

There never was a man or woman truly converted, from one end of the world to the other, who did not love the revealed will of God. Just as a child born into the world naturally desires the milk provided for its nourishment, so does a soul "born again" desire the sincere milk of the Word. This is a common mark of all the children of God—they "delight in the law of the LORD" (Psalm 1:2).

Show me a person who despises Bible reading, or thinks little of Bible preaching, and I hold it to be a certain fact that he is not yet "born again." He may be zealous about forms and ceremonies. He may be diligent in attending church and the taking of the Lord's Supper. But if these things are more precious to him than the Bible, I cannot believe that he is a converted man. Tell me what the Bible is to a man and I will generally tell you what he is. This is the pulse to try—this is the barometer to look at—if we would know the state of the heart. I have no notion of the Spirit dwelling in a man and not giving clear evidence of His presence. And I believe it to be clear evidence of the Spirit's presence when the Word is really precious to a man's soul.

Love of the Word is one of the characteristics we see in Job. Little as we know of this Patriarch and his age this, at least, stands out clearly. He says, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread" (Job 23:12).

Love of the Word is a shining feature in the character of David. Note how it appears all through that wonderful part of Scripture, the 119th Psalm. He might well have said, "Oh, how I love your law!" (Psalm 119:97).

Love of the Word is a striking point in the character of Paul. What were he and his companions but men mighty in the Scriptures? What were his sermons but expositions and applications of the Word?

Love of the Word appears preeminently in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He read it publicly. He quoted it continually. He expounded it frequently. He advised the Jews to "search" it. He used it as His weapon to resist the devil. He said repeatedly, "The Scripture must be fulfilled." Almost the last thing He did was to "open their minds [Disciples] so they could understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). I am afraid that

man cannot be a true servant of Christ, who has not something of his Master's mind and feeling towards the Bible.

Love of the Word has been a prominent feature in the history of all the saints, of whom we know anything, since the days of the Apostles. This is the lamp which Athanasius and Chrysostom and Augustine followed. This is the compass which kept the Vallenses and Albigenses from making shipwreck of the faith. This is the well which was reopened by Wycliffe and Luther, after it had been long stopped up. This is the sword with which Latimer, and Jewell, and Knox won their victories. This is the manna which fed Baxter and Owen, and the noble host of the Puritans, and made them strong in battle. This is the armory from which Whitefield and Wesley drew their powerful weapons. This is the mine from which Bickersteth and M'Cheyne brought forth rich gold.

Differing as these holy men did in some matters, on one point they were all agreed—they all delighted in the Word.

Love of the Word is one of the first things that appears in the converted heathen, at the various Missionary stations throughout the world. In hot climates and in cold—among savage people and among civilized—in New Zealand, in the South Sea Islands, in Africa, in Hindostan—it is always the same. They enjoy hearing it read. They long to be able to read it themselves. They wonder why Christians did not send it to them before. How striking is the picture which Moffat draws of Africaner, the fierce South African chieftain, when first brought under the power of the Gospel! "Often have I seen him," he says, under the shadow of a great rock nearly the whole day, eagerly perusing the pages of the Bible." How touching is the expression of a poor converted Black, speaking of the Bible! He said, "It is never old and never cold." How affecting was the language of another old Black man, when some would have discourage him from learning to read, because of his old age. "No!" he said, "I will never give it up till I die. It is worth all the labor to be able to read that one verse, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Love of the Bible is one of the grand points of agreement among all converted men and women in our own land. People from many Evangelical denominations all unite in honoring the Bible, as soon as they are real Christians. This is the manna which all the tribes of our new Israel feed upon, and find satisfying food. This is the fountain around which all the various portions of Christ's flock meet together, and from which no sheep goes away thirsty.

Oh, that believers in this country would learn to cleave more closely to the written Word! Oh, that they would see that the more the Bible, and the Bible only, is the substance of men's religion, the more they agree! It is probable there never was an

uninspired book more universally admired than

Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." It is a book which all denominations of Christians delight to honor. It has won praise from all parties. Now what a striking fact it is, that the author was preeminently a man of one book! He had read hardly anything but the Bible.

It is a blessed thought that there will be "many people" in heaven in the end. Few as the Lord's people undoubtedly are at any one given time or place, yet all gathered together in the end, they will be "a great multitude that no one could count" (Revelation 7:9; 19:1). They will be of one heart and mind. They will have passed through the same experience. They will all have repented, believed, lived holy, prayerful, and humble lives. They will all have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But one thing besides all this they will have in common: they will all love the texts and doctrines of the Bible. The Bible will have been their food and delight in the days of their pilgrimage on earth. And the Bible will be a common subject of joyful meditation and retrospect, when they are gathered together in heaven.

This Book, which all true Christians live upon and love, is the subject about which I am addressing the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. Surely it is matter for serious inquiry, whether you know anything of this love of the Word, and have this mark of following "in the tracks of the sheep" (Song of Solomon 1:8). I charge you, I entreat you to give me an honest answer. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

VIII. In the last place, "the Bible is the only book which can comfort a man in the last hours of his life."

Death is an event which in all probability is before us all. There is no avoiding it. It is the river which each of us must cross. I who write, and you who read, have to die one day. It is good to remember this. We are all sadly apt to put away the subject from us. "Each man thinks each man mortal but himself." I want everyone to do his duty in life, but I also want everyone to think of death. I want everyone to know how to live but I also want everyone to know how to die.

Death is a solemn event to everyone. It is the winding up of all earthly plans and expectations. It is a separation from all we have loved and live with. It is often accompanied by much bodily pain and distress. It brings us to the grave, the maggot, and corruption. It opens the door to judgment and eternity—to heaven or to hell. It is an event after which there is no change, or space for repentance. Other mistakes may be corrected or retrieved, but not a mistake on our death beds. As the tree falls, there it must lie. No conversion in the coffin! No new birth after we have ceased to breathe!

And death is before us all. It may be close at hand. The time of our departure is quite uncertain. But sooner or later we must each lie down alone and die. All these are serious considerations.

Death is a solemn event even to the believer in Christ. For him no doubt the "sting of death" is taken away. (1 Corinthians 15:55). Death has become one of his privileges, for he is Christ's Living or dying, he is the Lord's. If he lives, Christ lives in him; and if he dies, he goes to live with Christ. To him, "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Death frees him from many trials—from a weak body, a corrupt heart, a tempting devil, and an ensnaring or persecuting world. Death admits him to the enjoyment of many blessings. He rests from his labors—the hope of a joyful resurrection is changed into a certainty: he has the company of holy redeemed spirits—he is "with Christ." All this is true, and yet, even to a believer, death is a solemn thing. Flesh and blood naturally shrink from it. To part from all we love, is a strain and trial to the feelings. The world we go to is a world unknown, even though it is our home. Friendly and harmless as death is to a believer, it is not an event to be treated lightly. It must always be a very solemn thing.

It is good for every thoughtful and sensible man to consider calmly how he is going to meet death. Be strong, like a man, and look the subject in the face. Listen to me while I tell you a few things about the end to which we are coming to.

The good things of the world cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. All the gold of California and Australia will not provide light for the dark valley of death. Money can buy the best medical advice and attendance for a man's body; but money cannot buy peace for his conscience, heart, and soul.

Relatives, lovers, friends and coworkers cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. They may minister affectionately to his bodily wants. They may watch by his bedside tenderly, and anticipate his every wish. They may smooth down his dying pillow, and support his sinking frame in their arms. But they cannot "minister to a mind diseased." They cannot stop the aching of a troubled heart. They cannot screen an uneasy conscience from the eye of God.

The pleasures of the world cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The brilliant ballroom—the merry dance—the midnight frolic—the party at the races—the card table—the box at the opera—the voices of singing men and singing women—all these are finally distasteful things. To hear of hunting and shooting engagements gives him no pleasure. To be invited to feasts, and regattas, and fancy fairs, gives him no ease. He cannot hide from himself that these are hollow, empty, powerless things. They are noise to the ear of his conscience. They are out of harmony with his condition. They cannot stop one gap in his heart, when the last enemy is coming in like a flood. They cannot make him calm in the prospect of meeting a holy God.

Books and newspapers cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The most brilliant writings of Dickens will be gloom to his ear. The most able article in the Times will fail to interest him. The Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews will give him no pleasure. The Illustrated News, and the latest new novel, will lie unopened and unheeded. Their time will be past. Their calling will be gone. Whatever they may be in health, they are useless in the hour of death.

There is but one fountain of comfort for a man drawing near to his end, and that is the Bible. Chapters out of the Bible—texts out of the Bible—statements of truth taken out of the Bible—books containing matter drawn from the Bible—these are a man's only chance of comfort when he comes to die. I do not say that the Bible will do good, as a matter of course, to a dying man, if he has not valued it before. I know, unhappily, too much of death-beds to say that. I do not say whether it is probable that he who has been unbelieving and neglectful of the Bible in life, will at once believe and get comfort from it in death. But I do say positively, that no dying man will ever get real comfort, except from the contents of the Word of God. All comfort from any other source is a house built upon sand.

I lay this down as a rule of universal application. I make no exception in favor of any class on earth. Kings and poor men, learned and unlearned—all are equal in this matter. There is not a bit of real consolation for any dying man, unless he gets it from the Bible. Chapters, passages, texts, promises, and doctrines of Scripture heard, received, believed, and rested on—these are the only comforters I dare promise to any one, when he leaves the world. Taking communion will do a man no more good than the Roman Catholic sacrament of "extreme unction," so long as the Word is not received and believed. The Roman Catholic Priest's absolution will no more ease the conscience than the incantations of a heathen magician, if the poor dying sinner does not receive and believe Bible truth. I tell everyone who reads this paper, that although men may seem to get on comfortably without the Bible while they live, they may be sure that without the Bible they cannot comfortably die. It was a true confession of the learned Selden, "There is no book upon which we can rest in a dying moment but the Bible."

I might easily confirm all I have just said, by examples and illustrations. I might show you the deathbeds of men who have despised the Bible. I might tell you how Voltaire and Paine, the famous atheists died in misery, bitterness, rage, fear, and despair. I might show you the happy deathbeds of those who have loved the Bible and believed it, and the blessed effect the sight of their deathbeds had on others. Cecil, a minister whose praise ought to be in all churches, says, "I will never forget standing by the bedside of my dying mother. 'Are you afraid to die?' I asked. 'No!' she replied. 'But why does the uncertainty of another state give you no concern?' 'Because God has said, When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you'" (Isaiah 43:2). I might easily multiply

illustrations of this kind. But I think it better to conclude this part of my subject by giving the result of my own observations as a minister.

I have seen many dying persons in my time. I have seen great varieties of character and behavior among them. I have seen some die bad-tempered, silent, and comfortless. I have seen others die ignorant, unconcerned, and apparently without much fear. I have seen some die so wearied out with a long illness that they were quite willing to depart, and yet they did not seem to me at all in a fit state to go before God. I have seen others die with professions of hope and trust in God, without leaving satisfactory evidences that they were on the rock. I have seen others die who, I believe, were "in Christ," and safe, and yet they never seemed to enjoy much tangible comfort. I have a few dying in the full assurance of hope, and like Bunyan's "Standfast," giving glorious testimony to Christ's faithfulness, even in the river. But one thing I have never seen. I never saw anyone enjoy what I would call real, solid, calm, reasonable peace on his deathbed, who did not draw his peace from the Bible. And this I am bold to say, that the man who thinks to go to his deathbed without having the Bible for his comforter, his companion, and his friend, is one of the greatest madmen in the world. There are no comforts for the soul but Bible comforts, and he who does not have a hold of these, does not have a hold of anything at all, unless it be a broken reed.

The only comforter for a deathbed is the book about which I address the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter whether you read that book or not. Surely a dying man, in a dying world, should seriously consider whether he has got anything to comfort him when his turn comes to die. I charge you, I entreat you, for the last time, to give an honest answer to my question. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

I have now given the reasons why I press on every reader the duty and importance of reading the Bible. I have shown that no book is written in such a manner as the Bible,

- that knowledge of the Bible is absolutely necessary to salvation
- that no book contains such matter
- that no book has done so much for the world generally
- that no book can do so much for every one who reads it
- that this Book is the only rule of faith and practice
- that it is, and always has been, the food of all true servants of God
- and that it is the only Book which can comfort men when they die.

All these are ancient things. I do not pretend to tell anything new. I have only gathered together old truths, and tried to mold them into a new shape. Let me finish everything by addressing a few plain words to the conscience of every group of readers.

(1) This paper may fall into the hands of some who "can read, but never do read the Bible at all."

Are you one of them? If you are, I have something to say to you. I cannot comfort you in your present state of mind. It would be mockery and deceit to do so. I cannot speak to you of peace and heaven, while you treat the Bible as you do. You are in danger of losing your soul.

You are in danger, because "your neglected Bible is plain evidence that you do not love God." The health of a man's body may generally be known by his appetite. The health of a man's soul may be known by his treatment of the Bible. Now you are manifestly living with a serious disease. Will you not repent?

I know I cannot reach your heart. I cannot make you see and feel these things. I can only enter my solemn protest against your present treatment of the Bible, and lay that protest before your conscience. I do so with all my soul. Oh, beware lest you repent too late! Beware lest you put off reading the Bible till you send for the doctor in your last illness, and then find the Bible a sealed book, and dark, as the cloud between the hosts of Israel and Egypt, to your anxious soul! Beware lest you go on saying all your life, "Men get along very well without all this Bible-reading" and find in time, to your cost, that men without the Bible do very poorly, and end up in hell! Beware lest the day come when you will feel, "Had I but honored the Bible as much as I have honored the newspaper, I should not have been left without comfort in my last hours! "Bible neglecting reader, I give you a plain warning. Judgment is outside your door ready to come in and destroy you. The Lord have mercy upon your soul!

(2) This paper may fall into the hands of someone who is "willing to begin reading the Bible, but wants advice on how to begin."

Are you that man? Listen to me, and I will give a few short hints.

(a) For one thing, "begin reading your Bible this very day."

The way to do a thing is to do it, and the way to read the Bible is actually to read it. It is not meaning, or wishing, or resolving, or intending, or thinking about it, which will not advance you one step. You must positively read. There is no royal road in this matter, any more than in the matter of prayer. If you cannot read yourself, you must persuade somebody else to read to you. But one way or another, through eyes or ears, the words of Scripture must actually pass before your mind.

(b) For another thing "read the Bible with an earnest desire to understand it."

Do not think for a moment that the great object is to turn over a certain quantity of printed paper, and that it matters nothing whether you understand it or not. Some ignorant people seem to fancy that all is done if they read so many chapters every day, though they may not have an idea what they are all about, and only know that they have pushed on their bookmark so many pages. This is turning Bible-reading into a mere form. It is almost as bad as the Roman catholic habit of buying indulgences, by saying an almost incredible number of "Hail Mary's" and "Our Fathers." Settle it in your mind as a general principle, that a Bible not understood is a Bible that does no good. Say to yourself often as you read, "What is all this about?" Dig for the meaning like a man digging for gold. Work hard, and do not give up the work in a hurry.

(c) For another thing, "read the Bible with childlike faith and humility."

Open your heart as you open your book, and say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Resolve to believe implicitly whatever you find there, however much it may run counter to your own prejudices. Resolve to receive heartily every statement of truth, whether you like it or not.

Beware of that miserable habit of mind into which some readers of the Bible fall. They receive some doctrines because they like them: they reject others because they are condemning to themselves, or to some lover, or relation, or friend. At this rate the Bible is useless. Are we to be judges of what ought to be in the Word? Do we know better than God? Settle it in your mind that you will receive everything and believe everything, and that what you cannot understand you will take on trust. Remember, when you pray, you are speaking to God and God hears you. But, remember, when you read, God is speaking to you, and you are not to "talk back" but to listen.

(d) For another thing, "read the Bible in a spirit of obedience and self-application.

Sit down to the study it with a daily determination that "you" will live by its rules, rest on its statements, and act on its commands. Consider, as you travel through every chapter, "How does this affect "my"- view and course of conduct? What does this teach "me?" It is improper to read the Bible from mere curiosity, and for speculative purposes, in order to fill your head and your mind with opinions, while you do not allow the book to influence your heart and life. That Bible is read best which is put into practice in our daily lives.

(e) For another thing, "read the Bible every day."

Make it a part of every day's business to read and meditate on some portion of God's Word. Private means of grace are just as needful every day for our souls as food and clothing are for our bodies. Yesterday's meal will not feed the worker today, and

today's meal will not feed the worker tomorrow. Do as the Israelites did in the wilderness. Gather your manna fresh every morning. Choose your own periods and hours. Do not hurry your reading. Give your Bible the best and not the worst part of your time. But whatever plan you pursue, let it be a rule of your life to visit the throne of grace and the Bible every day.

(f) For another thing, "read all the Bible, and read it in an orderly way."

I fear there are many parts of the Word which some people never read at all. This is a very arrogant habit. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching" (2 Timothy 3:16). To this habit may be traced that want of broad, well-proportioned views of truth, which is so common in this day. Some people's Bible-reading is a system of perpetual dipping and picking. They do not seem to have an idea of regularly going through the whole book. This is also a great mistake. No doubt in times of sickness and affliction it is allowable to search out seasonable portions. But this exception, I believe it is by far the best plan to begin the Old and New Testaments at the same time, to read each straight through to the end, and then begin again. This is a matter in which everyone must be persuaded in his own mind. I can only say it has been my own plan for nearly forty years, and I have never seen cause to alter it.

(g) For another thing, "read the Bible fairly and honestly."

Determine to take everything in its plain, obvious meaning, and regard all forced interpretations with great suspicion. As a general rule, whatever a verse of the Bible seems to mean, it does mean. Cecil's rule is a very valuable one, "The right way of interpreting Scripture is to take it as we find it, without any attempt to force it into any particular system." Well said Hooker, "I hold it for a most infallible rule in the exposition of Scripture, that when the literal construction will stand, the furthest from the literal is commonly the worst."

(h) In the last place, "read the Bible with Christ continually in view."

The primary object of all Scripture is to testify about Jesus:

Old Testament ceremonies are shadows of Christ.

Old Testament judges and deliverers are types of Christ.

Old Testament history shows the world's need of Christ.

Old Testament prophecies are full of Christ's sufferings.

Old Testament prophecies are full of Christ's glory yet to come.

The first coming and the second.

The Lord's humiliation.

The Lord's kingdom.

The Lord's cross and crown.

All these shine forth everywhere in the Bible. Remember this clue, if you would read the Bible right.

I might easily add to these hints, if space permitted. Few and short as they are, you will find them worth your attention. Act upon them, and I firmly believe you will never be allowed to miss the way to heaven. Act upon them, and you will find light continually increasing in your mind. No book of evidence can be compared with that internal evidence which he obtains who daily uses the Word in the right way. Such a man does not need the books of learned men—he has the witness in himself. The book satisfies and feeds his soul. A poor Christian woman once said to an unbeliever, "I am no scholar. I cannot argue like you. But I know that honey is honey, because it leaves a sweet taste in my mouth. And I know the Bible to be God's book, because of the taste it leaves in my heart."

(3) This paper may fall into the hands of some one who "loves and believes the Bible, and yet reads it only a little."

I fear there are many such people in this day. It is a day of hustle and hurry. It is a day of talking, and committee meetings, and public work. These things are all very well in their way, but I fear that they sometimes clip and cut short the private reading of the Bible. Does your conscience tell you that you are one of the persons I speak of? Listen to me, and I will say a few things which deserve your serious attention.

You are the man that is likely to "get little comfort from the Bible in time of need." Trials come at various times. Affliction is a searching wind, which strips the leaves off the trees, and exposes the birds' nests. Now I fear that your stores of Bible consolations may one day run very low. I fear lest you should find yourself at last on very short allowance, and come into the harbor weak, worn and thin.

You are the man that is likely "never to be established in the truth." I will not be surprised to hear that you are troubled with doubts and questions about assurance, grace, faith, perseverance, and the like. The devil is an old and cunning enemy. Like the Benjamites, he can "sling a stone at a hair and not miss" (Judges 20:16). He can quote Scripture easily enough when he pleases. Now you are not sufficiently ready with your weapons to be able to fight a good fight with him. Your armor does not fit well. Your sword sits loosely in your hand.

You are the man that is likely to "make mistakes in life." I will not wonder if I am told that you have erred about your own marriage—erred about your children's education of spiritual things—erred about the conduct of your household—erred about the company you keep. The world you steer through is full of rocks, and reefs, and sand bars. You are not sufficiently familiar either with the search lights or your charts.

You are the man that is likely to "be carried away by some deceptive false teacher for a time." It will not surprise me if those clever, eloquent men, who can "make the lie appear to be the truth," is leading you into many foolish notions. You are out of balance. No wonder if you are tossed to and from, like a cork on the waves.

All these are uncomfortable things. I want every reader of this paper to escape them all. Take the advice I offer you this day. Do not merely read your Bible "a little," but read it a great deal. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16). Do not be a mere babe in spiritual knowledge. Seek to become "well instructed in the kingdom of heaven," and to be continually adding new things to old. A religion of feeling is an uncertain thing. It is like the tide, sometimes high, and sometimes low. It is like the moon, sometimes bright, and sometimes dim. A religion of deep Bible knowledge, is a firm and lasting possession. It enables a man not merely to say, "I feel hope in Christ," but "I know whom I have believed" (2 Timothy 1:12).

(4) This paper may fall into the hands of someone who "reads the Bible a lot, and yet believes he is no better because of his reading."

This is a crafty temptation of the devil. At one stage he says, "do not read the Bible at all." At another he says, "Your reading does you no good: give it up." Are you that man? I feel for you from the bottom of my soul. Let me try to do you good.

Do not think you are getting no good from the Bible, merely because you do not see that good day by day. The greatest effects are often silent, quiet, and hard to detect at the time they are being produced. Think of the influence of the moon upon the earth, and of the air upon the human lungs.

Remember how silently the dew falls, and how unperceptively the grass grows. There may be far more going on than you think in your soul by your Bible-reading.

The Word may be gradually producing deep "impressions" on your heart, of which you are not presently aware. Often when the memory is retaining no facts, the character of a man is receiving some everlasting impression. Is sin becoming every year more hateful to you? Is Christ becoming every year more precious? Is holiness becoming every year more lovely and desirable in your eyes? If these things are so, take courage. The Bible is doing you good, though you may not be able to trace it out day by day.

The Bible may be restraining you from some sin or delusion into which you would otherwise run. It may be daily keeping you back, and hedging you up, and preventing many a false step. Yes, you might soon find this out to your hurt, if you were to cease reading the Word! The very familiarity of blessings sometimes makes us insensible to their value. Resist the devil. Settle it in your mind as an established rule, that, whether you feel it at the moment or not, you are inhaling spiritual health by reading the Bible, and unknowingly becoming more strong.

(5) This paper may fall into the hands of some who "really love the Bible, live upon the Bible, and read it regularly."

Are you one of these? Give me your attention, and I will mention a few things which we will do well to lay to heart for time to come.

Let us resolve to "read the Bible more and more" every year we live. Let us try to get it rooted in our memories, an engraved into our hearts. Let us be thoroughly well provisioned with it against the voyage of death. Who knows but we may have a very stormy passage? Sight and hearing may fail us, and we may be in deep waters. Oh, to have the Word "hid in our hearts" in such an hour as that! (Psalm 119:11).

Let us resolve to be "more watchful over our Bible-reading" every year that we live. Let us be jealously careful about the time we give to it, and the manner that time is spent. Let us beware of omitting our daily reading without sufficient cause. Let us not be gaping, and yawning and dozing over our book, while we read. Let us read like a London merchant studying the city article in the Times—or like a wife reading a husband's letter from a distant land. Let us be very careful that we never exalt any minister, or sermon, or book, or tract, or friend above the Word. Cursed be that book, or tract, or human counsel, which creeps in between us and the Bible, and hides the Bible from our eyes! Once more I say, let us be very watchful. The moment we open the Bible the devil sits down by our side. Oh, to read with a hungry spirit, and a simple desire for edification!

Let us resolve to "honor the Bible more in our families." Let us read it morning and evening to our children and spouses, and not be ashamed to let men see that we do so. Let us not be discouraged by seeing no good arise from it. The Bible-reading in a family has kept many a one from the jail and the prison, and from the eternal fires of hell.

Let us resolve to "meditate more on the Bible." It is good to take with us two or three texts when we go out into the world, and to turn them over and over in our minds whenever we have a little leisure. It keeps out many vain thoughts. It tightens the nail of daily reading. It preserves our souls from stagnating and breeding corrupt things. It

sanctifies and quickens our memories, and prevents them becoming like those ponds where the frogs live but the fish die.

Let us resolve to "talk more to believers about the Bible" when we meet them. Sorry to say, the conversation of Christians, when they do meet, is often sadly unprofitable! How many frivolous, and trifling, and uncharitable things are said! Let us bring out the Bible more, and it will help to drive the devil away, and keep our hearts in tune. Oh, that we may all strive so to walk together in this evil world, that Jesus may often draw near, and go with us, as He went with the two disciples journeying to Emmaus!

Last of all, let us resolve "to live by the Bible more and more" every year we live. Let us frequently take account of all our opinions and practices—of our habits and tempers—of our behavior in public and in private—in the world, and in our own homes. Let us measure everything by the Bible, and resolve, by God's help, to conform to it. Oh that we may learn increasingly to "keep our way pure? By living according to the Word." (Psalm 119:9).

I commend all these things to the serious and prayerful attention of every one into whose hands this paper may fall. I want the ministers of my beloved country to be Bible-reading ministers—the congregations, Bible-reading congregations—and the nation, a Bible-reading nation. To bring about this desirable end I cast in my resources into God's treasury. The Lord grant that it may prove not to have been in vain!

What Think You of the Cross?

"Far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Galatians 6:14

What do we think and feel about the cross of Christ? We live in a Christian land. We probably attend the worship of a Christian church. We have, most of us, been baptized in the name of Christ. We profess and call ourselves Christians. All this is well—it is more than can be said of millions in the world. *But what do we think and feel about the cross of Christ?*

I want to examine what one of the greatest Christians who ever lived, thought of the cross of Christ. He has written down his opinion—he has given his judgment in words that cannot be mistaken. The man I mean is the Apostle Paul. The place where you will find his opinion, is in the letter which the Holy Spirit inspired him to write to the Galatians. The words in which his judgment is set down, are these, "But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now what did Paul mean by saying this? He meant to declare strongly, that he trusted in nothing but "Jesus Christ crucified" for the pardon of his sins and the salvation of his soul. Let others, if they would, look elsewhere for salvation; let others, if they were so disposed, trust in other things for pardon and peace—for his part the apostle was determined to rest on nothing, lean on nothing, build his hope on nothing, place confidence in nothing, boast in nothing, "except in the cross of Jesus Christ."

I wish to say something about "the cross" to the readers of this volume. Believe me, the subject is one of the deepest importance. This is no mere question of controversy. It is not one of those points on which people may agree to differ, and feel that differences will not shut them out of heaven. A man must be right on this subject, or he is lost forever. Heaven or hell, happiness or misery, life or death, blessing or cursing in the last day—all hinges on the answer to this question, "What do you think about the cross of Christ?"

I. Let me show you, first of all, *what the Apostle Paul did NOT boast in.*

There are many things that Paul might have boasted in, if he had thought as some do in this day. If ever there was one on earth who had something to boast of in himself, that man was the great apostle of the Gentiles. Now if he did not dare to boast, who shall?

He never boasted in his *national privileges*. He was a Jew by birth, and, as he tells us himself, "A Hebrew of the Hebrews." (Phil. 3:5.) He might have said, like many of his brethren, "I have Abraham for my forefather I am not a dark unenlightened heathen; I am one of the favored people of God—I have been admitted into covenant with God by circumcision. I am a far better man than the ignorant Gentiles." But he never said so. He never boasted in anything of this kind. Never, for one moment!

He never boasted in *his own works*. None ever worked so hard for God as he did. He was "more abundant in labors" than any of the apostles. (2 Cor. 11:23.) No man ever preached so much, traveled so much, and endured so many hardships for Christ's cause. None was ever made the means of converting so many souls, did so much good to the world, and made himself so useful to mankind. No Father of the early Church, no Reformer, no Puritan, no Missionary, no minister, no layman—no one man could ever be named, who did so many good works as the Apostle Paul. But did he ever boast in them, as if they were in the least meritorious, and could save his soul? Never! Never for one moment!

He never boasted in *his knowledge*. He was a man of great gifts naturally, and, after he was converted, the Holy Spirit gave him greater gifts still. He was a mighty preacher, and a mighty speaker, and a weighty writer. He was as great with his pen as

he was with his tongue. He could reason equally well with Jews and Gentiles. He could argue with infidels at Corinth, or Pharisees at Jerusalem, or self-righteous people in Galatia. He knew many deep things. He had been in the third heaven, and "heard unspeakable words." (2 Cor. 12:4.) He had received the spirit of prophecy, and could foretell things yet to come. But did he ever boast in his knowledge, as if it could justify him before God? Never—never! Never for one moment!

He never boasted in **his graces**. If ever there was one who abounded in graces, that man was Paul. He was full of **love**. How tenderly and affectionately he used to write! He could feel for souls like a mother or a nurse feeling for her child. He was a **bold** man. He cared not whom he opposed when truth was at stake. He cared not what risks he ran when souls were to be won. He was a **self-denying** man—in hunger and thirst often, in cold and nakedness, in watchings and fastings. He was a **humble** man. He thought himself less than the least of all saints, and the chief of sinners. He was a **prayerful** man. See how it comes out at the beginning of all his Epistles. He was a **thankful** man. His thanksgivings and his prayers walked side by side. But he never boasted in all this, never valued himself on it—never rested his soul's hopes on it. Oh, no—never for a moment!

He never boasted in **his Churchmanship**. If ever there was a good Churchman, that man was Paul. He was himself a chosen apostle. He was a founder of churches, and an ordainer of ministers—Timothy and Titus, and many elders, received their first commission from his hands. He was the beginner of services and sacraments in many a dark place. Many an one did he baptize; many an one did he receive to the Lord's Table; many a meeting for prayer, and praise, and preaching, did he begin and carry on. He was the setter up of discipline in many a young Church. Whatever ordinances, and rules, and ceremonies were observed in many Churches, were first recommended by him. But did he ever boast in his office and Church standing? Does he ever speak as if his Churchmanship would save him, justify him, put away his sins, and make him acceptable before God? Oh, no! Never—never! Never for a moment!

Now if the apostle Paul never boasted in any of these things, who in all the world, from one end to the other—who has any right to boast in them in our day? If Paul said, "God forbid that I should boast in anything whatever except the cross," who shall dare to say, "I have something to boast of—I am a better man than Paul"?

Who is there among the readers of this paper that trusts in any goodness of his own? Who is there that is resting on his own amendments—his own morality—his own churchmanship—his own works and performances of any kind whatever? Who is there that is leaning the weight of his soul on anything whatever of his own, in the smallest possible degree? Learn, I say, that you are very unlike the apostle Paul. Learn that your religion is not *apostolic religion*.

Who is there among the readers of this paper that trusts in his religious profession for salvation? Who is there that is valuing himself on his baptism, or his attendance at the Lord's table—his church-going on Sundays, or his daily services during the week—and saying to himself, "What more do I lack?" Learn, I say, this day, that you are very unlike Paul. Your Christianity is *not the Christianity of the New Testament*. Paul would not boast in anything but "the cross." Neither ought you.

Oh, let us beware of self-righteousness! Open sin kills its thousands of souls. Self-righteousness kills its tens of thousands! Go and study humility with the great apostle of the Gentiles. Go and sit with Paul at the foot of the cross. Give up your secret pride. Cast away your vain ideas of your own goodness. Be thankful if you have grace—but never boast in it for a moment. Work for God and Christ, with heart and soul and mind and strength—but never dream for a second of placing confidence in any work of your own.

Think, you who take comfort in some fancied ideas of your own goodness—think, you who wrap up yourselves in the notion, "all must be right, if I keep to my Church,"—think for a moment what a sandy foundation you are building upon! Think how miserably defective your hopes and pleas will look in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment! Whatever people may say of their own goodness while they are strong and healthy, they will find but little to say of it when they are sick and dying. Whatever merit they may see in their own works here in this world, they will discover none in them when they stand before the tribunal of Christ. The light of that great day of judgement will make a wonderful difference in the appearance of all their doings. It will strip off the tinsel, shrivel up the complexion, expose the rottenness of many a deed that is now called good. Their wheat will prove nothing but chaff—their gold will be found nothing but dross. Millions of so-called 'good works' will turn out to have been utterly defective and graceless. They passed current, and were valued among men—they will prove light and worthless in the balance of God. They will be found to have been like the whitened sepulchers of old—fair and beautiful on the outside—but full of corruption on the inside. Alas, for the man who can look forward to the day of judgment, and lean his soul in the smallest degree on anything of his own now!

"Howsoever people when they sit at ease, do vainly tickle their own hearts with the wanton conceit of I know not what proportionable correspondence between their merits and their rewards, which in the trance of their high speculations, they dream that God has measured and laid up as it were in bundles for them—we see notwithstanding by daily experience in a number even of them, that when the hour of death approaches, when they secretly hear themselves summoned to appear and stand at the bar of that Judge, whose brightness causes the eyes of angels themselves to dazzle, all those idle imaginations do then begin to hide their faces. To name merits then is to lay their souls upon the rack. The memory of their own deeds is loathsome unto them. They forsake all things wherein they have put any trust and confidence. No

staff to lean upon, no rest, no ease, no comfort then—but only in Christ Jesus."—*Richard Hooker*. 1585.

Once more I say, let us beware of self-righteousness in every possible shape and form. Some people get as much harm from their fancied virtues as others do from their sins. Rest not, rest not until your heart beats in tune with Paul's. Rest not until you can say with him, "far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

II. Let me explain, in the second place, ***what we are to understand by "the cross of Christ."***

The 'cross' is an expression that is used in more than one meaning in the Bible. What did Paul mean when he said, "I boast in the cross of Christ," in the Epistle to the Galatians? This is the point I now wish to examine closely and make clear.

The cross sometimes means that **wooden cross**, on which the Lord Jesus Christ was nailed and put to death on Calvary. This is what Paul had in his mind's eye, when he told the Philippians that Christ "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:8.) This is not the cross in which Paul boasted. He would have shrunk with horror from the idea of boasting in a mere piece of wood. I have no doubt he would have denounced the Roman Catholic adoration of the crucifix, as profane, blasphemous, and idolatrous.

The cross sometimes means the **afflictions and trials** which believers in Christ have to go through, if they follow Christ faithfully, for their religion's sake. This is the sense in which our Lord uses the word when He says, "He who takes not his cross and follows after Me, cannot be my disciple." (Matt. 10:38.) This also is not the sense in which Paul uses the word when he writes to the Galatians. He knew that cross well—he carried it patiently. But he is not speaking of it here.

But the cross also means, in some places, **the doctrine that Christ died for sinners upon the cross**—the atonement that He made for sinners, by His suffering for them on the cross—the complete and perfect sacrifice for sin which He offered up, when He gave His own body to be crucified. In short, this one word, "the cross," stands for Christ crucified, the only Savior. This is the meaning in which Paul uses the expression, when he tells the Corinthians, "the preaching of the cross is to those who perish foolishness." (1 Cor. 1:18.) This is the meaning in which he wrote to the Galatians, "God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross." He simply meant, "I boast in nothing but Christ crucified, as the salvation of my soul."

"By the cross of Christ the Apostle understands the all-sufficient, expiatory, and satisfactory sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, with the whole work of our redemption;

in the saving knowledge of whereof he professes he will glory and boasts."—*Cudworth on Galatians*. 1613.

"Touching these words, I do not find that any expositor, either ancient or modern, Popish, or Protestant, writing on this place, does expound the cross here mentioned of the sign of the cross—but of the profession of faith in Him who was hanged on the cross."—*Mayer's Commentary*. 1631.

"This is rather to be understood of the cross which Christ suffered for us, than of that we suffer for Him."—*Leigh's Annotations*. 1650.

Jesus Christ crucified was the joy and delight, the comfort and the peace, the hope and the confidence, the foundation and the resting-place, the ark and the refuge, the food and the medicine of Paul's soul. He did not think of what he had done himself, and suffered himself. He did not meditate on his own goodness, and his own righteousness. He loved to think of what Christ had done, and Christ had suffered—of the death of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the blood of Christ, the finished work of Christ. In this he did boast. This was the sun of his soul.

This is the subject he loved to preach about. He was a man who went to and fro on the earth, proclaiming to sinners that the Son of God had shed His own heart's blood to save their souls. He walked up and down the world telling people that Jesus Christ had loved them, and died for their sins upon the cross. Mark how he says to the Corinthians, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins." (1 Cor. 15:3.) "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2.) He, a blaspheming, persecuting Pharisee, had been washed in Christ's blood. He could not hold his peace about it. He was never weary of telling the story of the cross.

This is the subject he loved to dwell upon when he wrote to believers. It is wonderful to observe how full his epistles generally are of the sufferings and death of Christ—how they run over with "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," about Christ's dying love and power. His heart seems full of the subject. He enlarges on it constantly—he returns to it continually. It is the golden thread that runs through all his doctrinal teaching and practical exhortations. He seems to think that the most advanced Christian can never hear too much about the cross.

"Christ crucified is the sum of the Gospel, and contains all the riches of it. Paul was so much taken with Christ, that nothing sweeter than Jesus could drop from his pen and lips. It is observed that he has the word "Jesus" five hundred times in his Epistles."—*Charnock*. 1684.

This is what he lived upon all his life, from the time of his conversion. He tells

the Galatians, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galat. 2:20.) What made him so strong to labor? What made him so willing to work? What made him so unwearied in endeavoring to save some? What made him so persevering and patient? I will tell you the secret of it all. He was always feeding by faith on Christ's body and Christ's blood. Jesus crucified was the food and drink of his soul.

And we may rest assured that Paul was right. Depend upon it, **the cross of Christ—the death of Christ on the cross to make atonement for sinners—is the center truth in the whole Bible.** This is the truth we begin with when we open Genesis. The seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head is nothing else but a prophecy of Christ crucified. This is the truth that shines out, though veiled, all through the law of Moses, and the history of the Jews. The daily sacrifice, the passover lamb, the continual shedding of blood in the tabernacle and temple, all these were emblems of Christ crucified. This is the truth that we see honored in the vision of heaven before we close the book of Revelation. "In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts," we are told, "and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." (Rev. 5:6.) Even in the midst of heavenly glory we get a view of Christ crucified. Take away the cross of Christ, and the Bible is a dark book. It is like the Egyptian hieroglyphics without the key that interprets their meaning—curious and wonderful—but of no real use.

Let every reader of this paper mark what I say. You may know a good deal about the Bible. You may know the outlines of the histories it contains, and the dates of the events described, just as a man knows the history of England. You may know the names of the men and women mentioned in it, just as a man knows Caesar, Alexander the Great, or Napoleon. You may know the several precepts of the Bible, and admire them, just as a man admires Plato, Aristotle, or Seneca. But if you have not yet found out that Christ crucified is the foundation of the whole volume, you have read your Bible hitherto to very little profit. Your religion is a heaven without a sun, an arch without a key-stone, a compass without a needle, a clock without spring or weights, a lamp without oil. It will not comfort you. It will not deliver your soul from hell.

Mark what I say again. You may know a good deal about Christ, by a kind of head knowledge. You may know who He was, and where He was born, and what He did. You may know His miracles, His sayings, His prophecies, and His ordinances. You may know how He lived, and how He suffered, and how He died. But unless you know the power of Christ's cross by experience—unless you know and feel within that the blood shed on that cross has washed away your own particular sins—unless you are willing to confess that your salvation depends entirely on the work that Christ did upon the cross—unless this be the case, Christ will profit you nothing. The mere knowing Christ's name will never save you. You must know His cross, and His blood, or else you will die in your sins.

"If our faith stops in Christ's life, and does not fasten upon His blood, it will not be justifying faith. His miracles, which prepared the world for His doctrines; His holiness, which fitted Himself for His sufferings, had been insufficient for us without the addition of the cross." *Charnock*. 1684.

As long as you live, *beware of a religion in which there is not much of the cross*. You live in times when the warning is sadly needful. Beware, I say again, of a religion without the cross.

There are hundreds of places of worship, in this day, in which there is everything almost except the cross. There is carved oak, and sculptured stone; there is stained glass, and brilliant painting; there are solemn services, and a constant round of ordinances; but the real cross of Christ is not there. Jesus crucified is not proclaimed in the pulpit. The Lamb of God is not lifted up, and salvation by faith in Him is not freely proclaimed. And hence all is wrong. Beware of such places of worship. They are *not apostolic*. They would not have satisfied Paul.

"Paul determined to know nothing else but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But many manage the ministry as if they had taken up a contrary determination—even to know anything except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."—*Traill*. 1690.

There are thousands of religious books published in our times, in which there is everything except the cross. They are full of directions about sacraments, and praises of the Church. They abound in exhortations about holy living, and rules for the attainment of perfection. They have plenty of fonts and crosses, both inside and outside. But the real cross of Christ is left out. The Savior, and His work of atonement and complete salvation, are either not mentioned, or mentioned in an unscriptural way. And hence they are worse than useless. Beware of such books. They are *not apostolic*. They would never have satisfied Paul.

Paul boasted in nothing but the cross. Strive to be like him. Set Jesus crucified fully before the eyes of your soul. Listen not to any teaching which would interpose anything between you and Him. Do not fall into the old Galatian error—think not that anyone in this day is a better guide than the apostles. Do not be ashamed of the "old paths," in which men walked who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Let not the vague talk of modern teachers, who speak great swelling words about "catholicity," and "the church," disturb your peace, and make you loose your hands from the cross. Churches, ministers, and sacraments, are all useful in their way—but they are not Christ crucified. Do not give Christ's honor to another. "He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord." (1 Cor. 1:1.)

III. Let me show, lastly, *why all Christians ought to boast in the cross of Christ*.

I feel that I must say something on this point, because of the ignorance that prevails about it. I suspect that many see no peculiar glory and beauty in the subject of Christ's cross. On the contrary, they think it painful, humbling, and degrading. They do not see much profit in the story of His death and sufferings. They rather turn from it as an unpleasant thing.

Now I believe that such people are quite wrong. I cannot hold with them. I believe it is an excellent thing for us all to be continually dwelling on the cross of Christ. It is a good thing to be often reminded how Jesus was betrayed into the hands of wicked men—how they condemned Him with most unjust judgment—how they spit on Him, scourged Him, beat Him, and crowned Him with thorns—how they led Him forth as a lamb to the slaughter, without His murmuring or resisting—how they drove the nails through His hands and feet, and set Him up on Calvary between two thieves—how they pierced His side with a spear, mocked Him in His sufferings, and let Him hang there naked and bleeding until He died. Of all these things, I say, it is good to be reminded. It is not for nothing that the crucifixion is described four times over in the New Testament. There are very few things that all four writers of the Gospel describe. Generally speaking, if Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell a thing in our Lord's history, John does not tell it. But there is one thing that all the four give us most fully, and that one thing is the story of the cross. This is a telling fact, and not to be overlooked.

People seem to forget that **all Christ's sufferings on the cross were fore-ordained**. They did not come on Him by chance or accident—they were all planned, counseled, and determined from all eternity. The cross was foreseen in all the provisions of the everlasting Trinity for the salvation of sinners. In the purposes of God the cross was set up from everlasting. Not one throb of pain did Jesus feel, not one precious drop of blood did Jesus shed, which had not been appointed long ago. Infinite wisdom planned that redemption should be by the cross. Infinite wisdom brought Jesus to the cross in due time. He was crucified "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." (Acts 2:23.)

People seem to forget that **all Christ's sufferings on the cross were necessary for man's salvation**. He had to bear our sins, if ever they were to be borne at all. With His stripes alone could we be healed. This was the one payment of our debt that God would accept—this was the great sacrifice on which our eternal life depended. If Christ had not gone to the cross and suffered in our stead, the just for the unjust, there would not have been a spark of hope for us. There would have been a mighty gulf between ourselves and God, which no man ever could have passed.

"In Christ's humiliation stands our exaltation; in His weakness stands our strength; in His ignominy our glory; in His death our life."—*Cudworth*. 1613.

"The eye of faith regards Christ sitting on the summit of the cross as in a triumphal

chariot; the devil bound to the lowest part of the same cross, and trodden under the feet of Christ."—*Davenant on Colossians*. 1627.

People seem to forget that **all Christ's sufferings were endured voluntarily**, and of His own free will. He was under no compulsion. Of His own choice He laid down His life—of His own choice He went to the cross in order to finish the work He came to do. He might easily have summoned legions of angels with a word, and scattered Pilate and Herod, and all their armies, like chaff before the wind. But He was a willing sufferer. His heart was set on the salvation of sinners. He was resolved to open "a fountain for all sin and uncleanness," by shedding His own blood. (Zech. 13:1.)

When I think of all this, I see nothing painful or disagreeable in the subject of Christ's cross. On the contrary, I see in it wisdom and power, peace and hope, joy and gladness, comfort and consolation. The more I keep the cross in my mind's eye, the more fullness I seem to discern in it. The longer I dwell on the cross in my thoughts, the more I am satisfied that **there is more to be learned at the foot of the cross than anywhere else in the world.**

(a) Would I know the length and breadth of God the Father's love towards a sinful world? Where shall I see it most displayed? Shall I look at His glorious sun, shining down daily on the unthankful and evil? Shall I look at seed-time and harvest, returning in regular yearly succession? Oh, no! I can find a stronger proof of love than anything of this sort. I look at the cross of Christ. I see in it not the cause of the Father's love—but the effect. There I see that God so loved this wicked world, that He gave His only begotten Son—gave Him to suffer and die—that "whoever believes in Him should not perish—but have eternal life." (John 3:16.) I know that the Father loves us, because He did not withhold from us His Son, His only Son. I might sometimes fancy that God the Father is too high and holy to care for such miserable, corrupt creatures as we are! But I cannot, must not, dare not think it, when I look at the cross of Christ.

"The world we live in would have fallen upon our heads, had it not been upheld by the pillar of the cross; had not Christ stepped in and promised a satisfaction for the sin of man. By this all things consist—not a blessing we enjoy but may put us in mind of it; they were all forfeited by sin—but merited by His blood. If we study it well we shall be sensible how God hated sin and loved a world."—*Charnock*.

(b) Would I know how exceedingly sinful and abominable sin is in the sight of God? Where shall I see that most fully brought out? Shall I turn to the history of the flood, and read how sin drowned the world? Shall I go to the shore of the Dead Sea, and mark what sin brought on Sodom and Gomorrah? Shall I turn to the wandering Jews, and observe how sin has scattered them over the face of the earth? No! I can find a clearer proof still! I look at the cross of Christ. There I see that

sin is so black and damnable, that nothing but the blood of God's own Son can wash it away. There I see that sin has so separated me from my holy Maker, that all the angels in heaven could never have made peace between us. Nothing could reconcile us, short of the death of Christ. If I listened to the wretched talk of proud people, I might sometimes fancy sin was not so very sinful! But **I cannot think little of sin, when I look at the cross of Christ.**

(c) Would I know the *fullness and completeness of the salvation* God has provided for sinners? Where shall I see it most distinctly? Shall I go to the general declarations in the Bible about God's mercy? Shall I rest in the general truth that God is a "God of love"? Oh, no! I will look at the cross of Christ. I find no evidence like that. I find no balm for a sore conscience and a troubled heart, like the sight of Jesus dying for me on the accursed tree. There I see that a full payment has been made for all my enormous debts. The curse of that law which I have broken has come down on One who there suffered in my stead. The demands of that law are all satisfied. Payment has been made for me, even to the uttermost farthing. It will not be required twice over. Ah, I might sometimes imagine I was too bad to be forgiven! My own heart sometimes whispers that I am too wicked to be saved. But I know in my better moments this is all my foolish unbelief. I read an answer to my doubts in the blood shed on Calvary. I feel sure that there is a way to heaven for the very vilest of people, when I look at the cross.

(d) Would I find strong *reasons for being a holy man*? Where shall I turn for them? Shall I listen to the ten commandments merely? Shall I study the examples given me in the Bible of what grace can do? Shall I meditate on the rewards of heaven, and the punishments of hell? Is there no stronger motive still? Yes! I will look at the cross of Christ! There I see the love of Christ constraining me to "live not unto myself—but unto Him." There I see that I am not my own now—I am "bought with a price." (2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Cor. 6:20.) I am bound by the most solemn obligations to glorify Jesus with body and spirit, which are His. There I see that Jesus gave Himself for me, not only to redeem me from all iniquity—but also to purify me, and to make me one of a "peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:14.) He bore my sins in His own body on the tree, "that I being dead unto sin should live unto righteousness." (1 Pet. 2:24.) **There is nothing so sanctifying as a clear view of the cross of Christ! It crucifies the world unto us, and us unto the world. How can we love sin, when we remember that because of our sins Jesus died? Surely none ought to be so holy as the disciples of a crucified Lord.**

(e) Would I learn *how to be contented and cheerful under all the cares and concerns of life*? What school shall I go to? How shall I attain this state of mind most easily? Shall I look at the sovereignty of God, the wisdom of God, the providence of God, the love of God? It is well to do so. But I have a better argument still. I will look at the cross of Christ. I feel that "He who spared not His only-begotten Son—but

delivered Him up to die for me, will surely with Him give me all things" that I really need. (Rom. 8:32.) He who endured such agony, sufferings, and pain for my soul, will surely not withhold from me anything that is really good. He who has done the greater things for me, will doubtless do the lesser things also. He who gave His own blood to procure me a home in heaven, will unquestionably supply me with all that is really profitable for me by the way. **There is no school for learning contentment that can be compared with the foot of the cross!**

(f) Would I gather *arguments for hoping that I shall never be cast away?*

Where shall I go to find them? Shall I look at my own graces and gifts? Shall I take comfort in my own faith, and love, and penitence, and zeal, and prayer? Shall I turn to my own heart, and say, "this same heart will never be false and cold"? Oh, no! God forbid! I will look at the cross of Christ. This is my grand argument. This is my main stay. I cannot think that He who went through such sufferings to redeem my soul, will let that soul perish after all, when it has once cast itself on Him. Oh, no! what Jesus paid for, Jesus will surely keep. He paid dearly for it. He will not let it easily be lost. He called me to Himself when I was a dark sinner—He will never forsake me after I have believed. When Satan tempts us to doubt whether Christ's people will be kept from falling, we should tell Satan to look at the cross.

"The believer is so freed from eternal wrath, that if Satan and conscience say, 'You are a sinner, and under the curse of the law,' he can say, 'It is true, I am a sinner; but I was hanged on a tree and died, and was made a curse in my Head and Lawgiver Christ, and His payment and suffering is my payment and suffering.'"—*Rutherford's Christ Dying*. 1647.

And now, will you marvel that I said all Christians ought to boast in the cross? Will you not rather wonder that any can hear of the cross and remain unmoved? I declare I know no greater proof of man's depravity, than the fact that thousands of so-called Christians see nothing in the cross. Well may our hearts be called stony—well may the eyes of our mind be called blind—well may our whole nature be called diseased—well may we all be called dead, when the cross of Christ is heard of and yet neglected. Surely we may take up the words of the prophet, and say, "Hear, O heavens, and be astonished O earth; an astounding and a horrible thing is done,"—Christ was crucified for sinners, and yet many Christians live as if He was never crucified at all!

(a) The cross is *the grand peculiarity of the Christian religion.* Other religions have laws and moral precepts, forms and ceremonies, rewards and punishments. But other religions cannot tell us of a dying Savior. They cannot show us the cross. This is the crown and glory of the Gospel. This is that special comfort which belongs to it alone. Miserable indeed is that religious teaching which calls itself Christian, and yet contains nothing of the cross. A man who teaches in this way, might as well profess to explain the solar system, and yet tell his hearers nothing about the

sun.

(b) The cross is *the strength of a minister*. I for one would not be without it for all the world. I should feel like a soldier without weapons—like an artist without his brush—like a pilot without his compass—like a laborer without his tools. Let others, if they will, preach the law and morality; let others hold forth the terrors of hell, and the joys of heaven; let others drench their congregations with teachings about the sacraments and the church; give me the cross of Christ! This is the only lever which has ever turned the world upside down hitherto, and made people forsake their sins. And if this will not, nothing will. A man may begin preaching with a perfect knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; but he will do little or no good among his hearers unless he knows something of the cross. Never was there a minister who did much for the conversion of souls who did not dwell much on Christ crucified. Luther, Rutherford, Whitefield, M'Cheyne, were all most eminently preachers of the cross. This is the preaching that the Holy Spirit delights to bless. He loves to honor those who honor the cross.

(c) The cross is *the secret of all missionary success*. Nothing but this has ever moved the hearts of the heathen. Just according as this has been lifted up missions have prospered. This is the weapon which has won victories over hearts of every kind, in every quarter of the globe. Greenlanders, Africans, South-Sea Islanders, Hindus, Chinese, all have alike felt its power. Just as that huge iron tube which crosses the Menai Straits, is more affected and bent by half-an-hour's sunshine than by all the dead weight that can be placed in it, so in like manner the hearts of savages have melted before the cross, when every other argument seemed to move them no more than stones. "Brethren," said a North-American Indian after his conversion, "I have been a heathen. I know how heathens think. Once a preacher came and began to explain to us that there was a God; but we told him to return to the place from whence he came. Another preacher came and told us not to lie, nor steal, nor drink; but we did not heed him. At last another came into my hut one day and said, 'I am come to you in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth, He sends to let you know that He will make you happy, and deliver you from misery. For this end He became a man, gave His life a ransom, and shed His blood for sinners.' I could not forget his words. I told them to the other Indians, and an awakening began among us." I say, therefore, preach the sufferings and death of Christ, our Savior, if you wish your words to gain entrance among the heathen. Never indeed did the devil triumph so thoroughly, as when he persuaded the Jesuit missionaries in China to keep back the story of the cross!

(d) The cross is *the foundation of a Church's prosperity*. No Church will ever be honored in which Christ crucified is not continually lifted up—nothing whatever can make up for the lack of the cross. Without it all things may be done decently and in order; without it there may be splendid ceremonies, beautiful music, gorgeous churches, learned ministers, crowded communion tables, huge collections for the

poor. But without the cross no good will be done; dark hearts will not be enlightened, proud hearts will not be humbled, mourning hearts will not be comforted, fainting hearts will not be cheered. Sermons about the Church and an apostolic ministry—sermons about baptism and the Lord's supper—sermons about unity and schism—sermons about fasts and communion—sermons about fathers and saints—such sermons will never make up for the absence of sermons about the cross of Christ. They may amuse some—they will feed none. A gorgeous banqueting room, and splendid gold plate on the table, will never make up to a hungry man for the lack of food. Christ crucified is God's ordinance for doing good to people. Whenever a Church keeps back Christ crucified, or puts anything whatever in that foremost place which Christ crucified should always have, from that moment a Church ceases to be useful. Without Christ crucified in her pulpits, a church is little better than a cumberer of the ground, a dead carcass, a well without water, a barren fig tree, a sleeping watchman, a silent trumpet, a speechless witness, an ambassador without terms of peace, a messenger without tidings, a lighthouse without fire, a stumbling-block to weak believers, a comfort to infidels, a hot-bed for formalism, a joy to the devil, and an offence to God.

(e) The cross is *the grand center of union among true Christians.* Our outward differences are many, without doubt. One man is an Episcopalian, another is a Presbyterian—one is an Independent, another a Baptist—one is a Calvinist, another an Arminian—one is a Lutheran, another a Plymouth Brother—one is a friend to Establishments, another a friend to the voluntary system—one is a friend to liturgies, another a friend to extempore prayer. But, after all, what shall we hear about most of these differences, in heaven? Nothing, most probably—nothing at all. *Does a man really and sincerely boast in the cross of Christ?* That is the grand question. If he does, he is my brother—we are traveling on the same road; we are journeying towards a home where Christ is all, and everything outward in religion will be forgotten. But if he does not boast in the cross of Christ, I cannot feel comfort about him. Union on outward points only, is union only for a time—union about the cross is union for eternity. Error on outward points is only a skin-deep disease—error about the cross is disease at the heart. Union about outward points is a mere man-made union—union about the cross of Christ can only be produced by the Holy Spirit.

I know not what you think of all this. I feel as if I had said nothing compared to what might be said. I feel as if the half of what I desire to tell you about the cross were left untold. But I do hope that I have given you something to think about. I do trust that I have shown you that I have reason for the question with which I began this paper, "What do you think and feel about the cross of Christ?" Listen to me now for a few moments, while I say something to **APPLY** the whole subject to your conscience.

(a) *Are you living in any kind of sin?* Are you following the course of this world, and neglecting your soul? Hear, I beseech you, what I say to you this day, "Behold the

Cross of Christ." See there how Jesus loved you! See there what Jesus suffered to prepare for you a way of salvation. Yes—careless men and women, for you that blood was shed! For you those hands and feet were pierced with nails! For you that body hung in agony on the cross! You are those whom Jesus loved, and for whom He died! Surely that love ought to melt you. Surely the thought of the cross should draw you to repentance. Oh, that it might be so this very day! Oh, that you would come at once to that Savior who died for you, and is willing to save! Come, and cry to Him with the prayer of faith, and I know that He will listen. Come, and lay hold upon the cross, and I know that He will not cast you out. Come, and believe on Him who died on the cross, and this very day you shall have eternal life. How will you ever escape if you neglect so great salvation? **None surely will be so deep in hell as those who despise the cross!**

(b) *Are you inquiring the way toward heaven?* Are you seeking salvation—but doubtful whether you can find it? Are you desiring to have an interest in Christ—but doubting whether Christ will receive you? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Here is encouragement if you really want it. Draw near to the Lord Jesus with boldness, for nothing need keep you back. His arms are open to receive you—His heart is full of love towards you. He has made a way by which you may approach Him with confidence. Think of the cross. Draw near, and fear not.

(c) *Are you an unlearned man?* Are you desirous to get to heaven, and perplexed and brought to a stand-still by difficulties in the Bible which you cannot explain? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Read there the Father's love and the Son's compassion. Surely they are written in great plain letters, which none can well mistake. What though you are now perplexed by the doctrine of election? What though at present you cannot reconcile your own utter corruption and your own responsibility? Look, I say, at the cross. Does not that cross tell you that Jesus is a mighty, loving, ready Savior? Does it not make one thing plain, and that is that it is all your own fault if you are not saved? Oh, get hold of that truth, and hold it fast!

(d) *Are you a distressed believer?* Is your heart pressed down with sickness, tried with disappointments, overburdened with cares? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Think whose hand it is that chastens you; think whose hand is measuring to you the cup of bitterness which you are now drinking. It is the hand of Him who was crucified! It is the same hand which in love to your soul was nailed to the accursed tree. Surely that thought should comfort and hearten you. Surely you should say to yourself, "A crucified Savior will never lay upon me anything that is not for my good. There is a needs be. It must be well."

(e) *Are you a believer that longs to be more holy?* Are you one that finds his heart too ready to love earthly things? To you also I say, "Behold the cross of Christ." Look at the cross, think of the cross, meditate on the cross, and then go and set your

affections on the world if you can. I believe that holiness is nowhere learned so well as on Calvary. I believe you cannot look much at the cross without feeling your will sanctified, and your tastes made more spiritual. As the sun gazed upon makes everything else look dark and dim, so does the cross darken the false splendor of this world. As honey tasted makes all other things seem to have no taste at all, so does the cross seen by faith take all the sweetness out of the pleasures of the world. Keep on every day steadily looking at the cross of Christ, and you will soon say of the world, as the poet does—

Its pleasures now no longer please,
No more content afford;
Far from my heart be joys like these,
Now I have seen the Lord.

As by the light of opening day
The stars are all concealed,
So earthly pleasures fade away
When Jesus is revealed.

(f) *Are you a dying believer?* Have you gone to that bed from which something within tells you you will never come down alive? Are you drawing near to that solemn hour, when soul and body must part for a season, and you must launch into a world unknown? Oh, look steadily at the cross of Christ by faith, and you shall be kept in peace! Fix the eyes of your mind firmly, not on a man-made crucifix—but on Jesus crucified, and He shall deliver you from all your fears. Though you walk through dark places, He will be with you. He will never leave you—never forsake you. Sit under the shadow of the cross to the very last, and its fruit shall be sweet to your taste. "Ah," said a dying missionary, "there is but one thing needful on a death-bed, and that is to feel one's arms around the cross!"

I lay these thoughts before your mind. What you think now about the cross of Christ, I cannot tell. But I can wish you nothing better than this—that you may be able to say with the Apostle Paul, before you die or meet the Lord, "God forbid that I should boast—except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Have You Assurance?

Being Thoughts on 2 Tim. 4:6-8

"Grace with assurance is no less than heaven let down into the soul." - Bishop Hopkins. 1680.

"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 that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

READER,

In the words of Scripture, which head this page, you see the Apostle Paul looking three ways: downward, backward, forward. Downward to the grave,—backward to his own ministry,—forward to that great day, the day of judgment.

I invite you this day to stand by the Apostle's side a few minutes, and mark the words he uses. Happy is that soul who can look where Paul looked, and then speak as Paul spoke!

He looks downward to the grave, and he does it without fear. Hear what he says.

"I am ready to be offered." I am like an animal brought to the place of sacrifice, and bound with cords to the very horns of the altar. The wine and oil have been poured on my head, according to the custom. The last ceremonies have been gone through. Every preparation has been made. It only remains to receive the death-blow, and then all is over.

"The time of my departure is at hand." I am like a ship about to unmoor and put to sea. All on board is ready. I only wait to have the moorings cast off that fasten me to the shore, and I shall then set sail and begin my voyage.

Reader, these are glorious words to come from the lips of a child of Adam like ourselves. Death is a solemn thing, and never so much so as when we see it close at hand. The grave is a chilling, heart-sickening place, and it is vain to pretend it has no terrors. Yet here is a mortal man who can look calmly into the narrow house appointed for all living, and say, while he stands upon the brink, "I see it all, and am not afraid."

Let us listen to him again. He looks backward to his ministerial life, and he does it without shame. Hear what he says.

"I have fought a good fight." There he speaks as a soldier. I have fought that good battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, from which so many shrink and draw

back.

"I have finished my course." There he speaks as one who has run for a prize. I have run the race marked out for me: I have gone over the ground appointed for me, however rough and steep. I have not turned aside because of difficulties, nor been discouraged by the length of the way. I am at last in sight of the goal.

"I have kept the faith." There he speaks as a steward. I have held fast that glorious Gospel which was committed to my trust. I have not mingled it with man's traditions, nor spoiled its simplicity by adding my own inventions, nor allowed others to adulterate it without withstanding them to the face. "As a soldier,—a runner,—a steward," he seems to say, "I am not ashamed."

Reader, that Christian is happy who, as he quits this world, can leave such testimony behind him. A good conscience will save no man,—wash away no sin,—not lift us one hair's breadth toward heaven. Yet, a good conscience will be found a pleasant visitor at our bed-side in a dying hour. Do you remember that place in "Pilgrim's Progress" which describes Old Honest's passages across the river of death? "The river," says Bunyan, "at that time overflowed its banks in some places; but Mr. Honest, in his lifetime, had spoken to one, Good Conscience, to meet him there: the which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over." Believe me, there is a mine of truth in that passage.

Let us hear the Apostle once more. He looks forward to the great day of reckoning, and he does it without doubt. Mark his words.

"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 that love His appearing." A glorious reward, he seems to say, is ready and laid up in store for me: even that crown which is only given to the righteous. In the great day of judgment the Lord shall give this crown to me, and to all beside me who have loved Him as an unseen Saviour, and longed to see Him face to face. My work on earth is over. This one thing now remains for me to look forward to, and nothing more.

Reader, observe that the Apostle speaks without any hesitation or distrust. He regards the crown as a sure thing: as his own already. He declares with unfaltering confidence his firm persuasion that the righteous Judge will give it to him. Paul was no stranger to all the circumstances and accompaniments of that solemn day to which he referred. The great white throne,—the assembled world,—the open books,—the revealing of all secrets,—the listening angels,—the awful sentence,—the eternal separation of the lost and saved,—all these were things with which he was well acquainted. But none of these things moved him. His strong faith over-leaped them all, and only saw Jesus, his all-prevailing Advocate, and the blood of sprinkling, and sin washed away. "A crown,"

he says, "is laid up for me." "The Lord Himself shall give it to me." He speaks as if he saw it all with his own eyes.

Such are the main things which these verses contain. Of most of them I cannot pretend to speak, for space would not allow me. I shall only try to set before you one point in the passage, and that is "the assured hope" with which the Apostle looks forward to his own prospects in the day of judgment.

I shall do this the more readily, because of the great importance which I feel attaches to the subject of assurance, and the great neglect with which, I humbly conceive, it is often treated in this day.

But I shall do it at the same time with fear and trembling. I feel that I am treading on very difficult ground, and that it is easy to speak rashly and unscripturally in this matter. The road between truth and error is here especially a narrow pass, and if I shall be enabled to do good to some without doing harm to others, I shall be very thankful.

Reader, there are four things I wish to bring before you in speaking of the subject of assurance, and it may clear our way if I name them to you at once.

I. First, then, I will try to show you that an assured hope, such as Paul here expresses, is a true and Scriptural thing.

II. Secondly, I will make this broad concession,—that a man may never arrive at this assured hope, and yet be saved.

III. Thirdly, I will give you some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.

IV. Lastly, I will try to point out some causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained.

I. First, then, I will try to show you that an assured hope is a true and Scriptural thing.

Assurance, such as Paul expresses in the verses which head this tract, is not a mere fancy or feeling. It is not the result of high animal spirits, or a sanguine temperament of body. It is a positive gift of the Holy Ghost, bestowed without reference to men's bodily frames or constitutions, and a gift which every believer in Christ ought to aim at and seek after.

The Word of God appears to me to teach that a believer may arrive at an assured confidence with regard to his own salvation.

I would lay it down fully and broadly, that a true Christian, a converted man, may reach that comfortable degree of faith in Christ, that in general he shall feel entirely confident as to the pardon and safety of his soul,—shall seldom be troubled with doubts,—seldom be distracted with hesitation,—seldom be distressed by anxious questionings,—and, in short, though vexed by many an inward conflict with sin, shall look forward to death without trembling, and to judgment without dismay.¹

Such is my account of assurance. I will ask you to mark it well. I say neither less nor more than I have here laid down.

Now, such a statement as this is often disputed and denied. Many cannot see the truth of it at all.

The Church of Rome denounces assurance in the most unmeasured terms. The Council of Trent declares roundly, that a "believer's assurance of the pardon of his sins is a vain and ungodly confidence;" and Cardinal Bellarmine, the well-known champion of Romanism, calls it "a prime error of heretics."

The vast majority of the worldly among ourselves oppose the doctrine of assurance. It offends and annoys them to hear of it. They do not like others to feel comfortable and sure, because they never feel so themselves. That they cannot receive it is certainly no marvel.

But there are also some true believers who reject assurance, or shrink from it as a doctrine fraught with danger. They consider it borders on presumption. They seem to think it a proper humility never to be confident, and to live in a certain degree of doubt. This is to be regretted, and does much harm.

I frankly allow there are some presumptuous persons who profess to feel a confidence for which they have no Scriptural warrant. There always are some people who think well of themselves when God thinks ill, just as there are some who think ill of themselves when God thinks well. There always will be such. There never yet was a Scriptural truth without abuses and counterfeits. God's election,—man's impotence,—salvation by grace,—all are alike abused. There will be fanatics and enthusiasts as long as the world stands. But, for all this, assurance is a real, sober, and true thing; and God's children must not let themselves be driven from the use of a truth, merely because it is abused.²

My answer to all who deny the existence of real, well-grounded assurance is simply this,—What saith the Scripture? If assurance be not there, I have not another word to say.

But does not Job say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in

my flesh shall I see God"? (Job 19: 25-26.)

Does not David say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me"? (Psalm 23:4.)

Does not Isaiah say, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee"? (Isaiah 26:3.)

And again, "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isaiah 32:17.)

Does not Paul say to the Romans, "I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, not 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.)

Does he not say to the Corinthians, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"? (2 Cor. 5:1.)

And again, "We are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." (2 Cor. 5:6.)

Does he not say to Timothy, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him"? (2 Tim. 1:12.)

And does he not speak to the Colossians of "the full assurance of understanding" (Coloss. 2:2), and to the Hebrews of the "full assurance of faith," and the "full assurance of hope"? (Heb. 6:11; 10:22.)

Does not Peter say expressly, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure"? (2 Peter 1:10.)

Does not John say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life"? (1 John 3:14.)

And again, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." (1 John 5:13.)

And again, "We know that we are of God." (1 John 5:19.)

Reader, what shall we say to these things? I desire to speak with all humility on any controverted point. I feel that I am only a poor fallible child of Adam myself. But I

must say, that in the passages I have just quoted I see something far higher than the mere "hopes" and "trusts" with which so many believers appear content in this day. I see the language of persuasion, confidence, knowledge,—nay, I may almost say, of certainty. And I feel, for my own part, if I may take these Scriptures in their plain, obvious meaning, the doctrine of assurance is true.

But my answer, furthermore, to all who dislike the doctrine of assurance, as bordering on presumption, is this: it can hardly be presumption to tread in the steps of Peter and Paul, of Job and of John. They were all eminently humble and lowly-minded men, if ever any were; and yet they all speak of their own state with an assured hope. Surely this should teach us that deep humility and strong assurance are perfectly compatible, and that there is not any necessary connection between spiritual confidence and pride.³

My answer, furthermore, is, that many have attained to such an assured hope as our text expresses, even in modern times. I will not concede for a moment that it was a peculiar privilege confined to the Apostolic day. There have been, in our own land, many believers who have appeared to walk in almost uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son,—who have seemed to enjoy an almost unceasing sense of the light of God's reconciled countenance shining down upon them, and have left their experience on record. I could mention well-known names, if space permitted. The thing has been, and is,—and that is enough.

My answer, lastly, is, it cannot be wrong to feel confidently in a matter where God speaks unconditionally,—to believe decidedly when God promises decidedly,—to have a sure persuasion of pardon and peace when we rest on the word and oath of Him that never changes. It is an utter mistake to suppose that the believer who feels assurance is resting on anything he sees in himself. He simply leans on the Mediator of the New Covenant, and the Scripture of truth. He believes the Lord Jesus means what He says, and takes Him at His Word. Assurance, after all, is no more than a fall-grown faith; a masculine faith that grasps Christ's promise with both hands,—a faith that argues like the good centurion, if the Lord "speak the word only," I am healed. Wherefore, then, should I doubt? (Matt. 8:8.)⁴

Reader, you may be sure that Paul was the last man in the world to build his assurance on anything of his own. He who could write himself down "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15) had a deep sense of his own guilt and corruption. But then he had a still deeper sense of the length and breadth of Christ's righteousness imputed to him.—He, who would cry, "O wretched man that I am" (Rom. 7:24), had a clear view of the fountain of evil within his heart. But then he had a still clearer view of that other Fountain which can remove "all sin and uncleanness." —He, who thought himself "less than the least of all saints" (Ephes. 3:8), had a lively and abiding feeling of his own weakness. But he had a still livelier feeling that Christ's promise, "My sheep shall

never perish" (John 10:28), could not be broken—Paul knew, if ever man did, that he was a poor, frail bark, floating on a stormy ocean. He saw, if any did, the rolling waves and roaring tempest by which he was surrounded. But then he looked away from self to Jesus, and was not afraid. He remembered that anchor within the veil, which is both "sure and steadfast." He remembered the word, and work, and constant intercession of Him that loved him and gave Himself for him. And this it was, and nothing else, that enabled him to say so boldly, "A crown is laid up for me, and the Lord shall give it to me"; and to conclude so surely, "The Lord will preserve me: I shall never be confounded." 5

I may not dwell longer on this part of the subject. I think you will allow I have shown ground for the assertion I made,—that assurance is a true thing.

II. I pass on to the second thing I spoke of. I said, a believer may never arrive at this assured hope, which Paul expresses, and yet be saved.

I grant this most freely. I do not dispute it for a moment. I would not desire to make one contrite heart sad that God has not made sad, or to discourage one fainting child of God, or to leave the impression that men have no part or lot in Christ, except they feel assurance.

A person may have saving faith in Christ, and yet never enjoy an assured hope, like the Apostle Paul. To believe and have a glimmering hope of acceptance is one thing; to have joy and peace in our believing, and abound in hope, is quite another. All God's children have faith; not all have assurance. I think this ought never to be forgotten.

I know some great and good men have held a different opinion. I believe that many excellent ministers of the Gospel, at whose feet I would gladly sit, do not allow the distinction I have stated. But I desire to call no man master. I dread as much as any one the idea of healing the wounds of conscience slightly; but I should think any other view than that I have given a most uncomfortable Gospel to preach, and one very likely to keep souls back a long time from the gate of life.

I do not shrink from saying, that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ; sufficient faith really to lay hold on Him, really to trust in Him,—really to be a child of God, really to be saved; and yet to his last day be never free from much anxiety, doubt, and fear.

"A letter," says an old writer, "may be written, which is not sealed; so grace may be written in the heart, yet the Spirit may not set the seal of assurance to it."

A child may be born heir to a great fortune, and yet never be aware of his riches; live childish,—die childish, and never know the greatness of his possessions.

And so also a man may be a babe in Christ's family; think as a babe, speak as a babe; and though saved, never enjoy a lively hope, or know the real privileges of his inheritance.

Reader, do not mistake my meaning, while you hear me dwell strongly on assurance. Do not do me the injustice to say, I told you none were saved except such as could say with Paul, "I know and am persuaded,—there is a crown laid up for me." I do not say so. I tell you nothing of the kind.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ a man must have, beyond all question, if he is to be saved. I know no other way of access to the Father. I see no intimation of mercy, excepting through Christ. A man must feel his sins and lost estate,—must come to Jesus for pardon and salvation,—must rest his hope on Him, and on Him alone. But if he only has faith to do this, however weak and feeble that faith may be, I will engage, from Scripture warrants, he shall not miss heaven.

Never, never let us curtail the freeness of the glorious Gospel, or clip its fair proportions. Never let us make the gate more strait and the way more narrow than pride and love of sin have made it already. The Lord Jesus is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. He does not regard the quantity of faith, but the quality. He does not measure its degree, but its truth. He will not break any bruised reed, nor quench any smoking flax. He will never let it be said that any perished at the foot of the cross. "Him that cometh unto Me," He says, "I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37.)[6](#)

Yes, reader: though a man's faith be no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, if it only brings him to Christ, and enables him to touch the hem of His garment, he shall be saved,—saved as surely as the oldest saint in paradise; saved as completely and eternally as Peter, or John, or Paul. There are degrees in our sanctification. In our justification there are none. What is written, is written, and shall never fail: "Whosoever believeth on Him,"—not whosoever has a strong and mighty faith,—"Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." (Rom. 10:11.)

But all this time, I would have you take notice, the poor soul may have no full assurance of his pardon and acceptance with God. He may be troubled with fear upon fear, and doubt upon doubt. He may have many a question, and many an anxiety,—many a struggle, and many a misgiving,—clouds and darkness,—storm and tempest to the very end.

I will engage, I repeat, that bare simple faith in Christ shall save a man, though he may never attain to assurance; but I will not engage it shall bring him to heaven with strong and abounding consolations. I will engage it shall land him safe in harbour; but I will not engage he shall enter that harbour in full sail, confident and rejoicing. I shall not be surprised if he reaches his desired haven weather-beaten and tempest-tossed,

scarcely realizing his own safety, till he opens his eyes in glory.

Reader, I believe it is of great importance to keep in view this distinction between faith and assurance. It explains things which an inquirer in religion sometimes finds it hard to understand.

Faith, let us remember, is the root, and assurance is the flower. Doubtless you can never have the flower without the root; but it is no less certain you may have the root and not the flower.

Faith is that poor trembling woman who came behind Jesus in the press and touched the hem of His garment. (Mark 5:27.) Assurance is Stephen standing calmly in the midst of his murderers, and saying, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7:56.)

Faith is the penitent thief, crying, "Lord, remember me." (Luke 23:42.) Assurance is Job, sitting in the dust, covered with sores, and saying, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." (Job 19:25.) "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." (Job 13:15.)

Faith is Peter's drowning cry, as he began to sink "Lord, save me." (Matt. 14:30.) Assurance is that same Peter declaring before the Council in after-times, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:11-12.)

Faith is the anxious, trembling voice, "Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief." (Mark 9:24.) Assurance is the confident challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. 8:33-34.) Faith is Saul praying in the house of Judas at Damascus, sorrowful, blind, and alone. (Acts 9:11.) Assurance is Paul, the aged prisoner, looking calmly into the grave, and saying, "I know whom I have believed. There is a crown laid up for me." (2 Tim. 1:12; 4:8.)

Faith is life. How great the blessing! Who can tell the gulf between life and death? And yet life may be weak, sickly, unhealthy, painful, trying, anxious, worn, burdensome, joyless, smileless to the very end. Assurance is more than life. It is health, strength, power, vigour, activity, energy, manliness, beauty.

Reader, it is not a question of saved or not saved that lies before us, but of privilege or no privilege.—It is not a question of peace or no peace, but of great peace or little peace.—It is not a question between the wanderers of this world and the school of Christ: it is one that belongs only to the school;—it is between the first form and the last.

He that has faith does well. Happy should I be, if I thought all readers of this tract had

it. Blessed, thrice blessed are they that believe. They are safe. They are washed. They are justified. They are beyond the power of hell. Satan, with all his malice, shall never pluck them out of Christ's hand.

But he that has assurance does far better,—sees more, feels more, knows more, enjoys more, has more days like those spoken of in Deuteronomy: even "the days of heaven upon the earth." (Deut. 11:21.)⁷

III. I pass on to the third thing of which I spoke. I will give you some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.

I ask your attention to this point especially. I heartily wish that assurance was more sought after than it is. Too many among those who believe begin doubting and go on doubting, live doubting and die doubting, and go to heaven in a kind of mist.

It will ill become me to speak in a slighting way of "hopes" and "trusts." But I fear many of us sit down content with them, and go no farther. I should like to see fewer "peradventurers" in the Lord's family, and more who could say, "I know and am persuaded." Oh, that all believers would covet the best gifts, and not be content with less! Many miss the full tide of blessedness the Gospel was meant to convey. Many keep themselves in a low and starved condition of soul, while their Lord is saying, "Eat and drink abundantly, O beloved. Ask and receive, that your joy may be full." (Cant. 5:1. John 16:24.)

1. Let us remember, then, for one thing, that assurance is to be desired, because of the present comfort and peace it affords.

Doubts and fears have power to spoil much of the happiness of a true believer in Christ. Uncertainty and suspense are bad enough in any condition,—in the matter of our health, our property, our families, our affections, our earthly callings,—but never so bad as in the affairs of our souls. And so long as a believer cannot get beyond "I hope" and "I trust," he manifestly feels a degree of uncertainty about his spiritual state. The very words imply as much. He says, "I hope," because he dares not say, "I know."

Now assurance goes far to set a child of God free from this painful kind of bondage, and thus ministers mightily to his comfort. It enables him to feel that the great business of life is a settled business, the great debt a paid debt, the great disease a healed disease, and the great work a finished work; and all other business, diseases, debts, and works, are then by comparison small. In this way assurance makes him patient in tribulation, calm under bereavements, unmoved in sorrow, not afraid of evil tidings; in every condition content, for it gives him a **FIXEDNESS** of heart. It sweetens his bitter cups, it lessens the burden of his crosses, it smoothes the rough places over

which he travels, and it lightens the valley of the shadow of death. It makes him always feel that he has something solid beneath his feet, and something firm under his hands,—a sure friend by the way, and a sure home at the end.[8](#)

Assurance will help a man to bear poverty and loss. It will teach him to say, "I know that I have in heaven a better and more enduring substance. Silver and gold have I none, but grace and glory are mine, and these can never make themselves wings and flee away. Though the fig tree shall not blossom, yet I will rejoice in the Lord." (Habak. 3:17-18.)

Assurance will support a child of God under the heaviest bereavements, and assist him to feel "It is well." An assured soul will say, "Though beloved ones are taken from me, yet Jesus is the same, and is alive for evermore. Though my house be not as flesh and blood could wish, yet I have an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." (2 Kings 4:26; Heb. 13:8; 2 Sam. 23:5.)

Assurance will enable a man to praise God, and be thankful, even in a prison, like Paul and Silas at Philippi. It can give a believer songs even in the darkest night, and joy when all things seem going against him. (Job 21:10; Psalm 42:8.)[9](#)

Assurance will enable a man to sleep with the full prospect of death on the morrow, like Peter in Herod's dungeon. It will teach him to say, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." (Psalm 4:8.)

Assurance can make a man rejoice to suffer shame for Christ's sake, as the Apostles did. It will remind him that he may "rejoice and be exceeding glad" (Matt. 5:12), and that there is in heaven an exceeding weight of glory that shall make amends for all. (2 Cor. 4:17.)

Assurance will enable a believer to meet a violent and painful death without fear, as Stephen did in the beginning of Christ's Church, and as Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and Taylor did in our own land. It will bring to his heart the texts, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." (Luke 12:4.) "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59.)[10](#)

Assurance will support a man in pain and sickness, make all his bed, smooth down his dying pillow. It will enable him to say, "If my earthly house fail, I have a building of God." (2 Cor. 5:1.) "I desire to depart and be with Christ." (Phil. 1:23.) "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." (Psalm 73:26.)[11](#)

Reader, the comfort assurance can give in the hour of death is a point of great importance. Believe me, you will never think assurance so precious as when your turn comes to die.

In that awful hour, there are few believers who do not find out the value and privilege of an "assured hope," whatever they may have thought about it during their lives. General "hopes" and "trusts" are all very well to live upon, while the sun shines, and the body is strong: but when you come to die, you will want to be able to say, "I know" and "I feel."

Believe me, Jordan is a cold stream, and we have to cross it alone. No earthly friend can help us. The last enemy, even death, is a strong foe. When our souls are departing there is no cordial like the strong wine of assurance.

There is a beautiful expression in the Prayer-book service for the Visitation of the Sick: "The Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in Him, be now and evermore thy defence, and make thee know and feel that there is none other name under heaven, through whom thou mayest receive health and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The compilers of that service showed great wisdom there. They saw that when the eyes grow dim, and the heart grows faint, and the spirit is on the eve of departing, there must then be knowing and feeling what Christ has done for us, or else there cannot be perfect peace.[12](#)

2. Let us remember, for another thing, that assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make a Christian an active working Christian.

None, generally speaking, do so much for Christ on earth as those who enjoy the fullest confidence of a free entrance into heaven. That sounds wonderful, I dare say, but it is true.

A believer who lacks an assured hope will spend much of his time in inward searchings of heart about his own state. Like a nervous, hypochondriacal person, he will be full of his own ailments, his own doubtings and questionings, his own conflicts and corruptions. In short, you will often find he is so taken up with this internal warfare that he has little leisure for other things, little time to work for God.

Now a believer, who has, like Paul, an assured hope, is free from these harassing distractions. He does not vex his soul with doubts about his own pardon and acceptance. He looks at the everlasting covenant sealed with blood, at the finished work and never-broken word of his Lord and Saviour, and therefore counts his salvation a settled thing. And thus he is able to give an undivided attention to the work of the Lord, and so in the long run to do more.[13](#)

Take, for an illustration of this, two English emigrants, and suppose them set down side by side in New Zealand or Australia. Give each of them a piece of land to clear and

cultivate. Let the portions allotted to them be the same both in quantity and quality. Secure that land to them by every needful legal instrument; let it be conveyed as freehold to them and theirs for ever; let the conveyance be publicly registered, and the property made sure to them by every deed and security that man's ingenuity can devise.

Suppose, then, that one of them shall set to work to bring his land into cultivation, and labour at it day after day without intermission or cessation.

Suppose, in the meanwhile, that the other shall be continually leaving his work, and going repeatedly to the public registry to ask whether the land really is his own,—whether there is not some mistake,—whether, after all, there is not some flaw in the legal instruments which conveyed it to him.

The one shall never doubt his title, but just work diligently on.

The other shall hardly ever feel sure of his title, and spend half his time in going to Sydney, or Melbourne, or Auckland with needless inquiries about it.

Which, now, of these two men will have made most progress in a year's time? Who will have done the most for his land, got the greatest breadth of soil under tillage, have the best crops to show, be altogether the most prosperous?

Reader, you know as well as I do. I need not supply an answer. There can only be one reply. Undivided attention will always attain the greatest success.

It is much the same in the matter of our title to "mansions in the skies." None will do so much for the Lord who bought him as the believer who sees his title clear, and is not distracted by unbelieving hesitations. The joy of the Lord will be that man's strength. "Restore unto me," says David, "the joy of Thy salvation; then will I teach transgressors Thy ways." (Psalm 51:12.)

Never were there such working Christians as the Apostles. They seemed to live to labour. Christ's work was truly their meat and drink. They counted not their lives dear to themselves. They spent and were spent. They laid down ease, health, and worldly comfort, at the foot of the cross. And one grand cause of this, I believe, was their assured hope. They were men who could say, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." (1 John v. 19.)

3. Let us remember, for another thing, that assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make a Christian a decided Christian.

Indecision and doubt about our own state in God's sight is a grievous one, and the mother of many evils. It often produces a wavering and unstable walk in following the

Lord. Assurance helps to cut many a knot, and to make the path of Christian duty clear and plain.

Many, of whom we feel hopes that they are God's children, and have true grace, however weak, are continually perplexed with doubts on points of practice. "Should we do such and such a thing? Shall we give up this family custom? Ought we to go into that company? How shall we draw the line about visiting? What is to be the measure of our dressing and our entertainments? Are we never, under any circumstances, to dance, never to touch a card, never to attend parties of pleasure?" These are a kind of questions which seem to give them constant trouble. And often, very often, the simple root of their perplexity is, that they do not feel assured they are themselves children of God. They have not yet settled the point, which side of the gate they are on. They do not know whether they are inside the ark or not.

That a child of God ought to act in a certain decided way they quite feel, but the grand question is, "Are they children of God themselves?" If they only felt they were so, they would go straightforward, and take a decided line. But not feeling sure about it, their conscience is forever hesitating and coming to a dead lock. The devil whispers, "Perhaps, after all, you are only a hypocrite: what right have you to take a decided course? Wait till you are really a Christian." And this whisper too often turns the scale, and leads on to some miserable compromise, or wretched conformity to the world.

Reader, I believe you have here one chief reason why so many in this day are inconsistent, trimming, unsatisfactory, and half-hearted in their conduct about the world. Their faith fails. They feel no assurance that they are Christ's, and so feel a hesitancy about breaking with the world. They shrink from laying aside all the ways of the old man, because they are not quite confident they have put on the new. Depend on it, one secret cause of halting between two opinions is want of assurance. When people can say decidedly, "The Lord He is the God," their course becomes very clear. (1 Kings 18:39.)

4. Let us remember, finally, that assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make the holiest Christians.

This, too, sounds wonderful and strange, and yet it is true. It is one of the paradoxes of the Gospel, contrary, at first sight, to reason and common sense, and yet it to a fact. Cardinal Bellarmine was seldom more wide of the truth than when he said, "Assurance tends to carelessness and sloth." He that is freely forgiven by Christ will always do much for Christ's glory, and he that enjoys the fullest assurance of this forgiveness will ordinarily keep up the closest walk with God. It is a faithful saying in 1 John 3:3: "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure." A hope that does not purify is a mockery, a delusion, and a snare.¹⁴

None are so likely to maintain a watchful guard over hearts and lives as those who know the comfort of living in near communion with God. They feel their privilege, and will fear losing it. They will dread falling from their high estate, and marring their own comforts, by bringing clouds between themselves and Christ. He that goes on a journey with little money about him takes little thought of danger, and cares little how late he travels. He, on the contrary, that carries gold and jewels will be a cautious traveller. He will look well to his roads, his house, and his company, and run no risks. The fixed stars are those that tremble most. The man that most fully enjoys the light of God's reconciled countenance, will be a man tremblingly afraid of losing its blessed consolations, and jealously fearful of doing anything to grieve the Holy Ghost.

Reader, I commend these four points to your serious consideration. Would you like to feel the everlasting arms around you, and to hear the voice of Jesus daily drawing nigh to your soul, and saying, "I am thy salvation"?—Would you like to be a useful labourer in the vineyard in your day and generation?—Would you be known of all men as a bold, firm, decided, single-eyed, uncompromising follower of Christ?—Would you be eminently spiritually-minded and holy?—I doubt not some readers will say, "These are the very things our hearts desire. We long for them. We pant after them: but they seem far from us."

Now, has it never struck you that your neglect of assurance may possibly be the main secret of all your failures,—that the low measure of faith which satisfies you may be the cause of your low degree of peace? Can you think it a strange thing that your graces are faint and languishing, when faith, the root and mother of them all, is allowed to remain feeble and weak?

Take my advice this day. Seek an increase of faith. Seek an assured hope of salvation like the Apostle Paul's. Seek to obtain a simple, childlike confidence in God's promises. Seek to be able to say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed: I am persuaded that He is mine, and I am His."

You have very likely tried other ways and methods and completely failed. Change your plan. Go upon another tack. Lay aside your doubts. Lean more entirely on the Lord's arm. Begin with implicit trusting. Cast aside your faithless backwardness to take the Lord at His word. Come and roll yourself, your soul, and your sins upon your gracious Saviour. Begin with simple believing, and all other things shall soon be added to you.¹⁵

IV. I come now to the last thing of which I spoke. I promised to point out to you some probable causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained. I will do it very shortly.

This is a very serious question, and ought to raise in all great searchings of heart. Few, certainly, of Christ's people seem to reach up to this blessed spirit of assurance. Many

comparatively believe, but few are persuaded. Many comparatively have saving faith, but few that glorious confidence which shines forth in the language of St. Paul. That such is the case, I think we must all allow.

Now, why is this so?—Why is a thing which two Apostles have strongly enjoined us to seek after, a thing of which few believers have any experimental knowledge? Why is an assured hope so rare?

I desire to offer a few suggestions on this point, with all humility. I know that many have never attained assurance, at whose feet I would gladly sit both in earth and heaven. Perhaps the Lord sees something in the natural temperament of some of His children, which makes assurance not good for them. Perhaps, in order to be kept in spiritual health, they need to be kept very low. God only knows. Still, after every allowance, I fear there are many believers without an assured hope, whose case may too often be explained by causes such as these.

1. One most common cause, I suspect, is a defective view of the doctrine of justification.

I am inclined to think that justification and sanctification are insensibly confused together in the minds of many believers. They receive the Gospel truth,—that there must be something done **IN US**, as well as something done **FOR US**, if we are true members of Christ; and so far they are right. But, then, without being aware of it, perhaps, they seem to imbibe the idea that their justification is, in some degree, affected by something within themselves. They do not clearly see that Christ's work, not their own work,—either in whole or in part, either directly or indirectly,—is the alone ground of our acceptance with God; that justification is a thing entirely without us, for which nothing whatever is needful on our part but simple faith,—and that the weakest believer is as fully and completely justified as the strongest.[16](#)

Many appear to forget that we are saved and justified as sinners, and only sinners; and that we never can attain to anything higher, if we live to the age of Methuselah. Redeemed sinners, justified sinners, and renewed sinners doubtless we must be,—but sinners, sinners, sinners, always to the very last. They do not seem to comprehend that there is a wide difference between our justification and our sanctification. Our justification is a perfect finished work, and admits of no degrees. Our sanctification is imperfect and incomplete, and will be to the last hour of our life. They appear to expect that a believer may at some period of his life be in a measure free from corruption, and attain to a kind of inward perfection. And not finding this angelic state of things in their own hearts, they at once conclude there must be something very wrong in their state. And so they go mourning all their days,—oppressed with fears that they have no part or lot in Christ, and refusing to be comforted.

Reader, consider this point well. If any believing soul desires assurance, and has not got it, let him ask himself, first of all, if he is quite sure he is sound in the faith, if his loins are thoroughly "girt about with truth," and his eyes thoroughly clear in the matter of justification. He must know what it is simply to believe before he can expect to feel assured.

Believe me, the old Galatian heresy is the most fertile source of error, both in doctrine and in practice. Seek clearer views of Christ, and what Christ has done for you. Happy is the man who really understands justification by faith without the deeds of the law.

2. Another common cause of the absence of assurance is, slothfulness about growth in grace.

I suspect many true believers hold dangerous and unscriptural views on this point: I do not of course mean intentionally, but they do hold them. Many appear to me to think that once converted, they have little more to attend to, and that a state of salvation is a kind of easy chair, in which they may just sit still, lie back, and be happy. They seem to fancy that grace is given them that they may enjoy it, and they forget that it is given, like a talent, to be used, employed, and improved. Such persons lose sight of the many direct injunctions "to increase,—to grow,—to abound more and more,—to add to our faith," and the like; and in this little-doing condition, this sitting-still state of mind, I never marvel that they miss assurance.

I believe it ought to be our continual aim and desire to go forward; and our watchword at the beginning of every year should be, "More and more" (1 Thess. 4:1): more knowledge,—more faith,—more obedience,—more love. If we have brought forth thirty-fold, we should seek to bring forth sixty, and if we have brought forth sixty, we should strive to bring forth a hundred. The will of the Lord is our sanctification, and it ought to be our will too. (Matt. 13: 23; 1 Thess. 4:3.)

One thing, at all events, we may depend upon,—there is an inseparable connection between diligence and assurance. "Give diligence," says Peter, "to make your calling and election sure." (2 Peter 1:10.) "We desire," says Paul, "that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." (Heb. 6:11.) "The soul of the diligent," says Solomon, "shall be made fat." (Prov. 13:4.) There is much truth in the old maxim of the Puritans: "Faith of adherence comes by hearing, but faith of assurance comes not without doing."

Reader, mark my words. Are you one of those who desires assurance, but have not got it? You will never get it without diligence, however much you may desire it. There are no gains without pains in spiritual things, any more than in temporal. "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing." (Prov. 13:4.)[17](#)

3. Another common cause of a want of assurance is, an inconsistent walk in life.

With grief and sorrow I feel constrained to say, I fear nothing in this day more frequently prevents men attaining an assured hope than this. The stream of professing Christianity is far wider than it formerly was, and I am afraid we must admit, at the same time, it is much less deep.

Inconsistency of life is utterly destructive of peace of conscience. The two things are incompatible. They cannot and they will not go together. If you will have your besetting sins, and cannot make up your minds to give them up; if you will shrink from cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye, when occasion requires it, I will engage you will have no assurance.

A vacillating walk,—a backwardness to take a bold and decided line,—a readiness to conform to the world, a hesitating witness for Christ,—a lingering tone of religion,—all these make up a sure receipt for bringing a blight upon the garden of your soul.

It is vain to suppose you will feel assured and persuaded of your own pardon and acceptance with God, unless you count all God's commandments concerning all things to be right, and hate every sin, whether great or small. (Psalm 119:128.) One Achan allowed in the camp of your heart will weaken your hands, and lay your consolations low in the dust. You must be daily sowing to the Spirit, if you are to reap the witness of the Spirit. You will not find and feel that all the Lord's ways are ways of pleasantness, unless you labour in all your ways to please the Lord.[18](#)

I bless God our salvation in no wise depends on our own works. By grace we are saved,—not by works of righteousness,—through faith,—without the deeds of the law. But I never would have any believer for a moment forget that our SENSE of salvation depends much on the manner of our living. Inconsistency will dim your eyes, and bring clouds between you and the sun. The sun is the same behind the clouds, but you will not be able to see its brightness or enjoy its warmth, and your soul will be gloomy and cold. It is in the path of well doing that the day-spring of assurance will visit you, and shine down upon your heart.

"The secret of the Lord," says David, "is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm 25:14.)

"To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." (Psalm 50:23.)

"Great peace have they which love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them." (Psalm 119:165.)

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (1

John 1:7.)

"Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." (1 John 3:18-19.)

"Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (1 John 2:3.)

Paul was a man who exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. (Acts 24:16.) He could say with boldness, "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith." I do not wonder that the Lord enabled him to add with confidence, "Henceforth there is a crown laid up for me, and the Lord shall give it me at that day."

Reader, if any believer in the Lord Jesus desires assurance, and has not got it, let him think over this point also. Let him look at his own heart, look at his own conscience, look at his own life, look at his own ways, look at his own home. And perhaps when he has done that, he will be able to say, "There is a cause why I have no assured hope."

I leave the three matters I have just mentioned to your own private consideration. I am sure they are worth examining. May you examine them honestly. And may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

1. And now, in closing this important inquiry, let me speak first to those readers who have not given themselves to the Lord, who have not yet come out from the world, chosen the good part, and followed Christ.

I ask you, then, to learn from this subject the privileges and comforts of a true Christian.

I would not have you judge of the Lord Jesus Christ by His people. The best of servants can give you but a faint idea of that glorious Master. Neither would I have you judge of the privileges of His kingdom by the measure of comfort to which many of His people attain. Alas, we are most of us poor creatures! We come short, very short, of the blessedness we might enjoy. But, depend upon it, there are glorious things in the city of our God, which they who have an assured hope taste, even in their life-time. There are lengths and breadths of peace and consolation there, which it has not entered into your heart to conceive. There is bread enough and to spare in our Father's house, though many of us certainly eat but little of it, and continue weak. But the fault must not be laid to our Master's charge: it is all our own.

And, after all, the weakest child of God has a mine of comforts within him, of which you know nothing. You see the conflicts and tossings of the surface of his heart, but you see not the pearls of great price which are hidden in the depths below. The

feeblest member of Christ would not change conditions with you. The believer who possesses the least assurance is far better off than you are. He has a hope, however faint, but you have none at all. He has a portion that will never be taken from him, a Saviour that will never forsake him, a treasure that fadeth not away, however little he may realize it all at present. But, as for you, if you die as you are, your expectations will all perish. Oh, that you were wise! Oh, that you understood these things! Oh, that you would consider your latter end!

I feel deeply for you in these latter days of the world, if I ever did. I feel deeply for those whose treasure is all on earth, and whose hopes are all on this side the grave. Yes: when I see old kingdoms and dynasties shaking to the very foundation,—when I see, as we all saw a few years ago, kings, and princes, and rich men, and great men fleeing for their lives, and scarce knowing where to hide their heads,—when I see property dependent on public confidence melting like snow in spring, and public stocks and funds losing their value,—when I see these things I feel deeply for those who have no better portion than this world can give them, and no place in that kingdom that cannot be removed.[19](#)

Take advice of a minister of Christ this very day. Seek durable riches,—a treasure that cannot be taken from you,—a city which hath lasting foundations. Do as the Apostle Paul did. Give yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek that incorruptible crown He is ready to bestow. Take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him. Come away from a world which will never really satisfy you, and from sin which will bite like a serpent if you cling to it, at last. Come to the Lord Jesus as lowly sinners, and He will receive you, pardon you, give you His renewing Spirit, fill you with peace. This shall give you more real comfort than the world has ever done. There is a gulf in your heart which nothing but the peace of Christ can fill. Enter in and share our privileges. Come with us, and sit down by our side.

2. Lastly, let me turn to all believers who read these pages, and speak to them a few words of brotherly counsel.

The main thing that I urge upon you is this,—if you have not got an assured hope of your own acceptance in Christ, resolve this day to seek it. Labour for it. Strive after it. Pray for it. Give the Lord no rest till you "know whom you have believed."

I feel, indeed, that the small amount of assurance in this day, among those who are reckoned God's children, is a shame and a reproach. "It is a thing to be heavily bewailed," says old Traill, "that many Christians have lived twenty or forty years since Christ called them by His grace, yet doubting in their life." Let us call to mind the earnest "desire" Paul expresses, that "every one" of the Hebrews should seek after full assurance and let us endeavour, by God's blessing, to roll this reproach away. (Heb. 6:11.)

Believing reader, do you really mean to say that you have no desire to exchange hope for confidence, trust for persuasion, uncertainty for knowledge? Because weak faith will save you, will you therefore rest content with it? Because assurance is not essential to your entrance into heaven, will you therefore be satisfied without it upon earth? Alas, this is not a healthy state of soul to be in; this is not the mind of the Apostolic day! Arise at once, and go forward. Stick not at the foundations of religion: go on to perfection. Be not content with a day of small things. Never despise it in others, but never be content with it yourselves.

Believe me, believe me, assurance is worth the seeking. You forsake your own mercies when you rest content without it. The things I speak are for your peace. If it is good to be sure in earthly things, how much better is it to be sure in heavenly things. Your salvation is a fixed and certain thing. God knows it. Why should not you seek to know it too? There is nothing unscriptural in this. Paul never saw the book of life, and yet Paul says, "I know, and am persuaded."

Make it, then, your daily prayer that you may have an increase of faith. According to your faith will be your peace. Cultivate that blessed root more, and sooner or later, by God's blessing, you may hope to have the flower, You may not, perhaps, attain to full assurance all at once. It is good sometimes to be kept waiting. We do not value things which we get without trouble. But though it tarry, wait for it. Seek on, and expect to find.

There is one thing, however, of which I would not have you ignorant:—You must not be surprised if you have occasional doubts after you have got assurance. You must not forget you are on earth, and not yet in heaven. You are still in the body, and have indwelling sin: the flesh will lust against the spirit to the very end. The leprosy will never be out of the walls of the old house till death takes it down. And there is a devil, too, and a strong devil: a devil who tempted the Lord Jesus, and gave Peter a fall; and he will take care you know it. Some doubts there always will be. He that never doubts has nothing to lose. He that never fears possesses nothing truly valuable. He that is never jealous knows little of deep love. But be not discouraged: you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you.[20](#)

Finally, do not forget that assurance is a thing that may be lost for a season, even by the brightest Christians, unless they take care.

Assurance is a most delicate plant. It needs daily, hourly watching, watering, tending, cherishing. So watch and pray the more when you have got it. As Rutherford says, "Make much of assurance." Be always upon your guard. When Christian slept, in Pilgrim's Progress, he lost his certificate. Keep that in mind.

David lost assurance for many months by falling into transgression. Peter lost it when

he denied his Lord. Each found it again, undoubtedly, but not till after bitter tears. Spiritual darkness comes on horseback, and goes away on foot. It is upon us before we know that it is coming. It leaves us slowly, gradually, and not till after many days. It is easy to run down hill. It is hard work to climb up. So remember my caution,—when you have the joy of the Lord, watch and pray.

Above all, grieve not the Spirit. Quench not the Spirit. Vex not the Spirit. Drive Him not to a distance, by tampering with small bad habits and little sins. Little jarrings between husbands and wives make unhappy homes, and petty inconsistencies, known and allowed, will bring in a strangeness between you and the Spirit.

Hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

The man who walks with God in Christ most closely will generally be kept in the greatest peace.

The believer who follows the Lord most fully will ordinarily enjoy the most assured hope, and have the clearest persuasion of his own salvation.

Endnotes:

1. "Full assurance that Christ hath delivered Paul from condemnation, yea, so full and real as produceth thanksgiving and triumphing in Christ, may and doth consist with complaints and out-cries of a wretched condition for the indwelling of the body of sin"—*Rutherford's Triumph of Faith*. 1645.

2. "We do not vindicate every vain pretender to 'the Witness of the Spirit;' we are aware that there are those in whose professions of religion we can see nothing but their forwardness and confidence to recommend them. But let us not reject any doctrine of revelation through an over-anxious fear of consequences."—*Robinson's Christian System*.

"True assurance is built upon a Scripture basis: presumption hath no Scripture to show for its warrant; it is like a will without seal and witnesses, which is null and void in law. Presumption wants both the witness of the Word and the seal of the Spirit. Assurance always keeps the heart in a lowly posture; but presumption is bred of pride. Feathers fly up, but gold descends; he who hath this golden assurance, his heart descends in humility."—*Watson's Body of Divinity*. 1650.

"Presumption is joined with looseness of life; persuasion with a tender conscience: this dares sin because it is sure, this dares not for fear of losing assurance. Persuasion will not sin, because it cost her Saviour so dear; presumption will sin, because grace cloth abound. Humility is the way to heaven. They that are proudly secure of their going to heaven, do not so often come thither as they that are afraid of going to hell."—*Andrews on 2 Peter*. 1633.

3. "They are quite mistaken that think faith and humility are inconsistent; they not only agree well together, but they cannot be parted."—*Traill*.
4. "To be assured of our salvation," Augustine saith, "is no arrogant stoutness; it is our faith. It is no pride; it is devotion. It is no presumption; it is God's promise."—*Bishop Jewell's Defence of the Apology*. 1570.
 "If the ground of our assurance rested in and on ourselves, it might justly be called presumption; but the Lord and the power of His might being the ground thereof, they either know not what is the might of His power, or else too lightly esteem it, who account assured confidence thereon presumption."—*Gouge's Whole Armour of God*. 1647.
 "Upon what ground is this certainty built? Surely not upon anything that is in us. Our assurance of perseverance is grounded wholly upon God. If we look upon ourselves, we see cause of fear and doubting; but if we look up to God, we shall find cause enough for assurance."—*Hildersam on John 4*. 1632.
 "Our hope is not hung upon such an untwisted thread as, "I imagine so," or "It is likely;" but the cable, the strong rope of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of Him who is eternal ver-ity. Our salvation is fastened with God's own hand, and Christ's own strength, to the strong stake of God's unchangeable nature."—*Rutherford's Letters*. 1637.
5. "Never did a believer in Jesus Christ die or drown in his voyage to heaven. They will all be found safe and sound with the Lamb on mount Zion. Christ loseth none of them; yea, nothing of them. (John vi. 39.) Not a bone of a believer is to be seen in the field of battle. They are all more than conquerors through Him that loved them." (Rom. viii. 37.)—*Traill*.
6. "He that believeth on Jesus shall never be confounded. Never was any; neither shall you, if you believe. It was a great word of faith spoken by a dying man, who had been converted in a singular way, betwixt his condemnation and execution: his last words were these, spoken with a mighty shout,—' never man perished with his face towards Jesus Christ;'"—*Traill*.
7. "The greatest thing that we can desire, next to the glory of God, is our own salvation; and, the sweetest thing we can desire is the assurance of our salvation. In this life we cannot get higher than to be assured of that which in the next life is to be enjoyed. All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave this earth; some saints enjoy a heaven while they are here on earth."—*Joseph Caryl*. 1653.
8. "It was a saying of Bishop Latimer to Ridley, "When I live in a settled and steadfast assurance about the state of my soul, methinks then I am as bold as a lion. I can laugh at all trouble: no affliction daunts me. But when I am eclipsed in my comforts, I am of so fearful a spirit, that I could run into a very mouse-hole."—*Quoted by Christopher Love*. 1653.
 "Assurance will assist us in all duties; it will arm us against all temptations; it will answer all objections; it will sustain us in all conditions into which the saddest of times can bring us. 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'—*Bishop Reynolds*

on Hosea 14. 1642.

"We cannot come amiss to him that hath assurance: God is his. Hath he lost a friend?—His Father lives. Hath he lost an only child? God hath given him His only Son. Hath he scarcity of bread?—God hath given him the finest of the wheat, the bread of life.—Are his comforts gone?—he hath a Comforter. Doth he meet with storms?—he knows where to put in for harbour.—God is his portion, and heaven is his haven."—*Thomas Watson*. 1662

9. These were John Bradford's words in prison, shortly before his execution. "I have no request to make. If Queen Mary gives me my life, I will thank her; if she will banish me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her; if she will condemn me to perpetual imprisonment, I will thank her."
This was Rutherford's experience, when banished to Aberdeen. 'How blind are my adversaries, who sent me to a banqueting house, and not to a prison or a place of exile.' "My prison is a palace to me, and Christ's banqueting house."—*Letters*.
10. These were the last words of Hugh Mackail on the scaffold at Edinburgh, 1666. "Now I begin my intercourse with God, which shall never be broken off. Farewell, father and mother, friends and relations; farewell, the world and all its delights; farewell, meat and drinks; farewell, sun, moon, and stars. Welcome, God and Father; welcome, sweet Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; welcome, blessed Spirit of grace and God of all consolation; welcome, glory; welcome, eternal life; welcome, death. O Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit; for Thou hast redeemed my soul, O Lord God of truth."
11. These were Rutherford's words on his death bed. "O that all my brethren did know what a Master I have served, and what I have this day! I shall sleep in Christ, and when I awake, I shall be satisfied with his likeness." 1661.
These were Baxter's words on his death bed. "I bless God I have a well-grounded assurance of my eternal happiness, and great peace and comfort within." Towards the close he was asked how he did? The answer was, "Almost well." 1691.
12. The least degree of faith takes away the sting of death, because it takes away guilt; but the full assurance of faith breaks the very teeth and jaws of death, by taking away the fear and dread of it."—*Fairclough's Sermon in the Morning Exercises*.
13. "Assurance would make us active and lively in God's service; it would excite prayer, quicken obedience. Faith would make us walk, but assurance would make us run; we should think we could never do enough for God. Assurance would be as wings to the bird, as weights to the clock, to set all the wheels of obedience a-running."—*Thomas Watson*.
"Assurance will make a man fervent, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord. When the assured Christian hath done one work, he is calling out for another. What is next, Lord, says the assured soul: what is next? An assured Christian will put his hand to any work, he will put his neck in any yoke for Christ; he never thinks he hath done enough, he always thinks he hath done too little, and when he hath done all he can, he sits down, saying, I am an

unprofitable servant." —*Thomas Brooks*.

14. "The true assurance of salvation, which the Spirit of God hath wrought in any heart, hath that force to restrain a man from looseness of life, and to knit his heart in love and obedience to God, as nothing else hath in all the world. It is certainly either the want of faith and assurance of God's love, or a false and carnal assurance of it, that is the true cause of all the licentiousness that reigns in the world."—*Hildersam on 51st Psalm*.

"None walk so evenly with God as they who are assured of the love of God. Faith is the mother of obedience, and sureness of trust makes way for strictness of life. When men are loose from Christ, they are loose in point of duty, and their floating belief is soon discovered in their inconstancy and unevenness of walking. We do not with alacrity engage in that of the success of which we are doubtful: and therefore when we know not whether God will accept us or not, when we are off and on in point of trust, we are just so in the course of our lives, and serve God by fits and starts. It is the slander of the world to think assurance an idle doctrine."—*Manton's Exposition of James*. 1660.

"Who is more obliged, or who feels the obligation to observance more cogently,—the son who knows his near relation, and knows his father loves him, or the servant that hath great reason to doubt it? Fear is a weak and impotent principle in comparison of love. Terrors may awaken; love enlivens. Terrors may 'almost persuade;' love over-persuades. Sure am I that a believer's knowledge that his Beloved is his, and he is his Beloved's (Cant. vi. 3), is found by experience to lay the most strong and cogent obligations upon him to loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus. For as to him that believes Christ is precious (1 Peter ii. 7), so to him that knows he believes Christ is so much the more precious, even the 'chiefest of ten thousand.'" (Cant. v. 10)—*Fairclough's Sermon in Morning Exercises*. 1660.

"Is it necessary that men should be kept in continual dread of damnation, in order to render them circumspect and ensure their attention to duty? Will not the well-grounded expectation of heaven prove far more efficacious? Love is the noblest and strongest principle of obedience: nor can it be but that a sense of God's love to us will increase our desire to please Him."—*Robinson's Christian System*.

15. "That which breeds so much perplexity is, that we would invert God's order. 'If I knew,' say some, 'that the promise belonged to me, and Christ was a Saviour to me, I could believe:' that is to say, I would first see, and then believe. But the true method is just the contrary: 'I had fainted,' says David, 'unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord.' He believed it first, and saw it afterwards."—*Archbishop Leighton*.

"It is a weak and ignorant, but common, thought of Christians, that they ought not to look for heaven, nor trust Christ for eternal glory, till they be well advanced in holiness and meetness for it. But as the first sanctification of our natures flows from our faith and trust in Christ for acceptance, so our further sanctification and

meetness for glory flows from the renewed and repeated exercise of faith on Him."—*Traill*.

16. The Westminster Confession of Faith gives an admirable account of justification. "Those whom God effectually calleth, He also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other Evangelical obedience, to them, as their righteousness: but by imputing the obedience and righteousness of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith."

17. "Whose fault is it that thy interest in Christ is not put out of question? Were Christians more in self-examination, more close in walking with God; and if they had more near communion with God, and were more in acting of faith, this shameful darkness and doubting would quickly vanish."—*Traill*.

"A lazy Christian shall always want four things: viz., comfort, content, confidence, and assurance. God hath made a separation between joy and idleness, between assurance and laziness, and therefore it is impossible for thee to bring these together, that God hath put so far asunder."—*Thomas Brooks*.

"Are you in depths and doubts, staggering and uncertain, not knowing what is your condition, nor whether you have any interest in the forgiveness that is of God? Are you tossed up and down between hopes and fears, and want peace consolation, and establishment? Why lie you upon your faces? Get up: watch, pray, fast, meditate, offer violence to your lusts and corruptions; fear not, startle not at their crying to be spared; press unto the throne of grace by prayer, supplications, importunities, restless requests: this is the way to take the kingdom of God. These things are not peace, are not assurance; but they are part of the means God hath appointed for the attainment of them."—*Owen on the 130th Psalm*.

18. "Wouldst thou have thy hope strong?—Then keep thy conscience pure. Thou canst not defile one without weakening the other. The godly person that is loose and careless in his holy walking will soon find his hope languishing. All sin disposeth the soul that tampers with it to trembling fears and shakings of heart."—*Gurnall*.

"One great and too common cause of distress is the secret maintaining some known sin. It puts out the eye of the soul, or dimmeth it and stupefies it, that it can neither see nor feel its own condition. But especially it provoketh God to withdraw Himself, His comforts, and the assistance of His Spirit."—*Baxter's Saints' Rest*.

"The stars which have least circuit are nearest the pole; and men whose hearts are least entangled with the world are always nearest to God, and to the assurance of His favour. Worldly Christians, remember this. You and the world must part, or else assurance and your souls will never meet."—*Thomas Brooks*.

19. "They are doubly miserable that have neither Heaven nor earth, temporals nor eternal, made sure to them in changing times."—*Thomas Brooks*.
20. "None have assurance at all times. As in a walk that is shaded with trees and checkered with light and shadow, some tracks and paths in it are dark, and others are sunshine: such is usually the life of the most assured Christian."—*Bishop Hopkins*.
"It is very suspicious that that person is a hypocrite that is always in the same frame, let him pretend it to be never so good."—*Traill*.

MONERGISM BOOKS

Startling Questions by J. C. Ryle, Copyright © 2017

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub and .mobi Editions March 2017 Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068