

Title Page

Army Sermons.

or

Discourses

Delivered by Rev. R. L.
Dalney, D.D. of Union
Theological Seminary,
Pr. Edward, Va.

in the
Armies of the Valley
and of Northern Virginia

in the years
1860 - 1865.

(I.)

A Warning
Against Secular Prosperity-

A Sermon

Preached, to a great assemblage,
in the 2nd Presbyterian Church of
Richmond, Va. Feb. 21st 1858.

The day before the inauguration of
the Washington Monument of Va.

on

Deuteronomy. xxxii. 15:

"Then he forsook God which made
him, and lightly esteemed the Rock
of his salvation."

[With reference to the whole pas-
sage, from v. 12 to v. 16.]

Is not this the first occasion within the memory of man, when the temporal prosperity of the people was so great and general, that even complaining politicians were compelled to admit it? Agriculture, the basis of all increase, is successful; harvests are abundant, and markets unusually good. Commerce is expansive and progressive; money is plenty. The general standard of comfort in living is constantly improved; and among the wealthy classes, the standard of luxury is rising, with what we cannot call a rapid improvement; but, at least, with a rapid increase. Meanwhile, our modern Ophir continues to pour in its steady stream of gold. Perhaps such a spectacle of national plenty and increase, was never seen before.

Christians are enjoying their full share in these blessings; if blessings they are. They are in the foremost rank of every lawful business, and of every material comfort and luxury; and are gathering a full part even of the golden harvest of California. Besides this, the Church is free among us, in a sense in which it never enjoyed freedom before - Not only has it the fullest religious liberty, secured by law; but it enjoys the

apparent respect of the press, of the government, and of the masses. Surely, "illigion walks in her silver slippers." Such a combination of secular advantages was never possessed before by hebristians.

If any parallel has ever existed, it was to be found, probably, in the era of Israel's history which passes before the prophetic eye of Moses, in the text. His language is in the past tense; but the scenes he describes are future: to the divine Spirit, by which he then spoke, future and past have equal certainty. He saw in vision his people, miraculously delivered from Egypt, casting out the inhabitants of Canaan, possessing their fruitful and cultivated country, entering into the occupancy of houses, castles and towns ready built, ^{and} of teeming farms and vineyards, enjoying the abundant stores already gathered, and the herds of cattle, and flocks of sheep. They found the ^{vats for} wine and oil ~~vats~~ of the ~~Canaanites~~, excavated in the living rock, stored with their rich contents, and even the wilder crags of the mountains, stocked, in their caverns, with the luscious labours of the innumerable bees. Their lands were blessed by God with the early and latter rains; and the results of their

tillage were sure and abundant.

But no sooner were these benefits fully enjoyed, than they produced in the unthankful recipients the usual effects, arrogance, carnality, disobedience. According to the the figure, which was, to a pastoral people, so graphic: "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." This text has been selected, my brethren, as an instance of a sad truth; a truth which the introductory remarks show to be appropriate for our meditation; that Temporal prosperity usually occasions spiritual decline.

Is not the sin of Israel here in accordance with all the experience of the church? Has it ever been able to enjoy such temporal prosperity without being poisoned by it? Let us get the answer to this question from history and from human nature. The past does not furnish an instance, in which the spiritual health of the church has survived a season of high secular abundance. She has survived the sword and the fire. Like the burning bush, she has been unconsumed by persecutions. The power of kings and commonwealths, and the gates of hell, have not been able to prevail a =

5.

gainst her; but never, in a single case, has she failed to succumb, sooner or later, before the miasm of carnal ease and plenty. Then, under Joshua, God "made Israel ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine and milk of sheep, with the fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and he did drink the pure blood of the grape"; what was the result? "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked!" And again, when the talents and virtues of David, and of David's less noble son, had raised the theocracy to the zenith of its prosperity; so that Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating, and drinking, and making merry," when the nation became so rich that "silver was nothing accounted of, in the days of Solomon," how long was it before the apostasy of Jeroboam followed, and the idolatry of the calves at Dan and Bethel; yea, and Solomon's own backsliding?

So, under the Christian dispensation, as long as the primitive church was oppressed and reviled, it remained comparatively pure and active; but from the very date of its establishment by Constantine, when it

received external respect, ease, reverences and honours, began these corruptions, which, in a few centuries, brought on the dark ages. Thence forward, the only communions which had purity or vitality, were down trodden churches like those of the Waldenses. The pure and active churches of the Reformation were born, and grew strong, amidst reproach, danger and strife. As soon as they became safely established, and Providence had given them rest on every side, their decline began.

And where is now the glory of Geneva, of Wittenberg, of Leyden? Obscured by the twilight of Rationalism or Socinianism. Compare the pure zeal, the fraternal charity, the humility, of the Church of England, as it emerged from the fires of Bloody Queen Mary, with its subsequent worldliness, exclusiveness, Arminianism, and Popery. See what has been the effect of outward prosperity and power on the Established Church of Scotland, on Puritanism in New England, and on ourselves. Yes; let us count the feeble and retrograding beat of our own spiritual pulse, and note how much weaker is our own religious life, than in the days of Davies and Terrent.

Looking into man's nature, we shall see some of the reasons for this result. Societies are made up of persons; hence, that which is a customary tendency in the hearts

of individual men, will be the tendency of communities. Now, it ought not to be true; but it is true; (such is man's thankless and forgetful nature) that we are likely to feel less gratitude, as the favours we receive are multiplied. Try it my brother, with any neighbour you have. Send him a present this week; and he will return you his hearty thanks for it. But send him the same every week for three months; and then omit it; and he will almost feel that by this cessation, you have robbed him of a right. It will be well, if his politeness suffices to prevent his intimating so much to you. But we treat God in the same thankless way. We speak of the daily bounties which crown our lives, as his "common mercies". Why "common"? Only because they ~~have become~~ are so multiplied, that they have become habitual. But if they are multiplied, then each repetition should be an addition to our pleasing load of grateful obligation; for each is a new gift from God. But by virtue of a perversion of the law of habit, in our diseased souls, this very repetition causes the bestowal of the blessing to make less impression upon our hearts; so that the sense of obligation is decreased just in the inverse proportion

8

to our debt. Here then, we have this result; that sluggish, thankless indifference to God's love and benevolence, will naturally grow out of continued prosperity -

Second, it is very evident that worldly success stimulates worldly affections. *The more money men have it in their power to make, the more they will love to make money. Gain stimulates the desire of gain. That christians will win success, is usually ensured by those qualities which accompany godliness, integrity, industry, punctuality, economy - But continued success weakens the sense of dependence on Providence; and the too prosperous christian begins to "sacrifice to his drag, and burn incense to his net."

Third; when abundance is acquired, how is it likely to be employed? In alms, and pious uses? Or in avaricious hoarding, or the pomps and vanities of life? Alas, the influences which have just been explained are too apt to decide this question adversely. The same love of gain, whetted by success, and increasingly unmindful of God's kindness,

* "Diva auri famas ipsa pecunia crecit."
Hor.

9.

which wins these growing acquisitions, will very surely determine their perversion to selfish purposes. The new abundance will either be engrossed by the designs of that covetousness which is idolatry; or they will be devoted to the ~~pride of life,~~ "lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Thus comes in luxury, with its self-indulgence, its enervation, its pride, its impatience of toil, its sensual desires; and spirituality dies, as surely as the lamp goes out in the mephitic air of a cavern.

But fourth; there follows the most fatal cause of all: that the danger arising from temporal ease and plenty, is one which leads the Christian away from his fountain of strength, the mercy seat, just in degree as the danger becomes more imminent. The spiritual life of a Christian, or a church, is like that of the roots of a sturdy oak, which grow more tough by the storm, because then they grasp more tightly the crevices of the rock. It is like the refined gold, which must be purified from its dross in the furnace of fire. It is like the strength and hardihood of the soldier, which are formed by exposure and battle. Let the Christian

10

be persecuted, troubled, or afflicted; his trials, by casting down his heart, bring it to the footstool of grace in humble prayer. And there, he finds a strength which rises elastic and indomitable under every oppression, because it is the strength of God communicated to him. Hence it is, that the Christian is benefited by reproof and affliction; and that the fire of persecution has often been the most prosperous element for the church. That which crushes it down, at the same time brings it into contact with the source of might and life. But alas, just when the forgetful Christian is most endangered by pride, fulness of bread, worldliness, and sensuality, then he is farthest from prayer. Let us borrow an illustration from classic mythology. When Hercules wrestled with the giant Antæus, son of the Earth, he was baffled by finding that his antagonist rose from every fall with new strength; so that the more he was subdued, the more unconquerable he became. But at last Hercules perceived that it was because Antæus, as often as he fell upon the bosom of his mother, received new vigour from the contact. And then the God of Strength lifted him up in his mighty arms, so that he could no longer touch his mother.

Earth; and speedily crushed him to death in his embrace. So wrestles this mighty and insidious prosperity. So wrestles Satan now with the church, which he has found by other means unconquerable. Finding that the church has risen with immortal vigour, as often as she has been pressed down upon the bosom of her Saviour, and driven out of her pride and self-dependence by afflictions to the throne of grace by affliction, he now lifts her aloft in carnal abundance, security, and haughtiness; in order that having separated her from the spring of her strength, he may choke her to death in his treacherous embrace.

In a word, since the whole is made up of its parts; the spirituality of the church consists of that of its individual members. But let every true Christian review his own life, and see how nearly his whole spiritual progress has been made in the seasons of trial. Dearly beloved; have not your steps in advance towards heaven been chiefly taken in the season of private affliction, on the sick bed, in the chamber of bereavement, beside the dying couch or the fresh graves of those you love?

To close up this part of my argument, let us inquire whether the aspect of the church does not already betray signs of the fatal effects of an unblest abundance. I point you to the growing and unblest conformity of Christians

12

to the woddly standard of conduct: to the ex-
travagance of selfish and ostentations expendi-
ture, which has now become such, that there
is no license of luxury, in building, equipage
or diet, to which the world rushes in the very
riot of its rampant prodigality, which christians
are not eager to imitate: to the cold, metallic
mercenary spirit, and inordinate greed for
wealth, which seem to be the main-springs
of effort; to the decline of sober, moderate, and
devotional habits of life; to the relaxed stand-
ard of morals which is adopted, alike, in the
realms of business and pleasure. Is there
much religious bustle; much almsgiving?
Alas, it does not keep pace with the means and
obligations, which accrue with our growing
wealth; and there is reason to fear that much
of it is as foreign to christianity, as phariseism
was — as much inspired, in many quarters,
by ostentation and self-righteousness.

Is it not, then, a most sober and literal
truth, that this is a time of more danger than
the time of persecution and oppression? We
verily believe, that splendid is the grace
which carries the martyr to the stake, and
sustains him in his baptism of fire; glo-
rious as is the display of Divine power in a
church down-trodden but indomitable, per-
secuted, but not consumed; the grace which
should carry a church through a season of

continued prosperity and carnal ease, such as we now experience, would be still more potent. The church has often enjoyed the former grace; she has never yet attained permanently unto the latter. It seems as though this were a height of spiritual attainment, which is reserved for the better days ushering in the millennial glory. But the rule is; that grace is bestowed in answer to prayer. Now, while seasons of persecution are seasons of abounding prayer, this era of carnal plenty is a time of prayerless-ness. By how much is the danger more imminent. If then, the approach of oppression or persecution, or the prospect of losing our religious liberties would awaken the voices of the watchmen of our Zion, trumpet loud; what should be the action now, of those "who have understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do"? Should not the teachers and rulers of the church lift their voices in warning, more loudly even, than when Knox called upon his countrymen to stand for their lives against Pope and tyrants? And should not every christian gird himself against the danger, with a spirit more earnest, cautious, and prayerful, than if he were counting the cost for a deadly warfare with persecution? True, ours is a danger which, just now, comes with no clamour, no "distress of nations and

perplexity," or roaring of the seas of popular commo-
 motion. But if it is a danger, the wise man
 will therefore proclaim it with a voice only
 the more urgent and startling; because, un-
 like that class of calamities, it does not pro-
 claim itself. The household which should be
 awakened at the cold midnight, with the
 news that an absent member was freezing to death
 somewhere on the highway, would start from
 their beds into intense alarm and exertion.
 But that frost which was fast freezing their
 brother's blood into a fatal sleep, is a thing
 most quiet and noiseless; as quiet as the genial
 dew! And so, "the pestilence that walketh
 in darkness," with no outward sign or voice,
 but the stillness and desertion of the streets,
 and the muffled roll of the hearse, thrills
 the hearts of a people with as sharp an al-
 arm, as the clamorous voice of war. And
 rightly. So, unless we bestir ourselves with a wise
 alarm and diligence, utterly unlike our pres-
 ent conduct, and entirely above any to which
 any previous church has ever attained, in the
 like case, our present ease will be our ruin,
 and history will date the decline and fall of
 American christianity from our generation.
 But alas! where is the voice powerful enough
 to pierce the ear benumbed with this world's

ly abundance, and to rouse the sleepy, self-indulgent soul of the church, lapped in these folds of seductive ease, to more than the awakened hardihood and prayerfulness of a martyr communion? Can you reasonably flatter yourselves that you shall be an exception to all previous history? To human judgment, your history must be this; either to sink deeper and deeper into formalism, worldliness, heresy, and immorality, with, [perhaps] partial and temporary resuscitations, till our light shall go out in a night which, like that of the seven churches of Asia, is to have no morning: Or else, you must expect to be lashed back to duty and to the throne of grace, by the loss of your abused abundance, and religious liberties, by social calamities and political oppressions, until you are restored, purified, and fitted to promote the work of God. And if God, in his grace, shall deliver you from both these destinies, if he shall sustain and restore your spiritual life while he leaves you your present outward prosperity; then will that display of divine power and indwelling be more truly new and wonderful, than any thing which the church has ever yet experienced. Again I ask, "recalling the rule; 'he that asketh receiveth'; do you think that there is enough prayer now in the church to justify the expectation of such effusions of the Holy Spirit?"

Learn, then, these lessons, my brother: from the truth established - Beware of an un sanctified prosperity. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptations. Be humble. Repine not at loss or afflictions: your Father may see that it is your necessary medicine. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thy increase;" so, by sanctifying the first fruits, the remainder may become holy unto you. (Rom. 11:16) Beware, I repeat, of that abused bounty of God, in which his goodness, which should have led thee to repentance, being perverted, is treasured up as a material of wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. (Rom. 2:4, 5) Hear your Redeemer - King say: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." (Rev. 3:19) But if you will not, then ^{be sure} ~~regard~~ this season of desultory peace, is the time when the bolt is secretly fitting to the string, to pierce your calm, This is the ~~calm~~ sultry, relaxing, drowsy, which precedes the hurricane, when the storm is spreading its dusky wings in silence, and preparing its might to wreck the forests and lash the seas into chaos.

Let me humbly beg my brethren, the preachers of Christ, to accept a suggestion

17.

touching their duty likewise. If you clearly foresaw a powerful assault about to be made upon the spiritual independence of your charges; if you saw the fires already kindling for those who should refuse to bow the knee to Antichrist; how would you lift up your voices! How would you warn, and adjure the slumbering people! Well; a greater danger is upon them; greater, because more insidious, more sure in its mischievous efficacy.

What then, is the remedy for the organized church? By what means is this rescue to be effected, so unusual that it is scarcely to be hoped? We shall find the answer to this question, in asking another: what was God's benevolent design in giving this prosperity? Not, surely, to be a trap and curse to us! This is the secondary use to which his righteous and wise retributions will convert it, if it be abused by us. But surely, he gave it primarily, that we might find our safe and innocent enjoyment in it, by using it for his glory - Here, then, is our escape from its benumbing effects. We must be unlike all the outwardly prosperous churches which have ever gone before us, in the use which we make of our prosperity. We must be as distinguished for our large-hearted liberality, and our expens-

ded plans of beneficence, as we are for temporal riches and ~~prosperity~~ privileges. We must burst forth on every side, into a magnificence of missionary enterprise, as marvellous as the growth of our commerce, arts, agriculture, and general prosperity. We must cast the antiquated measures and standards of christian liberality to the winds. Our prosperity has utterly outgrown them, and calls upon us to adopt new and larger designs. This is our only medicine for the unwholesomeness of our abundance. Thus alone shall we be able to consecrate it and render it harmless. Our only escape is in giving and doing for Christ, on a scale as eminent as that of his liberality to us.

But should God give us the heart to adopt this remedy, how blessed, how splendid would be the aspect of such a church! Such outward means and advantages, armed with such grace, would surely work wonders for Christ, and for man. Perhaps this conjunction; never yet long maintained by the people of God, is to be the precursor of the millennium.

Preface.

This little volume of sermons is offered to my former comrades, and in general, to the surviving soldiers of the Southern armies, as an humble tribute of affection and respect. The primary object of its publication with the author, it is hoped, is the desire to glorify God in Christ, and to bless the souls of men, by giving farther currency, in this way, to the doctrines of redemption. But in consistency with this, several subordinate motives have concurred in prompting it. Of these, the chief one is the belief, that many Christian men, who heard a part of these discourses, when delivered, will read them with a tender and pensive pleasure, as they revive the recollections of the impressive scenes which they will recall, and of the comrades who then worshipped beside us, and are now in the General assembly on high. A second consideration of some weight, is that of self defence. It has been often charged, that the clergy of the South were as delinquent as those of the North, in desecrating the pulpit to political agitation; and that, in fact, they were the chief instigators of the war.

Now, so far as the author's limited reputation has extended, it is well known that no Southern clergyman was, or could be, more thoroughly identified, both by principles and position, with the great movement for the defence of the constitution, made by our people. And if any temptation could be supposed to swerve a minister of the gospel from the strict line of professional instructions, it would be that besetting an army chaplain. The publick may now see, in my volume, what proportions secular topics held in the pulpit teachings of the Southern clergy; and what sort of politics they preached. It will of course be understood, that a collection of twenty discourses must form a very small part of the whole number delivered in the army, in a diversified ministry, as chaplain and missionary. But the selection represents the tenour of my preaching fairly, save that the sermons which have a direct application to secular duties and interests, bear a ~~smaller~~ larger proportion to the others, in the volume, than they did in my ministry.

The reader will also understand, of course, that very few of these sermons were preached from written manuscripts. Where the temple was a forest, or a camp, and the pulpit an empty barrel or a stump, these formal methods were out of place. But in reducing

these oral discourses to writing, no changes have been made, except unimportant verbal ones. Having been preached memoriter from full manuscripts, or from careful briefs, all of which are still in my possession, they were found indelibly impressed upon my memory, as to the whole train of remark. They may now be received as substantially the same which were delivered.

Two discourses are introduced into these "Army sermons," which were delivered before the outbreak of the revolution. The apology for their insertion is, that events speedily gave a peculiar importance to the truths there discussed. In explanation of the predictions contained in these, and a few others, as the 14th of the series, (predictions fulfilled even more speedily and sorrowfully, although not more accurately, than the author feared,) he would say, that he is "neither a prophet, nor a son of the prophets;" but he was guided to these prognostications of coming events, solely by his habit of accepting the sacred Scriptures as an infallible book, and sure guide on every subject on which it professes to treat; and by faithfully and humbly applying its principles to current events, in preference to the shallow and vain-glorious boasts of the humanitarian philosophy, now prevalent.

In conclusion; every intelligent reader outside the late Confederate States, will perceive, from the topics and methods of discussion in these sermons, that the author at least, supposed himself to be addressing highly intelligent audiences. Often they were rough in exterior, travel-soiled, worn with battle and toil, and ill clad, and unkempt; but he always felt that he was, in the main, addressing assemblages of cultivated gentlemen.

And it will ever be his belief, that these volunteer armies of Southern citizens, while including not a few bad men, presented the noblest aggregate of mental and moral cultivation, christianity, manly honour, patriotism, and gallantry, which this age can assemble from the civilized earth. And the author will ever esteem it the chief honour of his life, next to that of belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ, that he served as a soldier and minister of the everlasting Gospel, in these armies; that he shared the dangers of these heroic men on many a well fought field, and followed them to their bivouacs and hospitals, with the consolations of the faith -

Procrastination.

A Sermon

Prov. 27: 1. "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Preached to the 2^d Va. Brigade,
Jackson's Division, Sabbath, April 26th
1862. in Swift-Run Gap. Rockingham Va.

Brethren;

We "know not what a day may bring forth." Man's ignorance of the future is, to the meditative mind, a most solemn and touching thought. Experience projects some light forward into it, by virtue of our confidence in the stability of the laws of nature and causation. That there will be a morrow we believe; and can surmise some of its attendants: we are very sure that it will bring us duties and temptations, and we expect that it will also be marked by some blessings, and by our sins. That the seasons will run their rounds we confidently anticipate, bringing seed-time and harvest, we confidently anticipate. That vice will sooner or later produce misery, we can predict, as safely as though we had the spirit of prophecy-

But a true foreknowledge belongs to none but the Almighty. It is only because there is a God, by whose wisdom and power the regularity of natural laws is maintained, that there is room for the creature's forecast. Were there no divine providence, there could be no rational prognostications among men; for blind chance furnishes no basis for it. But God, the almighty, foreknows be-

cause he has foreordained. That which He wills to pass out of the realms of the possible into the actual, is what makes up the events of time. An event is in the future, solely because it is in God's purpose and will. Thus His foreknowledge is as complete as man's is partial.

This text contains two parts: a fact, and an inference therefrom. That which is first in logical order, is last in the order of its mention. The fact is, that man has no complete foreknowledge, even of a single day. The inference is, that therefore he should not boast himself of the morrow. Let us examine each of these in turn.

I. "Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Your journey through life, my hearer, is like that of a traveller in some foreign labyrinth, where the very next turn may bring him face to face with destruction, or some unexpected bliss. Yet in this dread path he must ever move. He would fain pause; he would fain recoil from the unknown terrors which may people the darkness before him; but inexorable time propels him. He must advance, not knowing but that as he turns the next curve of the thicket, he may meet his fate. He is like the man journeying in Egyptian darkness, over a rugged mountain path. An irresistible impulse com-

4
pels him to advance, but he is conscious that
he moves amidst beetling precipices and pit-
falls, and unseen torrents, whose roar comes
up from the mysterious blackness, informing
his ear of nothing but their nearness, and his
danger. How anxiously do his sightless
balls glare after the light, and his trembling
hands grope in the thick darkness? But nei-
ther sight nor touch gives them any guidance.

It is not strange therefore, that it should
ever be one of the wildest yearnings of the hu-
man soul, to be able to pierce thro' darkness,
and to foresee the future. Witness the popular-
ity of all ~~magical arts~~ the pretended arts of
prophecy, oracles, witchcraft, necromancy, pal-
lismistry, astrology and divination. Nor is this
passion limited to barbarians, nor to ancient
ages. The most civilized races in this century
betray the same passion, as strongly as their
savage ancestors, whenever it is not checked
by the influence of the only true revelation.
Indeed, men justify this craving, and persuade
themselves that a fuller insight into futuri-
ty would be exceedingly beneficial; because, as
they imagine, that which was foreknown
could be better provided for. But the craving
for foreknowledge is erroneous: it is better
that man should not have it, unless he had
also omnipotence. The prospect of coming

5-

evils which he could not evade, would only harrow his soul with unavailing fears.

Or, if the danger were evitable, the knowledge of its certain approach, and of its date, would scarcely avail to stimulate him who was inert under the keener spur of the truth which the text teaches us. He who now procrastinates, while the very uncertainty of the time when danger may befall should be the most reasonable argument for preparation, would ~~scarcely~~ be very sure to practise the same folly, when he knew the actual amount of the interval which he possessed?

To realize the truth of the proposition that we know not what a day may bring forth, we need only to ask ourselves this question: What may not the possibilities of the next day be imagined to include, without any strained or unnatural suppositions? Possibly it may bring to us the news of some national disaster, which may cause all faces to gather blackness. It may inform us of the illness or death of some whom we love best. It may bring battle, bodily wounds, or death to some of those here. It may initiate some fatal sickness in our frames,

which, after a few short days of progressive suffering, may terminate in dissolution. It may possibly bring sudden temptations and sin, even such sin as may finally reseal the Holy Spirit, and thus seal our impenitency even before life is ended. Is there anything improbable in either of these? Or else, the morrow may bring some glad tidings of the prosperity of those we love, of their souls newly born into God, of some splendid military success, of the salvation of our beloved country. These things also are possible, so far as our shortsighted knowledge can foresee.

II. From this uncertainty of the future, we may learn not to boast ourselves of the morrow. This caution I understand as teaching us several connected truths. One is, that since our earthly future is so obscure to us, no temporal possession can be the portion and happiness of a rational creature. For the spirit of man will persist in running forward; foresight and hope are its essential attributes. Man must cease to be man, in order to divest himself of them. Hence, how necessary to his happiness, that he shall have some certain good in the morrow, of which he can boast himself? That good must be found in something above this unstable earth. "There is nothing true but Heaven." How bless-

sed others, to have heaven for our inheritance, and
 God for our guide through this intricate and
 dangerous journey! Without Him, we are
 blind men, staggering along amidst pitfalls
 and precipices, yet compelled to advance.
 "Our way is dark and slippery, and the angel
 of the Lord pursues us." "Surely we are set in
 slippery places." (Ps. 35:6. 73:16.) But he who
 has his treasure in heaven, has heaven's king
 for his guide. He indeed is blind, but his
 divine Leader is omniscient; and so he
 may reasonably boast himself in an im-
 mortal future of security and glory.

Another lesson which God teaches us
 from the uncertainty of the future is, that
 of moderation in all earthly attachments.
 "But this I say, brethren; The time is short:
 It remaineth that both they that have wives
 be as though they had none; and they that weep
 as though they wept not; and they that rejoice,
 as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy,
 as though they possessed not; and they that use
 this world as not abusing it: for the fashion
 of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. 7: 29-31.)
 But foolish man persists in the opposite. He
 wraps himself in the turmoil of business
 and pleasure, seeking to veil from himself by
 the confusion which he creates, the obstinate
 fact that all to which he attaches his idola-
 trous affections, is deceitful. Thus he ensures
 that every sudden stroke which rends these

8.

perishable goods shall tear his own heartstring
with anguish.

But some one may ask; Are we to cultivate a perpetual fear which poisons the enjoyment of the present? Is hope, the solace of disappointed hearts, and great spring of human energies, to be cast away, because it may perchance be disappointed? Are we to be ever labouring trouble from the future, by imagining evils which may never befall us? I reply; No. This is a caricature of that temper which the Apostle inculcates. The text enjoins, not a thankless, morose, and querulous spirit; not a propensity to look ever upon the darker side: not a refusal of present innocent good because there is no guarantee of the future. This is the very result of the inordinate affections which it discourages. It is at one with our Saviour when he says, "let the morrow take thought for the things of itself." But it enjoins the subordination of earthly good to spiritual, the wise diffidence of the temporal, and the hearty embracing and preference of those treasures which "moths and rust do not corrupt, and which thieves do not break through and steal." It is that chastened spirit of Christians moderation, which is born only of renewing grace.

Now, the advantages of this diffidence of temporal good are manifold. It delivers

9.
from much of the pain of disappointment. The greater the momentum with which you pursue the uncertain good, the more violent must be the shock of disappointment with which you impinge against an unforeseen obstacle. There is ~~such~~ a cheerfully disciplined temper, (The Christian knows how to exercise it.) which enjoys innocent earthly good, as sweetly as though its possession were secure, and yet surrenders it as meekly as though its loss were foreseen. This temper, again, if it diminishes the joys of anticipation, (How often deceitful!) will enhance the pleasure of possession by an agreeable surprise. Thus, they who go of set purpose pleasure seeking, are very likely to find little except disappointment. They who make duty their chief object, and thankfully accept such lawful pleasures as fall incidentally along their way, often enjoy much more than they anticipated. But the great mischief of an ~~inordinate~~ ^{overweening} confidence in the earthly future is this: It tempts to neglect the provision for the eternal future. The child, in the sports of summer, forgets to provide for winter. The reckless sailor, intoxicated with the pleasures of the sea-port, makes no preparation for the voyage and the storm. They boast not thyself too much of the morrow.

But third: the most glaring and mischievous instance of this vice is procrastina-

tions. He who promises himself that he will do tomorrow what he should do today, does most flagrantly disregard this heavenly wisdom. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, ^{today} do it with thy might; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

There are three sure results which follow every instance of the postponement of present duty: and these are additional to whatever evil the neglect of the task directly entails. One of these consequences is the waste of present time. Such delays are never practised for the purpose of gaining time, to be diligently expended in some competing duty. This would not be the vice of procrastination: it is, ^{would be} prudent discretion. No: as the motive of procrastination is indolence, so, the leisure of today, thus unlawfully purchased, is very surely wasted upon some unnecessary occupation, or amusement. A second consequence is, that the duty, postponed to tomorrow, will not be done then: for will not the same disinclination which today rejected it, being thus fostered and hurried by indulgence, be still more likely to refuse it tomorrow? And the third result is a self-condemned, restless, unhappy mind. The stolen leisure is never much enjoyed.

But the chief instance of the vice of procrastination, with which the christian

11.

minister has to do, is the delay of the duty of immediate repentance. And on no subject should the warning be lifted up with so loud a voice as this: 'Boast not thyself of tomorrow' for making thy peace with God; 'for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' Each of the three remarks just made upon the folly of procrastination, has its most emphatic application to the delay of repentance. It results in a waste of precious time in earthly pursuits, where all was too short to make the calling and election sure. Each delay fosters and strengthens the guilty repugnance to duty. It dashes every enjoyment with the pains of an uneasy conscience; or, what is worse, sears the heart into a deadly indifference.

But none of these reasons for immediate repentance equals the one contained in the text, in urgency - 'Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' Thou knowest not whether it may bring the precipitation and confusion of pressing events, which will enhance tenfold the difficulties of action for heaven, and give a yet more dangerous plausibility to the pleas of the heart for a future convenient season: whether it may bring sickness or delirium such as to deprive you of the power of thought and prayer, and repentance; whether it may

bring a sudden death, to remove you to ^{12.}
that world where repentance is forever too
late: or whether it may introduce a catastro-
phe so less terrible; the termination of your
day of grace, and the secret withdrawal of
the Holy Ghost forever. "Except ye repent, ye
shall all likewise perish." And there is no
repentance nor remission in the grave to
which ye haste. Whatever risque there is of
your death, Oh Sinner, in your present state,
there is the same risque of your irrepara-
ble perdition. And whatever probability there
is, of your incurring either of these consequen-
ces, by which your repentance will be prevent-
ed, in the lapse of one day, that probability
of everlasting ruin do you run, in postpon-
ing your repentance even to tomorrow. Do
you say, that within the limits of a sin-
gle day the risque is slight? God grant that
it may be so! Yet in some cases it may
not be slight. Were you certain of living
through your three-score years and ten, and
were you sure that nothing would happen, to
their close, to aggravate your hardness and
danger progressively, you might ascertain
by a process of subdivision, your chance of
damnation incurred by each day's delay.
I use the word chance; because to you, sud-
den death has all the uncertainty of chance.

although to God there is no chance nor contingency. The first day of your three score years and ten, which you thus cast upon the ~~the~~ chance of continued life, the risques were largely in your favour; but everytime the die was thrown one element was passed over to the other side of the calculations. Thus the probabilities of safety in even one day's delay are continually diminishing, and turning against you with every day's venture. At length, the day will come, (not distinguished by any note of warning or dread from the previous days,) when those probabilities will be violent against you; and yet another day, when the probability in your favour will be finally extinguished; and you will drop into hell, finding that you have run that little risque once too often. Practically then, the risque of one day's procrastination may not be small: it may be terribly great; and ^{the eagerness} when it becomes so, is known to none but that almighty God, to whom there is no contingency or chance, but all is clear foreknowledge and providence.

Perhaps this reasoning has grated on some pious ear, as though it savoured too much of the profane calculations of the gambler. Well; what is this delay of repentance till tomorrow, but a gambling with your everlasting all, upon the ~~continued~~

chances of uncertain life? The stake which¹⁷
you risque, Oh Sinner, is an immortal soul;
the price which Satan matches against it
is but the beggarly "pleasures of sin for a
season," and this most unequal wager is
cast upon that most hazardous of all uncer-
tainties, the continuance of the brittle
thread of life. Such is the madness of de-
lay in the soul's concerns! But is it only un-
til tomorrow that you are delaying? Or un-
til next year? Until middle life? Until
old age? Then the danger which you incur
is the more tremendous. And who is it, that
so insanely dares this hazard? A soldier, a
man whose very profession it is to face drea-
gers and wounds; whose daily tasks all point
to the field of battle, where death holds high
revel! Of all men, the soldier can with
least reason be thoughtless of his soul.

Would that I could reproduce, with all
the graphic power of a Whitefield, that fear-
ful picture, by which he represented the
rashness of the sinner, venturing imperi-
tent into the thick darkness of the future.
He is like the blind man, travelling over a
champaign, which, though smooth of sur-
face, is scarred here and there with bottom-
less chasms. He has advanced a number of
steps, cautiously feeling his way with his

157
staff over the level turf, until its evenness
reassures his measures, and he begins to
proceed with confidence. But he is uncon-
sciously nearing a frightful precipice, which
heaps sheer down from the sharp brink; and
there is nothing to give warning to the sight-
less man, of the diminishing distance be-
tween himself and it. Every step, so secure-
ly taken, diminishes that distance, even as
it diminishes his caution: and when only
one more separates him from it, his confi-
dence is strongest. That one step is passed
over, and his foot is upon the very edge; But
he knows it not! He heedlessly ^{extends} advances his
staff, thinking assuredly that it will touch
the same even plain. It slips from his hand,
falling so deep down into the abyss, that
no sound comes up from its fall, where it
strikes the sharp crags beneath. Believing
that it has fallen noiselessly upon the soft
turf, the blind man advances one more
step to regain it; but ah: it is just one
step too much. His foot is one instant pois-
ed over the empty void, the next, he seeks
to plant it, as though on solid ground; he bends;
he topples over; and is gone: having time
only to turn to the spectators we look,
ghastly with the flash of a horrible surprise!
Such is the course of him who boasts him-
self of the morrow, postponing his prepara-

tion for eternity, though he knows not what ⁽¹⁶⁾
a day may bring forth.

Is there, now, one unbeliever here, who says to himself; "Yes, I have been unwise; I must no longer tamper with an uncertain future: I must do something at once?" I ask, awakened soul; What is it that you will do? ~~Will~~ You answer, "I will read my bible. I will reflect; I will reform; I will pray; I will begin to obey." I reply: all this is right, provided it be pursued and accompanied with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ was asked: "What must we do that we may work the works of God?" He replied: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom He hath sent." If you essay prayer; let that prayer be the utterance of faith, from the first. If you attempt to reform and obey, see to it that your compliance is the obedience of faith. If you endeavor to feel repentance, let it be that repentance, which is the sister - grace to faith, and which Christ bestows to faith along with remission of sins. Otherwise, your beginning is all wrong; and is but a more refined form of procrastination. Until faith is exercised, nothing is done. For, it is by faith alone that you are united to Christ; and "without him you can do nothing" - Ino. 15: 5.

Christian; boast not thyself of the
 morrow. Think not that this exhortation
 has no application to you. As long as you
 are in the flesh, and not wholly purged from
 the stain of sin, this subtle vice of procrastination
 will beset you likewise. You have
 perhaps, applauded the warning which has
 now been applied to unbelievers, and as an
 impartial spectator, devoid of personal concern
 in the matter, have said well-done to
 the minister. Well; I claim this as your
 admission; by which you are sacredly bound
 to apply this message to your own conscience.
 Is there nothing that remains for you to do,
 for your own salvation, or that of others? Is
 your calling and election made sure? Is
 there no indwelling sin to conquer? Are
 you sure that you are meet for the inher-
 itance of the saints in light? Is there no
 neglected duty to others to be repaired? Is
 there no labour for souls which you would
 fain complete, before you go hence? Then,
 boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou know-
 est not what a day may bring forth. Let
 your loins be girded about, and your lights
 burning; and ye yourselves like unto men
 that wait for their lord, when he will re-
 turn from the wedding, that when he com-
 eth and knocketh, they may open unto him
 immediately. (Luke. 12: 35, 36.)

The Immediate Decision.

A Sermon

on
I Kings. 18:201. "And Elijah came unto
all the people and said, How long halt ye be-
tween two opinions? if the Lord be God, fol-
low him: but if Baal, then follow him.
And the people answered him not a word."

Preached to the 18th Regiment, Va.
Volunteers, in their encampment at Ben-
nevilles, Fairfax County, July 1861.

Decision of character has ever been esteemed a valuable trait. It is the strongest evidence of littleness and triviality of soul, to hang undecided although all the facts and truths on which a decision should be based are fully before the mind. This temper is the sure occasion of disaster. Indecision lets slip the golden opportunity, and forfeits the "blood-tide in the affairs of men," which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Efforts weakly made in inconsistent directions, neutralize each other, and waste their labour. While the double-minded man is hesitating, the man of decision has viewed his ground, has formed his conclusion, and has half accomplished it. Without decision of character, no man was ever successful in any secular undertaking, except by accident, and for a short season.

If indecision is so disastrous in temporal affairs, what must not be its mischiefs in the more momentous concerns of the soul? Here its folly is enhanced, by the critical nature of the interest, the plainness of the duty to every clear mind, the vastness of the stake, and the uncertainty of the time.

It is on this fault the venerable prophet Elijah remonstrates with those Israelites, who

were hesitating between the service of Jehovah, and the seductions of idolatry, under the reign of Ahab and his Phœnician wife, Jezebel. God's messenger seeks to terminate their indecision, by a miraculous demonstration of the claims of his Master. The sacred narrative of his proposal and its issue is one of the grandest pictures of moral sublimity in all history. Elijah seems to have overawed the mind of the vacillating king for a time by the majestic authority of truth, and his moral courage; and he thus gains his assent to a test so fair, that the pretext for objection could not be found. He caused the whole nation to assemble by its representatives, on the side of Mount Carmel, and near the great Sea. This is a lofty range in the west of Palestine, which running straight from the plains of Galilee, terminates in a grand promontory, overlooking the boundless waves of the Mediterranean, and the sinuous coast. At its southern base runs the River of Kishon, "that ancient river", celebrated in the song of Deborah and Barak, which swept away the slaughtered hosts of Sisera; and beyond it extends the great plain, which from this hoary antiquity to our own century, has been the battle ground of contending nations. On this promontory, overlooking the waste of waters, and a range of country equally boundless, and now equally barren with a three years'

4.

drought, are assembled the wicked king, and a great throng of the elders of Israel. On the one side are the priests of Baal and of the groves, nine hundred men, arrogant with royal patronage, gorgeons with all that the favour of their superstitious queen could confer, and drunk with persecution. On the other side is the solitary prophet, worn with fasting and hermitage, clad in his rude robe of camels hair, but distinct with the severe, rugged majesty of the desert mountains which were his sanctuary. He repeats his challenge: Let the priests of Baal select their victims, and let him choose another: Let each party rear their altar, arrange their sacrifice, but put no fire under; and then let them invoke their divinity; and let Him that answereth by fire from heaven, be God. The prophet has now gotten his cunning adversaries away from their temples, on the bare mountain side, where none of the apparatus existed for those pseudo-miracles in which the priests of superstition have ever been such adepts. He intends moreover, to keep up a sharp watch upon their manoeuvres; and he compels them to undergo the test in open day, and with hundreds of curious eyes fixed upon them. But in every thing he gives them the precedence: in the hour, in the choice of the bullock. They slay the animal; they build their altar; they dispose the wood; they place the flesh upon it;

they cry to their idol to interpose: "Oh Baal, hear us." Thus, from morning until noonday, did they supplicate their imaginary God, dancing with frantic, superstitious fury around their altar: "But there was no voice; nor any that answered." Then it was, that the prophet, expressing in righteous sarcasm, his scorn for their hypocrisy and delusion, mocked them, saying "Cry aloud; for he is a God; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened! At these biting words, their phrensy was redoubled, and to their wild cries they added the more sanguinary rites with which, like modern pagans, they were wont to propitiate their savage idols in extremity; and wormed themselves until the blood gushed out upon them.

But it was all in vain; and after their failure was manifest to the most obstinate, Elijah began at length to bestir himself. Inviting the people to draw near and inspect every motion, he repaired the prostrate altar of Jehovah, building it of twelve unhewn stones, one for each of the holy tribes. He slew his sacrifice; he arranged it on the wood: and then, to silence forever the charge that fire was secreted beneath it by some artifice, he caused the victim, the wood, the altar, and the very soil around its base, to be thrice drenched with water. And now, the sacred hour of the evening sacrifice at Jerusalem had arrived: so

dear to every reverent Hebrew's heart, that hour
 at which, for so many centuries, the smoke
 of the fire first kindled from the Shekinah of
 glory, had ascended from the sanctuary to the
 sky, freighted with the penitence and prayers
 of the people of God; the prophet spread forth his
 hands towards heaven, and without pomp or
 frenzy, with all the simplicity and calmness
 of conscious truth, uttered his brief prayer:
 "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let
 it be known this day, that thou art God in
 Israel, and that I am thy servant; and that I
 have done all these things at thy word. Hear me,
 O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that
 thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast
 turned their heart back again." The people stood
 in silent, awful expectation; while the holy
 man looked upward with confident faith: For
 had not the inspiration of the Holy Spirit al-
 ready warranted his appeals? When lo; like a
 flash of lightning from a cloudless sky, the
 fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the victim
 and the wood, and the incombustible stones
 and dust, and licked up the water around
 the altar! Well might the people, at this
 sight, prostrate themselves, and cry: "The Lord,
 he is the God." But did they, for this reason,
 cease to halt between the two opinions, and fol-
 low him? Alas no: the subsequent history shows
 that they, like so many of you, satisfied their

7.
consciences with a barren recognition of God,
and then continued to postpone his serious ser-
vice.

The minister of the Gospel does not pro-
fess to offer you, at this time, such a visible,
miraculous demonstration of the claims of
the God of the Bible. It is not necessary - To the
honest inquirer, the evidences of its authority
are as solid as those arising from a miracle,
if less impressive to the sensibilities. The Scrip-
tures possess an unbroken chain of historical
testimony for their genuineness, such as no
other ancient record can claim - They present
us daily, a miracle of foreknowledge, in their
prophecies, unfolding and fulfilling under
our eyes - Their signs and wonders which they
record are attested by eye-witnesses, competent
and honest, who had nothing to gain, but ev-
erything to lose by attesting an imposture. They
commend themselves to us by an internal
excellence, which commands the assent of ev-
ery conscience. And the results which follow
their track, of souls redeemed, and nations
blessed ~~in~~ to their origin in the skies -
But this argument is not pursued, because it
is supposed that the indecision of many here
is produced by the disbelief of the God of the
Bible.

Let me however, introduce the farther
appeal to your consciences, by an inquiry into

a popular opinion, as to the proper influence of real doubts. Many seem to suppose that if these are sincerely entertained, they relieve them from all obligations, until they are dissipated. They act as though one, because he really doubts, may dismiss all practical concern in his own duties towards God. But is this correct? I argue, that he who doubts a proposition, has some probable evidence that it is true, [counterbalanced, indeed, by seeming objections.] For if there is a total absence of evidence, we do not doubt: we say nothing. Would you profess doubts of this assertions: that there are red men on the planet Jupiter? But now consider, that man is often bound to act on evidence which is merely probable, and which sometimes, on that which is slight. Yea, he may be impelled by the most sacred sanctions to act, and that immediately, by this uncertain light. It may be true, that you are thus bound to act in doubt concerning duty to God. But to doubt implies a probability that christianity may be true. Now, a possibility of its truth begets an immediate obligation. If you admit even a possibility, you are bound to forbear all action, and all opposition, which would be found unwarrantable, should the truth of christianity ever become certain to you. Moreover, you are sacredly bound to pursue,

9.

at the earliest practicable hour, the most thorough inquiry into its claims, and never to rest, until you have either ascertained its certain falsity, or the impossibility of a decisive conclusion. For, if it is indeed true, then you undoubtedly owe it your allegiance, and he who loves his duty must desire to remove that ignorance which, he suspects, obstructs its performance - This may be evinced by a simple parallel. You have had a settlement of intricate transactions with your neighbour. After he has paid you your claims, new evidence reaches you, making it probable that the settlement has been unjust to him; and that certain parts of the sum paid you are his property - Will any man say, that because it is only suspected, and not certain, ~~that~~ therefore you may retain the money, and refuse all inquiry? He who is capable of this, has the heart of a thief. If the suspicion should turn out truth, you would be found depriving your neighbour of his goods: the doubt, as soon as it is awakened, originates an obligation, which every honest mind will admit, to a new and faithful inquiry. So; if there is a suspicion that the Gospel may have claims upon you, you are under obligation to dispassionate and thorough inquiry; in order that if this debt

of faith and love is indeed due, you may pay it at once.

But doubt is all that the skepticks can honestly profess. Skeptick is his proper name. He is one who is not convinced; who sees some proof, and who is considering. He would be a rash man, indeed, who should presume to demonstrate that the Gospel cannot possibly be true! But how different is the temper which unbelievers usually exhibit, from that honest anxiety to have their doubt happily solved, and this dispassionate readiness to discover and fulfil their duty? The petulance, the prejudice, the hatred of the light, the industrious care to evade every fair solution, and to magnify every cavil, which usually characterize them, betray the enmity of the heart to God.

But in those who do not even profess a doubt of the truth of revelation, hesitation is yet more inexcusable. They fully admit that "the Lord is God;" yet they refuse to follow him, and still "halt between two opinions". Among those who profess respect for the claims of the Bible, all those christians are guilty of this halting, who conscientiously neglect any of that effort which is involved in follow-

11.

ing the Lord gully, and making their calling and election sure. All worldly men are guilty of it, who, while they admit the necessity of repentance, faith, and holy living, postpone the day of giving themselves to Christ. To all these, the message of the prophet comes; If the Lord be God, serve Him; but if Baal, then follow him.

The idol which divides your convictions with Jehovah, is not, indeed a Pagan image. It is that universal object of the worship of unconverted men, this world, with its pleasures, riches, honours. For that to which you look for your prime happiness, which you seek with supreme devotion, and in which you rely as your chief good, is practically your God. And now I remonstrate with you; if this world is a sufficient God, if it can satisfy the instincts of a rational soul, and confer solid happiness; if it can minister relief to a diseased conscience; if it can be your infailing solace in the hour of desolation; if it can sustain you against the king of terrors; if it can endow your immortality with everlasting sources of bliss; then follow the world; follow it at once, and decisively, and exclusively. Halt no longer between it and God. But if it is manifestly insufficient for these ends, then turn at once from it, and

follow God. This I urge;

First, because a hesitating and divided service of the two masters is useless and impracticable. Such a life is but time and labor thrown away. Consider who God is; how sovereign, how majestic, how righteous, how jealous. Will he accept a divided heart? a heart divided with such a rival? Remember what the christian life is; a race, a contest, a warfare. Can the halting man win this race? Can the maimed soul fight this battle successfully? When the righteous scarcely are saved, with all their zeal, where shall the hesitating sinner appear? Be sure of this; that such a prize as heaven will never be won by these feeble strivings-

But the world also is an exacting master, and refuses to dispense his favours to any but those who give him the whole heart. If then this is to be your God, why mar his service with this abortive religionism? It is but an uncompensated loss of those "pleasures of sin which are but for a season." It only hinders your enjoyment of the world. It only troubles you with importunate thoughts of the future. And yet, it effects nothing towards the salvation of the soul. If therefore you will not follow God in earnest, it will be much more rational to say, with the Atheist; "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"; than to continue

your halting. ~~Better make~~ It will be better for you to make the utmost of your sinful joys, and then, for the rest, enter into covenant with death, and into agreement with hell.

For, second, this must be the natural end of your hesitation, if its proper tendencies are allowed their course - Let this startling proposition be tried by the homely conclusions of our daily experience - There is a man, whose interests imperatively demand a given conclusion and a decided course of conduct. He has before his mind all the facts which are necessary to determine the case: he has long had them: and yet, he is never able to make up his mind. Months, years roll by, and still the man is not yet decided, but ever going to decide. With what contemptions positive men does every practical man say of him: 'Oh, he will never do any thing: he must be ruined.' There is, as we shall see, excellent reason for this conclusion. Or, let us state the matter thus: our friend employs our intervention to dissuade his reckless son from some manifest improvidence: We use all our skill; we array arguments perfectly decisive of the case, and facts which ought to be absolutely commanding over any sane judgment. We throw all the earnestness of our souls into our persuasion: and all is unavailing - Upon repeat the effort w=

gain and again: but it avails nothing. Still your friend begs you to make another trial. Do you not say, at last: "There is no use: I have no new arguments to use: If reasoning could move his mind, he would have been long ago convinced: therefore in his case it is ineffectual. Shall I repeat the same hackneyed topics? They have already been resisted several times; and if I advance them again, the habit of neglect now formed in his heart, can but ensure their more certain neglect. There is no hope." And you would have most excellent reason for your conclusion.

For you would know that this man, a reasoning creature, could not thus violate the dictates of his own understanding, unless some active cause was swaying his will. Passion, ungoverned desire for the mischievous object, was assisting reason successfully. So, the reason you halt between two opinions, in the presence of motives for godliness as vast as eternity, and as solemn as the miracle of Elijah, is that you are swayed by your repugnance to the hated service of God. But, I pray you, consider whether this passionate enmity to Him remains without increase, while it is thus causing you to halt? Was there ever a passion of man's soul, that did not grow by its indulgence? Can man repeat the same acts again and again, and

10.

not experience that universal law of habit, that what is often done becomes more likely to be done, and more facile to do? Can Gospel motives be thus presented to your moral sensibility, and again and again repelled, without an inevitable blunting of the capacity for impression? No: the smallest experience of the laws of human nature gives the answer to these questions - While you halt, then, the arrows of divine truth, which with their best force could but make you halt - state in your career of sin, are blunted by every ineffectual blow upon your heart. While you halt, every sinful habit grows upon you: every good sensibility is worn and hardened: every ungodly propensity is fostered by its indulgence into more rampant strength: your enmity to God is confirmed in its sway: the tide of worldly cares and occupations absorbs you more and more in its current. Then, the truth which is today too weak to decide you effectually for God, must, by the stronger reasons, fail still more completely and certainly in any future application. As you conclude to day, to postpone; so will you conclude, still more severely, the next sabbath, and the next, and every sabbath; until at length, death will come, and find you still procrastinating.

Some one may say; 'This reasoning cannot be just; for if it were, it would teach that the ~~future destiny~~ of men who have resisted lights of duty as clear and numerous as ours, are already in a desperate condition of soul; and their doom is practically sealed. But the preacher himself does not believe this: for if he did, he would no more continue to urge the gospel on us, than on men already dead, or on devils'.

We reply: true: so far as your own action or the preacher's power is concerned, your doom would be practically sealed by your present choice. Were there not an Almighty Spirit, "which bloweth where he listeth"; whose saving influences you are now doing your utmost to alienate by your halting, your condition would be hopeless; and I, for one, would no more preach the gospel to you, than to those already dead and damned. Surely you are not entitled to count upon those gracious influences to interpose, when you are wilfully rejecting them in your present act! I repeat then: so far as the tendency of your own hesitation is concerned, your purpose to continue it today may be virtually regarded as equivalent to the purpose to die in your sins. But now: if the enemy of your soul stood revealed at your side, [as he may possibly be there invisibly] with all his gloomy terrors,

and urged you with all his fiendish malignity, today to make a final rejection of the grace of God, and to seal his title to your soul forever, and to bid a last farewell to hope, and to embrace everlasting despair, with what horror would you recoil from the ghastly proposal? With equal dread should you flee this day from the tempting ^{pled} ~~voice~~ of procrastination: it is but the same Devil masked and counterfeiting his traitor vice; and if he gains this point with you ~~today~~, he will fly to this pit, to regale his subjects with mocking laughter, assured that the same temptations which have deceived you today will yet more surely deceive you tomorrow.

How long then, will you halt between two opinions? How long will you play the part of the sick man, who knows that his disease is unto death without this remedy, and who yet hesitates and dallies because of the bitterness of the potion. Does the draught grow any the less bitter while you boggle at it? Is not your disease meantime making its steady progress? Up then; before it is too late; and play the man! If you are a reasonable being, you will seize the cup and drain it, as eagerly as though it were nectar.

What think you of the merchant who finds the ship freighted with his wealth overtaken by a storm, leaking and crippled,

and about to founder in the sea? The Master has told him that except she be lightened of her cargo, she must in a little while go to the bottom with all on board: already she is slowly settling; and the pumps fall steadily behind their task. But he cannot resolve to sacrifice his beloved riches: he hesitates, and while they argue that time presses; that if he gives up his treasures he may save his life; but if he cleaves to them he must lose both, he stands wringing his hands, and halting between the two opinions. Is this the conduct of a man, or of an ~~idiot~~ ^{idiot} imbecile? The man of true decision will have already resolved upon the necessary loss: and you shall see him heaving over his precious bales into the deep, as industriously as though he were glad to see them swallowed by the remorseless waves - Thus, O perishing man, cast out of thy heart thy selfwill, thy besetting sins, and thy delays, before they sink thee in the burning lake.

And remember, ~~that~~ that while thou haltest between the two opinions, time halts not! No: it bears thee with its ceaseless roll towards that eternity where hesitation will be forever ended. The rise of your accumulated provocations carries not, moment ever to a more threatening height, until they fall and overwhelm you in perdition. Death halts not, whose inexorable tread is ever ad-

rancing alike upon the waiting saint
and the befooled sinner. Judgment halts
not, but moves forward its appointed day,
close in the rear of the last enemy - Up, then,
soul, and flee today from these advancing ene-
mies; or else, while they halt, ^{zeal} time, and ^{judgm} sin
and death, and hell will overtake thee -

I beseech you to tell me, literally, how
long halt ye between two opinions? What is
to be the duration of your hesitancy? I would
require of you, to fix for yourselves a date,
for terminating this irrational delay - You
are not willing; you say, to accept despair as
your deliberate portion. You purpose and
expect to make the needed preparations for
eternity, some time this side of death. I pray
you, when? Select the proper measure of
time for the continuance of your present
state; and ^{be pleased} ~~request~~ to announce it to us.
Shall it be five years? One year? One month?
Are you sure that you may venture the
infinite stake of a soul upon the un-
certainties of time, for even one month,
without an insane rashness? Will it be
safe for you to bring upon your soul the ad-
ded sins, and obstacles, and evil habits,
of another month, when you feel it already
so obdurate? And dare you insult the
holiness and majesty of that infinite God, or
whose good pleasure your helpless soul must

20.

hang for life and grace, by telling Him that you will outrage his law, and vex His Spirit, and trample on his Son's Cross and Blood, one month more, before you begin to turn to him? Will you venture to invoke His converting grace, ~~to sanction~~ ^{with} such a proposal as this? No: there is no answer to the question but "today," "now." Your own reason refuses to sanction any delay, and tells you, that the only reply she can make to the prophet's challenge, is that of the Scriptures: "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation."

The sacred historian adds; "And the people answered him not a word." The irresistible force of the prophet's appeal left them not a word to say in justification of their halting: so they were silenced. How justly does this incident describe your condition today, in the presence of God's majestic truth, and your own consciences. There is no venerable prophet here, to awe you by the sanctity of his aspect, or by astonishing signs and wonders with which he was armed by omnipotence. There is nobody but a sinner like yourselves, (saved by grace.) But the same message is here, given from the skies, and the same Holy Spirit is here to write it upon your hearts. I take you to witness, that like the men of Israel, you find it impossible to dissent from these doctrines. You know the importance of

an immediate decision of your duty; you know that it has unspeakable, infinite arguments. It has not been necessary that a preacher of the gospel should come, and reason with you, in order for you to know, that it is not right to postpone present duty, to prefer the temporal to the eternal, to tamper with ~~perdition~~ for the sake of a few sinful and deceitful pleasures. Every dictate of your own reason and conscience is on the side of my message.

And yet, you purpose to disregard it! I leave you then, with this final question to ponder: Are you willing to dethrone reason, to abdicate the crowning attributes of your humanity, and whereas God gave you reason and conscience for your guides to immortality, to assimilate yourselves to the brutes, in this most important of all concerns? Will you throw away your own understanding in this one vastest of all affairs, for which above all others, understanding was given to you? Will you be so unwise as obstinately to pursue a course of conduct for which, as you admit, no apology can be uttered? Should God, in his righteous displeasure allow you to go on, until you have reached your doom, how bitter will be your remorse, as you remember that you had not only to resist the ministers of the gospel, the exhortations of your friends, the Spirit of God, but to trample upon your own understanding, and outrage every law of your

22.
own better nature, in order to destroy your-
self?

"How long, then, halt ye between two opin-
ions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if
Baal, then follow him." "Today, if ye will hear
his voice, harden not your hearts."

Preached at Univ of Va. April 1871.

Amherst C. H. July 1871.

at Do. July 1875.

at Richmond Ky. June 1875.

Asheville. N. C. June 1882.

By Dabney Bradford
By R. L. Dabney D. D.

The Happy Service. 12 pt.

An Expository Sermon (8 Point Catechism)

Matthew. XI. 28-30. "Come unto me,
all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and
I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon
you, and learn of me: for I am meek
and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest
unto your souls. For my yoke is easy,
and my burden is light."

Printed in the county of Giles, 1866
Rockport, Va. Published at Centerville,
Fauquier Co. Va. August, 1866. (Mary: 1866)

This world, my brethren, is a weary one. Many of you think not so; I can but liken you to inexperienced youths, who are summoned in the morning to set out on a toilsome journey, and in their ignorance of its real character, suppose it to be a pastime, because the adjuncts of the ~~morning~~ hour of setting forth are pleasant. They are in raptures with the free motion, and the exercise of their own exuberant energies, with the perfumed breath of dewy morn, with the fields glittering with liquid pearls, with the eastern sky bathed in crimson and gold, and with the beams of the rising sun. They loiter along the way in sport, wasting the vigour which they will sorely need ere nightfall. They forget the sultry hours of the afternoon, when this cheering sun shall have put on his fierid heats, the dusty, lengthening miles, the thirst, and hunger, the aching limbs, with which they must drag themselves at evening towards a goal which seems ever to recede.

But no man lives long enough to learn what life truly is, without reaching the convictions, that this is a weary world. We "labour and are heavy laden." How precious and timely, then, is the promise of rest to such

beings? Many of you are weary and burdened with the impossible endeavour to feed an immortal mind with earthly food. Some perhaps are heavily laden with their toils of self-righteousness, while they go about to establish their own acceptance with God, grievously galled by an uneasy, disapproving conscience. A few, I trust, are labouring with the salutary burden of conviction for sin, and conscious guilt. Some of you are wearying yourselves in vain, with the effort to break your bondage under sin in your own strength. God's people among you are ^{oppressed} ~~burdened~~ with the "heat and burden of the day", while they strive, painfully, yet with better heart and hope, "to make their calling and election sure": Many are crushed with sorrows and bereavements, or with anxieties and fears. All these are invited by the benevolent Redeemer, to come and find rest in him. Whatever may be their burden, he promises a gracious relief. How general then, ought not the interest in these divine words to be; and how eager?

When we are invited, "come unto me", we understand, of course, that this coming is not a corporeal approach to Christ's local habitation, which is not possible for us, in the flesh, nor necessary; but the embracing of his redemption by faith. This usage of

the word is too well established in our Saviour's preaching, to need much illustrations. When, for instance, he says, (Jno. 6:35) "he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst, the coming is manifestly faith. The yoke which we are to take up, is the service of Christ. And when rest is promised to those who believe, and who obey, it is not bodily indolence, or sensual ease, which the Saviour offers, but inward peace. He himself defines it in the subsequent words, as "rest to our souls". He may call us to stormy trials for his sake; he assuredly will, call us to diligent, persevering labours for his cause; but he guarantees to us that sweet repose of soul, with which outward toils are light, and without which the ease and prosperity of sin is but a mocking torture. The main doctrine taught us, then, in this passage is, that.

Our Peace is to be found in embracing Christ and his service, by faith.

At the threshold of the subject, we are met by this inquiry: Who is it, that makes this generous offer of rest, to all the weary and heavy laden of earth? Consider how much is implied in it. To fulfil the obligations which is thus ^{assumed} ~~assumed~~ will require no small resources of wealth, power, and love. To succour

The multitudinous evils of humanity is, indeed a ^{mighty} ~~great~~ undertaking. Let us suppose that the mightiest emperor of earth, or the most powerful angel in heaven, had ventured such an invitation as this: and that it had been universally accepted. Before this vast aggregate of the wants and woes of man, his resources would seem to shrink into a mite, and the greatest finite mind would reel and stagger in the mere attempt to comprehend, as all created riches would be absorbed a thousand times in ~~the~~ ^{relieving} the mighty mass. Who is this then, that calmly stands up, and announces to his dying race the audacious proposal? 'Come one, come all, to me; and I will give you rest. Is this the Nazarene, the carpenter's son; the man who had not where to lay his head? How dares he pledge to suffering mankind, he, in his beggary, a relief which Caesar, upon the throne of imperial Rome, with all the legions of her armies bowing to his sceptre, and all the nations of the civilized globe pouring their tributes into his royal treasury, would not presume to undertake? If he is only what he seems, well may scribe and pharisee resent with hot indignation, the insolence of such imposture; and say, this man at once blasphemes God, in assuming a prerogative of compassion which belongs to Him alone, and mocks the miseries of man, by vainly offering to take them all.

Marvelly

upon his puny arm-

Be assured, my brethren, that the holy Jesus would have been incapable of using this language, had he not been conscious that he was not only man, but God. It was because he could claim; ⁽¹⁾ "I and my Father are one." "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." "He hath set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church." Unless the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, and infinite attributes of omniscience and omnipotence, he cannot give peace to mankind. But he is both God and man. Unless the charge of insincerity and imposture can be brought against his character, this promise compels us to receive his proper divinity. And here, my brethren is the foundation of our trust in him. Because he hath in himself all the fulness of the Godhead, therefore we can rely upon his love, power, wisdom and faithfulness, to make us happy in our dedication to him. Thus, the apparent paradox at the outset of his invitation is turned into a noble support of its solidity.

Second; we read assurance of our peace and blessedness in Christ, in the mat-

(1) Jno. 10: 30. Col. 1: 19. Eph. 1: 21-23.

7.

we of the yoke ~~and the master~~ which we are invited to receive. "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Here again there appears to the unbeliever a still greater paradise; He is invited to look for rest in assuming a yoke! It is when the yoke is unbound and the wearied ox is released to follow his own will pasture-ward, that he finds rest. So, the perpetual delusion of the unbeliever is, that he can find his preferred happiness in the emancipation of his soul from the dreaded restraints of christianity, and in this alone - This error, we trust, may be dissolved, by reminding you of a few plain facts. The first is, that there is no such possible alternative for you, as you vainly dream, between the bearing of Christ's yoke, and entire immunity. No; the only real choice, within your reach, is that between the yoke of Christ, and the yoke of sin; of which Satan is the master. Now, if this is so, manifestly, one may be reasonably invited to seek the relief of his toil by exchanging a cruel and unrighteous bondage, for a mild and righteous service. But I repeat: no man is free; or can be: all who do not bear the yoke of Christ, groan under that of Sin and Satan. Such is the testimony of the Scriptures. "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever

8

committeth sin, is the servant of sin." "Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity." They are "taken captive by the devil at his will." (1) I appeal to your own experience: Is the most reckless sinner in this army really free from constraint? I speak not of the bonds of discipline and military duty. But in other respects, is he at liberty to regulate his actions by his own preferences? Nay; how often does his own passion and sin lay him under the most cruel constraint and self-denial? His delusive enjoyments in transgression are often purchased at a heavy cost, and then concealed at the expense of irksome sacrifices of inclination. These are but instances of the pinching of Satan's yoke. Here, then, is the choice which you have to make. ~~A~~ transgressor: not whether you may repudiate every yoke and go free as the wild-ass of the desert described by Job: but, whether it will most conduce to the repose of your soul to bear the yoke of Christ, your loving Redeemer, or of Satan, the soul-murderer. The first is right and reasonable: [your own conscience avouches it.] and your heavenly Master deals honestly, and graciously with you. He lays it upon your shoulder: but he assists you with his loving and almighty hand to bear it; he solaces your labour with the sweetest pleasures of an approving

(1) *Pro.* 8:34. *Acts.* 8:23. *2. Tim.* 2:26.

9.

conscience and heavenly hope: he makes it grow perpetually lighter by the growth of holy habits of soul; and at the end, he converts it into a crown of glory. But Satan, a "liar from the beginning," brings his foul, unrighteous yoke to you, concealed with flattery, and persuades you that it is but a toy. Thus he binds it upon your neck, and when he has fooled you effectually, leaves you to bear it unaided, or mocks you with sardonic malice, while it grows ever more weighty, and having galled you like iron here, crushes your miserable soul at last into perdition. Under which now, of these yokes, will you find rest to your souls?

The second fact is, that it is not apathetic indolence, or sensual ease, which Christ promises, but rest for the soul. It consists of peace of conscience, harmony of the affections, and the enjoyment of legitimate and ennobling exercise for all the powers, ~~of the soul~~. Man's true well-being requires activity. Even an ancient pagan sage learned enough of this truth, to define happiness as 'virtuous energy.' This definition we may accept, if we be permitted to take it in the sense of the normal and healthy exercise of the soul's powers. He who has no rule of life, no worthy aim, no duty, can never be happy, because he puts forth no virtuous energy. He who bears the right yoke, or in other words, has assigned to him the proper activities, is the

man who truly enjoys his existence.

Third; we may expect rest under the yoke of Christ, because of the character of our Master. "He is meek and lowly in heart; and we shall find rest unto our souls." He is a gentle, kindly, tender master. A merciful master makes an easy service. His benevolence makes him watchful of the welfare of his servants, and considerate in dealing with their infirmities. His lowliness of heart ensures that he will never sacrifice the happiness and lives of his subjects in reckless and ambitious enterprises. He is not a tyrant, to drag his wretched subjects, like an Alexander, or a Tamerlane, through frozen wilds and burning wastes, and to pour out their blood as a libation to the idol of his fame. He is the prince of peace, whose sceptre is truth, and meekness, and righteousness, and whose law is love. To his own people, he is the "Lamb of God," who loved them and gave himself for them. How then is it possible, that he, in regulating the lives and services of his redeemed ones, should impose on them any other law than one which conduces to their truest well-being? To dread the yoke of Christ is guilty mistrust and unbelief.

But we shall not acquire the richest meaning of the passage, unless we include the connection of the clause, "learn of me," with

the rest of the verse. Saith the Saviour: "Take ^{11.}
my yoke upon you, and learn of me." What
shall we learn of him? Obviously, we learn
~~him~~ of his meekness and lowliness of heart,
how to take the ^{yoke} and how to wear it. Thus shall
we find true repose of soul. This is but teaching
us, my brethren, that if we would have true
peace, we must imitate the spirit with which
our Redeemer fulfilled the will of His Father,
and love his cross. No more complete and
ready method of proof appears, to establish
this assertion, than to ask you to form to
yourselves a conception of the inward life of
such a man as the Man Jesus. Suppose a
servant of God endued with just his affec-
tion and benevolence, with his unselfish dis-
interestedness, with his purity, with his for-
giving temper, with ^{his} magnanimity, with his
elevated devotion, and moving among us in
the fulfilment of the duties of the Christian
life, under the impulse of these lovely sen-
timents, combined with the social ties ap-
propriate to our nature sanctified: Does not
this, at once, constitute a picture of a life,
than which none can be conceived more
imbued with the sweetness and earnestness
of true happiness? Would not such a life glow
with the very light of heaven's own bliss, amidst
the gloom of our sorrows and sins? Some one
may say, perhaps: Such was the temper of
Jesus; yet he was "The Man of Sorrows." How

True; but it was because he "bore our griefs,
 and carried our sorrows." It was the burden
 of our guilt which pressed upon that pure
 and holy heart. Let us suppose that he had borne
 no load of obloquy, of death, and of divine de-
 sertions for us; that he had enjoyed the friends
 and outward blessings with which our lot is
 crowned; and had experienced no heavier cha-
 tise-ments, than God's fatherly mercy appoints
 to his adopted children here, sustained by the con-
 solations of his grace. Then indeed would his
 life have been one of heavenly peace within.
 And such would ours be, if we learned of him,
 his heavenly temper. Reproach and opposition
 might still befall us, for we should still be in
 a wicked world; but the serene spirit of con-
 scious rectitude and of forgiveness would sus-
 tain our souls in a loftier atmosphere, high
 above the flights of all the embittered shafts
 of malice. Pain, fatigue, sickness, would still
 visit us; but the spirit baptized in peace would
 sustain our infirmity. Our hearts would some-
 times bleed with bereavements; for we should
 still be sinners, although pardoned; yet there
 would be no poison in the wound, for the as-
 surance of the love of the hand which direct-
 ed the stroke, would medicate our pain. If
 then, we would find rest to our souls, let us
 learn to imitate the temper of the meek and
 lowly Jesus, and to bear his yoke with that
 devoted spirit with which he fulfilled his

Father's will in living and dying for us.

Fourth: In the concluding verse, our Saviour gives this crowning argument: "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light; and ye shall find rest to your souls." But this reasoning the unbeliever repels with more incredulity than any thing that has preceded it. The yoke easy; and the burden light! he exclaims? How can this be? Has not Christ himself said? "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way." Is not the commandment declared to be "exceeding broad"? The righteous scarcely are saved." How then can it be argued, that we shall find our true repose of soul in the ~~salutary~~ service of Jesus Christ, because the burden of it is easy?

The unconverted man has often a worse ground of incredulity than this; that of his own experience and conscious rep-
He says to himself; "I have endeavoured to bear that yoke; I was earnest in my attempt; for was I not impelled to it by the infinite moment of the worth of an immortal soul, the sense of dreadful guilt, the terrors of an endless hell? I strove hard to live the christian's life; often I renewed my struggle, even with almost despairing bitterness; but the task was too great. I have relinquished it, and again I am living the life of careless impenitence, conscious that the danger of perdition is not removed, but only veiled partially from my own eyes by my insens-

sibility; ^{well aware} ~~conscious~~ that my conscience is not cleansed, but only ~~scared~~. So well have I learned, by my own miserable experiments, that this grievous yoke of christianity would crush out every enjoyment of life for me, if borne in earnest, that I am now stubbornly braving the appalling risks of an unprepared death, and a lost immortality, rather than face the burden again at present. And after all this, would the preacher persuade me that "the yoke is easy and the burden light"? Alas: I know better!

Burdett

Such is the skepticism, and such its ground which most adult transgressors read in their own hearts, when they scan their contents honestly. Say, Unbeliever: Have I not given correct form to your inmost thought? And your most intimate conviction is at points with the express declaration of your Saviour. How shall I attempt to solve this crowning paradox for you, and to reconcile your unbelief to this gracious truth? This is a task which the Holy Spirit can alone accomplish with efficacy; and, thanks to Him, he does not require the execution of it from his ministers. Nothing but a true conversion by His power, experienced in the heart, can enable the sinner to appreciate the nature of Christ's service. The blind man cannot be taught precisely what are the beauties of the Spring, before his eyes are opened. But yet, something may be said

to obviate your incredulity; something which, though it will not make you comprehend how this yoke becomes light, may yet enable you to apprehend that it is not unreasonable it should become so to the believer.

Remember then, that the declarations which the Scriptures make of the strictness and difficulty of the christian's way, refer always to man's native and unassisted strength. Relatively to that strength, the way is indeed arduous. It is impossible to exaggerate its difficulty: if we should persuade the unconverted heart that it is absolutely certain his unaided strength and resolution will fail before it, we should be strictly true. And now, I appeal to your own consciences: Were not those illstarred efforts to serve Christ, whose failure now so discourages you made in your own poor strength? Did you not begin them unconvinced of your impotency? Was not this the thought of your heart: 'Seeing the danger of my soul, &c. as a rational being, will resolve; and I will fulfill what I resolve. I shall not be an inconsistent, half-way christian, like these despised ones whose blemishes have so often been the butt of my contempt. I shall reform my life truly, and keep the law, and thus prepare and recommend myself for gospel forgiveness.' Did you form those purposes of piety, and

make those efforts, in explicit, full dependence on a spiritual ability to be communicated to you by Christ of free grace; so that your sole encouragement to attempt them was his faithful word of promise? Alas, no! And therefore your service of him was a mortifying failure. Now I beg you to weigh the real statement of your Saviour in the text. He has never said that the yoke would be easy, or the burden light to a soul which attempted to lift it apart from him. What he taught was this: that he who cometh to him, he who learns of him shall find the yoke easy - This you refused to do; you have never really tested the correctness of Christ's declaration; you have, in fact, no experience whatever upon the subject.

"But when we were yet without strengths, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." And one chief portion of his purchase for us was enabling grace; which is offered to our faith on the same terms with remission of sins. Hear now, some of the blessed assurances of this fact. (1) If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new; and all things are of God. (2) "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but

(1) Rom. 5:6. (2) 2. Cor. 5:17. (3) Gal. 2:20.

Christ liveth in me; and the life which I
 now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the
 Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself
 for me." (4) "And he said unto me, My grace
 is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made
 perfect in weakness." (5) "A new heart also will
 I give you, and a new spirit will I give ^{but with} into
 you; and I will take away the stony heart out
 of your flesh, and ^{will} give you a heart of flesh.
 And I will put my Spirit within you, and
 cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye
 shall keep my judgments and do them."

If these precious promises are true, is
 it not clear that he who has them fulfilled in
 his soul may reasonably expect a wholly
 different experience from yours, in bearing
 the yoke? Here new views of truth are giv-
 en: a spiritual ability is awakened in the
 faculties hitherto misdirected to sin and
 sense: man's impotence of will for spiritual
 good is renovated by the almighty will of
 the Spirit. If indeed Christ does all this
 in him who comes, and learns of him,
 and takes his yoke, plainly that service
 may be easy and pleasant to him, which
 before was intolerable. Sometimes the curi-
 -ous child, straying where the labourers

(4) 2. Cor. 12:9. (5) Ezek. 36:26-27.

have laid down their implements of ~~labour~~ ^{labour}, takes up the axe or scythe adapted to a man's strength, and undertakes to use it. But his youthful limbs are unequal to the task: his toil is excessive: his breast heaves with panting, his heart throbs, and his joints quiver with fatigue. As he lays it down, he concludes perhaps thus: "How burdensome and repulsive must the life of the labourer be! Surely every pleasure of existence is crushed out by their excessive toil! Yet he is mistaken: he has judged their tasks by his measure of strength. They have the muscles of men; and when they come forth into the breezy fields or fragrant woods, refreshed with food, and their veins rich with lusty blood, there is a positive joy in the vigorous swing of these weapons of sturdy and honest labour. Similar is the error which you have made, when you have attempted to bear Christ's yoke in your own strength, which is weakness; and overpowered by the burden, have inferred that Christ cannot make it light by his grace.

But there is another solution, which is, if possible, more important. It is found in the difference of motive and affection by which the service of the believer and ^(that of) the unbeliever

19.
are prompted. Those labours are easy and pleasant, which are inspired by love, however absorbing they may be of time and strength. But if they are compelled by reluctant fear, and rendered with hatred, the lightest exertions gale the heart. The man who is incapable of domestic love looks on the toils of the laborious father with disgust: he thinks his life that of a galley slave; and says to himself that no power nor price on earth shall ever bend him to so irksome a bondage. But does that careful parent think so? Nay: his labours, his crops, the glebe watered with the honest sweat of his brow, are dear to him; he cherishes them with all the affectionate interest of heart's treasures: they feed those whom he loves. As he pursues his busy tillage through the sultry hours, although he does feel the heat and burden of the day, he is happy in his endurance; because he has before him the peaceful home which is blessed with the fruits of these labours, the board spread with bounty by the work of his sturdy hand, with the smiling faces around it, the welcome of pattering feet, and gleeful voices, and childish arms about his neck, which he expects to meet him as he returns at eve, heavy perhaps of limb, but light of heart, from his daily tasks, and the loving smile of the thoughtful

mate, who keeps the hearth bright for his coming. Go now, to that man, and tempt him to leave his fields for some scene of sinful amusement; tell him that his daily labour is nothing but a miserable drudgery, and that it is time for him to seek enjoyment abroad. Will he hearken? No: his labour is his enjoyment: those guilty and mischievous scenes have no allurements for him, because love makes him happy enough in his industry.

Hawley

Or, if this instance is not enough, we may find a more conclusive one in that which is the strongest and purest of all affections found among sinful men, the love of a mother for her babe. And this also imposes the severest toils which any of the duties of common life require. As the young female, a stranger as yet to this devoted love, witnesses the sacrifices of some ~~mother~~ mother lately her comrade, amidst the perpetual watchings and sleepless cares of the nursery, it may be that she looks on with disgust and dread; and she says to herself; not for all the world would I submit to such an abhorred burden. But the time comes when the fountain of maternal love is opened in her heart also. Now see the recent rotaries of fashion! How zealously

21.
does she forsake the admiration of society, and sacrifice the bloom of her beauty, lately so much prized, amidst the vigils of her domestic tasks. These cares are no longer repulsive. Propose to her to resign her tender charge wholly to some hincing, whose well paid skill will probably far surpass her inexperience, in providing for its welfare, and to return to the delights of the ball room. She will reject it; and as she presses her infant to her bosom, will declare that no joy of earth is so sweet as the care of this darling object. Whence this change? It is because a new love has been born along with her offspring. The yoke of love is ever easy, and its burden is light.

In like manner, if he who comes to Christ and learns of him, learns thereby to love, this new motive abundantly explains the fact, to you, sinner, so incredible, that his yoke becomes easy. For I take your own heart to witness, that in your former efforts to live a religious life, no love animated your resolve. The world and self-will were still sweet to you intrinsically. If you felt the sting and bitterness of any of your sins, it was only because self-love was terrified by the looming of the danger they incurred. The Christian life was abhorrent to your secret heart; and the language of your inner thought was, that this Divine Master was an austere man

whose service you would defy, if you dared.
Poor, unwilling captive! No wonder your service, wrung by fear from a bitter, reticulating heart, was a galling bondage.

But now remember the blessed truths already established from the Scriptures: that when a believing soul embraces the cross, Christ "crucifies the enmity thereby"; that he engages to take away the stony heart out of our flesh, and give us a heart of flesh; that when he reconciles God to us by his atonement, he also reconciles us to God by our effectual calling, and sheds abroad his love upon our hearts. Then, as the regenerated sinner considers the amazing love and condescension of a Redeemer God, stooping to death to rescue him from unutterable ruin, a new-born gratitude conspires with adoration for his excellencies, and he begins to say: "I love him, because he first loved us." Then the love of Christ constraining him becomes the spring of a joyful obedience; and he sings with devout delight, in the language of David; "O Lord, truly I am thy servant: I am thy servant and the son of thy handmaid: Thou hast loosed my bonds." This is the way, O Sinner, the yoke is made easy, and the burden light! Cannot you apprehend it?

Perhaps such a glimpse of the beauty and glory of the Cross hath penetrated your heart, (which may God grant!) that you are almost ready to say: "Ah, if I could only claim

Hawley

that wondrous Sacrifice as mine, if I could be-
 lieve that the divine blood was indeed shed for
 my sins; that the burning Throne, whose just
 wrath now blights every look which my wretch-
 ed soul turns towards God, with fear and
 enmity, was changed for me into a Throne of
 grace; that this dreadful God was indeed re-
 conciled, and was become a tender father, I too
 could love; I too could serve with hope, and
 cheerful obedience. But how shall I know this?
 How read the secret verdict of heaven, which ac-
 quits and adopts the object of almighty grace?

I will tell you how. But first, let me
 warn you, not to mistake the obstinacy of your
 own native opposition to God. If you think that
 the mere apprehension of your own interest in
 the cross, and of the excellence and love displayed
 therein towards you, will be enough of itself, with-
 out the inworking of the sovereign Spirit, to re-
 volve your obdurate heart, you will be disap-
 pointed. No doctrine, no moral suasion alone,
 not even that of dying love, will melt that
 flinty thing; nothing but the power divine
 which first created it. But if you feel that
 you could indeed love Christ, if only you
 were assured that he had first loved you, then
 it is my delightful commission to tell you
 that you may claim that privilege of loving-
 Christ invites you. His own words are: "Whoso-
 ever will; let him come". He tells us that the

24.

man upon whom God's secret verdict of the heavenly justification and adoption is passed, is he who is truly willing to embrace, and to serve Christ. Are you willing? Then you are one of those for whom the invitation is sent. Come then, thou weary, heavy laden soul; "Come to Jesus, and He will give you rest. Take his yoke upon you and learn of Him; for he is meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls. For his yoke is easy, and his burden is light."

Permit me, in closing this discourse, to point out two instructive lessons, which are contained in these words of the Saviour.

One is; that faith always includes an immediate assumption of all known duty. Christ here explains "coming to him" in v. 28th (which is his customary expression for believing) by taking up the yoke and learning of him in v. 29th. The true believer, although of all men most impressed with his own impotency to live the Christian life aright, immediately sets about that very thing. It is because the gospel promise pledges Christ's strength to make the yoke easy; and the function of faith is, to embrace the promise just as it is. Now, there is somebody here, whose failure and distress are all explained by this remark. My brother: you

Think you comprehend and approve the plan for a sinner's pardon through Christ, and that you can trust it: But you have not found rest for your soul? It is because there is some yoke, some duty, which you have not assumed. What is it? You know: I do not: God does. Take it up like a man; do it now; not self-righteously, but believingly; and you will find the blessed rest.

Second: There is somebody else here, who thinks he sees and craves the blessedness of the soul which has received the conscious assurance, in its own exercises, of being saved in Christ. He says: Oh, if I could only feel in my heart these new-born affections, and thus know my interest in Him; how joyfully would I flee to Him, and embrace Him with his service; and no toils nor sacrifices should tempt my happy heart for one moment to forsake his yoke. But alas! when I look within, all is cold and dark. How can I venture, with this unscrewed heart?

The answer which Christ here implies is this: The conscious inward experience of his grace is bestowed by your coming, and when you come; not before. Hear him: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; +++ and ye shall find rest to your souls." You must find it by taking the yoke, not before you take it. You must venture ~~simply~~ on his divine

27

its doubts. "The fearful." (they who are too
timid to trust themselves to the faithfulness
of their God and Saviour) "and unbelieving
and abominable, . . . shall have their
part in the lake which burneth with fire
and brimstone, which is the second death."
(Rev. 21:8.)

Over Ineffectual Prayers.

A Sermon on

James, IV: 3^d

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."

Preached near Mossy Creek, Augusta, Va. May, 1862, to the 44th Va. Regiment.

(Note.) After the battle of McDowell, and the pursuit of Milroy and Schenk, Gen. Jackson returned by forced marches to effect his junction with Gen. Ewell, and to pay his respects to Banks. The point to which his march first tended was Harrisonburg. The Sabbath found him near the village of Mt. Solon, on Mossy Creek, and there, although most eager to husband every moment, he paused, amidst the luxuriant fields and majestic groves of that beautiful region, to give the troops

2.

their day of sacred rest. The Sabbath proved to be one of univalled mildness and beauty. The author, then chief of Genl Jackson's Staff, accompanied by him, went in the forenoon to preach in the camp of the famous 12th Georgia Regiment, then without a Chaplain. In the afternoon, he passed to the opposite extremity of the encampments, and delivered the following discourse to the 44th Va. ~~which was also without pastoral services, & at that time.~~

Brethren.

The subject of our ineffectual prayers should be one of lively interest to all of us. There has been, apparently, much 'asking' among us. Often the Sabbath witnesses four formal prayers, in which we all profess to unite our voices and hearts, in a general concert. Many praying circles weekly, or perhaps daily, offer up their social petitions to God with less publicity. Every christian waits before his God in secret, every day. Many large and varied requests are urged with him habitually, and with every form of repetition. But, alas; there has been much

less receiving than asking. Our prayers are, in seeming, abundant, and our answers scanty. Do you say, it is unsafe for shortsighted man to judge positively in this matter; because many of the prayers of christians may be graciously accepted by their Father, and yet not specifically granted, for the reason that omniscient love has seen it was more merciful to withhold than to give; or because our God may purpose a ~~grace~~ full answer, but he may have seen that the fulness of time has not yet come; or because he is bestowing the gift, but in a way so different from our expectations, that we scarcely recognize it? I grant it all: but, after making allowance for such explanations, in every case to which they can be fairly applied, we must admit that a multitude of our requests remain wholly unanswered. We have prayed for growth in grace: Are we indeed advancing to the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus? We have invoked the witness of the Spirit with our spirits: Are we rejoicing in hope of the glory of God? We have prayed for revival, and for the redemption of the souls of our heedless comrades: But alas; the ways of Zion still mourn, and our fellows are even now falling around us, unprepared, by battle and disease. We supplicate God to deliver our beloved country from the destroying sword; but enemies throng around her in increasing numbers, and assail her with more determined ferocity. Surely, we

ask, and we receive not.

But see, how positive is the connexion established by the promises of God, between believing prayer, and the answer. ¹ "For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." ² "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." ³ "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." Are these pledges abrogated? Is prayer now an unmeaning and fruitless form? Of old, it was not so; when holy men prayed in faith, heaven was moved, and God stooped to earth. There was a time, when the saints "through faith" ⁴ subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waded valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." ⁵ "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." It was true in those days, at least, that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availed much."

¹ Matt. 7: 8. ² Matt. 21: 22. ³ John. 16: 23. ⁴ Heb. 11: 33, 34.
⁵ James 5: 16-18.

But He to whom we pray is "the Father of lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." How then, can we suspect that God is no longer true to his promises? Nay; "Let Him be true, but every man a liar." The solution of our ineffectual prayers is to be found, not in God's unfaithfulness, but in our unbelief; "We ask, and receive not; because we ask amiss." Let us then, examine the nature of our prayers, in order that we may both justify our God, and amend what is amiss in ourselves.

First, may not one reason of our disappointment be suggested by the words following the text? "We ask amiss that we may consume it upon our lusts." This word, lusts, usually bears, to our apprehension, the meaning of sensual appetites and desires; of something both unlawful, and gross. We misapprehend the sense of the sacred writers in it. True, in the New Testament, it usually signifies the bodily desires; but desires are not therefore unlawful, merely because they are bodily. The word which signifies evil concupiscence, whether of body or spirit, is a different one; and this word, "lusts," suggests no more by its proper meaning, than ~~something which~~ man's natural desires for natural enjoyment. Perhaps, when you heard the Apostle James rebuke his readers for offering to God, prayers prompted by their own lusts, you had before your mind a picture of some soul so besotted in superstition and gross igno-

rance, as to insult the holiness of God, by asking of him only material good, for the purpose of lavishing it in foul and criminal orgies of sensual excess. And it is not strange that you felt, this picture was too monstrous to be verified in your petitions to God. But you limit the charge of the apostle unwarrantably. He brings this general accusation; that if any man is prompted chiefly by the wish to expend God's gifts in natural gratifications, legitimate, or illegitimate; that man asks amiss. If the propensity you thus seek to gratify be unlawful, then plainly, your request is an insult to both the righteousness and purity of God. But if it be innocent, still it may not be proper for you to make it your predominant motive. This is inordinate: it savours of the sin of idolatry; its tendency is to dethrone God, and exalt self as the chief end: it is inconsistent with that supreme love for God, and zeal for his glory, which are the very essence of christianity. Need we be surprised that even a merciful and pardoning God, who receives the petitions of sinners through their Advocate, Christ, should consider himself constrained by his own honour, to refuse such prayers as these?

Now then: when you ask for the salvation of comrades, of children, are you moved only by natural affection for them? Natural affection is right in its place. But if you

7.
give it the supreme place, what is this but saying to the Searcher of Hearts, that you greatly desire that his attributes and mercies shall be made to subserve the advantage of those creatures whom you love; but care not whether they shall subserve the glory of their Creator and rightful proprietor, and Redeemer? When you ask independence and just government, and prosperity, for our beloved country, is it merely from pride; from anger; from the desire that you, and those dear to you by natural ties, may enjoy the material good of a prosperous commonwealth? Or is it chiefly because you desire to see the righteousness of God's providential rule over nations manifested, and the resources of a free and happy people consecrated to his glory? You pray for the prosperity of Zion: Is it, that party spirit may be gratified; or, that Zion's Redeemer may "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied"? I beseech you, examine in this manner, all your prayers; and see whether you do not ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts?

Second. It may be that we err in allowing some other dependence than Christ's righteousness and intercession to insinuate itself into our prayers. Do not be too confident, I beseech you, in rejecting this surmise. I know that you are all members of the great Protestant communion, which hold the doctrine of a gracious justification as "the article of a standing or falling church"; and that you are all familiar with

your Bibles, where they say that 'no man cometh unto the Father but by Christ.' I know how you have been taught to recite in your catechisms the very definition of prayer, as 'the offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ.' I know that you have been instructed in the things of God, far beyond that gross ignorance, which avows the vain expectation of procuring his favour by alms, or mortifications, or fastings, or idle repetitions. I hear you begin and end your prayers with the orthodox formularies, which make due mention of the name of Jesus Christ as your only plea.

But, brethren; our hearts are deceitful. Self-righteousness is a potent, cunning, treacherous enemy. Be not so certain that it is expelled, merely by the use of a correct form of words. "Leviathan is not so tamed." Thrust out self-righteousness by the door, and it will return by the window. Pride, like a Proteus, when evicted in one form, will assume another, and re-enter unobserved. You have approached the mercy-seat with heartfelt confessions of guilt; and have expressly repudiated all dependence on your works and almsgiving. But may it not be, that after this, a lingering hope is harboured, that now God must hear you, because of the merit of your contrition, or of your self-abnegation; or of your strong faith; or of your perseverance in

prayer? What is this but self-dependence? You must not only say, but feel, that your contribution, however genuine, your faith itself, however scriptural, constitutes no claim of merit whatever in themselves; and that the only reason God may not reject you ~~in spite of the~~ justly reject your prayer, notwithstanding the truest faith, is, that He has condescended, of his own free grace, to promise to Jesus Christ the reception of all who come in his name. The only merit is that of our Redeemer's righteousness and intercession. If any other merit intrudes, you ask amiss.

Third. It is more probable, that there is a lack of earnestness and fervency in our prayers. This lamentable defect betrays itself in our lack of expectation and pointed desire, and in the absence of watchfulness. We do not "watch unto prayer." We do not anxiously wait for God, and stand looking to see whether the answer to our request be coming. How often do we remember at night, what it was, for which we prayed in the morning? Would it not often tax the recollection of a christian congregation, to state the main points of the prayer offered by the minister, before they had left the house of worship? And this shameful forgetfulness is not wholly the fault of the people; but the minister also not seldom, shows, by the aimless, and pointless language

which flows at random from his mouth, that he is professedly praying, not because either he or the people have any heartfelt errand to press at the throne of grace; but because they feel it incumbent on them, to comply with the customary form of prayer. Now, true desire is always definite. If a man wants, he wants some-thing; and he will be very sure not to forget that thing. But so little in earnest are we, that the answer to many of our prayers would probably take us by surprise, if it were granted.

Now praying thus, can we wonder that we do not receive? Such petitions are an insult to the kindness of the benefactor to whom they are addressed. We go to a human friend, and tell him of some great exigency which threatens our happiness, or perhaps, our very existence. We tell him that he alone has the means of our deliverance; and we beseech him, of his compassion, to extend to us the aid which is for our very lives. He replies by reminding us that it is no small thing which we ask, but we are in substance requiring him to sacrifice for us his own dearest interests. We reply; "Yea, we know this; but we thought that our extremity, and your love would combine, to make you feel that even such a request was not too presumptuous." He then, moved with compassion, decides that

he will give our request favourable consideration; and that his answer shall be made known when the day of our necessity is fully come. Well; the season passes by; and our friend has generously determined with himself, moved by his magnanimous and tender heart, that he will even make the sacrifices necessary to grant us relief. He comes; he begins to announce his noble purpose; when, lo! he finds us oblivious of the whole transaction, of the pretended exigency, and of our own request. What must he conclude? but that our anxiety and danger were a mockery, and that his compassion has been shamefully abused. He will turn away in honest indignation; saying: "Henceforth, if these hypocrites fall into trouble, let them help themselves, if they can!"

But if such righteous anger is natural in a fellow creature, what should we not expect, when we mock, with a similar heels up, the majestic King of kings? We, who are guilty worms in his sight, thrust ourselves through all the shining ranks of the angels, and ask that the Almighty shall turn to us, and divide his attention between the vast affairs of his universal empire, and the worthy praises of the heavenly principalities, and our little woes and sins. We claim of him assistance purchased for us by the blood of his own Son; And when he stoops with infinite condescension to bestow it, he finds that we

have forgotten our own petitions and his mercy and majesty, amidst the trivial, and perhaps, sinful toys of the hour! Well is it for us, that God's ways are as high above ours as the heavens above the earth: otherwise, such prayers would not only fail of answers, but bring down on us the swift lightning of His wrath.

In seeking such gifts as those of redemption, from such a God, it is reasonable that we should be not only honest and sincere in our petitions, but fervent. God and his grace deserve such homage at our hands. You may object that fervour of emotion is a thing to which it is difficult to affix an exact measure. Perhaps you ask, whether I require that your heads should conceive, and your hearts feel the full moment of heavenly things, in order that God may recognize you as coming "in spirit and in truth." No: The man lives not who does, or can appreciate, either with head or heart, the blessings of redemption and the woes of the second death. They are unutterable: we are finite. Nor do I require that the believer of feeble soul shall feel as large a flood of sacred emotion, as the great and blazing spirit; nor that he who is naturally phlegmatic should burn with the same warmth, as the ardent, impulsive nature; nor that the same believer

shall feel, in every hour of lassitude, of distraction, of depression, the same liveliness of emotion, which attended his first espousal to Christ, and the seasons ~~marked~~ of greatest elasticity of animal spirits. But is it not reasonable, that whether we be calm or passionate, light of spirit, or heavy, we shall be at least in thorough earnest, whenever we ask the attention of our God to our wants? It is entirely conceivable that a man may be terribly in earnest, and yet very deliberate. No such measure is proposed for the efficacy of our prayers, as that they shall be uttered with strong crying and tears, or that they must be warmed by so many degrees of conscious emotions, in order to be acceptable. But it is conceived that God exacts of us this standard; that whether our emotions be much or little, our practical estimate of his gifts at the time shall truly place them above all earthly gifts. He demands of us, that we shall at least, not give the world our preference over him, in our desires and efforts. You go to your closet, my brother, at morning, and there ask God that you may "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord." Do you then go to your place of business, and demonstrate by your conduct, that your soul is more thoroughly set upon growing in wealth? This earthly object may be very soberly and calmly pursued; and yet, it may be the dominant object of your

heart. Or did you go to your closet to pray that a beloved child might become an heir of heaven, and then go forth and exhibit more practical zeal than he might be fashionable or distinguished? What I claim for God is, that, though the temper in which you pursue his gifts be sober, calm, deliberate, it shall be your dominant temper: it must give Him and His redemption the sincere preference over all created good. Otherwise you ask amiss.

For, it would not be proper, that God should bestow Himself upon a soul which thus treats him with comparative depreciation: All the vicarious merit of Christ's righteousness wrought in place of the sinner cannot make it proper. What, shall man thus tacitly inform God, in his very prayers, that he idolatrously prefers self, and selfish good, to those pure and heavenly gifts, which Christ died to purchase for him with his precious blood; to dispense which he now sits upon the throne of the Universe, governing all things for the Church's sake; to minister which mighty angels fly on their zealous errands; which all heaven admires and studies; and shall such a petitioner expect success? Should the Almighty answer such prayers, he would seem to make Himself an accomplice in our degrading estimate of his blessings; and to assent to the dishonour

done himself. He will not do it. Surely it is ¹³ little enough to demand of a beggar, that he shall not disparage the boon which he receives gratuitously.

Fourth. We ask amiss, because we do not enough follow up our petitions by our labours. We pray for many excellent things; but we fail to second our prayers by the appointed exertions for receiving them. This we at once evince our unfitness to receive them, and betray our lack of earnestness. Do not tell me; that man is wholly dependent for spiritual good, upon Divine Grace. I know it. Yet this hearty exertion in the use of means is regarded by God as an expression of pious desire, just as essential as prayer itself. And this, for two reasons. One is, that God has established the connexion between means and results as regularly in the kingdom of grace, as of nature. The fact that he alone can give, does not destroy the fact that we receive only through the appointed instruments. Hence, if we have truly prayed, we shall be rationally impelled to work for our object, as truly as though prayer were naught, and our efforts the only efficient cause. The other reason is, that God knows we are active beings; and the law of our nature simply forbids our inactivity, where our souls are profoundly interested. Where we desire, there we must strive; it is our nature. Here is a mother, whose darling child is writhing in pain from disease. She is

told that she neither needs to do, nor can do, any thing more than others have done: that a professional physician, and a hireling nurse are administering all the practicable remedies: that she must know her skill cannot equal theirs: and therefore, the reasonable thing for her, is to sit perfectly still, and confine herself to mental aspirations for the relief of her child. She admits all your facts: but will she sit passive? Can she? It is not possible: reasonable or not, efforts she must make, for her loved one's deliverance; if from no other cause, from the uncontrollable prompting to seek relief for her own longing of soul, in exertions.

So, God properly judges, that where there is no persevering effort for the good sought, there is no true earnestness in our seeking. Do you not find sufficient solution for the failure of answer, my brother, in your neglect and indolence in religious labours? You prayed last sabbath for growth in grace. Now it is by the knowledge and practice of God's will revealed in the gospel, that one grows in grace. Did you, then, after uttering that prayer, devote your leisure to the study of the Scriptures, and the regulation of your own heart and conduct, in that business-like way, in which you would use the means for any secular end? You prayed for self-acquaintance: Did you then dedicate your efforts to that pains-tak-

ing self-examination, which is the appointed way to self-knowledge? Do were your leisure hours spent in unnecessary talk, or useless lozing? You who are parents, have prayed for the conversion of your children. Have you also been as diligent to teach them that saving knowledge of the truth, by which the soul is renewed? Let us ask ourselves all these questions; and we shall see, why we ask and receive not.

Fifth: A farther explanation may be found in these words of 66th Psalm: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." He who lives in secret sin, whose heart goes, unrestrained, after his unlawful desires, cannot be received at a propitiations throne of grace. And this is not because a true repentance, and a sincere evangelical ^{obedience} ~~repentance~~, have merit in themselves to purchase the answer; their imperfections, and their own dependence on communicated grace, forbid this. But they are the tests of that faith in the soul, by which Christs' merit, our sole propitiation, is embraced. Faith without works is dead. Moreover; the honour and purity of God cannot permit him [not even through the virtues of the glorious righteousness of our Substitute] to communicate Himself to the reb=

el who is outraging his law and holiness by intentional sin. Even the omnipotence of the Almighty cannot separate the inevitable connexion between sin and death, and make an immortal soul truly, and permanently blessed, in its disobedience. Hence, allowed sin, and successful prayer are incompatible. Let us search, then, my brethren, whether some plain duty neglected, some known sin entertained, be not between us and our God. So long as it is there, it must be a black cloud to keep out every ray of his spiritual blessings.

And now that we have made this short and partial inquiry into the nature of our prayers: now that we have seen the selfishness of their motives, the self-righteousness of their dependences, the lukewarmness of their desires, the lack of a seconding diligence in effort, and the sinfulness of our lives; is there any longer any wonder that we ask, and receive not? Is not God's faithfulness abundantly justified? I protest unto you, that when I estimate the poverty of the prayers which we offer up to God, instead of finding any remaining evidence of a failure of His promises, instead of see =

19.

ing him any longer in a reluctant or grudging attitude, I wonder that the Church receives as many answers to prayer, as we actually experience; I seem to behold God bending over his unworthy children, with both hands full of generous gifts for them, and a heart anxiously yearning for the joy of bestowing them, watching eagerly on every side for the first sign of such true desire as his own honour will permit Him to bless, that he may at once answer it with a shower of mercies. Brethren; our God is not unfaithful: "we ask, and we receive not, because we ask amiss." Let us prove him now, with true, scriptural prayer, and see if he will not pour us out a blessing, such, that there shall not be room to contain it.

He who only offers ineffectual prayers, virtually does not pray at all. How many, by this rule, are living prayerless lives! Christians without prayer! Sorrowful anomaly! He is separated from the only fountain of life, He is a branch severed from the vine-stock. Brethren: we must pray, with "the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous;" or we perish—

Spurious and Genuine
Repentance Contrasted.

A Sermon

Preached within the Entrenchments
at Manassas Junction, to the 18th Reg-
iment of Va. Volunteers, July 1861.

from

II. Corinthians, 7:10. "For godly sorrow
worketh repentance to salvation, not to be re-
pented of; but the sorrow of the world work-
eth death."

The word used by the Holy Spirit for the grace of repentance, has undergone, my brethren, a strange fortune, in its translation into the languages of Western Europe. Its proper meaning is a change of the principles of the soul as to evil conduct. The Latin language, inferior to the Greek in its adaptations to the expression of abstract and spiritual truths, offered no ready word to express this elevated idea. The early Christians of the Roman world therefore adopted another word, also derived from the Greek, approaching the desired meaning in its popular use, but suggesting by its origin a totally foreign idea; [†] that of ransom price paid for guilt. It is curious to trace this radical and primitive idea, which the ancient Greek attached to the root, reappearing in the religious phrases and creeds of modern Europe, in spite of the clear sense of God's word. Because the Latin words, penitence, repentance, contain this allusion to the penal suffering which is the established price of transgression, the way was prepared for the admission of that most unscriptural and deplorable delusion, which

† Greek ἀπορα. Lat. poena. Engl. pain. (Because suffering is the appointed price of guilt.) penalty; Lat. poenitere, poenitentia, Italians, pentimento. Spanish; penitencia. Fr. Penitence. Engl. Repentance.

mingles the ideas of penance and evangelic-
 al repentance, and assigns to the former an
 atoning virtue as to the guilt of sin. The per-
alty of the ancient Greeks was, indeed, the at-
 onement of guilt; the price of sin; the repent-
 ance of the Gospel is not: it is the new inward
 principle of soul which hates sinning. If we
 use this word, we must understand that it
 is to be employed with no reference to the an-
 cient sense. The godly sorrow which sin aw-
 akens in the believer's heart is no atone-
 ment for his guilt: the only ransom-price of
 this is the death of Christ.

"Repentance unto life is an evangelic-
 ical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preach-
 ed by every minister of the gospel, as well as
 that of faith in Christ." The Scriptures are very
 full of repentance; much fuller, it is to be
 feared, than the sermons of ministers, or the
 hearts of Christians. It was the burden of the
 preaching of the new dispensation, at its in-
 troduction; for we read that the language of
 John Baptist and of Christ alike was: "Repent
 ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 This grace is everywhere urged as essential to
 redemption. Often it is joined with the mother-
 -grace, faith; and sometimes it is even men-
 tioned without it, leaving faith to be implied.
 We are nowhere taught indeed, that repent-
 ance shares the peculiar instrumental func-

tions of faith, that of embracing the righteousness by which we are justified; but we are expressly told, that except we repent, we must all likewise perish. Do I need any apology then, for requiring your earnest attention to the teachings of God's word concerning the doctrine of repentance? I say: the teachings of God's word. The speculations of man are of no worth here. For it is to God we have to look, as a sovereign, for pardon and salvation: whence it is plain that it is for him alone to define the terms of salvation.

It is reasonable to ask your anxious study of this doctrine, farther, because, as the text intimates, there is a spurious repentance which imitates the genuine; and yet it only worketh death. There is a counterfeit coin current here, my brother: if you take it for the pure gold, you are bankrupt forever. Look out, then! Examine the tests of the King's "image and superscription"; by which you may discriminate. It is my business to teach them to you, out of the King's own book of directions. It is yours, to listen and learn, for your lives.

The separation between the sorrow of the world, which worketh death, and godly repentance, is rendered very distinct by this fact: that in the New Testament, there are

two words, ~~wholly~~ unlike in etymology and origin, which are always used separately to express the two exercises, and never interchanged. Our version fails entirely to express this distinction, and translates them both, "repent;" "repentance." But one may see how significant God intended to make the distinction, when he finds that out of sixty five cases, in which the New Testament uses the two families of words, the difference of their meaning is accurately observed in every instance. Some critics do indeed say, that in two or three of these passages, there is an interchange of meanings; but I am confident that a correct understanding of the sense will show, in these likewise, that there is none. The one family of words, corresponding to "the sorrow of the world," means simply, natural regret ~~after~~ ^{for} ~~one's conduct.~~ ~~having done wrong.~~ The other, corresponding to "godly sorrow," means a change of principles of soul, as to wrong doing. Let it be agreed between us, in the remainder of this discourse, that we will call the former regret, and the latter repentance. In the passage from which the text is taken, the Apostle Paul observes this distinction with a curious accuracy. The occasion of ~~this~~ language here was this: His first Epistle had contained a stern rebuke of the church, for immoralities which they had permitted among some of their members. Hav-

ing sent that Epistle, the apostle felt his generous ^{soul} ~~heart~~ moved with anxiety concerning its effect. When Titus returned, who had visited the church on his behalf, he learned that the rebuke had caused the christians at Corinth great distress; and also, that it had led to a thorough repentance and reform of their irregularities. Thereupon, the tender heart of Paul was agitated by two contending emotions; first regret at the pain he had inflicted on his dear spiritual children; and then, joy at the wholesome effect of his action upon their souls. And, he says, upon the whole, he was glad that the letter was written; not because their distress was pleasing to him; but because it had done them good. Notice now, how accurately he observes the distinction between natural regret, and gracious repentance for sin. "For, though I grieved you by the epistle, I do not regret it; (yet I did regret it at one time.) for I perceive that this epistle grieved you, but only for a time. Now, I am glad, not that you were grieved, but that you were grieved unto repentance; for you were grieved in a godly manner, that you might receive damage by us in nothing. For the grief which is according to God; worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be regretted. But the grief of the world worketh death." Godly sorrow cannot with propriety be shaken of

as the object of repentance: for this means a gracious turning from sin. Hence, the apostle, in speaking its praises, is particular to say that it is "not to be regretted." He does not say, not to be repented; for, while men sometimes regret having done right, they cannot repent of it. Would that all other religious teachers had been as careful as St. Paul, in their use of terms!

First, let us describe this sorrow of the world. By calling it sorrow of the world, the apostle teaches us, that its origin is natural, and not gracious. It is, in a word the kind of sorrow which the world of unconverted men feels for its conduct. To ascertain its elements clearly, we must remember the doctrine of the Scriptures touching man's native ingoodness. He has a conscience, and an understanding; he is made by nature capable of feeling the obligation of the right. He has a heart susceptible of sundry ingenuous affections towards his fellow creatures. Hence, we find him, in his natural estate practising some disinterested virtues relative to them; and spontaneously preferring those virtues. Yet, even here, the perversion of the soul from rectitude has introduced confusion, selfishness and sin, in different degrees, in different men. But as

8.

to God, the natural state of the soul is perfectly decided, and this, whether the degree of its secular virtues is greater or smaller. To God's holiness and authority, man's heart is originally and radically opposed: though his conscience shows him ~~very~~ clearly God's right over him, his will is inexorably set against it. The purpose to disobey God in such things as the sinner's social principles may allow him to pursue, is full, and absolute. In a word, self-will reigns supreme, so far as God is concerned; and reigns by nature. The carnal mind is enmity against God. "God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil, continually" (Rom 8:7. Gen. 6:5) But why need we appeal to any other evidence for the correctness of this statement, than your own consciousness? You know perfectly well, that, naturally, "God was not in all your thoughts." (Ps. 10:4)

Hence it is plain, that in the secret of the worldly man for his conduct, no ingenuous sorrow for the injustice done God can have place: the very principle of such a feeling is radically wanting. So far as the will and rights of God are concerned, this unconverted heart would still neglect them, if it dared. If it does not contrive to do so, it is not restrained by a righteous regard to God's will; for, ~~this selfwill~~ ~~is~~ ~~fully~~ ~~set~~ ~~in~~ ~~that~~ ~~heart~~ ~~to~~ ~~resist~~ ~~it~~. But it is restrained by other influences. One of these is the reproach of fellow men. The love of applause is a pow-

erful propensity of the ~~natural~~ heart; and it knows that its fellows are naturally prompted by the force of reason and conscience to applaud that which is right. Hence the apprehension of the reprovach of man is always painful; and is sometimes a pungent anguish. But the sensibility to it argues nothing spiritually good towards God, because the native appetite for applause is only a form of self-love.

Another element of the pain of natural regret is fear. Self-will would always gain resist Gods will, if it dared. But it knows that He is almighty, and hence it unwillingly trembles at his wrath. When reason speaks clearly, she pronounces a sure connexion between sin and penalty; and it is in view of that price of guilt, the natural heart selfishly quakes.

The third element is the instinctive pain of remorse; which is usually ^{much} ~~greatly~~ quickened by the other two, shame and fear. Our Maker hath so established conscience within us, as the intuitive law of our reason, that its condemning voice cannot be wholly silenced when we do wrong; and its verdict is inseparably attended with an instinctive pain. It is wholly involuntary. The heart would fain silence it; but it cannot. The sinner will may still prefer the transgression for the sake of the natural pleasure to which its indulgence leads; but in spite of all this, the testimony of conscience against it is only bitter. Indeed, this great fact of conscience is, of itself, conclusive proof that mans soul is in a state

of mind; for it shows us his will in a state
 invincible opposition to his moral judgments,
 which should be the regulative power of the
 whole man. This pain of conscience is not
 prompted by a selfish sense of danger, as is
 the fear we have just described; but it arises
 directly in view of the moral evil of one's
 own conduct. Yet, while it has this trait of
 truth and fidelity, it does not prove the exis-
 tence of any right intention, or spiritual
 good, in the heart. For it is involuntary; the
 sinner only feels it because he cannot help
 it; he usually fights against it with all
 his power of will; and could he have his choice,
 he would banish it forever. Hence, it is fairly
 to be regarded only as God's testimony echo-
 ing in his unwilling breast.

These, then, are the elements of this sorrow
 now of the world for sin: shame, selfish
 fear, and unwilling remorse. There is not
 a spark of love for the God and Saviour offend-
 ed, nor a trace of righteous regard for the
 rightfulness of his authority. There is no dimi-
 nution, but rather an increase, of the guilty
 enmity; for this grieves God only in the at-
 titude of a hated and dreaded avenger, who
 would be still openly resisted if the sinner dared.
 It does not draw his soul towards his Maker,
 but repels it. It prompts no honest and per-
 manent reformation of conduct; but only

11.
results in the servile repression of the particular sins by which the remorse has been awakened, until such time as the anguish is allayed by sinful diversion, or habit, or the searing of the conscience.

You will find this description verified in every lineament, if you will consider the worldly sorrow of Judas Iscariot for his sin. (Matt. 27: 3-5) "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself." (i.e. regretted) "and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said: What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."

This sorrow of the world, saith the text, worketh spiritual death. That is to say; its tendency is to confirm and establish the death of the soul in trespasses and sins. This it does, because its nature is not gracious, but carnal. It includes not one holy motion of the will; but is only a new expression of the same selfishness and rebellion, which impelled the sinner, in his more thoughtless moments, to his transgression. Must it not then cultivate these ungodly principles, instead of expelling them? But more; this sorrow of the world worketh death, because it separates

12.

the soul still farther from the God whom it
dreads. But communion with him is the only
fountain of holiness. Thus, instead of softening,
it hardens. Instead of hope it begets despair.
In place of love it plants fear and hatred. But
the clearest proof of the justice of the Apostles
verdict upon it is seen, when we ask ourselves
what are the elements of that anguish of the
lost in hell, which constitutes the second death?
Are they not obviously the very shame, fear,
remorse, despair, which we find in the
secret of the conscience - struck sinner here?
As heaven is but the consummation of the grace
which here works in the penitent child of God,
so perdition is but the maturity of this sor-
row of the world, unmitigated by hope, sensu-
al pleasure, or social restraints. To true
facts is the Apostles description of this spew-
ious repentance; the instances are not
rare, in which it has driven the miserable
men exercised by it, like Ahithophel and
Judas, to literal suicide. The fullest comple-
tion of its tendencies are thus seen, in this
life, in the crime of self-murder, which is
the stepping stone from earth to hell.

Let me pause here, my hearers,
to set in the light which we have now reached,
that seductive notion of the awakened, or un-
easy sinner, that he must postpone coming

to Christ, in order to foster serious feelings, as a preparation for embracing him. Doubtless there are many here, who, if I should urge Christ upon them in their present hardness of heart, would resist my proposal as preposterous. They are persuaded that they must feel more, must be convicted and awakened, must go through some mysterious and hitherto unexperienced routine of seekings, strivings, and sorrows, must reform many things, and begin many duties, before it can be proper for them to close with a Saviour. To the proposal that they shall embrace the redemption and the service of this Christ, as they are, all unprepared, unsoftened, and unreformed, they turn an ear absolutely incredulous. But I ask: why? This sorrow of the world is no preparation: it "worketh death"! Do you retort the question; "Is not conviction of sin a necessary stepping-stone, at least, to conversion?" I answer; yes; a condition precedent, but not a procuring cause of it: just such a condition as the sense of the agony produced by bodily disease is, to the invoking of the physician's aid. They that believe themselves whole do not call the physician, but they that feel themselves sick. But is the anguish, with which the mortal disease thrills the frame, itself a producing cause of restoration, of health? Will a man nurse it,

14

and propagate it, as a means of recovery? Nay; he knows that it is at once sign and partial cause of the deadly ravages which are wasting the very springs of life. Yet, even this is less terrible than the insensibility which shows that death has already overmastered the body! But why need the diseased man crave, or wait for any more conscious pain, if he knows himself diseased? If he but knows this, let him call the physician at once. Lo hearer: if thou only knowest thyself a lost sinner, this is all that conviction can do for thee: call ^{now} for the Physician of Souls.

"He is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give unto Israel repentance, and remission of sins." (Acts. 5:31) The only emotions which the natural heart can have, away from Christ, are the pains of this sorrow of the world. And these are not salutary, but deadly. Their completion is found in the pains of the lost: if they constituted a beneficial preparation for the work of Christ in the heart, damned souls would be ripest for the gospel message, of all others; and hell would be the most proper and hopeful place for its proclamation. Yea; it is precisely this worldly sorrow for sin, which the devils feel, when they "believe and tremble."

Let us turn then, in the second place to the contrasted exercise, that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto life, not to be regretted" - This is that saving grace, "whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after new obedience" -

The true penitent is not insensible to shame, nor indifferent to the tremendous danger incurred by transgression, nor unconscions of the natural pains of remorse. For he is still a man, and not an abnormal monster; he feels that regard for the applause of the good, and for his own welfare, and that sensibility of conscience, which are proper for a rational creature. But these emotions are not inordinate in him, nor are they, any longer, expressions of an idolatrous selfishness. They are exercised in subordination to a nobler and purer principle. That principle is love for God and the right. This gives him a better, higher, and more immediate motive for lamenting his own sin, than that it is dangerous, or than that it incurs the reproach of creatures; it is because it is wrong. Disobedience of God, before, the souls determine

16.

ed preference, is now actions for itself, and not merely for its painful consequences. The penitent soul eschews it with abhorrence, though no penalty now threatens him for it. His enmity to the great lawgiver is now turned to hearty love; love inspired not only by his mercy, but by his divine excellence. Transgression is no longer cherished with a secret preference of the will, as resistance to a hated authority: [thus the sinner cherishes it even in the most anxious moments of his guilty terror;] but sin is ~~abhorred~~ ^{lamented} with a tender and generous grief, because it is a wound aimed at a beloved Father. The holy law is no longer regarded as an abhorred restraint; but is approved as reasonable and excellent, with a righteous delight: the only sorrow is, that the soul is not able to conform to it in all things, because of remaining infirmity. Hope is born in the breast; because the same gospel which inculcates this repentance, also holds out a blessed way of pardon; and thus, the penitent soul is led sweetly up to a forgiving God, instead of being driven to a more guilty distance. Above all, does the doctrine of the cross become the argument of repentance; because it manifests at once the heinousness of sin, displays the unspeakable love of God and Christ, and melts the

obdurate heart with the thought of a dying friend pierced by its transgressions.

The results of this godly sorrow are as excellent as its nature: it "worketh repentance unto life." It reforms the conduct radically and permanently, turning the will by its inward energy, to a full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience. And that obedience, though still irregular in extent, is now pure in motive, prompted not merely by selfish fear, but by righteous preference, and by love. It is universal, ~~for~~ ^{and} attempting all known duty, ~~and forsaking all known sin~~ ^{and not merely the few glaring crimes by} which a galled conscience has been awakened. It is abiding; for it flows, not from panic and remorse, but from an inward principle of soul. Worldly sorrow, like the sluggish beast of burden, begins to lag, just as soon as the goad of present fear is withdrawn: Godly sorrow endureth to the end, and ceases not to run in all the ways of holiness; because it is willing, and self-prompted.

I beseech you now, brethren, hearken, while I substantiate this description of true repentance from the Scriptures; that your faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God? And let me beg you to read for yourselves the exercises of the penitent, as the Holy Ghost hath portray-

ed them, for instance, in the 51st Psalm^{18.}
and the parable of the Prodigal, Luke. 15th
But hear now. ¹ For I acknowledge my
Transgression, and my sin is ever before me.
Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and
done this evil in thy sight, that thou might-
est be justified when thou speakest, and be
clear when thou judgest. ² Create in me a
clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit
within me: ~~Ezek. 36:26.~~ ³ Then shall ye re-
member your ~~own~~ evil ways, and your do-
ings that were not good, and shall loathe
yourselves in your own sight, for your in-
iquities, and for your abominations." ⁴ Re-
pent, and turn yourselves from all your
transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your
ruin." ⁵ "And they shall look upon me
whom they have pierced, and they shall
mourn." ⁶ "For I delight in the law of God
after the inward man; But I see another
law in my members, warring against the
law of my mind. . . . O wretched man
that I am! who shall deliver me from the
body of this death?" ⁷ "For behold this self-
same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly
sort, what carefulness it wrought in you,"

¹ Ps. 51: 3, 4. ² Ps. 51: 10. ³ Ezek. 36: 31.

⁴ Ezek. 18: 30. ⁵ Zech. 12: 10. ⁶ Rom. 7: 22, 24

⁷ 2nd Cor. 7: 11. (following the text.)

(That is to say, what watchfulness against sin.)
 "yea, what clearing of yourselves." (purging out
 the evil.) "yea, what indignation?" (a holy an-
 ger against their own folly.) "yea what fear"
 (fear of God.) "yea, what vehement desire" (af-
 ter conformity to Him) "yea what zeal" (for
 holy living) "yea, what revenge" (against their
 sins.) "In all things ye have approved your-
 selves to be clear in this matter."

The difference between worldly and
 Godly sorrow may be justly displayed by that
 which is often seen in domestic life. There
 are two children of the same tender and right-
 eous mother. The first is cold, obdurate, self-
 ish, and rebellious in temper: the second,
 though not seldom headless, is docile, generous,
 and affectionate. Both have been betrayed
 into the same act of disobedience. Both, of
 course, dread the threatened chastisement,
 and listen to the sound of their mother's ap-
 proaching steps, with anxious and downcast
 countenances. The first trembles with servile
 panic, as he seems to himself to feel ^{already} the
 smarting lash upon his back; and perhaps
 he persuades himself that he is resolved to
 commit the folly no more. At least, he is
 ready to deprecate the dreaded pain, by any
 amount of fair promises. The second is fright-
 ened too, and dreads the lash; but other ele-
 ments

ments of sorrow, which he can scarcely analyse to himself, swell his heart, and make him dumb before his mother. But she declares her pity, and her purpose to pass by the punishment. She describes the evil of their fault, pleads with them by her love and forbearance to disobey no more, and beseeches them to remember all her benefits, her tenderneſs, and her ſacrifices for them. The first boy, juſt ſo ſoon as his impunity is announced, is wholly relieved of his pain, and he is now ready, with obſcure heart, to repeat his ſin, whenever there appears due promiſe of concealment. Here is the ſorrow of the world! But how is it with the ſecond? This diſplay of the evil of his fault, with the love of his forbearing mother, makes him hate himſelf, as he had not done before. The knowledge of his impunity is no ſufficient ſolace to his grief: but the unworthineſs of his behaviour wounds him now, with a tender ſmart, to which the mere pain of the puniſhment would be almoſt a relief. And as he weeps upon his mother's knee, he confeſſes his fault, and vows obedience, with a ſincere purpoſe, becauſe it is the purpoſe of love and duty. Here is the illuſtration of the godly ſorrow, working repentance unto life -

In like manner, to the gospel penitent, the pardoning love of Christ, protecting from the penalty of his sin, is not an encouragement, but the strongest possible barrier, to transgression. The more clearly he reads the preciousness of that love, the glorious power of the atonement, and his own title to an interest in it, the more strongly does he feel that it is impossible he can now consent to sin against such a Saviour. "The love of Christ constraineth him." But as the root of the sinner's grief for his sin was in his selfish fear; just in proportion as this is allayed by any delusive or dead faith, or by returning deadness of conscience, he is prepared to sin again with greediness. And this, my brethren, is the most scriptural test of the character of your repentance. Does your comfort of hope make your consciences more tender, and your godly obedience more diligent? Then you may hope your sorrow for sin is according to God, and worketh unto life. But if the love of sin and power of temptation return, in proportion as your fears of wrath are appeased, be sure, it is the sorrow of the world, that worketh death.

From this description of true repentance, it must be inferred that, if the picture

givers of the unconverted heart is correct, it
 will never exercise this grace of its own mo-
 tion. Resistance of God's will is its native
 preference; How then can it prefer subjection
 for its own sake? The indulgence of self-will
 is its native food; how then can it heartily
 abhor and bewail it? Just as the sick
 child may be frightened by the terrible ap-
 proach of death, to forego the food which his
 natural palate prefers, so the conscience-
 struck sinner may forego sin for a time.
 But will the child loathe, as well as forego,
 the food in which he delighted? Will he not
 only submit to swallow, but love and prefer
 the nauseous potions, to which the urgent
 fear of death reconciles him? Can he love
 the medicines for their own taste? Now, true
 repentance is that grace, which not only con-
 sents to forego beloved sins, for fear of the see-
 ond death; but hates them; which not only
 consents to holiness as a bitter medicine to
 which he is driven by danger; but loves and
 chooses it for its own sake. Before you can
 feel this, you must cease to be a sinner in
 heart: you must be born again. That is
 to say, no man truly repents, save he that
 is regenerated. It is not meant that there
 is an appreciable interval of time, in every

sinner's experience, between the moment
 of the new birth, and the first exercises of
 true repentance; but that regeneration
 must be the cause, and repentance the effect.
 The new-born infant may move and breathe
 from the instant of its birth; ~~it is by itself~~
 but it must be born in order to breathe; and
 it is by these two signs we know that it
 lives. So, the exercise of repentance and faith
 are the immediate consequences, and ap=
 pointed signs of regeneration. It is the uni=
 form teaching of the Scriptures, that Repent=
 ance is not the effect of the sinner's own
 will, but of sovereign grace - In Jer. 31:18.
 penitent Ephraim is heard saying to God;
 "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for
 thou art the Lord my God. Surely, after that
 I was turned, I repented." The same Prince
 of Peace who gives remission unto Israel,
 in Acts. 5: 31. also gives repentance - Acts
 11:18. The disciples glorified God saying:
 "Thou hath God also to the Gentiles granted re=
 pentance unto life". And in 2. Tim. 2: 25.
 St. Paul instructs the christian minister,
 "in meekness to instruct those that oppose
 themselves, if God peradventure will give
 them. repentance, to the acknowledging of

the truth."

24

Thus, my hearer, you are brought face to face with a solemn fact, which has ever been the subject of caril to unbelievers - "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And no man can repent, without almighty grace to renew him. Do you say this is a paradox? It is a fearful difficulty. But what has caused it? God? Or your sin? How can he who avows that he is a sinner, deny the reasonableness of sorrow for his fault? It is self-evident that he cannot. Then, if you find that your heart is so obstinately in love with sin, that it will not be moved to eschew it, by all the attractions of heaven and terrors of hell, and convincing lights of truth and duty, and love and mercy of the cross; is it not time for you to cease cavilling, and in despair of your own goodness, to cry? "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

V.

Encouragements to Prayer.

A Sermon.

Preached to the 18TH Regi-
ment. Va. Volunteers, in their
camp, within the Entrenchments
of Manassas's junction.

June, 1861.

On Luke 18TH 7. 8. "And shall not
God avenge his own elect, which cry
long unto him, though he bear long
with them? I tell you that he will
avenge them speedily."

Of the most of us it may probably be said, that we are more deficient in a proper value for spiritual blessings, than in confidence in God's generosity and faithfulness. There is danger that we shall supinely recline on an indolent assurance of God's willingness to bless, while we seek his blessings with no true earnestness and desire. And perhaps, the language of rebuke would be more appropriate to the present state of the church, for its sinful indifference to spiritual good, than the language of encouragement. But kindness often touches the heart more than severity. It may be, that a consideration of the loving assurances which our Father has given us, of his willingness to answer prayer, may affect us with a tender and ingenuous compunction for our lack of faith and desire. Shame! that these have so straitened our spiritual gifts, ~~while~~

TERM.

while God has been so ready to communicate! Let us dwell for a time upon his assurances; until we are filled with a generous contribution for the secularity and languor of our prayers, and until we feel boldness to come to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need."

The text contains the moral of the preceding parable; and its language is obviously formed upon that of the story. "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray; and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him saying; Avenge me of mine adver-

sary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself: Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming, she weary me."

"And the Lord said; Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."

It is clearly implied that the widow, by the phrase, avenge me of my adversary, intended, not malicious revenge, but a claim for her just rights. We shall best apprehend our Saviour's meaning, by looking only at this simple idea, that the widow had a suit to urge. Hence, when it is said, in drawing out the instruction of the parable in the text: "Shall not God avenge his own elect?" we are to find no more meaning in the words, than simply this: Shall he not grant their suit? To illustrate the strength of this gracious assurance, our Saviour presents this picture. The petitioner is a widow, a name in Oriental society, synonymous with that of a person friendless and unprotected. She could bring no social influence or patronage, to allure, or to overcome the judge. On the other hand, his character was at

once so ruthless, and so godless, that nothing was to be hoped from an appeal to his benevolence, his regard for reputations, or his religious fears. The poor, helpless applicant had nothing on which to rely, but pertinacity. And by the mere force of pertinacity, she was successful! How much more then, may not God's own, chosen people be assured of success, when they persevere day and night in prayer; seeing they come, not friendless, but with the powerful advocacy of Jesus Christ; and not to a ruthless judge, but to a faithful and pitying Father?

Such is the beautiful argument involved by our Redeemer, in this beautiful parable. Of course, we are not to invest it to the preposterous and impious idea, that God, like this judge, will yield unwillingly to our prayers, from a selfish fear of being "wearyed." We are to limit ourselves to the one idea; See here, the force of mere perseverance! And is it not a strange and touching thing, my Brethren, that it is God, the Father, who here uses the importunity, which among men, is usually found on the side of the beggar? It is evidence of inexpressible graciousness in God; of lamentable blindness and hardness in us! ~~Let~~ Let us pursue farther, the proofs of God's willingness to answer prayer -

But that our faith may be firm, it should be intelligent. Let us therefore understand how far God's warrant for prayer extends. When Christ says (Matt. 21: 22) "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;" or when similar promises are given elsewhere, we understand, of course, that there is a limitation—God has not bound himself to bestow literally every thing which a pious heart may ask, in the exercise of christian affections. For there are many things; many innocent things, even, which the christian might very piously desire; which would be disastrous to his welfare. If God had bound himself to give every such request, with literal exactness, he would have made his omnipotence the slave of our ignorance. The believer would be deprived of the advantages of having the Divine omniscience for his guide; and would have no better direction than his own pious, but often misjudging desires. If God had given such a promise, he would have given us the greatest curse. Accordingly; we find instances in Holy Writ, where the pious requests of pious men were refused by the Hearer of prayer.—II. Saml., 12; We find that David earnestly besought God to spare the life of his child by Bathsheba; and yet the child died. This too, was after his penitence induced by the rebuke of Nathan, and recorded in the 51st Psalm; and we may therefore conclude, that the prayer was offered with the right spirit. In II Cor. 12. Paul tells us that, when a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, was sent to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, "he besought the Lord for this thing thrice, that it might depart from him." But God's answer was: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness"—We cannot suspect that Paul's request, thrice repeated, was rejected because it was offered in an improper spirit.

To

There is therefore, a limitation implied in these promises. ~~So~~ see the extent of this limitation, we must draw a necessary distinction. There is a large class of objects, in themselves innocent and proper, concerning which we have no certainty whether they will be best for us or not. For all these, we must pray conditionally. Thus: we may submissively ask God to rescue us from temporal afflictions, or to exempt us from them in the future. But we do not know

6

whether he may not see it best for us to afflict us farther; because we have no light by which to read the designs of his providence in this matter. And yet it may be lawful and right for us to offer this prayer. It is even made our *duty* to pray: "Give us day by day our daily bread." And yet we have no warrant that God may not see it to be best for us to suffer actual want. How many a poor saint, who has meekly offered this petition, has suffered for the lack of daily food? To the same class belong all such objects as health, competence, long life, good name, ease. We may ask for these objects; but it must be with entire submission; and all must be suspended on the proviso; "if it be agreeable to thy will." And yet, even with regard to these, we have the explicit warrant to ask this, which is the most important concern respecting them; that, whether given or withheld. God will make them all subserve our highest good—Is not this enough for the meek soul?

But there is a higher and nobler class of objects concerning which we should pray with far different boldness and assurance. These may be described in general as being the gifts that pertain to redemption; or spiritual good things. Concerning all these we know, when we pray for them, that they are agreeable to God's will: for he has told us so—"This is the will of God; even our sanctification." When praying for any spiritual good, we may rely with undoubting confidence on God's literal engagement to give the answer. "This is the confidence that we have in him, (says the Apostle John,) that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petition that we desired of him." The *when*, the *how* the *wherewith* of the answer, may be far other than we expected. The desired gift may be so long delayed that we begin to fear God has forgotten us; for the times and seasons are in his own hands. The blessing may come in a shape so different from our foolish expectations, that we scarcely recognise it. It may be brought to us by means which, to us, had seemed most unlikely. But we believe that for all objects of spiritual good, the words of the promise are literally and universally exact; that every scriptural prayer for such objects is answered.

But now, let us to the proofs. And first, is not evidence to be found that we may

expect an answer to prayers for any of the gifts accompanying redemption, in God's very nature? He is intrinsically a holy being. He loves and delights in holiness with ineffable intensity. He delights in holy beings with an infinite delight. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "Such as are upright in their way are his delight." Now, the tendency of all these spiritual gifts is to make the soul holy; in other words, to make it that in which God delights. We may say, therefore, that the native inclinations of the Divine mind are on the side of such petitions. He who prays for any grace, prays that he may become just what God loves. In going to a fellow man, how strong an assurance of an affirmative answer would we feel, when we knew that we were inviting him to do something to which he was of himself inclined: and that we should have a warm prompter in his own breast, seconding our request? If there is not some external obstacle which forbids it, we feel certain that he will gratify himself and us at once, by assenting to our petition. In the case of God, all obstacles to the bestowal of grace, have been removed by the work of Christ. He may now lavish all the stores of redemption on any penitent and believing soul, without injury to his justice, majesty, or authority. And when our prayers fall in exactly with God's own inclinations, and no obstacle forbids him to indulge that inclination, may we not confidently expect a favorable answer?

Again we may say that God's own interests are too strongly on the side of an answer to all such prayers, to permit us to fear that they will be rejected. God is himself glorified in the redemption, and in all the graces and services of his children. And although he is independent and perfectly glorious and blessed in himself, and sufficient for himself, yet it is certain that the promotion of his own declarative glory in the acts and events of his creation, is a grand motive of his determinations. His purposes are formed by him, "to be to the praise of the glory of his grace." We believe that there is no event which occurs on this globe, which so glorifies God, as the redemption and perfection of a soul. There is no work by which so many of the divine attributes are so illustriously displayed. To form, out of a fallen, debased and rebel sinner, a glorified saint, a mate for angels, and a possessor of eternal glory, is a work more splen-

implements

did than would be the conversion of a clod into a star. Every acquisition of christians in holiness, and every good work, is also a tribute to God's glory. "So is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." "The fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, are unto the glory and praise of God." Will God begrudge the gifts of redemption, when they all redound to his own advantage? When the Christian prays for larger measures of the Spirit, for more wisdom, for more spiritual comfort, for victory over indwelling sin, for warmer zeal, or for stronger faith, he only prays for what will enable him to promote God's glory better. When the servant comes to the wise master, and asks for better ~~work~~, only in order that he may be able to earn more for that master, will he be refused? So, when the Christian prays for any spiritual good, what is it, ^{but asking what he may} be equipped for serving his God better? God's own self-interest and wisdom are on the side of the answer of such prayers.

There is a third fact which is yet more conclusive. All believing prayer for spiritual good is itself the fruit of the Holy Spirit. He himself has evoked it; therefore it is offered up. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the lips are from the Lord." "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." In man's natural heart, there is no good desire. Now, does the Spirit of truth prompt these desires for spiritual good, in order to disappoint them? Does he thus make a mock and sport of believing souls? It is impious to suppose it. When we feel a spiritual desire, why did he inspire it? It was a part of the eternal plan of his grace to us; that, through asking we might receive. He does not put petitions into our mouths and send us with them to his own footstool, in order that he may reject them. The fact that we feel a true and believing desire for any spiritual good is, therefore, the evidence and earnest of the Divine intention to bestow that good; in his own good time and way. Just so far as we are assured that our desires are sincere and pious, we may argue, with pleasing awe, and humble joy, that God himself has inspired them; inspired, because he intends to gratify them. We may spread the words of our requests before him, and urge that they are the Holy

Spirit's own words. Thus the Spirit makes intercession for us. We may plead with God that he disappoint us not: because he himself hath taught us to hope.

There is, what may perhaps be called, another view of the same truth, derived from the doctrine of our *union with Christ*. He is the head of which Christians are the limbs, receiving spiritual sensation, vitality and volition from him. He is the vine stock, and they are the branches, blooming, and bearing fruit by his sap, which circulates in a common flow through him and them. Wherever a believer possesses gracious exercises or qualities, it is in virtue of this vital union to Christ. Our gracious affections are therefore to be all regarded as the evidences of the existence, in full glory and perfection, of similar graces and affections in Christ our Head. As the drop of sap trickling from the twig is evidence of the strong flow of the

same sap throughout the generous vine-stocks, so the existence of a pious affection in the breast of a believer, is evidence that the same affection is glowing, in full purity and perfection, in the breast of the Saviour. As we pass along, with our eyes fixed upon the ground, we suddenly behold a flush of splendour which dazzles the sight, thrown from the surface of a pool, to whose margin we have come. Whence that blaze of light? Not from the pool, which is in its own nature rayless, and perhaps sordid! We know at once, that it is reflected light; descending first from the King of day, and that therefore he is now shining in his strength from the sky. So, every gracious desire in our poor breasts, is reflected from the heart of the Sun of Righteousness-

In like manner, when we have a good

desire to offer to God, we have the unspeakable encouragement of believing that the same desire burns, in far superior strength, in the breast of him who is "our Advocate with the Father," and "Head over all things to the church." If Christ, into whose hand "all power in Heaven and in earth is given," desires the same things which we desire; if this is so true, that the reason why we felt the desire, was, that he felt it first and communicated it to us, how can we be disappointed? Such gracious desires for spiritual good are as certain of an answer in Christ's own

time and way, as it is certain that Christ is King in Zion.

In our desires and zeal for Christ's cause and church, especially, does not our forgetfulness of this sometimes amount to an impertinence towards Him? When we go, with ardent zeal for the revival of religion, to plead before Him, is not this the implied language of our temper and feeling: "that God and Christ are too cold and inattentive to the interest of Zion; and that we must arouse and warm them?" My brother; if that zeal is pure, which sends you to your knees, interceding for Zion, whence comes it, except from the infinitely purer and stronger zeal for the Church, which ever glows in the breast of him who gave his blood for it? Let us remember this for our rebuke: for what an impertinence is it, that when our remissness, and follies, and faults, have brought the cause of Christ into an evil case, (the only causes of the church's reverses,) we should go querulously to him who loves the church with a perpetual and intense love, as though he were not zealous enough for his own cause? Let us remember it also for our encouragement. It is our privilege to pray always for Zion in the strain of Asaph, in the 74th Psalm. "Arise, Oh God, plead thine own cause." If we feel that it is dear to us, herein we have the evidence that it is infinitely dearer to Christ. If the opposition of the wicked grieves our hearts, we know thereby that it grieves Christ far more. His care and concern for his cause are infinitely more tender than ours; for ours are only a faint reflection of his. And while we are living a life of parity, consistency, and faithful effort for Zion, we should offer all our intercessions for her, and commit all her concerns to her Head, with a blessed composure and peacefulness, which would fill our souls with heavenly assurance and courage, amidst all delays, discouragements and oppositions.

To be further strengthened in encouragement, let the Believer ask himself, for what purpose he has been redeemed, and what was the expense at which the work of his redemption has been set on foot. Both these questions are answered in Titus ii: 14. "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Now, we have an assurance of God's sincerity in intending our complete redemption, in the immense expense he has already incurred to begin the work: and it is the strongest of all inferences, that a wise Being, having gone to this expense, will not begrudge any thing else which is necessary to perfect the undertaking. When the Christian prays for any gift accompanying redemption; he prays for just the object for which God has already made this great expenditure. And when he prays for the largest measures of grace, he does not pray for more than is embraced in God's object, for that object is his *perfect* sanctification.

easy

But more; since Christ has been given for us, all other gifts are, to God, inexpressibly easy. Not only are they vastly less precious and costly than this first, great gift: but the giving of this has smoothed the way for the prompt and easy bestowal of all the rest. To God's almighty power, it is, and always has been an effort perfectly ~~trivial~~ to put forth any exertion of strength or wisdom, which may be needed for our complete redemption. How slight ~~and easy~~ are the works of renewing our hearts, of conquering our indwelling sins, of foiling our enemies, human and spiritual, of enlightening our minds, and of moving the wheels of providence for our highest welfare, to that God whose understanding is infinite, whose word made the worlds, "who spake and it was done; who commanded, and it stood fast?" The only obstacles which ever existed to our receiving all spiritual blessings, were those arising from our guilt and God's truth, holiness, and justice. By the gift of Christ, these have been all so thoroughly removed, that God is actually more glorified in giving than in withholding. All the rest then, which pertains to our redemption, however precious and necessary to us, is to God, in comparison with his first gift, unspeakably easy and light. Is it conceivable that God, after having proved the earnestness and reality of his purpose to save us, by so great a gift, will begrudge the less? Would a wise man who had expended

great treasures, to purchase a pearl of great price, then begrudge the additional expense of a trifling sum to secure the gem from being lost? Could there be any doubt, after Abraham—had bound his only son, the son of promise, as a sacrifice to God, whether this pastoral Prince would spare a lamb out of his countless flocks, as an offering to him? So argues, the Holy Spirit for our encouragement: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii: 32. To taste the richness of these words, we must try to conceive something of the divine and eternal love for the coequal Son. We must remember how freely he was bestowed. We must consider *to what* he was surrendered for our redemption; to how cruel and bitter, and humiliating a destiny.— Can a love so unspeakable as that which gave Christ to die for us, stint us in any of those slighter gifts which we now need? (slighter for God to give, though still invaluable to us.) If he so loved, must he not now delight to lavish these gifts of his grace upon his people?

But the Apostle Paul raises this argument to a delightful climax, when he says, Rom. v. 8, 10. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us:—For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." This love, and this gift, so unspeakably great, were bestowed upon us while as yet we were in a state of heinous rebellion, and loathsome guilt. It is impossible for us to express or conceive the abhorrence and indignation, with which God regards the character of an impenitent sinner. He averts his eyes from him, as a loathsome object. "He is angry with the wicked every day." If we have been truly convinced of sin, we can recall the impressions of our own guilt and hatefulnes which we then had; and we may remember that these were but a little glimpse of the character which we then bore in God's eyes. It was in that hateful condition, that he thus loved us, and gave this unspeakable gift for us. But now, we hope we are reconciled. We are, ~~we are~~ "accepted in the Beloved." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." All our sins are covered with the precious atonement, and the robe of Christ's obedience, so lovely in the Father's eyes, is thrown all around us. And although there is not and

will not be, any thing, in our personal char-
acters or conduct, meritorious in such a sense
as to purchase the justification of a holy, per-
fect, and absolute law; yet there is a change
here, which must render believers very dif-
ferent objects to God's eye. In place of obduracy
there is repentance. In place of insolent
rebellion, there is imperfect, but affection-
ate obediences. None of this personal change
can be presented by us, to satisfy the law;
for it is all imperfect, while the law is
perfect; and it is all the unwrought gift
of God to us. How can we offer to Him his
own gift, as a price to purchase any thing
from Him of our own right? But the fact
that all this conversion is God's work,
surely does not render it less interesting
in his eyes. Doubtless He is pleased with
His own holy and excellent handiwork in
us, although He still disapproves that evil
which our indwelling sin mingles with
it. Here then, is St. Paul's argument; if
in our old estates of guilt and enmity, God
loved so much, and did so much for us,
will He not now, when we are reconciled,
when we are clothed with Christ's glo-
rious righteousness, when our souls be-
gin to show some of the results of His
gracious handiwork, give us all that
our souls need? How can words strengthen
in the blessed assurance?

The answer of prayer is further ensured to believers, by the Advocate who presents it. His merits are complete: He is the "beloved Son in whom God is well pleased." His mediation has never been unsuccessful; he could say to his Father when asking of him that the bonds of death should be broken from the limbs of his friend, Lazarus, "I knew that thou hearest me always." "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." God the Father stands pledged to grant all his mediatorial petitions; having engaged: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." Yea, he exercises the authority of a regal advocate; for "God hath set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, and hath put all things under his feet, and made him to be head over all things to the church." This Christ is also ever ready to undertake for believers. He declared: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Let us recall his tenderness, compassion, and liberality when upon earth, and remember that he is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever." It is to be noted, that there is not a single instance, in all the biographies of Christ by the Evangelists, where any applicant was turned away with neglect or refusal. Even though it was but a corporeal evil which brought the petitioner to him, and the evidence was lacking of any

time, gracious desire for the better gifts of redemption, even though it was the Canaanish woman, daughter of an unclean and doomed race, none ever found an ear inattentive to their woe. The God-man wears the same tender heart upon the throne of the universe. Come, then, brethren, with all your wants and sorrows, to the mercy-seat, and you will not be disappointed.

To conclude the proof, let us recite a few of the promises so thickly strewn over the Bible. ¹ "The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

² "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary: they shall walk and not faint." ³ "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain."

⁴ "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

⁵ "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Now, dear brethren, if we have little grace, or joy, or strength, or usefulness, whose is the fault? Our God proclaims to us, "Ye are not straitened in me."

1. Ps. 84:11. 2. Isaiah 40:31. 3. Isaiah 45:19. 4. Psalm 81:10. 5. John 16:24.

He repudiates the blame of our lean-
ness. It is we, who have straitened our-
selves, with a suicidal folly and in-
dolence. Let us not pervert the truth of
the sovereignty of grace; and facily as-
sign our shortcoming to God's disposing
purpose; for He has assured us that he
purposes a full and liberal answer to
our prayers. We deceive ourselves here:
we argue that the higher measures of
holiness and zeal are not within our
power. When we compare our barren
and sluggish lives with that of a Paul
we say, it is God who maketh us to
differ. True, such grace, the least true
grace, is not within our natural
power; but it is within the promises;
those same promises which were given
to the great Apostle. We are, indeed,
not responsible that a disposing Provi-
dence has refused to us the genius,
and the opportunity, of a Paul. But we
are blameworthy if we fail to pray so
that equal measures of love, fidelity,
faith, and zeal are granted to our
more lowly capacities. It is our duty to
ask great endowments of grace, and to
labour for them, and to expect them.

But I am reminded, that the
christian heart is often vehemently con-
cerned for other gifts than those per-
taining to redemption, to which alone,
as I have today taught you, the ex-
press and literal warrant of answer
extends. Many of these things, though
not essential to your glorification as
ransomed souls, are very dear, you
say, to your affections; the life, the

comfort of beloved ones at home, your health, your life, your good name, And especially is there one desire, belonging to this class, which lies near the heart of every christian patriot among us, today - the deliverance of the bleeding country for which we contend. What are we entitled to claim, and to expect of God, concerning these dear objects? Perhaps, my brethren, it becomes us to conclude that one reason these precious interests are permitted to be jeopardized today, is, that our God sees our innocent attachments to them are becoming inordinate, and are no longer innocent. Perhaps we have suffered them to intrude into that supreme place in our hearts, which should be reserved for God and for heaven alone; and therefore he is constrained to cast the anxious shadow of fear across them, to remind us that they should not be our chief good.

With regard to this class of objects, the warrant of God's word may be expressed in these propositions; That if our petitions for them are offered in a believing, submissive spirit, they are graciously entertained by our Father, even though they cannot be expressly granted; That they will be granted, unless a loving omniscience sees that to refuse them is a truer kindness, in view of the whole interests of our immortality, and of his glory; And that in any event, all these things shall be made to work together for your truest good. Ought not this to suffice

for a christian heart? Is it not sufficient for the servant, that he be as his master? When our Redeemer in Gethsemane, cried; "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" his holiness caused him to add; "nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." And the cup did not pass! But a gift was bestowed, in answer to this earnest cry. (for, saith the apostle, "he was heard in that he feared.") fuller of glory and blessing than immediate deliverance could have been; strength to endure, and thus, to achieve man's redemption and his own infinite exaltation. Look, then, unto Him, who is the "author and finisher of our faith;" there is your model at once, of importunity, and of submission.

It may be added, that the tender compassion of our Advocate and King prompt him to give every innocent gift which affects the happiness of his people, unless their higher good, or his higher glory, forbids. And perhaps, if we attempt to prognosticate whether a lawful secular object of our desire, such as the independence of our beloved country, will be found accordant with the higher spiritual interests; no safer rule can be given, to guide our surmises in so uncertain a question, than this: That we may probably encourage ourselves to expect its bestow-

al, if we find that the motives of our request are not only innocent, but godly. Why do we beseech God to crown our land with independence, liberty, and just civil government? Is it that pride and resentment, ambition and animosity may be gratified in such a triumph? If our hearts be so; then we certainly have little to encourage us in the hope that the King of Zion smiles on our prayer: and if the boon be given, we may fear that it will rather be in righteous anger, than in love. But if the Church in these Confederate States can say, in the presence of the Searcher of Hearts, that its desire is prompted by zeal for righteousness, and the hope and purpose that all the fruits of our new prosperity shall be sanctified to the honour of Christ, then she may probably conclude that the wish was inspired by the Holy Ghost, the only author of holy aspirations in man; and is therefore to be fulfilled.

In conclusion; let me remind you of our Saviour's description of the successful petitioner. He is one who "cries day and night into his bow:" one who "prays always, and faints not." We must "ask in faith, nothing wavering." "For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

But I hear some anxious sinner, some feeble, doubting Christian say; "Ah no; this great and precious promise is for the elect: it is to them the Saviour limits it. How shall I know whether I am of that mysterious number? This question, I answer, my brother, in the words of the Holy Spirit. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." And this you are instructed by the Apostle Peter to do. ⁽¹⁾ by believing on Christ, and then "adding to your faith virtue." God's elect are those who truly go to him as the Publican went, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Are you willing to go thus? Then you, oh sinner, may claim and appropriate all the blessings of the throne of grace, as fully, as triumphantly, as a Paul. Are you unwilling to go thus? Then that is your own fault alone.

1. 2nd Peter. 1:5.

The Christian Philosopher.

An Expository Sermon

022
Phillippians. 14. 4-7.

Preached at Camp Lee, near
Richmond Va. by moonlight; to a
number of volunteers. May, 1861.

Preached in Charlottesville Va. May, 1877.

Phil. 4:4-7. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say; Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your minds and hearts through Christ Jesus."

The Christian religion is singular, my Brethren, in that it makes religious joy not only a privilege, but a duty. Its exercise is commanded more than once in the Bible. P.S. 33:1. "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright." In the text, the obligation is enforced with an emphatic repetition: "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say; Rejoice." Had the Philippian Christians possessed no more fortitude than we, they would ^{possibly} have demurred from this command, as ill-suited to their dangerous and afflicted circumstances. They would perhaps have reminded the Apostle, that their church was planted by him amidst a storm of persecution; (See Acts. 16:22.) and had grown up

under its peltings; and that he had himself taught them. (Col. 1:29.) that suffering under their adversaries was one of the regular allotments of the servant of Christ. How can we rejoice, they might have said, who live with the sword at our throats, and who only serve our Redeemer at the cost of exciting a jealousy, which may burst out at any time into murder, and which makes us feel its bitterness daily in exactions and revilings?

But the Apostle could, at least, rejoice, by asking whether he was in more cheering circumstances, an obscure prisoner in the vast capital of Pagan Rome, with powerful accusers, without friends. Yet he was able to be "exceeding joyful in all his tribulations." They could not charge him then, with enjoining upon them a higher rule than he observed for himself. If this holy Apostle's spiritual joy sustained him in his gloomy captivity, surely, my brethren, we should be ashamed to bear our lighter lot less cheerfully.

For, the joy of the Lord is independent of outward circumstances. It consists of the inward peace and sunshine of a conscience cleansed from evil works, of the sweet assurance of God's friendship, of delight in his perfect and admirable attributes, and of the triumphant hope of heavenly glory in reward for us. It has been said that the Apostle not

only invites, but commands us to feel it. And is not this just? A voluntary profession of faith in Christ involves an obligation to act in consistency with the creed professed. Now, your creed is, that all your sins are reconciled, that the pains of the fall are surely repairing in your soul, that this glorious, infinite God is your friend and portion, that a heaven of bliss is your destined home; in a word, that as an heir of God you are journeying to an inheritance, in comparison with whose glories the scantiness of your viaticum, and the toils of the way, are trivial evils. Nothing can be more inconsistent than such a profession, and a murmuring, melancholy spirit. Your Redeemer has a right, my brethren, to ask that you shall not seem to contradict his gospel, and to belye his assurance, that his yoke is easy and his burden light; and to malign that celestial city to which he is inviting men, by your discontented air. He may justly complain of those who defraud themselves of that happiness during their pilgrimage, which he purchased for them by his pangs.

There are many men, who have been persuaded by the "Father of Lies," that christianity is a gloomy thing. They believe that its practice will suffuse their whole lives with sombre melancholy. So dark and repulsive does the christian life appear to them, they de-

8.

liberately purchase a postponement of its hated
restraints at the cost of ~~sinning~~ ~~their~~ ~~souls~~
hazarding the immortal soul. But lo! Chris-
tianity is not gloom; solid joy is one of its
constituent parts! "Its ways are ways of pleas-
antness, and all its paths are peace". So false
is that guilty fear, at the prompting of which
you are now postponing duty, and risking
your everlasting welfare.

But, returning to Christ's people, we are
taught that the joy of the Lord should super-
sede all inordinate emotions concerning lower
things. "Let your moderation be known unto
all men". Here is inculcated that continent
and self-governed spirit, which refuses to be
keenly agitated by earthly desire, or by earthly
sorrow and loss. It pursues even lawful good
without overweening cravings; it submits to its
^{privations} ~~loss~~ without excessive grief or indignation.
It refuses to allow the steady balance of its equal
mind, filled with better things, to be greatly
disturbed by any thing below the skies. The
Apostle points us to the fact that "the Lord",
Christ, "is at hand"; as the ground of this
Christian philosophy. Does he mean to sug-
gest the nearness of the Divine Redeemer, as
ubiquitous God; with his power, and readiness
to succour and to vindicate his own people?
If we accept this as his meaning, surely his
reasoning is excellent. Omnipotent, redeeming

6.
love is at hand, as a resource ~~in every trial~~.
Is not this truth enough to breathe composure
in every trial? How can that soul be agitated,
which reposes in contact with the 'Rock of
Ages' beneath it? Or if we attribute to the
Apostle another meaning which is consonant
to his usage of the phrase, then his argument
is equally just. (Indeed it will scarcely seem
erroneous to receive the words with a sort of
happy ambiguity, and draw from them both
senses.) The second idea which they will
bear, is the rapid approach of the end,
which brings to everyone the final consum-
mation of this earthly scene, and of all its
interests. Time is short. The hour is near
when Christ will call you away from sublim-
inary fears and joys, to more substantial reali-
ties. Surely then, it is not reasonable that
the heir of immortal riches should be over-
much occupied either by the gains or losses
which are soon to be forgotten amidst vaster joys.

Notice too, the Apostle says: "Let your
moderation be known unto all men". You
must not only cultivate, but exhibit this
spirit, to all who behold your life. This is a
tribute which we owe, brethren, to the truth
of the Gospel, to the reality of heaven, to the
superior moment of eternity. Shall we seek
with as querulous anxiety, what we shall eat,

and what we shall drink, and wherewithal⁷
we shall be clothed, as the poor idolaters of
earthly good around us, who have no superior
hope? "After all these things do the gentiles
seek!" If the worshippers of this world see us
jostling these in their race, with a covetous-
ness as keen as their own, or retorting the loss
of temporary things with as hot an indignation
as theirs, will they not be likely to conclude that
we believe in our hearts, in no better prize? Con-
scious as they are of the infinite superiority of
our inheritance, over the beggarly object of their
idolatry, they will find it difficult to believe
that we could conform the two, if we truly
possessed both. But if we exhibit a noble
indifference to all these objects which so
engross their desires, they will feel, that they
who say such things declare plainly that they
seek a better country, even a heavenly."

Let us therefore "be careful for nothing."
We are not taught here, indeed, to forswear
a reasonable forecast and industry in pro-
viding for temporal wants. We may safely
assume that St. Paul does not mean
to contradict himself, when he says, (Rom.
12: 11. & 17.) that we must "not be slothful in
business," and that we must "provide things
honest in the sight of all men;" and when
he commands, (2. Thess. 3: 10) "that if any

will not work, neither shall they eat." But the term "careful," in the intent of the venerable translators of our version, ~~there~~ ^{conveys} the sense, [which is a correct representation of the meaning of the word which they render by it] ~~that of~~ ^{of} growing anxiety. We are here forbidden to indulge inordinate care for any terrestrial concern. The apostle echoes the precept of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, in which he commands us to take no thought; no over-anxious thought, "what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithall we shall be clothed"; but to commit these smaller interests to our Heavenly Father, and seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. Our inability to secure the objects of our desire, and the inutility of our strivings without a favouring Providence; our reliance on a present God and Saviour, who knows our real wants; the superior moment of heavenly good; all these argue against excessive earthly care.

But what Christian heart has not experienced the rebellion of these inordinate anxieties against the soundest argument? They will not be charmed.

ed down by logic, let it charm ever so wisely. These obstinate cares cleave to the heart, infest the most sacred seasons and exercises, and throw between our souls and their Redeemer, even when we seek him on his Mercy seat. The apostle therefore shows us a more excellent way. He proposes a holy art, by which these enemies of our heavenly-mindedness may be disarmed, and even enlisted to assist in our approaches to God. This method is, instead of making them subjects for an ineffectual and consuming anxiety, to make them subjects of prayer. "But," as another and better alternative than sinful care, "in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." "Let all our wants be carried to Him in earnest, humble prayer: and that accompanied with thanks for mercies already received. For what attitude is more inconsistent, than that of an ungrateful petitioner? And what consideration could more properly arrest the

10

future bounties of our Heavenly Father, than
the discovery that we were thankless for the
good already bestowed?

But do you ask; Shall I carry every
want thins to the Throne of grace; the
trivial as well as the grave; the temporal
as well as the spiritual? Would not the
obtaining of the former be derogatory to the
majesty of God; and of the latter, to his
sanctity? Shall I be so presumptuous as to
ask the sovereign Ruler of angels and
worlds to repair the lesser inconveniences,
and to remedy the petty annoyances which
are the daily worry of my existence? If
I went to him to plead for the life of a child
languishing with mortal disease, or for the
soul of one wandering in devils paths of
sin, I should feel that there was a propor-
tion in the gravity of the petition to the
grandeur of the King. But how can I ask
the Majesty of heaven to stoop to the healing
of the fleeting indisposition which is the
vexation of a day; how request Him whose
infinite mind is filled with designs for the
redemption of immortal souls, to turn
aside for the bestowal of ^{some} ~~this~~ little corpo-
real good?

It is by such fallacies as these,

perhaps only half-uttered in the heart, that many a christian defrauds himself of the larger part of his Saviour's legacy of peace. And here is to be found one solution of that strange blemish, which has been so often observed in God's people; that while, in the grave emergencies of life, they are calm, and in its heavy calamities, nobly submissive; they have no philosophy to sustain the smaller annoyances, ~~of life~~, but regard with a petulant unworthy of their heavenly birth. This occurs, because the weighty events drive them to the throne of grace; whences they receive strength to endure: but the light ones are met in their strength alone, which is weakness.

Now, in opposition to all this error, St Paul says: "in every thing, let your requests be made known unto God." In large things, and in small things: in spiritual, and in secular things; in those which move the world's sympathy, and in those which evoke its sneer. If there is any want, which you do not make known to God by prayer and supplication, that is a want not disarmed of its sting of inordinate care. If there is anything which it is right for you to desire; then it is right

for you to ask it of God. If there is any annoyance which men call trivial, that is sufficient to disturb the christian integrity of God's child, then it is important enough to claim the attention of the Redeemer who died for him. If it is large enough, my brother, to be a temptation to you, then it is large enough for the reasonable notice of God; for in his eye, sin in you is the most momentous occurrence of which your being can be the subject.

But the illusion which has been described is effectually dispelled by two thoughts. One is, that relatively to God, human affairs are not large and small, as they appear to our limited capacities. If we compare the grandest transactions of earth with his infinitude, they are inexpressibly minute beside Him. He counteth "the nations as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing." If, on the other hand, we regard ~~the~~ his omniscience, we see that no fatigue can arise in the divine mind, from multiplicity or minuteness of details. There is a sense in which nothing earthly is great, nothing is small to God. The other truth is, that He has al-

readily proved his concern in the most trivial events which befall His own people, We believe in a special Providence: we hold that, to God, there is nothing which comes by chance: we read that the very hairs of our heads are all numbered. As every thing which exists was created by Him, so every event which occurs is superintended and directed by His design. Remember, my brother, when you taste an evanescent or unimportant pleasure, that you would not have enjoyed it, but for the purpose and care, and power of God. This is true, even though that pleasure is merely corporeal, and wholly unessential to the good of your nobler part, the soul. Your eye is delighted with the beauty of a landscape? Who spread the fields with verdure, swelled the hills into forms of grace, and arched them over with the azure sky? Who directed your steps to it just when the scene was refreshed with showers and illuminated with the mellowest light of morn or evening? You regale your senses with the tint and the perfume of an ephemeral rose. Who dyed its leaves with those pure colours, and embued them with ^{that} sweetness?

14

It was your Heavenly Father; and he did it, in part, that he might prepare for you, his child, this fleeting joy beside your pathway. So, when we receive those supplies of the commonplace wants of every day, the failure of which would so soon plunge us into heavy trouble, we see in every gift the detailed watchfulness, the paternal care of our omnipresent Father. He who has taught us to pray; "Give us this day our daily bread," does not disdain to provide the humble gift. We have ~~there~~ in our own experience, the most complete proof that our God condescends to provide for the smallest wants of his creatures. Let us then, "in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make known our requests unto God." Nothing will be so great as to overtask his power; nothing so minute as to elude his omniscience.

And thus calling us, with all our wants, to the Throne of grace, the Apostle tacitly encourages us with the warrant of the sacred Scriptures, that all earnest, believing prayer of Christians is surely answered. God has pledged his own power and faithfulness to this, in many great

15.

and precious promises, such as these; "God will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Ps. 84:11) "Shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he ~~shall~~ ^{will} avenge them speedily." (Luke 18:7 & 8.) "He that spared not his own Son, but ~~freely~~ delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.) God has not indeed bound himself here, to gratify every specific desire for unessential, earthly good, in spite of his wiser knowledge of our true interests; but he has done what is better: he has engaged to watch over our all, for time and eternity, with an omniscient love, which secures us whatever is for our truest good, and which, where it withholds, makes the privations a more real blessing than the bestowal would have been. Thus it is plain, that he who reposes, by a habitual life of prayer, upon his God, has enlisted the resources of his infinite attributes in his own cause. He has the Almighty pledged to his security, for time and eternity.

Now let us notice the blessed consequence which follows from this life

of prayer. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep his heart and mind through Christ Jesus." This peace is surely some great thing, seeing the apostle dignifies it with so majestic a term.

Shall we, with some, receive this as meaning no more than a phrase of amplification, an instance of a Hebrew mode of speech, which expressed superlative excellence or greatness of created things, by attributing them to God as their immediate possessor? Thus, the lofty cedars of Lebanon were called "trees of God"; the grandest of God's vegetable creation; and the plain of Jordan is compared to the "Garden of God," for its fruitfulness and beauty.

May, I am persuaded that these blessed words signify far more - that the peace which they assure to the praying Christian is God's own peace; the peace which God himself enjoys, communicated by his own spirit in that measure which befits the created soul. And I rest this conviction not only on the grounds that this meaning is more simple and obvious, and more accordant with the usual expressions of the apostle Paul, but especially upon the words of our Saviour to his disciples; (John 14:27.) "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give

unto you." It is his own peace; It is the ^{17.} same serene composure and assured blessedness which reigned in the soul of the God-man; and which constitutes the eternal sunshine of the Divine Spirit. Sublime, audacious thought! Yea, impious for a poor sinner to think; were he not invited to it by the gracious words of his Master. But, brethren, splendid as is the conception, it is not extravagant; for we have it in the very words of God and of Christ, that they invite us to share their own peace. "The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath ~~we~~ are the everlasting arms." (Deut. 33:27) He has taught us, that "he that toucheth his people, toucheth the apple of his eye." (Zech. 2: 8). He authorizes us to say; (Ps. 46th. 1. 2.) "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." How much nobler and truer thy Lyriks, believer, than the vain boast of the classic heathen, who ~~boasts~~ ^{vaynts} of a fortitude amidst the most appalling calamities, built upon the strength of his own virtue and stability of his own will!

*
 "If man be just, and to his purpose true,
 The rage malign of urgent populace
 And wilful despots' angry face
 Shall not his steadfast will subdue,
 Nor stormy South-wind, restless Hadria's King,
 Nor yet the mighty hand of thundering Jove.
 His fearless soul shall never move,
 If worlds their ruins round him fling."

Be our fortitude, brethren reared on
 a more stable foundation; the strength
 of God - Almighty, pledged to us! To him
 who lives the life of believing prayer, our
 God has engaged himself, to withhold no
 good thing, and to give grace and glory.
 The covenant is ordered in all things and
 sure. It is fortified by two immutable things
 in which it is impossible for God to lie,
 his word and oath. Thus ~~we~~ engaged ~~for~~ ~~us~~
 all the perfections of Jehovah are enlisted
 for us, with the fidelity and zeal of redeem-
 ing love. When the Divine mind regards the
 future interests of its own unchangeable ble-
 ssedness, and sees the kings of earth and hell
 taking counsel against his throne, what
 is the thought which fills the heart of God

with his ineffable and changeless composure? We infer, with reverence, that it is the recollection of his own immense resources of wisdom ~~and~~ knowledge and power, and of his own immutable rectitude; of an omniscience which no cunning of human or Satanic malice can elude; of ~~an~~ omnipotence which no created power can successfully assail. Well; the same attributes are engaged for our protection, by a love which was strong enough to die for us. So that the security of our souls reposes on the same foundations, which support the honour of Jehovah's throne.

"Our lives are hid with Christ in God." Is it not with justice then, that the Apostle calls the repose of that faith, which embraces the promises of redemption, the peace of God?

This peace, he declares, "passeth all understanding." It is indeed, most obviously incomprehensible to the unbeliever. Conscious that his soul possesses no such foundation, and that it will shiver with helpless fright before the stroke of fate, he looks on with wonder, and almost with incredulity, when he sees the man of faith composed, or even joyful, in the presence of calamity and death.

But more than this, it passeth all understand-
 ing, even that of believers themselves. There is
 a breadth and length, and height and depth
 in it, which passeth knowledge. No trials to
 which christians have yet been subjected have
 fully tested or exhausted its resources. No
 soul has yet drawn all the sweetness which
 is contained in the ineffable truth that this
 God is our God, and our portion forever.
 To Zion He said; "Behold, I will extend peace
 to her like a river." (Is. 66:12.) On this bles-
 sed flood the child of God is sustained and
 borne: He is immersed in its waves; they
 embrace him all around with a full and
 satisfying volume: he feels no boundary
 to his joy around him, beneath him. But
 he is not able to fathom and measure the
 generous flood: all he knows is, that it is
 more than large enough for his largest
 desires.

This abounding peace, saith St. Paul,
 "shall keep your hearts and minds through
 Christ Jesus." The verb he uses is of peculiar
 strength: It shall garrison your souls, to
 keep out every assailant, as the detachment
 of soldiers guards and watches a besieged pro-
 tress. And this, the Christian's peace effects,
 whether the temptation is aimed at the

21.

affections of the heart, in the form of seductive passions, or at the understanding, in the form of sophisms and heresies. Spiritual joy garrisons the heart against corrupt desires, chiefly by filling and satisfying it with its own pure blessedness. Has not your experience taught you, my brethren, that these temptations have power over you only when your souls have lost the savour of divine things? When your heart is no longer filled with this peace, its native craving for happiness, rising in your emptiness into a consuming hunger, impels you to feed upon the baser food of forbidden pleasures. Like the prodigal, estranged from his Father's house, and furnished for good, you feed upon the husks which the swine did eat, which none gave unto you. But when the prodigal has returned, and has been embraced by his reconciled father, when he has satisfied his soul with the meat and wines of the feast of rejoicing, do those husks again tempt him? No; they have no longer any allurements for him: he is secure from their seductions: his nature is satiated with better things. Even so vile, brethren, do impure joys seem to your hearts, when they are soled and fed with the joys of your

salvation.

It is equally true, although less obvious, that peace in believing is the best defence against all erroneous dogmas in religion. And here a remark may be made parallel to one just uttered, which deserves the special reflection of all who are, or may become guides of other souls; that the great inlet to speculative errors concerning christianity, is spiritual declension. When christians fall into the domain of "Doubting Castle"; or under the frightful clutches of "Giant Despair", it is always found that the misfortune has begun by turning aside into the bypaths of transgression and forfeiting their peace. When professed religious teachers are betrayed into heresies or damnable errors, it will always be found that 'prayer and supplication with thanksgiving' had first declined, and the peace which passeth all understanding had been lost. When that blessed peace is felt, the mind finds, in ~~the~~ self-evident holiness and reality, ^{of the gift,} the best argument for the correctness of that system of redeeming truths by which the happy state of the soul has been propagated. The sanctified heart

is teacher to the enlightened head. And this, instead of detroning reason, is the order which is supremely rational. Will you go and tell the man who is basking in the light, that there is no sun ~~making~~ shining in his strength? It will be vain; he will say, even though blind; "Nay verily; I know there is a Sun in the heavens, and that he shines on me; For do I not feel his blessed beams, filling every fibre of these limbs but now frozen, with his vivifying warmth?" "He that believeth, hath the witness in himself."

It is through Jesus Christ the soul is thus defended; for it is through him this peace is derived to us. The prayers and supplications, which are the means for its descent, must all be offered through him. His intercession must obtain the gift, as his death purchased it. His Spirit must infuse it in our hearts.

And now, I end this exposition, by asking you, my Brother; Is not this peace of God worth the pains of gaining it? Oh, is it not well worth the surrender of those deceitful, beggarly pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, that defraud us of the blessed endowment, and ^{worth} the dili-

24.
gence in christian duties and prayer, by
which it is attained?

I ask you, in turn, Unbeliever;
What thinks you of this peace? Is it not
worth having? Contrast it with your pres-
ent condition and future destiny. What
have you here, to set against it? ~~spiritual~~
~~joy~~? A few treacherous, hollow joys, dashed
with satiety, and evil consciences, and disap-
pointment; with the miserable license of
your darling self-will; the whole speedily
terminated by death; and then —
the blackness of darkness forever! Poor,
begged soul; Is it nothing to have
peace between yourself and your Almighty
Judge; to have a mercycat thrown open
to your every want; to have the infinite
powers of God all engaged, by the most
faithful love, for the preservation of your
highest welfare, and transmuting appa-
rent evils into occasions of blessing; to
have wounds, calamities, death itself,
disarmed of all their real sting; to have a
home in heaven pledged as the end of your
toils here below? Surely, even your heart
avows that this is worth the winning
(Turn over)

But is it for you too? Yea, for all, who
come through Jesus Christ, by prayer
and supplication, with thanksgiving -
Bring your spiritual wants then, to God;
(and they are many,) he will meet them
all: Your sins, to be covered with Christ's
atonement: Your self-will, to be subdued
by his Spirit: Your darkness, to be illumined
by his light: your weakness of pur-
pose as to all good, to be upheld by his
strength: your misery to be enriched by
his love. "And the peace of God which
passeth all understanding, shall keep
your heart and mind, likewise, through
Jesus Christ."

XIX.

The Bondage of Sin.

A Sermon.

on

Acts. VIII. 23? "Show art. . . . in the
land of iniquity."

Preached in the Tabb Street Church,
Petersburg, Va. February 1865. to an assem-
blage of soldiers and citizens.

This is a part of the rebuke addressed by the Apostle Peter to Simon Magus. It was provoked by an outrageous sin. Simon's attempt^{to} induce the apostles by a bribe, to bestow on him a share in their spiritual influences. The word iniquity is sometimes popularly used among us, to express a high degree of relative wickedness. But the text, of itself, contains no reference to the peculiar enormity of Simon's sin. The word rendered "iniquity" is that common word, everywhere used in the New Testament, to express unrighteousness—disobedience to God's laws. When we address the text to impenitent men, we do not at all intend special reproach against them, as though, like Simon Magus, they had committed sins of great enormity compared with those of their fellows. We use it simply to express by it what St. Peter expressed by it; that you are in bondage to sin.

That you are sinners, is a charge which you, my impenitent friends, will admit. But my object is not merely to point your attention to this lamentable fact. I would urge the peculiar form in which this fact is charged home upon unbelieving man: "Thou art in the bond of unrighteousness" Thou art a captive, a bond slave to sin. Your sinful condition is a true slavery; your liberty is gone; sin holds you fast bound in its fetters, so that you cannot deliver yourself from it.

Now, if a bondage were imposed upon you by external force, which you could not resist, there would be no guilt necessarily implied in your condition. Where man is kept back by a physical impossibility, from the performance of any duty, God will not hold him responsible for failing, provided his disposition to obey was good - But it is ever to be pressed upon the sinner, that his bondage is, as this text so clearly expresses it, the bondage of iniquity, and not of external force. It is a bondage; and yet it is not involuntary; because he is only bound by his own sinful inclinations of heart, and by evil habits and other untoward circumstances of his own producing - The ungodly influences of fellow-sinners cooperate with this bondage; but they do it only suavisly - Satanic temptations assist; but Satan can only allure, he cannot compel - No man, no angel, no daemons, nothing but the sinner's own free-will, causes him imperatively, to disobey God; and if man or devil did compel him to disobedience by a controlling outward force, his own free-will fully purposing to obey, in that act God would not hold him guilty. While other influences concur, your bondage to evil consists essentially in this; that your own spontaneous inclinations prompt you to evil, (in some of its forms) with a force absolutely

certain and invariable. If I should say that you are utterly unable to resist your own inclinations to evil, I should use the word, unable, in a peculiar meaning. For it is properly applied to a person who wishes and endeavours to do something; but has not the requisite natural power. But you never wish, or endeavour to resist your inclinations to evil, because it is from these inclinations your wishes proceed, and by them, are directed to the opposite choice. No rational being ever wishes what is contrary to his own inclinations. I will say then, with more strict accuracy of language, it is absolutely certain that you never will, in your own strength, overcome the bondage of your own inclination to sin. For, that inclination is natural, and controlling, and uniform in you; so that of yourself, you will never have a true desire to overcome it. When therefore, I shall say hereafter, that you are wholly unable to deliver yourself, in your own strength, from the bond of iniquity, or that it is impossible; or any such like words are used; you will bear in mind that I do not mean that there is some outward power, which will compel you against your own free choice; but that I mean this: It is perfectly certain that your own sinful inclinations and habits will always cause you, of your own free choice, to live in sin, notwithstanding your partial, selfish efforts

towards outward reform.

While the bond of iniquity which holds you is thus voluntary, several strands enter into its composition. One of these is habit. Man's soul has always a tendency to do what it has done before. The mere fact that the soul has sinned, creates some propensity to sin again. The oftener it is repeated, the stronger the habit. Consider now, the slighter and more recent bodily habits, which you have formed since your recollection, in things to which no natural inclination impelled you: see their strength; reflect how hard it would be to break them; and how probably such an effort would fail; and ask yourself then, how much strength a habit of sinning may not possess; a habit which has been growing every day and every hour, since you understood the difference between right and wrong.

Another strand in this bond of iniquity is the evil power of human example, fashion, persuasions, and ridicule. Man is a social, and an imitative being. Example and fashion decide a vast portion of his actions, and exert a powerful influence over his feelings. It has been found far easier to break through all the social instincts, and separate from our fellow creatures, than, remaining amidst them, to be wholly unlike them. There have been many more of hermits than

of unfashionables - But the fashion of the human race is to sin. Even in so unimportant a matter as dress, would it not require a more powerful exertion of resolution than you could put forth, to disregard the universal example of the community, and wear the Hebrew tunic and flowing mantle, instead of the modern European garments? How strong, then, is the bond of the sinful example of a whole world?

Another element of bondage to sin is doubtless to be found in the persuasions and enticements of Satan - He operates by guiding and inciting the suggestions of our own wayward fancies; and therefore, we cannot put our finger upon one enticing idea, and say, this was injected by Satan; and upon another, deciding that this sprung out of our own uninfluenced memory - But we have the word of God for it, that "sinners are taken captive by him at his will." (2 Tim. 2: 26) It is enough to know that the Scriptures represent his influences as fearfully strong -

But the fourth, and the chief element of your bondage is your own inclination to sin. It is this which gives strength to all the other elements. This inclination was born in you - It has strengthened by indulgence, ever since you began to act as free agents - And this, especially, is the bond of iniquity, which makes you the servant of sin - The text, thus explained, teaches us, that unconverted men are determined to sin by influences of their own free-will, which, it

is absolutely certain, they will never break.

I. For evidences of this truth, let us look at the frequency and strength of the Scriptural assertions concerning it. In Isaiah (66:1) the Messiah thus announces the nature of his mission: "He" (Jehovah) "hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." And what this captivity, and this prison are, from which Christ delivers men, we will explain by the Apostle Paul. (Rom. 6:16.) "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are, to whom ye obey? Whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. But God be thanked that ye, who were the servants (slaves) of sin, have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Or, let Christ himself explain the nature of the captivity, and of the deliverance predicted, where he declares his mission to the Jews, (John. 8:31. &c) "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, we be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, we shall be made free? Jesus answered them, verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever

9.
committeth sin, is the servant" (slave) "of sin:"
So this agree various other expressions, such as
that of Rom 7: 23. "I see another law in my
members, warring against the law of my
mind, and bringing me into captivity to the
law of sin which is in my members."
Gal. 4: 3. "Even so we, when we were children,
were in bondage under the elements of the
world." 2 Pet. 2: 19. "For of whom a man is
overcome, of the same he is brought in bond-
age". Does not all this represent your condi-
tion as one of helpless bondage in iniquity,
from which none but Christ can make you
free? You have already "yielded yourselves to
obey sin": then, you are the servants of sin, unto
death. You have indisputably "committed
sin; According to the words of Christ, you
are "the servants of sin."

But the Apostle Paul says, he endeavoured
so to manifest the truth, as to commend him-
self to every man's conscience in the sight
of God." So, we prefer to set before you those
proofs of your bondage, derived from your own
convictions and experience, which will carry
home the most practical feeling of the
reality of your slavery.

II. Let us look then, at the evidence of it
which is given by the analogy of secular
vices, and bodily habits. It is the most

common observation of your worldly expe-
 rience, to say that the drunkard, the gam-
 bler, the debauchee, is the slave of his vice.
 Indeed, are there not practices of comparatively
 trivial importance, and indulgences in
 certain feeble stimulants, concerning which
 we are accustomed to say, that they who have
 long indulged them, are slaves to the habit?
 The power of secular vices over their victims
 is, indeed such, as fully to justify the use of
 this language. Look at the drunkard, for
 instance, in his reflecting and rational
 moments. How keen his sense of the viles-
 ness of his faults! How strong, distinct, and
 terrifying the picture which rises to the
 view of his mind, of the shame and want,
 the sorrow, disease, and ruin, brought by his
 vice upon himself and those he loves. See
 his tears of repentance, so burning and sin-
 cere; and hear his vows of amendment,
 spoken apparently from the bottom of his
 heart, and with awful protestations to God;
 vows in which he, at least, imagines him-
 self most sincere. And yet, see how the
 next temptation drags him astray like
 a bullock to the slaughter! his own better
 nature forewarning him, and love, hon-
 our, duty, drawing him back. How frequent-
 ly does he not make these bitter, but abortive

efforts to escape from the deadly grasp of his passion; efforts most intense, earnest, and bitter, and yet most futile, because of the more intense force of his tyrant vice. See how, resolving and re-resolving to stay his course, he plunges down, and yet deeper down, and explores the depths of that degradation which his own soul hates. Say: is not this a bondage? Is not this man a slave? Consider how few vicious men are ever thoroughly reformed, without the grace of God, by all their desires after reformation, and their harrowing foresight of their own ruin. How many efforts are made, which in the end, yield again to the power of vice?

Now, the control of these particular indulgences over their victims consists of similar elements to those, which make up the bond of ungodliness upon the unbeliever. It is formed of the united influences of habit, example, persuasions and ridicule of evil companions, Satanic temptations, and the evil propensity, fostered into strength by frequent indulgence. Hence, it is most natural to infer that, as the power of the secular vice is a bondage, so, the power of the great, spiritual, universal vice of the sinful heart is a bondage still more. Each one of these particular social vices is a part of

that general sinfulness; and what we find true of each of the parts, we suppose is more true of the whole. Yes, our inference is greatly strengthened, as we pass from the particular social vice to the spiritual malady. How long has the drunkard's or the gambler's habit of indulgence been growing? It may be, two or five, or ten years. And yet he cannot break it! But your habit of disobeying God has been strengthening with your strength from infancy. How frequently does the gambler or the drunkard repeat these indulgences, by which his habit and passion have been confirmed? It may be, sometimes daily, and sometimes with intervals of weeks, and even months. Yet he cannot break them! But you have repeated your neglect of God's authority every hour, and with every act. For "God sees that every imagination of the thought of men's hearts is only evil continually - How much more confirmed then, your habit and passion of sinning? Again: the evil example, ^{which} countenances and influences the drunkard or the gambler, is far from constant or general. The great majority of men, and all those whom he respects as men of considerable example, frown upon his vice: Yet the evil example of the few wicked coun-

passions controuls him! But the example
 and fashion of almost the whole world, and
 of all whose society you most love, and whose
 conduct is most congenial to you, encour-
 ages you in disobeying God. The drunk-
 ard's passion for the wine-cup, the gamb-
 ler's for his dice and cards, was, for many
 years, dormant in his breast: when first
 awakened, it was feeble; and yet, his in-
 dulgence has pampered it into a resistless
 tyrant. Your propensity to ungodliness
 sprang like a full-grown dragon from
 your infant heart, and since the days
 of your childhood, has swayed every moral
 act, with evergrowing mastery. Draw
 the fair conclusion then; you who know
 the fearful bondage of one of these secular
 vices, when it is fully established. Is it
 natural to expect, that you will ever be
 able to break out from your bondage of
 unrighteousness, so much more deeply
 founded? You who have not been able to
 break so unimportant a habit as the use
 of a trifling stimulant, although perhaps
 you have made strenuous exertions, to do
 it, will you be so absurd as to expect, in
 your own strength, to reform the lifelong
 habit and passion of sinning?

III. That sinners will never deliver themselves from the bondage of sin, is proved by all the abortive attempts which men have ever made to do so, in their own strength. When we see a multitude of people in a house, and great numbers of them making strenuous efforts to escape, but always without success, we conclude naturally that this house is a prison, and that they are captives. So every ineffectual attempt which has been made to serve God in the strength of self-righteousness, by monks, or ascetics, or legalists, or partially convinced sinners, bears testimony to the reality of man's bondage. Men have made mighty struggles to become christians without divine help; but always in vain. They have imagined to tear themselves ~~away~~ from the bondage of sin, by sending themselves away from all human ties, and immuring themselves in caves and cells. They have imposed upon themselves numberless prayers and fastings. They have attempted to subdue sinful propensities by scourgings and penances. But the ever restless conscience has declared that it was all in vain: they were still, in heart, the servants of sin. I can appeal to many of you, my brethren, for similar proof-

When you were groaning under your guilt and danger, and were not yet humbled to trust yourself wholly to Christ, did you not make most strenuous exertions to become christians? Did you not resolve that you would reform your sins, that you would read and pray; that you would live the inward life of a pious man? Did you not watch, and strive, and tremble, and weep, while you struggled against the power of ungodliness? And was it not all in vain? Yes; conscience condemned all your services, and groaned in anguish under her increasing load. Your resolutions were broken; your religious services were soon neglected; your piety soon came to nought; till at last, convinced of the helplessness of your soul, you invoked Christ to set the captive free. We all failed in our self righteous attempts, because all of us were in the bonds of iniquity.

Indeed, I can appeal to many of you, my unconverted hearers, for proof. Have there not been times with many of you, when you felt the omnipotent force of religious truth, and were convinced that you must attend to your soul's salvation? You made firm resolutions to be christians, and you began many pious practices,

as you supposed them. Where are those resolutions? Where those religious observances? Broken, neglected, forgotten; and you are today more the servant of sin than ever.

But you say, perhaps; "I was not thoroughly in earnest then: I did not make a sufficient effort. Had I put forth all my determination I should have succeeded." Sinner: I defend you from your own charge! You were not hypocritical in those resolutions; you made them before a God who, you knew, could not be mocked. You verily purposed to keep them; yea, you fully expected to do so. But you see the result! Now will you not believe that you are in the bond of iniquity; since you yourself have tried the strength of the fetters, and could not break them? All your bitter struggles, your tumultuous beatings against the bars of your prison, have but left you with limbs bruised and bleeding, and strength exhausted.

Yet more painful proof of the text is seen in all the attempts of religious reforms, to which men have been driven by the urgent terrors of danger and death, when those efforts were made merely in

dependence on natural feelings and principles - This is an evidence of the most practical and experimental kind. It is presented by incidents of real life, known to all observing men - We have seen souls driven out of their carelessness, and impelled to religion by the most mighty and dreadful of natural motives; the instant danger of death, and approach of judgment. We have seen men of clearest minds and most determined wills, whose gigantic purpose triumphed over all other resistances, set about turning to God at such times, with agonizing earnestness; we have heard them pray, and vow, and confess, with all the terrible solemnity of men who thought themselves dying; and yet we have witnessed the speedy and ignominious failure of their religiousness, as soon as the danger was overpast. Ah, sinful hearers, physicians and pastors witness things, in sick rooms, where wretched men erroneously conclude themselves dying, which form a biting commentary upon man's ability for God's spiritual service. Almost uniformly, returning health and security explodes these supposed death bed repentances; and sometimes the most tremendous vows of unending gratitude and deathless devotion to the God of mercies

are falsified with the first breath of their convalescence; which, one would think, should have been spent in heartfelt ascriptions of praise to the divine Deliverer.

Now, why was this? Did not these men know perfectly, that their restoration was only a reprieve? Surely. Do you say, that they were not in earnest? They were terribly in earnest. Why should they not be, when they knew that they had death and hell at their backs, to lash them to a true repentance? And yet they could not break the fetters of ungodliness. Do you scornfully say: "But they were men of weak and despicable character. I am not a poor, vacillating wiling like them: when I undertake any thing of importance, I do not so feebly relinquish it." I reply: No. These men were no more weaklings, than you are. They were simply what you are, poor, lost sinners in "the land of iniquity" - One of the most immediate, and shameful, even pitiful failures in carrying out a sick bed repentance, which has fallen under my observation, was made by a man notable for an iron will, and invincible determination, before which every opposing will,

during his whole life, had been accustomed to bend. But these attempts were made in the mere strength of natural principles, without any timely appeal for the help of the great deliverer: and hence their shameful failure.

Again: it has often been found that when the Holy Ghost stood aloof, even an actual death bed has not been sufficient to drive the sinner out of his ungodliness. Men die as Voltaire and Paine died; despairing, yet incapable of that repentance by which despair might have been turned to hope. And lest you should think that their desperate case arose only from their preeminent impiety, God shows us instances in which the outwardly moral, and even tender and amiable females, who had finally banished his Holy Spirit, have died thus. Their consciences were fully awakened to feel the horror of their cases: they fully apprehended their doom; their whole souls were aroused by terror; no difficulty of resigning the pleasures of sin, or braving the ridicule or fashion of the world, had any longer an atom of influence upon their hearts. for they well knew that they were done forever with the world, and its follies and its joys: They cried for salvation with

anguish which harrowed the souls of the bystanders: but yet, when the herald of mercy faithfully set before them a free redemption, upon the terms of a true faith and hearty surrender of sinful self to Christ, those conditions were found more obnoxious to their obdurate wills than hell with all its torments; and they coldly turned their despairing faces away, to resume the lamentations of despair. Thus it is evinced, that not even approaching death, nor imminent perdition are sufficient to loose the chains of iniquity, if the Holy Ghost be absent. Human power, stimulated to its most intense effort by the agonizing stings of the never-dying worm, cannot break this bond!

But remember, sinner, in all this bondage, you are yet a free-agent. It is not the lack of faculties of soul: ~~by which, if they were rightly directed,~~ you have all the faculties by which, if they were righteously directed, you might serve God fully. It is not any external constraint. It is the bondage of iniquity, of your own iniquity. So far as it consists in habits of sin, it is a bondage of your own making; and so far as it consists in an ungodly disposition, it is of your own free exercising. These seeming efforts for godliness which you have made, were never prompted by a true

desire to please God, or choice of his service for its own righteousness sake; if they had been, they would have constituted you a Christian. But they were made merely at the impulse of alarmed selfishness, fear, self-righteousness, or other carnal motives, which, if not sinful, had no positive godliness. Such a piety is simply your old self will, directed to a new object.

Remember also, sinner, that this bond does not lighten your responsibility. It aggravates your guilt. This is clear, because it is the very strength of your guilty principles and impulses, which constitutes it. Do you spurn the incipient drunkard, who as yet can, and often does, resist his passions; but when he has become the confirmed slave of his vice, do you judge him as now innocent again, and irresponsible, and reinstate him in your confidence? No; you judge, ^{that} the more he is enslaved by his sin, the more is he blameworthy. So judges God, of you.

You talk, ungodly man, with contemptuous arrogance, of the restraints of religion. You "do not intend to surrender your liberty; not you!" What is the transgressor's liberty? It is only a license to grovel; to become more vile, to ruin himself. As soon as he aspires to the true freedom, and safety, and elevation of Christ's service, to true honour, or glory, or immortality, he finds the foul

constraint of this bond of iniquity upon his limbs. True liberty is only found in the conformity of the will to God. His will is holy, true, wise, and good; harmony with it alone brings man's soul under the sway of the principles which promote its true glory, and concur with his nobler nature. "If the truth shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

And now, let me speak plainly with you. There are two things perfectly evident to your own minds. One is, that you are not now prepared for death. The other is, that it is a thing not to be thought of, to die as you are. Who can endure infinite, everlasting, hopeless misery? Upon no more purpose it for yourself, than I do for myself. Your fixed intention is, as you suppose, to do, at some future day, before it is too late, this necessary work of preparation. And this is the expectation which aids in keeping you quiet in your present most dangerous position. If you clearly foresaw that you were destined to live ungodly, as you now are, until you die, and drop into hell; if you knew that this was an absolutely settled fact, you might perhaps be awakened to some sense of your misery. I tell you,

so far as you are concerned, it is settled. You may purpose to turn to God at a future day; but when that day comes, you will not turn. You may make earnest resolutions. You will break them. You may bestir yourself to practise much religiousness, under the spur of fear and selfishness. It will all come to naught. You may hope that the sober and pensive shades of age, or seasons of bereavement, or the wholesome admonitions of sickness and approaching death, will be efficacious to turn you in earnest to a better world. All these will fail. Not even the terrors of an unprepared death, although they may wring your heart with despair, will be sufficient to bow it to Christ. I repeat. Sin and Satan have you safe in their chains, and so far as your efforts go, they mock your vain dreams of release. "Thou art in the bond of iniquity."

And now, do you cry in your anguish, "O men and brethren, what must we do?" Evidently, you are in desperate case. What can that man do, who is fast bound? I see but one thing; and that is, to raise the cry of the helpless: "Save Lord, or I perish."

Publick Calamities caused by
Publick Sins.

A Sermon

Isaiah IX. 12. 13. "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. For the people turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts."

Preached May. 12th 1862. in the meadows near Franklin, Pendleton Co. Va., to Poagues Battery of Artillery.

(Note.) On the Monday after the battle of Mr. Dowell, the sabbath having been employed in the pursuit of Brilroy and Schenk, Genl. Jackson granted his soldiers the half of Monday as a season of rest, and issued the following order.

"Soldiers of the Army of the Valley and North West."

"I congratulate you on your recent victory at Mr. Dowell. I request you to unite with me, this morning, in

Thanksgivings to Almighty God, for thus having crowned your arms with success; and in praying that He will continue to lead you on from victory to victory, until your independence shall be established; and make us that people whose God is the Lord."

"The chaplains will hold divine service at 10 o'clock, A.M. this day in their respective regiments."

The author having been invited by Poague's battery, composed of gentlemen from Rockledge County, who had no chaplains, to preach for them, availed himself of this opportunity. The men were assembled in the verdant meadow of the South Branch, beside a cluster of haystacks, and there were present in addition, Genl Jackson and his Staff. Genl F. H. Smith of the Military Institute, and a distinguished group of officers; when the following sermon was delivered.

sent a word into Judah, and it hath light
upon Israel." Of this word of warning we
have examples in the 2^d Bishop of Durham
for instance.

Men ask anxiously: When will
the war end? I reply, when God has gain-
ed those purposes, which he proposes to him-
self in it. It is not we, nor our enemies,
who began this war, or who can end it;
but God. That it is His agency, is proved by
this fact: that the struggle has notoriously
been precipitated against the purposes and
expectations of both parties. I shall then
attempt to give an answer to this anxious
question, from the Sacred Scriptures. But
do not fear that I propose to inflict upon
you that nuisance, so justly hateful to all
Christian souls, a political sermon. Far
be it from me to make the sacred pulpit
a partizan in any secular debate, or an
advocate of any social plan or advantage.
But the attempt will be made, to apply
God's own truth to the explanation of His
providences towards us. Were this oftener
done, we should see more life and interest
in the Sacred Scriptures, and should derive
more profit from the lessons of our Father's
chastisements.

To learn the instructions of this passage,
we must recur to the eighth verse. "The Lord

sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel.' Of this word of warning we have examples in the 28th Chap. of Deuteronomy, for instance. There God has most solemnly declared that public and social sins should be followed by calamities. This threat had already begun to take effect upon Israel, the kingdom of the ten Tribes, more notably than upon Judah. Its fulfilment was plainly seen in the disasters inflicted upon them by their pagan neighbours and their own wicked kings. But the people of the Kingdom of Samaria, and especially Ephraim, the leading tribe, arrogantly refused to learn the lesson of reproof: they persisted in tracing their calamities to the wrong source, and in disregarding the hand of God in them. They boasted in their own ability to repair, and more than repair all their losses. "Have our enemies," said they, "savage our cities, levelling our dwellings of brick: We will rebuild with marble. Have they cut down our groves of sycamore fruit? We will replace them with nobler and more valuable groves of ~~the~~ cedars." No wonder then, that a righteous God, thus despised in his awful judgments, resolves that these proud rebels shall be made to recognize his hand. He determines that he will redouble his providential blows upon them; and to this end, he causes the Assyrians, lately the enemies of Rezin king

of Syria and Damascus, to join with him in an alliance against Samaria, so that the two powers, instead of hindering each others' aggressive designs against Israel, should now cooperate in ravaging him. And the Philistines in the South-west corner of Palestine, the traditional enemies of the Hebrews, were to assail him in the rear, while the Syrians and Assyrians invaded him from the East and North-east. Between the three, Israel would be devoured, as by the gaping jaws of some wild beast.

But for all this, adds the prophet, after all this extremity of disaster, God's hand would still be stretched out to punish; and this, because the culprits refused to repent and reform. And the result of this obduracy would be, that the Lord would be provoked to proceed to their final and summary destruction: so that the heads of the commonwealth, the princes and rulers, represented by the boughs of the lofty and precious palm tree; and the rabble, represented by the lowly and worthless rushes or sedge of the open fields, should be swept away together by massacre and captivity. Thus, the very name and existence of the kingdom of the ten tribes would be extinguished, for their impenitence.

Our text then, my brethren, is a very clear declaration of the connexion between the sins of a people, and their calamities. It teaches us that when ~~an~~^{men} ~~evils~~ come on =

der God's chastising hand for their sins, his strokes will be continued until they repent and reform, or else will be repeated for their destruction. Here then, we have a divine answer to the anxious inquiry with which we began. The scourge of this war will cease, when we turn unto him that smiteth us, and seek the Lord of hosts.'

War is a grievous scourge, however victorious it may be. Do not we feel it to be such, in our separation from the homes and households which we love; in our hardships, cares, and dangers; in our exposure to wounds and death? Our country feels it to be a grievous calamity, by the ravaging of her teeming fields, the wasting of her wealth, the banishment and beggary of once peaceful families, and the slaughter of her sons. Surely God's hand is stretched out in us."

To evince farther the truth of the text, I shall attempt to establish the following propositions.

I. Publick calamities are always God's chastisements upon communities for their sins. If there is anything emphatically revealed in the Bible, it is there taught that Jehovah is King of kings, and that the affairs of com-monwealths are under his providential government. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos. 3:6.) Now a state is a corporate personality, possessing as such a common will, a publick morality,

and an organick activity, and bearing duties and moral responsibilities towards God and its neighbours. But it has no immortality: when its citizens appear before God in the other world, they stand only as individuals, and the state is resolved into its integral elements. Hence, the manifestation of the glory of God in the righteousness of his government prompts him to visit the marks of his displeasure upon them in this world, in the shape of national evils. This outward display of His righteous anger, in time, which is irregular in the case of single human beings, because His final and complete dealings with them are reserved for eternity, must be uniform and sure in the case of commonwealths, because they have no fixture. While therefore the individual sinner may be permitted to prosper here in his sin, the guilty state must, sooner or later, pay its penalty, in the shape of temporal calamities.

Does not universal history show this to be true? National crimes have ever been followed by national disaster and ultimate ruins. The whole drama of Assyrian, Persian, Macedonian, Roman, and Modern empire, has been but a commentary upon this law - that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Does any one reply that this is but a natural law, and that the causative connexion can regularly be traced between publick vice and publick disaster? True. And this fact is precisely to my

3.

hand. For what is natural law? Whose is the power in those regular links of causation, to which you point? That law is not in itself a force; it is but the method which we observe as characterizing the operations of Providence; and the powers which operate under the law are just those providential forces, which God at first deposited in these natural causes, and which he perpetually sustains and regulates. So that this great law of history is but one phase of the revelation of God's judgments against publick sins.

Argue, next, that this is confirmed by God's express announcement of the same rule of government, in his dealings towards the commonwealth of Israel. There, obedience and publick prosperity, disobedience and disaster are uniformly bound together. The whole history of judges, kings, and prophets is but the detailing of the execution of this law, as, for instance, it is laid down in Deut. 28:1, 2, 15, 16. "All these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God." "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, that all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee." &c. Here, again, it may be objected that this rule was peculiar, because God had separated the Hebrews to be his peculiar people, and had entered into a unique relations with them under

a theocratic covenant, to be their civil ruler or king. But, I reply, it is the same unchangeable and righteous God who rules, as providential Lord, over us; and since he is immutable, there cannot be any essential difference between the principles of his government there and here.

See also, the uniform declarations of the prophets against the pagan nations of the old world. Of these we have a fair specimen in Isaiah 14:4-23. There, destruction is denounced against Chaldea, even in the height of its prosperity, as the penalty of its crimes. "Prepare slaughter against his children for the iniquity of their fathers"; (vs. 21.) is the language of the divine judgments. "This", adds the Prophet. (v. 26.) "is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations." So, in every minatory message of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, of Ezekiel, of Jonah, against Assyria, Egypt, Moab, Tyros, Edom, the doom is pronounced upon them for their sins. Will any one be hardy enough to assert, that God bore more intimate relations to these pagan nations of the old world, than to us, a Christian people nominally devoted to his service? The law is, then proved beyond dispute. Our calamities are, beyond peradventure, God's testimony against our social and public sins as a people.

He is employing our present enemies as

the rod of our correction. Here let me pointedly¹⁰
call your attention to this scriptural truth:
that God may righteously employ them for our
punishment, although they be greater sin-
ners before him than we, and although we
may be wholly in the right as to them, in
this quarrel. Whether we be less sinners before
God than they, it may not be appropriate for
us to assert, in this hour and place, where we
stand before Him as penitent suppliants: and
whether we, or our adversaries are the aggres-
sors in this war, it may not be proper for
the minister of the gospel to decide: for it is
not his business, when speaking as God's her-
ald, to adjust political rights and obligations.
But the decision of those points is unneces-
sary to my doctrine. It is painful to hear
many men say, that God must be on our
side, because ours is the righteous cause. I
solemnly warn you, my brethren, that this
does not follow. To have God surely on our side
we must also be a righteous people. However
innocent as to our assailants, we are mis-
erable sinners against Him; and he often
employs the more guilty as a rod to scourge,
or a sword to hew, the less guilty; reserving
the subsequent punishment of the more
criminal instrument to some future day,
which seems to his sovereignty suitable.
Hear the prophet; Isaiah, ~~ix. 12-14.~~
ch. 10th v. 5. 6. 12 &c.

(11.)

"O Assyrians, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. x x x x Therefore, it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks," &c. - Babylon had no quarrel with the little kingdom of Judah. Their territories were not coterminous; they had no relations whatever with each other. In the war between them, the Chaldean was wholly the aggressor. Nor was Judea more idolatrous or guilty than the pagan nations. But God permitted the aggression; he righteously employed the nefarious and arrogant instrument, to chasten his disobedient children for a time, by defeat and captivity. Yet did blood-stained Babylon escape her appropriate doom? Nay verily. When the secret and sovereign purposes of God were served with her, in due time she also was punished for all her crimes, inclusive of this ^{unprovoked} ~~very~~ invasion and ravage of Judaea; punished, not with a captivity of seventy years, but with a vengeance which blotted her forever from the face of the earth, and made her palaces the abodes of owls and satyrs.

II. What then are the sins which provoke

publick calamities? In one sense, it may be answered, that as the individuals make up the nation, so the aggregate guilt is made up of the numberless sins of single persons. It is conceivable that a nation which committed no organized crimes, might yet become exceedingly guilty, and pluck down on itself the curse of God, if the individuals composing it were generally criminal. But probably no such instances can ever occur in fact, because as are the people, such are the governments. But it is clearly taught in the sacred Scriptures, that some sins are far more momentous in God's sight than the ordinary transgressions of private persons. And among these are, unquestionably, the overt sins of kings, rulers, commanders, and representative men. So saith Isaiah, v. 16. "For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed." The pagans even had perspicacity enough to see this truth: Virgil, following Homer, represents the Greeks at Troy as scourged by the anger of the Gods for the follies of their commanders. The same truth is apparent in the very arrangements of Providence. The people actually suffer for the faults of their rulers; the sins of parents bring obloquy and poverty upon their children; and the acts of leaders have a representative power,

+ Delirant reges: plectuntur Achivi.

with both God and man. These heads, in ^{13.}
their official acts, impersonate the common-
wealth; for they act in its name: indeed it
is through them that the commonwealth
acts. In their private and personal character
they are representatives exemplars. And as God's
purposes in his national judgments are so
largely declarative, it is appropriate that he
should judge the people by the acts and char-
acters of those by whom they are represented.
Especially is this just in the case of a people
like us, who boast of being republicans, and
select our own rulers by vote, according to our
own options. The acts and characters of our rul-
ers and legislators are still more strictly ours:
since it is by our choice they are clothed with
their representative character functions.

Have we then delegated power to bad men,
as chief magistrates, commanders of armies,
legislators? Do these representatives of our pub-
lic morality, despise God's laws, profane his
name and his sabbath, set to the younger cit-
izens an example of profligacy, and pervert
their sacred position as executors of justice, to
work wrong and oppression upon God's peo-
ple? If this is so; we may easily understand
why his hand is stretched out still, and his
anger is not turned away from us.

Again; the army of a people may be
justly regarded as a representative body. It is
composed of a selection of its most active citi-

gens. It is the nation's organ of defence. It is, in ¹⁴
a certain sense, the nation's right hand, and
the executioner of its will against its enemies.
God may therefore be reasonably expected to judge
a people according to the guilt of its army.
If this public organ is lewd, profane, drunk-
en, lawless; if this sword of a nation's justice,
which should be a terror to evil doers, and a
praise to them that do well, makes itself the
implement of oppression and violence against
the innocent and peaceful, what more nat-
ural than that God's indignation should rise
against it, and that he should make the guilty
agent a means of calamity and overthrow to
the people it was appointed to protect? If
our people, in the very act of appealing to
the Lord of Hosts by the ordeal of battle, is
found lifting up to him a hand foul with
crime, will not he blight and wither it with
his righteous curse? Our army may be
called our people's shield: if now when
we hold up this buckler of our defence in
the face of mankind and the heavens, to
meet the assaults of our enemies, it be found
all over defiled with names of blasphemy,
what may we expect, but that an insulted
God will ~~send it~~ shiver it with the lightning
of his wrath?

As the leaders of a people are represen-
tative men, so its capital city may be re =

garded as their representative place. To this agrees the prophet, (Isa. 7: v. 8. 9.) "For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin, x x x x. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son." (Pekah.) The metropolis of a country is a miniature of the nation. It is the habitation of its rulers and men of chief influence. Its customs and manners are examples for every other community in the nation. Thither repair the strangers who visit the country, and from what they see there, they take their impressions of the whole. If now that capital is the chief seat of disorder; if the evil example of the selected rulers and representatives of the people make it the doleful of the whole land, if its halls are foul with bribery and venality, if its streets echo with the din of violence and the cry of riot and murder, if while the guilty nation bleeds and groans under the rod of the Lord, its mansions reel with sensual joys, it will not be strange that an offended God surrenders it to capture and sack. It was thus that guilty Jerusalem, more than once, sealed her own overthrow.

III. The purposes of God in his judgments are either to punish, or to amend; they are either for vengeance or for paternal correction. The Scriptures reveal no other object in his afflictive dispensations than these two. Now

16.

whichsoever of these may be his secret purpose, it will assuredly be accomplished. Hath not God said; "My purpose shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure"? The men of Sodom and righteous Lot beheld the same fiery tempest sweeping over their dwelling: to the former it meant extermination; to the latter, wholesome corrections. Of his erring children God says, (Psalm 89: 30-33.) "If they forsake my statutes, ^{Law} and walk not in my judgments, if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments: then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail."

If the purpose of God in national judgments is only vindicatory, and he designs the extermination of the guilty subjects, then I can understand how He may arrest them while they are still impenitent. I can comprehend that it is His fearful but righteous purpose to make the criminals without excuse by these impressive warnings of coming vengeance, and summons to repentance; and then, after they are slighted He leaves them to ripen for their doom in an accursed and treacherous prosperity. This is just the solution which was given to the Psalmist Asaph (Ps. 73: 12-18, 19.) in

the sanctuary of God, concerning the prosperity of the wicked. "Behold these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. x x x I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou eastest them down into destruction - x x x As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their iniquity." God placed before Abraham in prophetic vision the contrasted career of his posterity, and of the Amorites, among whom he was sojourning. The chosen people were to be chastened with a long pilgrimage, and a bondage for four generations in Egypt, while the idolatrous Canaanites revelled in the prosperous enjoyment of cities walled up to the skies, and of a land flowing with milk and honey. It was because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full." (Gen. 15:16) Because God had purposes of mercy towards Israel, therefore he must needs correct his backslidings until he repented. But from the Amorites, his partial judgments were withdrawn, leaving them obdurate and progressively impious; because the secret purpose of God towards them was extermination. So, when I see the disciplinary strokes of God upon a people suspended, as upon

the great unchristian nature of the French, leaving them unreformed and impenitent. I can only explain it by the supposition, that He purposes to leave them for a time, after thus uttering his testimony against their impiety in the presence of their contemporaries, to ripen for some fiercer wrath in the future.

But if the design of God's discipline is paternal, then I see not how it is possible that it can be happily suspended, until the subjects of it are brought to sincere repentance. "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts." Because penitence is not produced, therefore the correction must continue. The majesty, the wisdom, the very goodness of God, require it. Shall God take up the rod for the purpose of turning his children thereby away from their folly, and lay it down again with the purpose unfulfilled? Where would be His wisdom? Shall the Almighty contend thus with his puny creature, and cease, leaving the victory in his vile hand? When the parent is impelled by his fidelity to his child's welfare, to chasten him for his good, his very love

ing him not to cease until hearty submission is produced. For if he does, the ruinous insubordination of the child is only hardened, the incomplete discipline results in mingled mischief, and every pang uselessly inflicted on the child becomes a gratuitous cruelty. Thus the wise parent is constrained by his very love, to go on, although it may be with a bleeding heart, and to continue the stripes until his authority is acknowledged.

Now then, brethren; do you wish to claim this chastising God as your heavenly Father, or your avenging Judge? If he is to be found the former, the war will not end, until 'this people turneth unto him that smiteth them, and seeketh the Lord of hosts; by a genuine repentance and reform. If the calamity ends otherwise, short of our extermination, its meaning must be the following; that God's secret purposes in it were not paternal, but vindicatory; that having seen our sins outrage his holiness and beneficence until his honour demanded a vindication before the world, he has poured out upon us this vial of wrath, as a sufficient prelibation of destruction to warn this generation of mankind, in our example,

that he hath not forgotten his judgments; and that then, he leaves us in righteous anger, to mature our impenitency for some still more condign retribution. Oh! shall the scourge be arrested thus? Shall so fearful and ghastly a victory be won by us? Far better for us, that ^{we} a sinning people, should lie groaning under the rod for as many generations as Israel served in Egypt; if thereby we are taught to avouch the Lord as our God indeed.

IV. And now, that we may ascertain whether ~~the~~ happy end of our calamities is near, all we have to learn is, whether our people are turning unto Him that smiteth them, and are seeking the Lord of Hosts. Perhaps it is not best for me to undertake to answer this question. It will be better that each one of you shall decide it for yourself, as to your own heart and life; it is these for which you are primarily responsible. And as we are taught that the kingdom of heaven is within us, and cometh not with observation, it does not befit a fallible creature to say, Lo here! or Lo there! too confidently, concerning the sinfulness or the repentance of his fellow men. But alas! There are signs of reckless impenitence so alarming, as to compel every

thoughtful patriot to harbour anxious fears—
 When I look at the slumberous condition of many
 of the churches, at the avarice and extortion
 which absorb the hearts of so many at home,
 at the profanity which echoes through our
 camps and through many of our high places,
 at the boastful self-reliance which inflates
 so many minds, at the loathsome drunkenness,
 whose streams, once partially restrained,
 are now breaking out again with such volume,
 at the sins of violence which defy the skies,
 I am compelled to fear, that God's angry hand
 is not soon to be withdrawn from us.

And these are the things which frighten
 me, with reference to the issue of our contest.
 It is not the countless levies, and mammoth
 armies of our foes; it is not their determined
 malignity or obstinate rage; it is not their
 hundreds of cannon nor myriads of bayo-
 nets pointed at our breasts; it is the sins of
 our people and soldiers. Hear that oath! (A
 loud and profane oath heard in the distance.)
 Such an insult to the Almighty God to whom
 we have made our appeal in drawing the
 sword, appalls my heart far more than the
 loudest tremors of our enemies' artillery—
 And such sinners, however bold in the day of
 battle, are the worst foes of the country for
 which they profess to fight.

The conclusion of the whole matter, my

brethren, is this: There is one way, and only one,
 by which our people may ensure a happy issue
 out of our struggle beyond a peradventure. This
 is by hearty reform. I do not say that God is
 pledged to reward it with precisely that form
 of deliverance on which our hearts are set: we
 are too blind to be allowed by our Heavenly
 Father to elect the particular forms of our
 own well-being. But if we turn to Him
 that smiteth us, He will assuredly restore to
 us a true prosperity and honour. Not only are
 we assured of this by the scriptural truths now
 established; but in the midst of our heavy chas-
 tisements, how many marks of his readiness
 to forgive and bless, does he not exhibit? We
 have been, thus far, sustained against our
 gigantic foe beyond our own expectations.
 Again and again has success against the
 most fearful odds been granted, at the criti-
 cal hour. We should regard each of these in-
 terpositions as a species of overture from God
 to us, encouraging us to claim his paternal
 shelter against our foes, by repenting and sensi-
 tizing Him. By these mercies God is making
 proof of us, whether we are suitable objects for
 his favour. Hear Him say, O my brethren, by
 these events: "If ye be willing and obedient,
 ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye re-
 buse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the
 sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken
 (I am over.)

it." (Isaiah 1:18, 19.) Bear with the entreaty
of one who would willingly die for this beloved
cause and country, that you will turn from
sin, and walk in the fear of God. This, believe
me; this, which is your christian duty, is your
truest patriotism. And may the Lord bless
you and keep you. The Lord make his face
shine upon you, and be gracious unto you:
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace".

XV.

God's Eminent Mercy.

A Sermon

on

Psalm. 108: 4. "For thy mercy is great
above the heavens."

Preached in the Stonewall Brigade,
June 15th 1862, near Al^t Meridian, Aus-
gusta County, Va.

Note.) The previous Sabbath, June 8th the
headquarters of the Army of the Valley were
at Port Republic. On Saturday, Gen^l. Jackson
had sent away the mortal remains of the
heroic Ashly for burial, and had committed
to the earth the corpses of those slain in the
combat near Harrisonburg, in which he fell.
The morning of the holy day dawned with
peculiar brightness; and the author asked the
General, as was customary, whether it was his
wish that he should attempt to hold public

worship in any part of the army, while the enemy was so near. His reply was: "Oh yes: certainly, unless he disturbs us. I wish you to prepare for preaching, that, if things remain quiet, we may have publick worship." But a very short time elapsed, before the sudden attack of Shields upon the village plunged everything into hurry and excitement. The author was compelled to doff his sacred functions, more hastily than he had donned them, to resume those of the officer, and to spend the sacred hours, not in proclaiming the gospel of peace, but in galloping from point to point to reinstate the order of the surprised troops, in the rapid issuing of commands, and in combat with the enemy's advance. Thus began the two days' battle of Port Republic. This was followed by the withdrawal of the troops into Brown's Gap, and a dreary rain.

But in the middle of the week, Genl. Jackson moved his army from their uneasy bivouacs, out into the open valley at Mount Meridian; and in that charming region of green woods, and waving fields, and sparkling waters, he allowed it a week's repose. According to his wont after a battle, Saturday, June 14th, was set apart as a day of religious rest

and Thanksgiving; and publick worship was celebrated in those regiments which had chaplains. The following day was again the Sabbath, and a day of peaceful splendour. In the forenoon, the General worshipped with his old Brigade; where the following discourse was preached, in the presence of a ^{large} ~~great~~ assemblage of men and officers, including Generals Evell, G. S. Winder, and others. In the afternoon, there was a great convocation of believers, with their ministers, in the woods, where the Lord's supper was administered. At this solemn ordinance, Genl. Jackson attended, as an unobtrusive, ~~and~~ ~~devout~~ participant, with a multitude of devout soldiers; many of whom were destined to taste the sacramental cup no more, until they drank it new in the kingdom of their father. This sabbath day can never cease to be the source of a flood of sacred and ^{pensive} reminiscences, to those who assisted ^(these evenings) at it; and it is with a mournful pleasure, that they recall especially, the shining countenances of the many young christians, like Hugh White, Randolph Fairfax, and others, who then promised to be so precious to the church of God, but whose gallant and devoted spirits were to be breathed out, ere long, upon the field of glory.

Sermon -

Brethren.

There are a few facts, simple and indisputable, That show man to be in a melancholy condition, which he seems very little to apprehend -

The punishment of everlasting death is threatened against all sin, by inflexible truth and justice. "The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6: 23. God is one who "will by no means clear the guilty." Exod. 34: 7.

All of us have sinned: yea we were born sinners, "being by nature children of wrath, even as others." Eph. 2: 3. Conviction has taken place, under the joint testimony of God and our own consciences -

Sentence of condemnation is already passed: "He that believeth not, is condemned already." Jno. 3: 18. Hence, escape is impossible; unless the supreme magistrate of the universe may be induced to pardon.

We have no guarantee that the execution of this sentence may not take place any day. "The God in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways, we have not glorified." Dan. 5: 23. We are warned; "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Prov. 27: 1.

Is it not a correct simile, then, to compare the world of sinners to a prison, occupied by condemned criminals? There is this aggravation of the state; that these convicted culprits of God's government may be executed without a moment's warning; whereas, in man's government, a distant day is fixed, and the wretch's fate does not take him by surprise. And on the other hand, there is this alleviation; that sinners are allowed sundry temporal comforts, while detained as 'prisoners of hope'.

How little do thoughtless men behave as such creatures should? What indifference to their doom! What levity! The face of society wears far more the appearance of a festival, where men are celebrating their secure triumphs, than of a doleful prison, where they are awaiting their death with no hope except that of reprieve.

There have, indeed, been cases in actual history, when feasts were held in dungeons of despair. They tell us that during the reign of terror in Paris, under the terrible rule of the Committee of Public Safety, as it was called, by a species of bitter irony, and of the Revolutionary Tribunal, a multitude of pretended political offenders were confined in the state prisons, await-

ing trial. Few escaped sentences of death in that ferocious court; and execution followed swift upon the heels of judgment. Daily the publick prosecutor came to knock at the doors of the prisons, and read a list of the names of those who were ordered for trial. None knew on what day their turns would come. At the time of these daily visits of death, we are told, a momentary chill of dread seemed to fall upon all spirits. But as soon as the doomed persons were separated from their company, the tide of gaiety rolled back again; luxurions meals were spread in the prisons; music resounded; and the hours were hastened with amusements, amours, and private theatricals.

Such, you exclaim, was the ghastly recklessness of atheistical France! But is not this shocking picture a fair illustration of the behaviour of the world of unpardoned sinners? They too are shut up, prisoners, awaiting the dreaded summons: the chief point of difference is, that it is not unjust. Death makes his frequent rounds, and calls out some, no one can predict whom, for executions. Yet how are you, meantime, spending your hours?

Let us return now, to the subterraneous vaults of those prisons of state; let us suppose that the news of pardon, release, acquittal, were rumoured through them. Would not the hardened inmates have gathered in breathless interest, to hear the terms? But can I hope

for so much attention from you, condemned sinners, while I speak of the mercy of God to you? Shall I arrest the tide of indifference or levity, while I tell of a pardon bought with blood, from a worse death than that of the reeking scaffold, offered to you with a generous compassion which towers above the skies? Listen, for once, O brethren, while I explain the greatness of this transcendent mercy of God.

It is not unusual with the sacred writers, to exalt the ^{divine} superiority, of ~~God~~, by comparing it to the elevation of the heavens above the earth. In this strain God says by Isaiah. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (55:9) In many things are His ways and character in splendid contrast with man's; in their stability, in their wisdom, in their power, in their vast range. But in nothing is the superiority of God to man so admirable, as in his exercise of mercy towards the guilty. The Psalmist seems to behold the conception of this attribute rising and expanding like a vision, as vast as lovely, until it towers above the heavens, and fills the whole firmament, ~~with its gentle glory~~ and floods all the earth, with its mild glory. Let it be my delightful task today to justify this encomium, by unfolding so much as I am able of the trails of

7

God's mercy to sinners. In doing this, I shall at once explain and commend them.

1. The foundation for the excellency of God's mercy is laid in this, that He exercises it without any expense to His law. The understanding of this important truth must be gained, my hearers, in order that you may apprehend all the rest of His mercy. When other rulers pardon those justly condemned, it is at the expense of the law's inflexibility, of its claims, and of its threats. The ordained penalty is disappointed: mercy boasts itself against judgment. Law and justice must be violated, in order that the criminal may enjoy his impunity. But with God alone it is not so; because his infinite wisdom has found a way to satisfy both justice and mercy, in the same transaction. This he does, by both punishing and pardoning the same sins. Is this a paradox? It is one of those seeming paradoxes, which is true; yea, a blessed truth. And this is the scriptural solution: that God, having appointed his Divine Son, as united to humanity, our Substitute, laid the guilt of our sins to his account, and fully punished it in Christ Jesus; while we, the doers of the sins, are freely pardoned in believing on him. Thus, when eternal retribution and truth prohibited the proper and beneficial pardon of sin without a penal substitute, and none could be found adequate beneath the throne of God, His mercy was so great above the heavens,

that He freely gave His own, co-equal Son as ^{8.}
the victim, so that ~~our sins~~ our sins
might be punished in him, and pardoned
to us.

It is this which renders the mercy of God
so secure and precious. When man pardons
at the expense of the law, the forgiven criminal
feels that he owes his impunity to the disregard
of justice, which requires, and of truth, which
threatens, his punishment. Should these res=
tore their rightful sway, he must fall again
under the curse of his sin, and perish. But
our pardon is as much founded on justice as
on compassion. "Mercy and truth have met
together: righteousness and peace have kissed
each other." (Ps. 85:10) The same unchangeable
attributes which must, else, have stood in=
flexibly opposed to our escape, now array them=
selves beside us, and defend the rectitude of
our release, when we penitently plead the
sacrifice of Christ in our stead.

2. Because among men, mercy is exer=
cised at the expense of law, only a few of the
justly condemned can be safely pardoned.
And these favoured instances must be selected
among the offenders whose intention was least
malignant, and whose crimes admitted the
most palliation. Should forgiveness be pro=
miscuously offered to all, and should the
most hardened and flagrant offenders be
pardoned along with the rest, then all order
and justice are overthrown; lawless anarchy.

riots over every thing valued in the commonwealth.

But God's mercy, more extensive than man's, can be safely offered to all, and to the chief of sinners? For Christ hath so fulfilled and honoured the law, both in its precept and penalty, that justice herself, as well as her sister, mercy, is more glorified in the substitution, than she would be in the sinner's own destruction. The more offenders are pardoned, the more is the law magnified. Thus no fear holds mercy back, lest too many should escape; no question need be asked concerning degrees of aggravation - God can remit the blackest crime, without relinquishing in the least his abhorrence of crime. None are excepted, but those who exclude themselves. The herald of mercy is authorized to go forth, as I am now, and proclaim forgiveness to every creature, and to the blackest criminal; even though he be foul with murder. "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." (1 Jno. 1:7.)

3. God pardons many and repeated offences of the same person. Men talk of mercy as possible towards the first offence, or perhaps the second. But a few repetitions makes forgiveness with them impossible. When they are able to point to the repetition of the offence, this is with them the sternest count in their accusation, and the strongest ground for refusing farther mercy. When Christ's disciples, not

yet fully enlightened by His example and Spirit, asked him how far their mercy should reach over repeated offences from their brother, they said; Shall we forgive until seven times? Doubtless they thought they had strained mercy far, in saying, 'until seven times'; for they desired to seem to imitate the tender forbearance of their Master. How must they have been astonished by his answer: "I say not unto you, until seven times, but until seventy times seven". But this measure of mercy, so astonishing to them, He immeasurably transcends, in His own dealings towards us. For how countless are our offences; and yet he forgives - 'He forgiveth all our iniquities'. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us -

(Ps. 103: 3, 12.) "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea". (Jonah. 1: 19.)

4. Men seldom pardon without upbraiding. Often they say: "I may forgive, but I cannot forget." meaning, not only that the injuries of which they speak will remain as involuntary marks upon the tablets of memory; but that they are to be carefully cherished, and wilfully kept rankling in their hearts, while they only forgo the acts of outward revenge. Not so with God; the generosity with which He casts our sins behind his back, has just been stated in the words of inspiration. When earthly authorities remit guilt, they usually do no more than place the criminal upon a sort of probation. They

hold out to him an opportunity to retrieve^{11.}
his position before the law by a painful and
watchful obedience. The old load of wrath is
not finally and decisively removed, it is
only held in suspense, over his anxious head;
and if he fails in the slightest point of obed-
ience, the whole incubus of guilt rolls back,
increased by the aggravation of this new
lapse, and the last state of the man is
worse than the first.

But God, when he pardons, also adopts.
So boundless is his mercy, that the criminal
is not only released, by virtue of a sacrifice
which was provided wholly at God's expense,
and not his own, from all the penal debt;
but he is graciously received into the num-
ber of God's beloved children, selected as the
object of His tender favour, and crowned with
all the benefits of redemption. The reconciled
Father does not hold him suspiciously to
his good behaviour, awaiting the opportunity
of some new lapse into transgression, to
 hurl back all the mountainous curse of sin,
temporarily suspended from him. No: He
takes him into His bosom; and, that the ev-
ring child may not again compel divine
justice to array itself against him, by his
relapse into rebellion, God tenderly guides
him, and watches and sustains his steps
in all the paths of new obedience. "He puts
His Spirit within them, and causes them to

walk in his statutes, and they shall keep².
his judgments and do them" (Ezek. 36: 27.)
He says: "I will make an everlasting covenant
with them, that I will not turn away from
them to do them good; but I will put my fear
in their hearts that they shall not depart from
me. (Jer. 32: 40.) "They are kept by the power
of God, through faith, unto salvation." (I Pet.
1: 5) Thus the mercy of God in the gospel
not only restores the guilty sinner out of the
consequences of his sin, but raises him to a
state of adoption, more secure than the immo-
cence of paradise from which Adam fell,
and as gloriously stable as that which Gab-
riel has won by his holiness-

5. It has been already intimated that
the mercy of God is so great, it forgives the
sinner without requiring any costly condi-
tions on his part. Indeed, the only meritori-
ous conditions in the transaction, are those
which God himself, in Christ, provides and
fulfills, in order that he may consistently
pardon. He pays the sinner's debt. He works
out the meritorious righteousness for the sin-
ner's reconciliation. He earns not only that
pardon for which the sinner is perishing,
but all those provisions of wisdom and strength
which must needs be administered to him,
for his perseverance in his restored state. How
high is this above the mercy of this earth?
The offended man, when mercy is asked for

the offender, arrogantly requires that every sacrifice shall be made upon the culprit's side. If he, on his part, sacrifices some pique, or some fancied dignity of his resentment. if he makes some cheap advance towards condescension, he thinks that he has done enough. And then, he takes great praise to himself, that he is merciful! But God, in his forgiveness, although most majestic and infinite Sovereign, bears the whole expense of the reconciliation, and requires none of the pardoned sinner, who receives all the gain. And this expense is, the bitter, shameful death of His Son, Jesus Christ, who, ~~was~~ in his divine nature, ^{was} in His bosom from eternity.

Consequently, His pardon is perfectly free. He requires no price, and establishes no terms, except those simple ones which are as imperatively demanded by the welfare of the beneficiary, as by the honour of Him who pardons. Does he exact faith? This is inevitable; for how can the returning sinner be reconciled to a Father in whom he does not trust? How can the beggar receive the benefaction, except he shall, at the least, reach out his hand to accept it when it is offered to him? And faith is no more than this trusting, this receiving. Hence, too it follows, that it can never

claim the office of a price to purchase¹⁴
the gift, which it merely receives. Does God
require a penitent obedience of him whom
his mercy pardons? This also is as necessary
for the sinner, as for God's holiness. For sin
is misery; and even omnipotence cannot
make that creature truly happy, who contin-
ues to love transgression.

But so free is the pardon, that the co-
libility to comply with even these light terms
is supplied by God, as it is purchased by
Christ. "He is exalted, as a Prince and a
Saviour, to give unto Israel repentance, as
well as remission of sins" (Acts. 5:31.) "For
unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ
to believe on him." &c. (Phil. 1:29.) He
excuses the pardoned to love his law. He en-
bles them to keep their vows of future obedience
and submission. All this he does in, and
for every sinner, who permits himself to be
blessed. Was ever mercy as great as this
seen under the heavens?

6. The mercy of God is magnified
in this; that it forgives that offence which,
with all other rulers, is held to be necessa-
rily unpardonable; the offence against it-
self. Noen reason thus: that an outrage
against justice or authority may possibly be
forgiven with propriety; but not an assault

committed upon offered mercy: because ^{16.}
this betrays an utter malignity of opposition,
which should be at once accepted as irrecon-
cilable; and because he who assails this at-
tribute in its mission of benevolence, shows him-
self an enemy of goodness, outside the pale of
humanity. Does not even the loving parent
argue against the son that has insulted his
very forbearance; "any resistance to my mere
authority, I might have forgiven; but this, never.
When compassion herself is outraged, then
the cup of patience ought to be full."

But God has mercy on the sin against
his mercy. Men may blaspheme the Father
er, and yet be forgiven: they may speak a-
gainst the Son who died for them, and be
forgiven. (Matt. 12: 32.) Indeed, all sinners
who hear and intelligently reject the gospel,
or postpone its claims for self-will and sin,
experience this forbearance of God; and if
they escape perdition, must obtain the par-
don of the sin of resisting mercy. They have
"made light of Christ." They "have done des-
pite to the spirit of his grace." By cherish-
ing the sins which slew him, they "crucify
the Son of God afresh, and put him to an
open shame." So that the mercy of God to
you, obstinate unbelievers, will, hence-
forth, be like the forgiveness of a righteous
king towards armed rebels, who have fired

16.
on his flag of truce. You have broken his
laws, defied his authority, introduced an-
archy and ruin into his peaceful domini-
ons, and injured his law-abiding citizens.
The righteous sovereign has been compelled
to muster his forces against you; and
you have retired before his irresistible
might. He has surrounded you on every
side, and his angelic hosts stand ready
to let loose upon you the arrows of destruct-
ion, which will overwhelm you with per-
dition. But the merciful king bade them
withhold their fury yet longer, that he
might try one more experiment with your
infatuated souls. His pity persuaded him
to offer one more overture of forgiveness, be-
fore his angry hosts were let loose to sweep
you from the earth. But who will volun-
teer to bear this flag of truce, and face the
treacherous obstinacy of these desperate men?
Lo! his Son advances, the tender and lovely
image of his Father's virtues, heir of his
throne, and sole sharer of his bosom, ~~and~~
~~there~~: he exclaims: "I will go; I share
the noble impulses of thy compassion, my
Father. Surely they will reverence thy Son;
they will reverence the divine Pity, whose mes-
senger I shall be. I will entreat them not to des-
troy themselves, by all the tenderness of thy com-"

passion, and by the terrors of thy royal wrath; and they will hearken. Thus shall their blood be spared, ~~and~~ thy kingdoms shall regain a host of devoted subjects; and all thy dominions lovingly admire thy wisdom and goodness. Now upon, the Father smiled upon the Son with ineffable pride and love; and answered: "Go, my only Begotten, my joy and my heir: let my subjects see thee first exercising those kingly functions which are thy inheritance, in this act of royal clemency: Go; and by thy love woo back those misguided criminals to duty and happiness." Thus the Son set out upon his errand of mercy to you: He laid aside his glittering armour, the helm that waved with horrors dark as the wings of death, the shield whose bosses shot devouring fire against you, and the sword whose edge could devour whole ranks at every blow; and taking the snowy banner, emblem of Peace, in his hands, he advanced to you, down from the heights of heaven which were crowned with his embattled hosts of angels, into the vale of despair where you had pitched; while every eye was intent to watch his reception. They saw him draw nigh to you, gently wave his flag of truce, and reach forth his smarmed hand in entreaty; when lo! you, miserable culprits, instead of casting your weapons away, and falling upon your knees, and cast-

ing your guilty weapons away. lifted them^{18.}
and shot him dead: dead by the hands of those
he was endeavouring to save! and the sacred,
inviolable emblem of peace is trailed in the
bloody dust!

Then, did not the Father lift his hand
with a grief and wrath too vast for utterance,
swear with an oath which made the very depths
to quake, that there should be no more truce
for you, but vengeance that should burn to the
lowest hell; and speak the instant word to his
indignant hosts, to let loose upon you all the
rollies of their might? No: O wonder, no.
There came back to his ear, as a sigh borne
upon the breeze, these dying words from his
murdered Son: "Father forgive them: they
know not what they do": and at that word,
his righteous fury was all calmed, and his hand
was only lifted up to restrain his impatient
followers. O wonder! he despatches new mes-
sengers to you, to entreat you, by the love of
the Prince whom you have slain, yet to turn
and be forgiven! Was there ever mercy like
this? Is it not "great above the heavens"? But
such is God's mercy to you, by me, this day.

The news of forgiveness should be a
moving, melting sound. He who knoweth
what is in man's heart taught us; "If thine
enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst,
give him drink: for in so doing, thou shalt
heap coals of fire upon his head." He knew

that there was a gentle power in mercy, to melt the angry and obdurate heart, which would only harden itself against threats, even righteous threats. And that policy which he enjoins upon us, he pursues himself towards you, his enemies. Mistaken souls; how can you resist it? Relent, relent before the attractions of Jesus' love. Ye hearts, that shake not at the wrath and terrors of God Almighty, melt beneath the beams of this mercy, which is above the heavens.

But alas! Are not God's compassions as peculiar in the reception which befalls them in this world, as they are eminent in themselves? In all this world, there is nothing that can equal the mercies of God in Christ to sinners, save the hardness of these sinners' hearts against Him.

And shall I now stay, to show you how smittenably you down must needs be embittered by the recollection of this obstinacy, when God's mercy shall at length have given place to judgment? (And if you reject constantly the atoning sacrifice of Christ, be assured, judgment must some day awake; for God is a perfect God.) Shall I remind you how your awful sentence must be aggravated by the weight of this rejected love; and how your remorse will tear your souls,

as you reflect how much mercy you had ²⁰
to slight in order to fight your way down
to perdition? No: I will not dwell on
these dread truths: I wish to leave you, to
send you to your solitude, with the sweet
voice of divine mercy lingering in your
ears, and wooing your souls to the Prince
of Peace. "God commendeth his love towards
you, in that while you were yet sinners,
Christ died for you." Turn you to the
strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." Rom. 5:8.
Zech. 9:12. "Come now, and let us reason
together, saith the Lord: Though your sins
be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow:
though they be red like crimson, they shall
be as wool." Is. 1:18.

XVIII.

Faith.

An Expository Sermon.

or.

Roman. X. 6-10. "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise: Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? [that is, to bring Christ down from above] 7. Or, Who shall descend into the deep? [that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.] 8. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach: 9. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10. For with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation?"

Preached September 1863. at Orange Court House, Va. to an assemblage of officers and men, belonging to the 2nd Corps, Army of N. Va.

The great end, my brethren, of all the exhortations of the ministry to men is, to flee from the wrath to come, and make their peace with God. Just so far as their exhortations are successful, they must be met by the answering inquiry; "What must we do, that we may work the works of God?" And therefore they should be always ready to expound the nature of that faith, which answers this great question: that faith which the Redeemer declared, was pre-eminently the work of God, and which the Scriptures everywhere hold out as the thing whereby the sinner passes from death unto life. I invite you to study this topic today, as it is presented in the text, one of the most striking and profitable descriptions of saving faith within the lids of the Bible. I do it, because I would fain hope that there are at least some here, enough interested concerning their own salvation, to find this an interesting subject. I would appeal to that consciousness of your lost estate which, I well know, lurks in the hearts of the most careless of you. Why may not this be the day for you to awake, and look at the hope which is set before you in the gospel?

The Apostle Paul's language in this place is almost a verbal quotation of the words

of Moses in Deuteronomy 30:11. and following verses. He quotes first, the declaration of Moses in Leviticus 18:5: as expressing the condition of the covenant of works. "He that doeth the commandments shall live in them."

But the gospel proposes no such plan of salvation. The righteousness of faith which we preach is just the opposite. It depends, not on a perfect obedience, which we know we cannot render; but on simple faith or trust in the offered righteousness of another. To describe this faith, St. Paul borrows the words of Moses in Deuteronomy, where the great prophet urges upon his charge, the people of Israel, that he had set before them life and death. He says: "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hid from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say; Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." A remark may be needed, to explain the apostle's apparent wresting of Moses' words, in applying to the "righteousness which is by faith;" what at the first glance,

5-

seems to have been said by him touching obedience to his institutions and precepts. Moses tells his people that the condition of their salvation was now brought near, and made plain to them. It was no longer concealed, remote, or abstruse. No profound speculations, no distant journeys to consult the sages of other lands, no imagination soaring into the secrets of heaven, ~~was~~ ^{were} now needed by a Hebrew, to know what he must do in order to be accepted of God. The revelation of this was ~~now~~ explicitly made by him; and he had taught them what they had to do, publicly, and plainly, so that all might understand.

Saint Paul is to be understood, in the first place, as asserting a parallelism between the teachings of Moses and Christ, in this particular; that the latter, like the former, had published the terms of salvation clearly, so that no sinner could justly complain of not knowing what he had to do. As Moses had set before his people "life and good, and death and evil," by his fulfilment of his mission; so Jesus Christ had wrought out a finished redemption, and had announced its terms with a clearness which left no room for addition; as, for instance, when he commissioned his apostles, and said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Ob-

viously, the two dispensations, of Moses and Christ
 could be alike in this particular, even though
 they proposed different plans of salvation. So that
 in this respect, St. Paul might speak just as
 Moses spake. As the latter reminded the Hebrews,
 that they no longer had a pretext for asking:
 "Who shall go up for us to heaven"? because he
 had met God on the holy mount, and brought back
 full instructions: so, says the apostle, none now
 have a pretext to say that they are waiting for
 fuller communications with the skies, because
 Christ himself has come thence, finished his
 work, and declared his will as to man's salva-
 tion. Moses urges, in substance, that his people
 could not say they were awaiting instructions
 from beyond the ocean, or from some remote and
 inaccessible region; for he had published their
 duty in their very midst, and in the most sim-
 ple mode. So, Paul reminds us, ~~that~~ no one can
 now pretend that it is necessary the abyss of
 the grave shall be sounded, or its secrets dis-
 closed: because Jesus Christ, by his resurrection
 has already taught the sinner all he needs to
 know of its secrets; namely, that the Captain of
 his salvation has conquered death, and led cap-
 tivity captive, and assumed the resurrection of all
 his people. And as Moses declared that the word
 was very nigh unto the people, that the quest-
 ion of duty was brought home to these people, to

their very lips and hearts, so, says the apostle, is the word of faith which we preach - A provided gospel and finished redemption now so plainly offered to you, bring your own salvation to the issue of your own choice. All you have to do is to decide in your heart, and declare Christ with your mouth. Your fate is ready for this immediate decision.

But, in the second place: The dispensations of Moses and Christ agree exactly, not only in the above particular, but in the substance of the way which they propose to man for salvation. "Moses spake of me," says the Saviour himself. Notice, that the prophet, in v. 10th requires not only a formal obedience to his ordinances, but a "turning to God", with all the soul. "What can this be but repentance? And those ordinances which made up the formal part of his system, all pointed to a vicarious sacrifice to come; so that to observe them with the heart, was to exercise faith in the foreshadowed Saviour. In a word St. Pauls application of the language is justified by the acknowledged fact, that the feelings with which the pious Hebrew offered the Mosaic sacrifices, and obeyed his precepts, were substantially the same with that faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, and repentance towards God, by which we are saved under the gospel -

Proceeding now to apply the instructions

of the passage, we are taught.

- I. That there is no work or discovery on the sinner's part, except the simple discovery of his need, which is required to prepare the way for believing. The gospel tells us, v. v. 6. 7. that there is no righteousness to be brought in by us, no atonement to be invented, no addition to be made to that everlasting righteousness which Christ wrought, when he descended from heaven, went into the grave, and was brought up again from the dead. None of our good works, our forms, rites, sacraments, or superstitions, nor of our reformations or repentings, whether unscriptural or scriptural, are needed to supplement his righteousness for our justification. We are to embrace the finished work of Christ just as we are, in our unfitness and unworthiness, except so far as a thorough sense of our guilt and necessity prepares us.

Or, perhaps it is equally important to learn from these words, that saving faith does not consist at all in any profound or far-reaching exercise of the understanding. The sinner is not required to explore the secrets of heaven, or the mysteries of the world of spirits, by the efforts of his philosophy, in order to learn the way of salvation. There is no profound speculation needed. There is no discovery to be made by the force of genius. The believer does

not depend on speculations, but on the word of God. He pretends to invent nothing, and to know nothing, except what God has told him; and this he believes, because he has God's word for it. And here, the wisest and most learned are on a level with the babe in Christ. The faith of the learned divine is no more founded on his own wisdom, than that of the humble saint, who knows no more than that his Bible is God's word, and that it offers him Christ. All is revealed, which is to be believed for salvation, and so revealed that its saving reception requires nothing, but a childlike simplicity coupled with humility.

But though faith is not founded on human speculation, it is not opposed to reason. That we should here bow our reason to God's more word, is the highest dictate of reason. She tells us, by her clearest dictate, that this gospel is God's inspired word, and that therefore, all it teaches is unmingled truth, however above, or beyond her comprehension. She pronounces the obvious principle, that the terms on which a sovereign God shall see fit to pardon his rebel creatures cannot be inferred by speculations or deductions, but can only be declared by himself; and when she has heard his voice and recognized it as his, she bows in instant submission. She feels that to admit the dominion of faith here is

supremely reasonable.

Lay not in thy heart then, O sinner; who shall ascend into heavens, or fathom the abyss, to bring the knowledge of Christ to the soul. All is revealed which you need to know: all is clear and explicit. No laborious invention or ingenuity is required of you. All that is needed is a simple and an humble heart, to embrace God's word.

- II. This leads us to the second point of instruction in the text; that saving faith is an exercise natural and easy to him who is truly willing to believe. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is: the word of faith which we preach". How opposite is this to the thoughts of the unregenerate man? He imagines that faith must be something abstract and profound, and that some mighty, and almost inconceivable exertion of the soul must be put forth. He looks afar off for it. He supposes that this something which is the hinge of the soul's eternal state, and which transfers from life to death, must be a thing wonderful and difficult. Not so: "The word is nigh thee". To the heart which feels its need of a Saviour a right; and is willing to be saved, faith is an exercise so easy, so natural, that it is in fact, spontaneous and unavoidable. It is the reaching forth of the hand of the beggar,

when he feels within him the consuming hunger, and sees the bread offered - It is the cry of the frightened disciple, as he found himself sinking in the angry waves, while he grasped the Master's extended hand, "Save Lord, or I perish." "The word is even in thy mouth and in thy heart." It is the spontaneous expression of the soul made willing by the Holy Spirit, coming forth from the heart and lips as naturally, as easily, and as certainly, as the water flows from the living spring -

Hence, the impossibility of conveying to the unbeliever a correct idea of what faith is, needs not be much regretted. All descriptions must, perhaps, fail of conveying a full conception of it; because an affection of the soul cannot be described to one who has never felt it, any more than the idea of light and colours can be conveyed accurately to the mind of one born blind. But there is no danger, that any one truly wishing to come to Christ will be kept away by not knowing how to come. When once the sinner is truly willing, believing on Christ is as easy and spontaneous as the cry of the frightened child for aid, who sees the danger, and his parent near at hand. It is only he who is not willing to come, that does not know how to come -

III. Next, we are taught that the direct object of saving faith is Christ's work of redemption - "Thou shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead." The believer embraces the great fact of Christ's resurrection, as that which he himself had appointed, before his death, for the crowning test of his messiahship. He embraces it as the necessary evidence of the completeness of his atonement. For when the great Surety was released from the prison house of death, it was thereby proved that he had fully paid our debt. The believer sees in Christ's resurrection the proof of his victory over death, and thereby, of his ability to deliver us; and of the fulfilment of the Father's promise to seat him at his right hand, and give all the fulness of redemption into his keeping - To believe in the resurrection, then, is to believe in Christ's completed work of redemption. And this is the direct object of saving faith. Though all the rest of revelation, except the central doctrines of redemption, be unknown; though the believer may not have heard even, of any portion of the Scriptures, except the single evangel or epistle which tells him of Christ, and convinces him of his truth and fitness as a Saviour, saving faith may be exercised, and the soul may pass from death unto life. And yet, wherever true faith on Christ exists, the willing reception of all divine truth will be certain, as fast as it becomes known - When we say that the object of

saving faith is not the whole circle of revealed truths, but the doctrine of the cross, we mean that the soul may be saved although [unavoidably] ignorant of all but the doctrines of the cross; and not, that a believing soul can knowingly reject any portion of God's truth. For the same trust in the divine fidelity, which causes him to confide in one doctrine, will ensure his confiding equally in all that God says, as fast as it becomes known.

IV. We are next led to the centre of the whole subject, when the apostle tells us, that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Saving faith is not a mere notion of the understanding; it is an act of the affections and will. By the heart, the Scriptures usually mean the dispositions and will, or the active powers of the soul. And when the text tells us, that man believeth with the heart unto righteousness, it is hoped that you will be led to some understanding of what it is that you lack. Doubtless, when you have heard so much stress laid upon faith, your secret thoughts have answered; I do believe the gospel; I never doubted the truth of the history, which tells how Jesus suffered and died for man's sins, and rose again for his justification, nor of the promises, which offer life in him. And yet, I experience nothing of that mighty change, which is promised to accom-

pany faith; nor of that religious hope and joy
 which it should beget. How is this? I am told
 that to believe is all that is needed; and I
 have never been anything else than a believer,
 and yet I feel and know that I am not renewed.
 The text, O sinner, gives you the answer: "With
 the heart man believeth unto righteousness."
 You have only believed with the head. You
 must so believe as to act out your belief. You
 must so believe as practically to entrust
 yourself to the Saviour. The reality of your be-
 lief must be exhibited by your actually set-
 ting out on the christian pilgrimage, and en-
 tering upon all the obligations and tasks of
 the christian life, in dependence on those truths
 which your mind professes to receive concern-
 ing Christ. A part of this gospel truth is, that
 you are a lost sinner, condemned to a ruin
 unspeakably more urgent and vast than
 all earthly ills. When you so hold this truth,
 as to arise and flee with instant and con-
 stant earnestness from the wrath to come,
 then you believe with the heart. Another part
 of the gospel truth is, that "Christ bare our sins
 in his body, on the tree." When you so believe
 this, as to entrust your pardon to his advocacy,
 by a hearty and final act of the inward soul,
 then you believe with the heart. Another prom-
 ise of the gospel is, that "they that wait upon
 the Lord shall renew their strength:" that Christ-

15.
makes "his yoke easy, and his burden light."
When you so believe this as to have your dread
of undertaking his spiritual service effect-
ually overcome, and so, arise and march
forward in the path of his service, then your
belief becomes saving faith. Another gospel
fact is, that Christ, by his personal excellence,
his love, and his sacrifice for us, has earned
a right to our supreme, affectionate devotion.
When you so believe this, as to bestow that devo-
tion freely and heartily, then the heart believes
in Christ, and you are saved. Is it thus that
you trust in this Saviour? If it is, then I
embrace you as my brother in Him; you are
a saved soul; and heaven is your inheri-
tance! But alas no! Your faith is a cold,
inoperative notion; it dwells only in the im-
practical region of the head; it has never
warmed and governed your heart and choice.

There are many divines who teach
that saving faith should be defined as nothing
but the simple, intellectual belief of a proposition.
They suppose themselves to be constrained to
this view by the force of such passages of Scrip-
ture as these - (1) "Now faith is the substance of
things hoped for, the evidence of things not
seen." (2) "For he that cometh unto God must be-
lieve that he is, and that he is the rewarder
of all such as believe them that diligently
(1.) Hebr. 11:1. (2.) Hebr. 11:6.

16. seek him" (3) "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." They say, that when we see the exercise so currently and plainly described in the word of God, by the *familiar* verb 'believe', and noun 'belief,' we are bound to apprehend it as being simply belief of facts upon evidence, exercised by the mind. They appeal also to the nature of the soul; and ask whether it is necessary to predicate any thing more of it. They ask; is it not the nature of man to feel and decide, as his mind sees? Do not all active affections of soul arise by virtue of ^{some} view ^{held in} the soul's own understanding? And is it not the most obvious law of man's nature, that when he chooses any thing, he does it according to the prevalent view and judgment of his own mind as to the most preferable and reasonable? Is it not this law, in fact, which makes him a reasonable creature in his actions? Now then, say they; by the law of his own nature, according as the mind perceives and judges, the heart will feel and act. Hence we have no need to define faith, as anything more than a thorough conviction of truth in the mind, in order to see how it produces all its practical fruits in the life.

These teachers, among whom are many venerated names, say therefore, that wherever

there is a real, clear conviction in the mind, of gospel truth scripturally understood, there is a true, saving faith. If we ask them; 'How is it then, with all those unnumbered persons who indignantly reject the charge of infidelity, and suppose that they believe the Scriptures? they reply, that they are not sincere and hearty in their conviction of their truth; that, in short, they are, perhaps unconsciously, secret skeptics. They make the difference between a living and a dead faith only this: that the former is full and strong conviction of the understanding, and the latter, wavering and weak. There is a sense, as will be ^{shown} ~~expressed~~, in which this explanation is true.

But it is perfectly clear that the Scriptures, which aim to give practical rather than scientific views of spiritual exercises, do describe saving faith as embracing two elements, conviction of the understanding concerning gospel truth, and the active embracing of it by the will and purposes. Among these descriptions is the emphatic declaration of the text. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Saving faith is described in the Scriptures, by almost every term which expresses action of soul. It is "trusting in the Lord." (1) It is "looking unto God for salvation," (2) It is "receiving Christ" (3) It is "coming unto him" (4) It is "embracing the promises" (5) It is, (6) "fleeing

(1) Psalm. 2:12. (2) Isaiah 45:22. (3) Jno. 1:12.
 (4) Jno. 6:44. Hebr. 11:13. (6) Hebr. 6:18.

mits, and laying hold of Christ." Did inspired truth select these representations, many of them expressive of intense action, to mean nothing?

The intimate connexion between faith and repentance shows that faith involves the active powers of the soul, as well as the understanding. Faith implies repentance, and repentance faith. These two graces are twin sisters, so intimately united that their severance would destroy both. Must there not be a community of nature? The active nature of faith is also shown beyond dispute, by the language of the gospel concerning its opposite, unbelief. This is always represented, not as a mere notion, harmlessly erroneous, not as a thing negative and passive, but as a sin, a grievous sin; yea, the head and front of our offending. Now, nothing can be sin in which no active power of the soul is concerned. But since unbelief is both of the heart and head, faith, its contrasted exercise, must be of the heart and head, likewise.

Yet, nothing appears more clear, than that man's feelings and purposes arise according to the light of his own understanding; so that the conclusion seems unavoidable, that if your head were thoroughly convinced of gospel truth, as it is scripturally set forth, your heart would feel and choose accordingly.

149.
There is an old-fashioned book, of which I have a high opinion, which defines faith in these words: "A saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel." Now, because I do not see you practically resting upon Christ for salvation; I am compelled to conclude that you do not receive him "as he is offered to you in the gospel," not even with the notion of the understanding. You may honestly suppose that you do; but you are misled by your hearts. You say that you feel you are sinners! Yes; but not in the sense in which the gospel represents you as sinners. You believe that the redemption which you suppose Christ offers is will be a desirable thing; but you do not desire such a redemption as God really offers you. When you say that you are not an infidel; that you sincerely believe the gospel history and doctrines; and that you have a high respect for religion, and even a strong desire to possess it; your real meaning is about this: That you are, indeed a sinner, for you have done many wrong things; That sin endangers your soul, because it is just in God to punish, if he pleases; That you need a change of purpose and feeling, you scarcely know what, before your heart will be right within; That when

you get ready to reform and repent, you must be assisted by Jesus Christ, who procures your pardon. That when you come to die, and so, can no longer possess this world, it will be extremely desirable to possess the Christian's security; ~~and~~ that, in short, when you have gotten your own consent, you must secure that blessing, some day before it is too late; which you fully purpose to do: And that, whenever you thus begin to move in the matter, Christ will help and pardon you, as he has engaged. This is your gospel; and it is as different from the true gospel of the Scriptures, as earth is from heaven!

You verily think you are a sinner! But do you believe that "all your righteousnesses are filthy rags, and that those very virtues on which you plume yourself are justly condemned before God? You feel that you need an inward change, and intend to procure it! But do you believe that your soul is "dead in trespasses and sins," that you "are in the bond of iniquity," and that, so far from choosing your own "convenient season" to repent, you will never form the first sincere desire for God, if left to yourself, and will live on in your guilty procrastination until you drop into hell, as surely as rivers flow towards the sea? You think that

when death forbids you to enjoy longer the preferred delights of sin and worldliness, the Christian's impurity will be an excellent thing! But do you believe that it is a desirable thing for you, today, to be "redeemed from all iniquity, and purified unto God a peculiar person zealous of good works? Ah no; that peculiar sanctity is the very thing which you today dread; and that entire surrender of will and forsaking of sin for Christ is the very thing against which you today reluctate. You hope Christ will help you when you seek him! But do you believe that Christ will faithfully communicate to every sinner who simply trusts him, and to you, spiritual strength to carry out a profession of religion consistently and happily, in such a sense that you, even such a poor conscious worldling as you, may leave that seat today, a declared, steadfast child of God, and consistent Christian, by trusting yourself to his hands? No; you do not believe it; not even with the cold speculative notions of the head. Much of this you regard as absurdity and extravagance. But these propositions which I have thus set in contrast with your creed; these are Christ's true gospel! This then, is the just sense in which, as was before indicated, all dead faith is and

actual skepticism.

And now, how can this obstinate unbelief of the head be removed? I reply, only by a sovereign renewal of the heart. It may be granted, that if the understanding be thoroughly convinced concerning the preferable good, the will must surely and naturally follow its judgment. But there is a prior question. How shall the head ever be brought to think that ^{holiness} the preferable good, which the heart obstinately eschews, as the object of its native repugnance? And how shall the head sincerely adopt the belief that sin, in all its forms, is a present evil in itself, when the heart loudly declares that, apart from the hell which is connected with it, sin is its preferred delight? It must be remembered that the objects which the gospel presents to man's soul are all moral objects. It brings not only truths to be understood, but in every truth it also brings a duty, or an obligation, to be felt. The profound Paschal observes, in his Pensées: "In natural things, the views of the understanding determine the feelings; but in spiritual things, the feelings determine the views of the understanding." This is true. In the choice between sin and righteousness, the world and Christ, the judgment of the head is

but the echo of the native affection of the heart. Here then, is the root of the sinner's unbelief, who professes a historical faith. Christ proposes himself as a Saviour from sin itself. Embracing him as such implies then, of course, the intellectual conviction that sin itself, apart from its penalty is a ^(and present) great evil, and that the sinner is in bondage to that evil. But how is it possible, that man's understanding can entertain these statements as truths, whose heart cherishes sin, in itself, with a controlling native affection, and only is pained by the fear of its punishment?

This explanation shows us what the text means, when it says, that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." And we can now understand also, how faith is the result of that sovereign change of heart, by which the sinner is born again. This native appetite for sin must be revolutionized, before sin can be seen to be indeed a present evil, and a salvation from it the immediate preferable good. But let the almighty Spirit cure this perverse affection of the heart, and turn it to God and right; and then the head comprehends, and the will chooses, Christ, as the desired deliverer. "Thus, by grace we are saved, through faith; and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of

God." Eph. 2:8.

V. The text teaches us, that saving faith is not a thing latent and inoperative.

"Thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus-" Some men cheat themselves with the dream of a covert christianity; of a compact with Christ to be formed and kept in secret, so as to avoid the reproach of the cross- This cannot be. Such a faith as this of the heart will declare itself with the mouth. It cannot be restrained from publishing its affectionate devotion, but rejoices in glorifying its Redeemer.

And now, O heaver, wilt thou not ~~not~~ close with Christ, by believing on him with the heart, and confessing him with the mouth? If only thou art willing to be saved by him, with such a salvation as he offers, a salvation from sin and self-will, as well as from hell. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy heart and in thy mouth." A complete redemption is brought to thy very lips, and only one word, spoken from the heart, is needed to make it yours! Will you close your

eyes now upon the outer world, even where you sit, and speak that word to your God in the secret chambers of your soul?

There is momentous solemnity in this thought, that the gift, freighted with all the immense issues of eternity, should be now brought so near us, that only a word of the heart, ~~one~~ aspiration to Christ, should interpose between us and it. For, as nigh as it now is to us, even so remote will it soon become, if we reject it. Between us and this gospel, which is now even in our mouths and in our hearts, there will soon be a gulf fixed, which no man can pass over.

Does any unbeliever object, that now I am inconsistent; because I am urging him to faith; and yet, I have just taught that it is God's gift, which no man exercises until his heart is renewed by sovereign grace? This is true; but wherefore is it true, O sinner? Those fault are those perverse and sinful dispositions of soul, which blind you to the present evil of sin and the value of a present redemption from it? In adopting sin and the world as your present preferred portions, you are but following your

own inclinations. And therefore your
 incapacity is your guilt. Helpless sin-
 ner; guilty for thy very helplessness,
 cast thyself upon the Saviour. Away
 with proud carils! If thou art impo-
 tent, then fall impotent and sub-mis-
 sive upon Jesus' arms, and he will save.

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
 On thy kind arms I fall:
 Be thou my strength and righteous-
 ness,
 My Jesus and my all -