



Expositions of Holy Scripture

1 Peter

ALEXANDER MACLAREN



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By

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Introduction

Alexander MacLaren (1826-1910) is ranked among the expert expositors of the 19th century. His life was passionately devoted to the study of Scripture and to the pulpit ministry. His career was marked by faithful commitment to both his church community and to the integrity of the Baptist tradition. His writings and reputation were world renown, and his skill with the English language ability to handle the biblical languages has inspired students of holy Scripture for decades. Even to this day, Maclaren is considered to be a prime exemplar of expository preaching.

The sermons included in the 32 volumes of *Exposition of Holy Scripture* cover 64 of the 66 books included in the Protestant canon of Scripture. The 1500+ sermons are arranged in canonical order making this collection an expository commentary on most of the Bible. Maclaren's unique ability to handle the original languages of Scripture and his skilled writing style draw the reader deep into the life of holy Scripture.

1 Peter

Sojourners of the Dispersion: 1 Peter 1:1

THE words rendered ‘strangers scattered’ are literally ‘sojourners of the Dispersion,’ and are so rendered in the Revised Version. The Dispersion was the recognized name for the Jews dwelling in Gentile countries; as, for instance, it is employed in John’s Gospel, when the people in Jerusalem say, ‘Whither will this man go that we shall not find Him? Will he go to the Dispersion amongst the Greeks?’ Obviously, therefore the word here may refer to the scattered Jewish people, but the question arises whether the letter corresponds to its apparent address, or whether the language which is employed in it does not almost oblige us to see here a reference, not to the Jew, but to the whole body of Christian people, who, whatever may be their outward circumstances, are, in the deepest sense, in the foundations of their life, if they be Christ’s, ‘strangers of the Dispersion.’

Now if we look at the letter we find such words as these—‘The times of your ignorance’—‘your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers’—‘in time past were not a people’—‘the time past may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles’—all of which, as you see, can only be accommodated to Jewish believers by a little gentle violence, but all of which find a proper significance if we suppose them addressed to Gentiles, to whom they are only applicable in the higher sense of the words to which I have referred. If we understand them so, we have here an instance of what runs all through the letter; the taking hold of Jewish ideas for the purpose of lifting them into a loftier region, and transfiguring them into the expression of Christian truth. For example, we read in it: ‘Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation’; and again: ‘Ye are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.’ These and other similar passages are instances of precisely the same transference of Jewish ideas as I find, in accordance with many good commentators, in the words of my text.

So, then, here is Peter’s notion of—

I. What the Christian Life Is.

All those who really have faith in Jesus Christ are ‘strangers of the Dispersion’; scattered throughout the world, and dwelling dispersedly in an order of things to which they do not belong, ‘seeking a city which hath foundations.’ The word ‘strangers’ means, originally, persons for a time living in an alien city. And that is the idea that the Apostle would impress upon us as true for each of us, in the measure in which our Christianity is real. For, remember, although all men maybe truly spoken of as being ‘pilgrims and sojourners upon the earth’ by reason of both the shortness of the duration of their earthly course and the disproportion between their immortal part and the material things amongst which they dwell, Peter is thinking of something very different from either the brevity of earthly life or the infinite necessities of an immortal spirit when he calls his Christian brethren strangers. Not because we are men, not because we are to die soon, and the world is to outlast us; not because other people will one day live in our houses and read our books and sit upon our chairs, and we shall be forgotten, but because we are Christ’s people are we here sojourners, and must regard this as not our rest. Not because our immortal soul cannot satisfy itself, however it tries, upon the trivialities of earth any more than a

human appetite can on the husks that the swine do eat, but because new desires, tastes, aspirations, affinities, have been kindled in us by the new life that has flowed into us; therefore the connection that other men have with the world, which makes some of them altogether 'men of the world, whose portion is in this life,' is for us broken, and we are strangers, scattered abroad, solitary, not by reason of the inevitable loneliness in which, after all love and companionship, every soul lives; not by reason of losses or deaths, but by reason of the contrariety between the foundation of our lives, and the foundation of the lives of the men round us; therefore we stand lonely in the midst of crowds; strangers in the ordered communities of the world.

Ah, there is no solitude so utter as the solitude of being the only man in a crowd that has a faith in his heart, and there is no isolating power like the power of rending all ties that true attachment with Jesus Christ has. 'Think not that I am come to bring peace on earth, but a sword'—to set a man against his own household, if they be not of the household of faith. These things are the inevitable issues of religion—to make us strangers, isolated in the midst of this world.

And now let us think of-

II. Some of the Plain Consequent Duties That Arise from This Characteristic of The Christian Life

Let me put them in the shape of one or two practical counsels. First let us try to keep up, vivid and sharp, a sense of separation. I do not mean that we should withdraw ourselves from sympathies, nor from services, nor from the large area of common ground which we have with our fellows, whether they be Christians or no—with our fellow-citizens; with those who are related to us by various bonds, by community of purpose, of aim, of opinion, or of affection. But just as Abraham was willing to go down into the plain and fight for Lot, though he would not go down and live in Sodom, and just as he would enter into relations of amity with the men of the land, and yet would not abandon his black camels' hair tent, pitched beneath the terebinth tree, in order to go into their city and abide with them, so one great part of the wisdom of a Christian man is to draw the line of separation decisively, and yet to keep true to the bond of union. Unless Christian people do make a distinct effort to keep themselves apart from the world and its ways, they will get confounded with these, and when the end comes, they will be destroyed with them.

Sometimes voyagers find upon some lonely island an English castaway, who has forgotten home, and duty, and everything else, to luxuriate in an easy life beneath tropical skies, and has degraded himself to the level of the savage islanders round him. There are professing Christians—perhaps in my audience—who, like that poor castaway, have 'forgotten the imperial palace whence they came,' and have gone down and down and down, to live the fat, contented, low lives of the men who find their good upon earth and not in heaven. Do you, dear brethren, try to keep vivid the sense that you belong to another community. As Paul puts it, with a metaphor drawn from Gentile instead of from Jewish life, as in our text, 'Our citizenship is in heaven.' Philippi, to the Christian Church of which that was said, was a Roman colony; and the characteristics of a Roman colony were that the inhabitants were enrolled as members of the

Roman tribes, and had their names on the register of Rome, and were governed by its laws. So, we, living here in an outlying province, have our names written in the 'Golden Book' of the citizens of the new Jerusalem. Do not forget, if I might use a very homely illustration, what parish your settlement is in; remember what kingdom you belong to.

Again, if we are strangers of the Dispersion, let us live by our own country's laws, and not by the codes that are current in this foreign land where we are settled for a time. You remember what was the complaint of the people in Persia to Esther's king? 'There is a people whose laws are different from all the peoples that be upon the earth.' That was an offence that could not be tolerated in a despotism that ground everything down to the one level of a slavish uniformity. It will be well for us Christian people if men look at us, and say, 'Ah, that man has another rule of conduct from the one that prevails generally. I wonder what is the underlying principle of his life; it evidently is not the same as mine.'

Live by our King's law. People in our colonies, at least the officials, set wonderful store by the approbation of the Colonial Office at home. It does not matter what the colonial newspapers say, it is 'what will they say in Downing Street?' And if a dispatch goes out approving of their conduct, neighbors may censure and sneer as they list, So we Christians have to report to Home, and have so to live 'that whether present or absent'—in a colony or in the mother country—'we may be well pleasing unto Him.'

Keep up the honor and advance the interests of your own country. You are here, among other reasons, to represent your King, and people take their notions of Him very considerably from their experience of you. So, see to it that you live like the Master whom you say you serve.

The Russian Government sends out what are called military colonies, studded along the frontier, with the one mission of extending the empire. We are set along the frontier with the same mission. The strangers are scattered. Congested, they would be less useful; dispersed, they may push forward the frontiers. Seed in a seed-basket is not in its right place; but sown broadcast over the field, it will be waving wheat in a month or two. 'Ye are the salt of the earth'—salt is sprinkled over what it is intended to preserve. You are the strangers of the Dispersion, that you may be the messengers of the Evangelization.

Lastly, let us be glad when we think, and let us often think, of—

III. The Home in Glory

That is a beautiful phrase which pairs off with the one in my text, in which another Apostle speaks of the ultimate end as 'our gathering together in Christ.' All the scattered ones, like chips of wood in a whirlpool, drift gradually closer and closer, until they unite in a solid mass in the center. So, at the last the 'strangers' are to be brought and settled in their own land, and their lonely lives are to be filled with happy companionship, and they to be in a more blessed unity than now. 'Fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.' If we, dwelling in this far-off land, were habitually to talk, as Australians do of coming to England of 'going home,' though born in the colony, it would be a glad day for us when we set out on the journey.

If Christian people lived more by faith, as they profess to do, and less by sight, they would oftener think of the home-coming and the union; and would be happy when they thought that they were here but for awhile, and when they realized these two blessed elements of permanence and of companionship, which another Apostle packs into one sentence, along with that which is greater than them both, ‘so shall we ever be with the Lord.’

By, through, Unto: 1 Peter 1:5

THE Revised Version substitutes ‘guarded’ for ‘kept,’ and the alteration, though slight, is important, for it not only more accurately preserves the meaning of the word employed, but it retains the military metaphor which is in it. The force of the expression will appear if I refer, in a sentence, to other cases in which it is employed in the New Testament. For instance, we read that the governor of Damascus ‘kept the city with a garrison,’ which is the same word, and in its purely metaphorical usage Paul employs it when he says that ‘the peace of God shall keep’—guard, garrison—‘your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.’ We have to think of some defenseless position, some unwall’d village out in the open, with a strong force round it, through which no assailant can break, and in the midst of which the weakest can sit secure. Peter thinks that every Christian has assailants whom no Christian by himself can repel, but that he may, if he likes, have an impregnable ring of defense drawn round him, which shall fling back in idle spray the wildest onset of the waves, as a breakwater or a cliff might do.

Then there is another very beautiful and striking point to be made, and that is the connection between the words of my text and those immediately preceding. The Apostle has been speaking about ‘the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,’ and he says ‘it is reserved in Heaven for you who are kept.’ So, then, the same power is working on both sides of the veil, preserving the inheritance for the heirs, and preserving the heirs for the inheritance. It will not fail them, and they will not miss it. It was of little avail to care for either of the two members separately, but the same hand that is preparing the inheritance and making it ready for the owners is round about the pilgrims, and taking care of them till they get home.

So, then, our Apostle is looking at this keeping in three aspects, suggested by his three words ‘by,’ ‘through,’ ‘unto,’ which respectively express the real cause or power, the condition or occasion on which that power works, and the end or purpose to which it works. So, these three little words will do for lines on which to run our thoughts now—‘by,’ ‘through,’ ‘for.’

I. In the First Place, What Are We Guarded For? ‘Guarded Unto Salvation.’

Now that great word ‘salvation’ was a new and strange one to Peter’s readers—so new and strange that probably they did not understand it in its full nobleness and sweep. Our understanding of it, or, at least, our impression of it, is weakened by precisely the opposite cause. It has become so tarnished and smooth-rubbed that it creates very little definite impression. Like

a bit of seaweed lifted out of the sunny waves which opened its fronds and brightened its delicate colors, it has become dry and hard and sapless and dim. But let me try for one moment to freshen it for our conceptions and our hearts. Salvation has in it the double idea of being made safe, and being made sound. Peril threatening to slay, and sickness unto death, are the implications of the conditions which this great word presupposes. The man that needs to be saved needs to be rescued from peril and needs to be healed of a disease. And if you do not know and feel that that, is you, then you have not learned the first letters of the alphabet which are necessary to spell 'salvation.' You, I, every man, we are all sick unto death, because the poison of self-will and sin is running hot through all our veins, and we are all in deadly peril because of that poison—peril of death, peril arising from the weight of guilt that presses upon us, peril from our inevitable collision with the Divine law and government which make for righteousness.

And so, salvation means, negatively, the deliverance from all the evils, whether they be evils of sorrow or evils of sin, which can affect a man, and which do affect us all in some measure. But it means far more than that, for God's salvation is no half-and-half thing, contented, as some benevolent man might be, in a widespread flood or disaster, with rescuing the victims and putting them high up enough for the water not to reach them, and leaving them there shivering cold and starving. But when God begins by taking away evils, it is in order that He may clear a path for flooding us with good. And so, salvation is not merely what some of you think it is, the escape from a hell, nor only what some of you more nobly take it to be, a deliverance from the power of sin in your hearts; but it is the investiture of each of us with every good and glory, whether of happiness or of purity, which it is possible for a man to receive and for God to give. It is the great word of the New Testament, and they do a very questionable service to humanity who weaken the grandeur and the greatness of the Scriptural conception of salvation, by weakening the darkness and the terribleness of the Scriptural conception of the dangers and the sicknesses from which it delivers.

But, then, there is another point that I would suggest raised by the words of my text in their connection. Peter is here evidently speaking about a future manifestation of absolute exemption from all the ills that flesh and spirit are heir to, and radiant in vesture with all the good that humanity can put on, which lies beyond the great barrier of this mortal life. And that complete salvation, in its double aspect, is obviously the end for which all that guarding of life is lavished upon us, as it is the end for which all the discipline of life is given to us, and as it is the end for which the bitter agony and pain of the Christ on the Cross were freely rendered. But that ultimate and superlative perfection has its roots and its beginning here. And so, in Scripture you find salvation sometimes regarded as a thing in the past experience of every Christian man which he received at the very beginning of his course, and sometimes you have it treated as being progressive, running on continually through all his days; and sometimes you have it treated, as in my text, as laid up yonder, and only to be reached when life is done with. But just a verse or two after my text we read that the Christian man here, on condition of his loving Jesus Christ and believing in Him, rejoices because he here and now 'receives the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul.' And so, there are the two things—the incipient germ to-day, the full-foliaged fruit-bearing tree planted in the higher house of the Lord.

These two things are inseparably intertwined. The Christian life in its imperfection here, the partial salvation of to-day demands, unless the universe is a chaos and there is no personal God the center of it, a future life, in which all that is here tendency shall be realized possession, and in which all that here but puts up a pale and feeble shoot above the ground, shall grow and blossom and bear fruit unto life eternal. 'Like the new moon with a ragged edge, e'en in its imperfections beautiful,' all the characteristics of Christian life on earth prophesy that the orb is crescent, and will one day round itself into its pure silvery completeness. If you see a great wall in some palace, with slabs of polished marble for most of its length, and here and there stretches of course rubble shoved in, you would know that that was not the final condition, that the rubble had to be cased over, or taken out and replaced by the lucent slab that reflected the light, and showed, by its reflecting, its own mottled beauty. Thus the very inconsistencies, the thwarted desires, the broken resolutions, the aspiration that never can clothe themselves in the flesh of reality, which belong to the Christian life, declare that this is but the first stage of the structure, and point onwards to the time when the imperfections shall be swept away, 'and for brass He will bring gold, for iron He will bring silver,' and then the windows shall be set 'in agates, and the gates in carbuncles, and all the borders in pleasant stones.' Perfect salvation is obviously the only issue of the present imperfect salvation.

That is what you are 'kept' for. That is what Christ died to bring you. That is what God, like a patient workman bringing out the pattern in his loom by many a throw of a sharp-pointed shuttle, and much twisting of the threads into patterns, is trying to make of you, and that is what Christ on the Cross has died to effect. Brethren, let us think more than we do, not only of the partial beginnings here, but of that perfect salvation for which Christian men are being 'kept' and guarded, and which, if you and I will observe the conditions, is as sure to come as that X, Y, Z follow A, B, C. That is what we are kept for.

II. Notice What We Are Guarded By.

'The power of God,' says Peter, laying hold of the most general expression that he can find, not caring to define ways and means, but pointing to the one great force that is sure to do it.

Now if we were to translate with perfect literality, we should read, not by the power of God, but in the power of God. And whilst it is quite probable that what Peter meant was 'by,' I think it adds great force and beauty to the passage, and is entirely accordant with the military metaphor, which I have already pointed out, if we keep the simple local sense of the word, and read, 'guarded in the power of God.' And that suggests a whole stream of Scriptural representations, both in the Old and in the New Testament. Let me recall one or two. 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe.' 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' 'Israel shall dwell safely,' says one of the old prophets, 'in unwalled villages, for I will be a wall of fire round about her.' The psalmist said, 'The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him.' And all these representations concur in this one thought, that we are safe, enclosed in God, and that He, by His power, compasses us about. And so, no foe can get at us who cannot break down or

climb over the encircling wall of defense. An army in an enemy's country will march in hollow square, and put its most precious treasures, or its weaker members, its sick, its women, its children, its footsore, into the middle there, and with a line of lances on either side, and stalwart arms to wield them, the feeblest need fear no foe. We 'are kept in the power of God unto salvation.'

But do not forget how, far beyond the psalmist and prophet, and in something far more sublime and wonderful than a poetic figure, the New Testament catches up the same phrase, and gives us, as the condition of vitality, as the condition of fertility, as the condition of tranquility, as the condition of security, the same thing—'in Christ.' Remember His very last words prior to His great intercessory prayer, in which He spoke about keeping those that were given Him in His name. And just before that He said to them, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me ye shall have peace.' Kept, guarded as behind the battlements of some great fort, which has in its center a quiet, armored chamber into which no noise of battle, nor shout of foeman, can ever come. 'In Christ,' though the world is all in arms without, 'ye shall have peace.' 'Guarded in the power of God unto salvation.'

III. Lastly, What We Are Kept Through

'Through faith.' Now there we come across another of the words which we know so well that we do not understand them. You all think that it is the right thing for me to preach about 'faith.' I daresay some of you have never tried to apprehend what it means. And I daresay there are a great many of you to whom the utterance of the word suggests that I am plunging into the bathos and commonplaces of the pulpit. Perhaps, if you would try to understand it, you would find it was a bigger thing than you fancied. What is faith? I will give you another expression that has not so many theological accretions sticking to it, and which means precisely the same thing—trust. And we all know that we do not trust with our heads, but with our hearts and wills. You may believe undoubtedly, and have no faith at all, for it is the heart and the will that go forth, and clutch at the thing trusted; or, as I should rather say, at the person trusted; for, at bottom, what we trust is always a person, and even when we 'trust to nature,' it is because, more or less clearly, we feel that somehow or other at the back of nature there is a Will and an Intelligence that are working and trustworthy. However, that is a subject that I do not need to touch upon here. Faith is trust, trust in a Person, trust that, like the fabled goddess rising, radiant and aspiring to the heavens, out of the roll of the tempestuous ocean, springs from the depths of absolute self-distrust and diffidence. There is a spurious kind of faith which has no good in it, just because it did not begin with going down into the depths of one's own heart, and finding out how rotten and hopeless everything was there. My friend, no man has a vigorous Christian faith who has not been very near utter despair. 'Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee.' The zenith, which is the highest point in the sky above us, is always just as far aloft as the nadir, which is the lowest point in the sky at the Antipodes, is beneath us. Your faith is measured by your self-despair.

Further, why is it that I must have faith in order to get God's power at work in me? Many people seem to think that faith is appointed by God as the condition of salvation out of mere arbitrary selection and caprice. Not at all. If God could save you without your faith, He would do it. He does not, because He cannot. Why must I have faith in order that God's power may keep me? Why must you open your window in order to let the fresh air in? Why must you pull up the blind in order to let the light in? Why must you take your medicine or your food if you want to be cured or nourished? Why must you pull the trigger if your revolver is to go off? Unless I trust God, distrusting myself, and the spark of faith is struck out of the rock of my heart by the sharp steel in the midst of the darkness of despair, God cannot pour out upon me His power. There is nothing arbitrary about it. It is inseparable from the very nature of the case. If you do not want Him, you cannot have Him. If you do not know that you need Him, you cannot have Him. If you do not trust that He will come to you and help you, you will not have Him.

So then, brother, your faith, my faith, anybody's faith is nothing of itself. It is only the valve that opens and lets the steam rush in. It is only the tap you turn to let Thirlmere come into your basins. It is not you that saves yourself. It is not your faith that keeps you, any more than it is the outstretched hand with which a man, ready to stumble, grasps the hand of a stalwart, steadfast man on the pavement by his side that keeps him up. It is the other man's hand that holds you up, but it is your hand that lays hold of him. It is God that saves, it is God that guards, it is God that is able to keep us from falling, and to give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. He will do it if we turn to Him, and ask and expect Him to do it. If you will comply with the conditions and not else, He will fulfil His promise and accomplish His purpose. But my unbelief can thwart Omnipotence, and hinder Christ's all-loving purpose, just as on earth we read that 'He could there do no mighty works because of their unbelief.' I am sure that there are people here who all their lives long have been thus hampering Omnipotence and neutralizing the love of Christ, and making His sacrifice impotent and His wish to save them vain. Stretch out your hands as this very Peter once did, crying, 'Lord, save, or I perish'; and He will answer, not by word only, but by act: 'According to thy faith be it unto thee.' Salvation, here and hereafter, is God's work alone. It cannot be exercised towards a man who has not faith. It will certainly be exercised towards any man who has.

Help us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, to live the lives which we live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God. And may we know what it is to be in Him, strengthened within with might by His spirit.

Sorrowful, Yet Always Rejoicing: 1 Peter 1:6

You will remember the great saying of our Lord's in the Sermon on the Mount, in which He makes the last of the beatitudes, that which He pronounces upon His disciples, when men shall revile them and persecute them, and speak all manner of evil falsely against them for His sake, and bids them rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is their reward in Heaven.

Now it seems to me that in the words of my text there is a distinct echo of that saying of Christ's. For not only is the whole context the same, but a somewhat unusual and very strong word which our Lord employs is also employed here by Peter. 'Rejoice and be exceeding glad,'

said Christ. 'Ye rejoice greatly,' said the Apostle, and he is echoing his Master's word. Then with regard to the context; Christ proposes to His followers this exceeding gladness as evoked in their hearts by the very thing that might seem to militate against it—viz., men's antagonism. Similarly, Peter, throughout this whole letter, and in my text, is heartening the disciples against impending persecution, and, like his Lord, he bids them face it, if not 'with frolic welcome,' at all events with undiminished and undimmed serenity and cheerfulness. Christ based the exhortation on the thought that great would be their reward in Heaven. Peter points to the salvation ready to be revealed as being the ground of the joy that he enjoined. So, in the words and in the whole strain and structure of the exhortation the servant is copying his Master.

But, of course, although the immediate application of these words is to Churches fronting the possibility and probability of actual persecution and affliction for the sake of Jesus Christ, the principle involved applies to us all. And the worries and the sorrows of our daily life need the exhortation here, quite as much as did the martyr's pains. White ants will pick a carcass clean as soon as a lion will, and there is quite as much wear and tear of Christian gladness arising from the small frictions of our daily life as from the great strain and stress of persecution.

So, our Apostle has a word for us all. Now it seems to me that in this text there are three things to be noticed: a paradox, a possibility, a duty. 'In which ye rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.' Look at these three points.

I. This Paradox

Two emotions diametrically opposed are to be contained within the narrow room of one disposition and temper. 'Ye greatly rejoice ... Ye are in heaviness.' Can such a thing be? Well! let us think for a moment. The sources of the two conflicting emotions are laid out before us; they may be constantly operative in every life. On the one hand, 'in which ye greatly rejoice.' Now that 'in which' does not point back only to the words that immediately precede, but to the whole complex clause that goes before. And what is the 'which' that is there? These things; the possession of a new life—'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath begotten us again!'—the springing up in a man's heart of a strange new hope, like a new star that swims into the sky, and sheds a radiance all about it—'Begotten unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'; a new wealth—an 'inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away; a new security—guarded by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' These things belong, ipso facto, and in the measure of his faith, to every Christian man, a new life, a new hope, a new wealth, and a new security; and in their conjoint action, all four of them brought to bear upon a man's temper and spirit, will, if he is realizing them, make him glad.

Then, on the other hand, we have other fountains pouring their streams into the same reservoir. And just as the deep fountains which are open to us by faith will, if we continue to exercise that faith, flood our spirits with sweet waters, so these other fountains will pour their bitter floods over every heart more or less abundantly and continually. 'Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.' There are confluent streams that one has sometimes seen, where a clear river joins, and flows in the same bed with, one all foul with half-

melted ice, and the two run side by side for a space, scarcely mingling their waters. Thus, the paradox of the Christian life is that within the same narrow banks may flow the sunny and the turbid, the clear and the dark, the sorrow that springs from earthly fountains, the joy that pours from the heavenly heights.

Now notice that this is only one case of the paradox of the whole Christian life. For the peculiarity of it is that it owns two;—it belongs to, and is exposed to, all the influences of the forces and things of time, whilst in regard to its depths, it belongs to, and is under the influence of, ‘the things that are unseen and eternal’; so that you have the external life common to the Christian and to all other people, and then you have the life ‘hid with Christ in God,’ the roots of it going down through all the superficial soil, and grappling the central rock of all things. Thus, a series of paradoxes and perennial contradictions describes the twofold life that every believing spirit lives, ‘as unknown and yet well known, as dying and, behold we live, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things.’

Remember, too, that according to Peter’s conception neither of these two sources pours out a flood which obliterates or dams back the other. They are to co-exist. The joy is not to deprive the heaviness of its weight, nor the sorrow of its sting. There is no artificial stoicism about Christianity, no attempt to sophisticate one’s self out of believing in the reality of the evils that assail us, or to forbid that we shall feel their pain and their burden. Many good people fail to get the good of life’s discipline, because they have somehow come to think that it is wrong to weep when Christ sends sorrows, and wrong to feel, as other men feel, the grip and bite of the manifold trials of our earthly lives. ‘Weep for yourselves,’ for the feeling of the sorrow is the precedent condition to the benefit from the sorrow, and it yields ‘the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.’

But, on the other hand, the black stream is not to bank up the sunny one, or prevent it from flowing into the heart, ay! and flowing over, the other. And so, the co-existence of the joys that come from above, and the sorrows that spring from around, and some of them from beneath, is the very secret of the Christian life.

II. Further, Consider The blessed Possibility of This Paradox

Can two conflicting emotions live in a man’s heart at once? Rather, we might ask, are there ever emotions in a man’s heart that are not hemmed in by conflicting ones? Is there ever such a thing in the world’s experience as a pure joy, or as a confidence which has no trace of fear in it? Are there any pictures without shadows? They are only daubs if they are. Instead of wondering at this coexistence of joy and sorrow, we must recognize that it is in full accord with all our experience, which never brings a joy, but, like the old story of the magic palace, there is one window unlighted, and which never brings a sorrow so black and over-arching so completely the whole sky, but that somewhere, if the eye would look for it, there is a bit of blue. The possibility of the paradox is in accordance with all human experience.

But then, you say, ‘my feelings of joy or sorrow are very largely a matter of temperament, and still more largely a matter of responding to the facts round about me. And I cannot pump up emotions to order; and if I could they would be factitious, artificial, insincere,

and do me more harm than good.’ Perfectly true. There are a great many ugly names for manufactured emotions, and none of them a bit too ugly. Peter does not wish you to try to get up feeling to order. It is the bane of some type of Christianity that that is done. You cannot thus manufacture emotion. No; but I will tell you what you can do. You can determine what you will think about most, and what you will look at most, and if you settle that, that will settle what you feel. And so, though it is by a roundabout way, we can regulate our emotions. A man travelling in a railway train can choose which side of the carriage he will look out at, either the one where the sunshine is falling full on the front of each grass-blade and tree, or the side where it is the shadowed side of each that is turned to him. If he will look out of the one window, he will see everything verdant and bright, and if he will look out at the other, there will be a certain sobriety and dullness over the landscape. You can settle which window you are going to look out at. If the one—‘in which ye greatly rejoice.’ If the other—‘ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.’ You have seen patterns wrought in black and white, you may focus your eye so as to get white on a black ground, or black on a white ground, just as you like. You can do that with your life, and either fix upon the temptations and the heaviness as the main thing, or you can fix upon the new life, and the new wealth, and the new hope, and the new security as the main things. If you do the one, down you will go into the depths of gloom, and if you do the other, up you will spring into the ethereal heights of sober and Christian gladness.

So then, brethren, this” possibility depends on these things, the choice of our main object of contemplation, and that breaks up into two thoughts about which I wish to say a word. The reason why so many Christian people have only religion enough to make them gloomy, or to weight them with a sense of burdens and unfulfilled aspirations and broken resolutions, and have not enough to make them glad, is mainly because they do not think enough about the four things in which they might ‘greatly rejoice.’ I believe that most of us would be altogether different people, as professing Christians, if we honestly tried to keep the mightiest things uppermost, and to fill heart and mind far more than we do with the contemplation of these great facts and truths which, when once they are beheld and cleaved to, are certain to minister gladness to men’s souls. These great truths which you and I say we believe, and which we profess to live by, will only work their effect upon us, so long as they are present to our minds and hearts. You can no more expect Christian verities to keep you from falling, or to strengthen you in weakness, or to gladden you in sorrow, if you are not thinking about them, than you can expect the most succulent or most nutritive food to nourish you if you do not eat it. As long as Christ and His grace are present in our hearts and minds by thought, so long, and not one moment longer, do they minister to us the joy of the Lord. You switch off from the main current, and out go all the lights, and when you switch off from Christ out goes the gladness.

Then another thing I would point out is that the possibility of this co-existence of joy and of heaviness depends further on our taking the right point of view from which to look at the sources of the heaviness. Notice how beautifully, although entirely incidentally, and without calling attention to it, Peter here minimizes the ‘ manifold temptations ’ which he does expect, however minimized, will make men heavy. He calls them ‘ temptations. ’ Now that is rather an unfortunate word, because it suggests the idea of something that desires to drag a man into sin. But suppose, instead of ‘ temptations, ’ with its unfortunate associations, you were to substitute a

word that means the same thing, and is free from that association—viz., ‘trial,’—you would get the right point of view. As long as I look at my sorrows mainly in regard to their power to sadden me, I have not got to the right point of view for them. They are meant to sadden me, they are meant to pain, they are meant to bring the tears, they are meant to weight the heart and press down the spirits, but what for? To test what I am made of, and by testing to bring out and strengthen what is good, and to cast out and destroy what is evil. We shall never understand, even so much as it is possible for us to understand, and that it’s not very much, of the mystery of pain until we come to recognize that its main purpose is to help in making character. And when you think of your sorrows, disappointments, losses, when you think of your pains and sickness, and all the ills that flesh is heir to, principally as being ‘trials,’ in the deep sense of that word—viz., a means of testing you, and thereby helping you, bettering you, and building up character—then it is more possible to blend the sorrow that they produce with the joy to which they may lead. The Apostle adds the other thought of the transitoriness of sorrow, and yet further, the other of its necessity for the growth of humanity. So, they are not only to be felt, not only to be wept over, not only to make us sad, but they are to be accepted, and used as means by which we may be perfected. And when once you get occupied in trying to get all the good that is in it out of a grief, you will be astonished to find how the bitterness that was in it was diminished.

We may have the oil on the water, calming, though not ending, its agitation. We may carry our own atmosphere with us, and like the diver that goes down into depths of the sea, and cannot be reached by the hungry water around his crystal bell, and has communication with the upper air, where the light of the sun is, so you and I, down at the slimy bottom, and with the waste of water all around us, which if it could get at us would choke us, may walk at liberty, in peace and gladness. And so, ‘though the labor of the olive shall fail and the fig tree not blossom, though the flocks be cut off from the folds and the herd from the stalls,’ we may joy in the Lord, and ‘rejoice in the God of our salvation.’

III. Now Lastly, we Have Here a Duty

Peter takes it for granted that these good people, who had persecution hanging over them, were still rejoicing greatly in the Lord. He does not feel it necessary to enjoin it upon them. It is a matter of course in their Christian life. And you will find that all through the New Testament this same tone is adopted which recognizes gladness as being, on the one hand, an inseparable characteristic of the Christian experience, and on the other hand as being a thing that is a Christian man’s duty to cultivate. Now I do not believe that the most of Christian people have ever looked at the thing in that light at all. If joy has come to them, they have been thankful for it, but they have very, very seldom felt that, if they are not glad, there is something wrong. And a great many of us, I am sure, have never recognized the fact that it is our duty to ‘rejoice in the Lord always.’ Have you realized it? I do not mean have you tried to get up, as I have been saying, factitious emotions, but have you felt that if you are doing what, as Christian men or women, it is your plain duty to do, there will come into your hearts this joy of the Lord. I have told you why you are not happier Christians, why so many of us have, as I said, only got religion enough to make you gloomy and burdened, is because you do not think enough about Jesus Christ, and what He has given you, and what He is doing for you and in you. It is because you

have not the new life in strong experience and possession, and because you have not the new hope springing in your hearts, and because you have not the new wealth realized often in present possession, and because you have not the new security which He is ready to give you. It is your duty, Christian man and woman, to be a joyful Christian, and if you are not, then the negligence is sin.

It is a hard duty. It is not easy to turn away from that which is torturing flesh or sense or natural desires or human affections, and to realize the unseen. It is not easy, but it is possible. And, like all other difficult things, it is worth doing. For there is nothing more helpful, more recommendatory, of our Christianity to other people, and more certain to tell on the vigor and efficiency of our Christian service, than that we should be rejoicing in the Lord, and living in the possession of the experience of Christ's joy which He has left for us.

There is one other thing I must say. I have been talking about the co-existence of joy and sorrows. In one form or another that co-existence is universal. The difference is this. A Christian man has superficial sorrows and central gladness, and other men have superficial gladness and central sorrow. 'Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful.' Many of you know what that means—the black aching center, full of unrest, grimly unparticipant of the dancing delights going on about it, like some black rock that stands up in the midst of a field flooded with sunshine, and gay with flowers. 'The end of that mirth is heaviness.' Better a surface sadness and a core of joy than the opposite, a skin of verdure over the scarcely cold lava. Better a transient sorrow with an eternal joy than the opposite, mirth, 'like the crackling of thorns under a pot,' which dies down into a doleful ring of black ashes in the pathless desert. Choose whether you will have joy dwelling with and conquering sorrow, or unrest and sorrow, darkening and finally shattering your partial and fleeting joys.

The True Gold and Its Testing: 1 Peter 1:7

THE Apostle is fond of that word 'precious.' In both his letters he uses it as an epithet for diverse things. According to one translation, he speaks of Christ as 'precious to you which believe.' He certainly speaks of 'the precious blood of Christ,' and of 'exceeding great and precious promises,' and here in my text, as well as in the Second Epistle, he speaks about 'precious faith.' It is a very wide general term, not expressing anything very characteristic beyond the one notion of value. But in the text, according to our Authorized Version, it looks at first sight as if it were not the faith, but the trial of the faith that the Apostle regards as thus valuable. There are difficulties of rendering which I need not trouble you with. Suffice it to say that, speaking roughly and popularly, the 'trial of your faith' here seems to mean rather the result of that trial, and might be fairly represented by the slightly varied expression, 'your faith having been tried, might be found,' etc.

I must not be tempted to discourse about the reasons why such a rendering seems to express the Apostle's meaning more fully, but taking it for granted, there are just three things to notice—the true wealth, the testing of the wealth, and the discovery at last of the preciousness of the wealth.

I. Peter Pits Against Each Other Faith That Has Been Tried, And ‘Gold That Perisheth’

He puts away all the other points of comparison and picks out one, and that is that the one lasts and the other does not. Now I must not be seduced into going beyond the limits of my text to dilate upon the other points of contrast and pre-eminence; but I would just notice in a sentence that everybody admits, yet next to nobody acts upon, the admission that inward good is far more valuable than outward good. ‘Wisdom is more precious than rubies,’ say people, and yet they will choose the rubies, and take no trouble to get the wisdom. Now the very same principles of estimating value which set cultivated understandings and noble hearts above great possessions and large balances at the bankers, set the life of faith high above all others. And the one thought which Peter wishes to drive into our heads and hearts is that there is only one kind of wealth that will never be separated from its possessor. Nothing is truly ours that remains outside of us.

‘Twas mine, ‘tis his, and has been slave to thousands.’

Nothing that is there whilst I am here is really mine. I do not own it if it is possible that I shall lose it. And so, with profound meaning our Lord speaks about ‘that which is another’s in comparison with ‘that which is your own.’ It is another’s because it passes, like quicksilver under pressure, from hand to hand, and no man really holds it, but it leaps away from his grasp. And if a man retains it all his days, still, according to the grim old proverb, ‘shrouds have no pockets,’ and when he dies his hands open, or sometimes they clutch together, but there is nothing inside the palms, and they only close upon themselves. Dear brethren, if there is anything that can be filched away from us, anything about which it is true that, on the one hand, ‘moth and rust’—natural processes—‘do corrupt’ it, on the other hand, ‘thieves break through and steal’—accidents of human conduct can deprive us of it, then we may call it ours, but it is not ours. It possesses us, if we are devoted to it as our best good, and fighting and toiling, and sometimes lying and cheating, and flinging the whole fierce energy of our nature into first gripping and then holding it; it possesses us; we do not possess it. But if there is anything that can become so interwoven and interlaced with the very fibers of a man’s heart that they and it cannot be parted, if there is anything that empty hands will clasp the closer, because they are emptied of earth’s vanities, then that is truly possessed by its possessor. And our faith, which will not be trodden in the grave, but will go with us into the world beyond, and though it be lost in one aspect, in sight, it will be eternal as trust, will be ours, imperishable as ourselves, and as God. Therefore, do not give all the energy of your lives to amassing the second-best riches. Seek the highest things most. ‘Covet earnestly the best gifts,’ and let the coveting regulate your conduct. And do not be put off with wealth that will fail you sooner or later.

II. Not, Again, The Testing of The Wealth

I need not dwell upon that very familiar metaphor of the furnace for gold, and the fining-pot for silver, only remember that there are two purposes for which metallurgists apply fire to metals. The one is to test them, and the other is to cleanse them, or, to use technical words, one is

for the purpose of assaying them, and the other is for the purpose of refining them. And so, linking the words of my text with the words of the previous verse, we find that the Apostle lays it down that the purpose of all the diverse trials, or 'temptations' as he calls them, that come to us, is this one thing, that our faith should be 'tried,' and 'found, unto praise and honor and glory.' The fire carries away the dross; it makes the pure metal glow in its luster. It burns up the 'wood, hay, stubble'; it makes the gold gleam and the precious stones coruscate and flash.

And so, note this general notion here of the intention of all life's various aspects being to test character is specialized into this, that it is meant to test faith, first of all. Of course, it is meant to test many other things. A man's whole character is tested by the experiences of his daily life, all that is good and all that is evil in him, and we might speak about the effect of life's discipline upon a great many different sides of our nature. But here the whole stress is put upon the effect of life in testing and clarifying and strengthening one part of a Christian's character, and that is his faith. Why does Peter pick out faith? Why does he not say 'trial of your hope,' of your 'love,' of your 'courage,' of half a dozen other graces? Why 'the trial of your faith?' For this reason, because as the man's faith is, so is the man. Because faith is the tap-root, in the view of the New Testament, of all that is good and strong and noble in humanity. Because if you strengthen a man's trust you strengthen everything that comes from it. Reinforce the center and all is reinforced. Your faith is the vital point from which your whole life as Christians is developed, and whatever strengthens that strengthens you. And, therefore, although everything that befalls you calls for the exercise of, and therefore tests, and therefore, rightly undergone, strengthens a great many various virtues and powers and beauties in a human character, the main good of it all is that it deepens, if the man is right, his simple trust in God manifested by his trust in and love to Jesus Christ; and so, it reinforces the faith which works by love, and thus tends to make all things in life good and fair.

Now if thus the main end of life is to strengthen faith, let us remember that we have to give a wider meaning to the word 'trials' than 'afflictions.' Ah! there is as sharp a trial of my faith in prosperity as in any adversity. People say, 'It is easy to trust God when things are going well with us.' That is quite true. But it is a great deal easier to stop trusting God, or thinking about Him, when things are going well with us, and we do not seem to need Him so much, as in the hours of darkness. You remember the old story about the traveler, when the sun and the wind tried which could make him take off his cloak; and the sun did it. Some of us, I daresay, have found out that the faith which gripped God when we felt we needed Him, because we had not anything else but Him, is but too apt to lose hold of Him when fleeting delights and apparent treasures come and whisper invitations in our hearts. There are diseases that are proper to the northern, dark, ice-bound regions of the earth. Yes! and there are a great many more that belong to the tropics; as there is such a thing as sunstroke, which is, perhaps, as dangerous as the cramping cold from the icebergs of the north. Some of us should understand what that Scripture means: 'Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.' Prosperity, untroubled lives, lives even as the lives of those of the majority of mankind now, have their own most searching trials of faith.

But on the other hand, if there are ‘ships that have gone down at sea, when heaven was all tranquility,’ there come also dark and nights of wild tempest when we have to lay to and ride out the gale with a tremendous strain on the cable. Our sorrows, our disappointments, our potty annoyances, and the great irrevocable griefs that sooner or later darken the very earth, are all to be classified under this same purpose, ‘that the trial of your faith might be found unto praise and honor and glory.’ And so, I beseech you, open your eyes to the meaning of life, and do not suppose that you have found the last word to say about it when you say ‘I am afflicted,’ or ‘I am at ease.’ The affliction and the ease, like two wheels in some great machine working in opposite directions, fit with their cogs into one another and move something beyond them in one uniform direction. And affliction and ease cooperate to this end, that we might be partakers of His holiness.

I believe experience teaches the most of us, if we will lay its lessons to heart, that the times when Christian people grow most in the divine life is in their times of sorrow. One of the old divines says, ‘Grace grows best in winter’; and there are edible plants which need a touch of frost before they are good to eat. So, it is with our faith. Only let us take care that the fire does not burn it up, as ‘wood, hay, stubble,’ but irradiates it and glorifies it, as ‘gold, silver, and precious stones.’

III. Now A Word, Lastly, About the Ultimate Discovery

‘Might be found unto praise and honor and glory.’ Note these three words, which I think are often neglected, and sometimes misunderstood—‘praise, honor, glory.’ Whose? People sometimes say ‘God’s,’ since His people’s ultimate salvation redounds to His praise; but it is much better to understand the praise as given to the Christians whose faith has stood the testing fires. ‘Well done, good and faithful servant’—is not that praise from lips, praise from which is praise indeed? As Paul says, ‘then shall every man have praise of God.’ We are far too much afraid of recognizing the fact that Jesus Christ in Heaven, like Jesus Christ on earth, will praise the deeds that come from love to Him, though the deeds themselves may be very imperfect. Do you remember ‘She hath wrought a good work on Me,’ said about a woman that had done a perfectly useless thing, which was open to a great many very shrewd objections? But Jesus Christ accepted it. Why? Because it was the pure utterance of a loving heart. And, depend upon it, though we have to say ‘Unclean! Unclean! We are unprofitable servants,’ He will say ‘Come! ye blessed of My Father.’ Praise from Christ is praise indeed.

‘Honor.’ That suggests bystanders, a public opinion, if I may so say; it suggests ‘have thou authority over ten cities,’ and that men will have their deeds round them as a halo, in that other world. As ‘praise’ suggests the redeemed man’s relation to his Lord, so ‘honor’ suggests the redeemed man’s relation to the fellow-citizens of the New Jerusalem. ‘Glory’ speaks of the man himself as transfigured and lifted up into the light and luster of communion with, and conformity to, the image of the Lord. ‘Then shall we appear with Him in glory. Then shall the righteous blaze forth like the sun in My heavenly Father’s Kingdom.’

‘Shall be found.’ Ah! there will be many surprises yonder. Do you remember that profound revelation of our Master when He represents those on whom He lavishes His eulogies as the Judge, as turning to Him and saying, ‘Lord! when saw we Thee in ... prison and visited thee?’ They do not recognize themselves or their acts in Christ’s account of them. They have found that their lives were diviner than they knew. There will be surprises there. As one of the prophets represents the ransomed Israel, to her amazement, surrounded by clinging troops of children, and asking, ‘These! Where have they been? I was left alone,’ so many a poor, humble soul, fighting along in this world, having no recognition on earth, and the lowliest estimate of all its own actions, will be astonished at the last when it receives ‘praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.’

Joy in Believing: 1 Peter 1:8

THE Apostle has just previously been speaking about the great and glorious things which are to come to Christians on the appearing of Jesus Christ, and that naturally suggests to him the thought of the condition of believing souls during the period of the Lord’s absence and comparative concealment. Having lifted his readers’ hopes to that great Future, when they would attain to ‘praise and honor and glory’ at Christ’s appearing, he drops to the present and to earth, and recalls the disadvantages and deprivations of the present Christian experience as well as its privileges and blessings. ‘Whom having not seen, ye love,’ that is a very natural thought in the mind of one whose love to Jesus rested on the ever-re-membered blessed experience of years of happy companionship, when addressing those who had no such memories. It points to an entirely unique fact. There is nothing else in the world parallel to that strange, deep personal attachment which fills millions of hearts to this Man who died nineteen centuries ago, and which is utterly unlike the feelings that any men have to any other of the great names of the past. To love one unseen is a paradox, which is realized only in the relation of the Christian soul to Jesus Christ.

Then the Apostle goes on with what might at first seem a mere repetition of the preceding thought, but really brings to view another strange anomaly. ‘In Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.’ Love longs for the presence of the beloved, and is restless and defrauded of its gladness so long as absence continues. But this strange love, which is kindled by an unseen Man, does not need His visible presence in order to be a fountain of joy unspeakable and full of glory. Thus, the Apostle takes it for granted that everyone who believes knows what this joy is. It is a large assumption, contradicted, I am afraid, by the average experience of the people that at this day call themselves Christians.

We notice—

I. The All-Sufficient Ground or Source of This Glad Emotion

‘In whom,’ with all the disabilities and pains and absence, ‘yet believing,’ you can put out a long arm of faith across the gulf that lies, not only between to-day and eighteen centuries

ago, but the deeper and more impassible gulf that lies between earth and heaven, and clasp Christ with a really firm grasp, which will fill the hand, and which we shall feel has laid hold of something, or rather has laid hold of a living person and a loving heart. That is faith. The Apostle uses a very strong form of expression here, which is only very partially represented by our English version. He does not say only 'in whom believing,' but 'towards whom'; putting emphasis upon the effort and direction of the faith, rather than upon the repose of the heart when it has found its object and rests upon Him. And so, the conception of the true Christian attitude is that of a continual outgoing of Trust and its child Love; of Desire and its child Possession; and of Expectation and its child Fruition towards that unseen Christ. It is much to believe Him; it is more to believe in Him; it is—I was going to say—most of all to believe towards Him. For in this region, quite as much as, and I think more than, in the one to which the saying was originally applied, 'search is better than attainment.' Our condition must always be that of 'forgetting the things that are behind'; and however much we may realize the union with the unseen Christ in the act of resting upon Him, that must never be suffered to interfere with the longing for the larger possession of myself, and fuller consequent likeness to Him, which is expressed in that great though simple phrase of my text 'believing towards Him.' Such a continual outgoing of effort, as well as the rest and blessedness of reposing on Him, is indispensable for all true gladness. For the intensest activity of our whole being is essential to the real joy of any part of it, and we shall never know the rapture of which humanity, even here and now, is capable until we gather our whole selves, heart, will, and all our practical, as well as our intellectual, powers in the effort to make more of Christ our own, and to minimize the distance between us to a mere vanishing point. 'Believing towards whom ye rejoice.'

That act of trust, however inadequate the object upon which it rests, and however mistaken may be our conceptions of that on which we lean, always brings a gladness which is real, until disappointment disillusionises and saddens us. There is nothing that so sheds peace over the heart as reliance, absolute and quiet, upon some object worthy of trust. It is blessed to trust one another until, as is too often the case, we find that what we thought to be an oak against which we leaned is but a broken reed that has no pith in it, and no possibility of support. So far as it goes, all trust is blessed, but the most blessed is simple reliance upon, and aspiration after, Jesus Christ. Ever to yearn for Him, not with the yearning of those who have no possession, but with that of those who, having a little, desire to have more, is to bring into our lives the one solid and sufficient good without which there is no gladness, and with which there can be no unmingled sorrow, wrapping the whole man in its ebon folds. For this Christ is enough for all my nature and for the satisfaction of every desire. In Him my mind finds the truth; my will the law; my love the answering love; my hope its object; my fears their dissipation; my sins their forgiveness; my weaknesses their strength; and, to all that I am, what He is answers, as fulness to emptiness, and as supply to need. So, 'believing towards Him, we rejoice.'

But note that the joy is strictly contemporaneous with the faith. Tear away electric wire from the source of energy, and the light goes out instantly. It is as another Apostle says, 'in believing' that we have 'joy and peace.' And that is why so many of us know little of it. Yesterday's faith will not contribute to to-day's gladness, any more than yesterday's meals will

satisfy to-day's hunger. Present joy depends upon present faith, and the measure of the one is the measure of the other.

Notice again—

II. The Characteristics of The Christian Gladness

'Unspeakable,' and, as the word ought to be rendered, not 'full of glory' but 'glorified.' Unspeakable. Still waters run deep. It is poor wealth that can be counted; it is shallow emotion that can be crammed into the narrow limits of any human vocabulary. Fathers and mothers, parents and children, husbands and wives, know that. And the depths of the joy that a believing soul has in Jesus Christ are not to be spoken. Perhaps it is better that it should not be attempted to speak them.

'Not easily forgiven Are those, who, setting wide the doors that bar the secret bridal chambers of the heart, Let in the day.'

It is in shallow streams that the sunlight gleams on the pebbles at the bottom. The abysses of ocean are dark, and have never been searched by its light. I suspect the depth of the emotion which bubbles over into words, and finds no difficulty in expressing itself. The joy which can be manifested in all its extent has a very small extent. Christian joy is unspeakable, too, because just as you cannot teach a blind man what color is like, and cannot impart to anybody the blessedness of wedded love, or parental affection, by ever so much talking—and, therefore, the poetry of the world is never exhausted—so there is only one way of conveying to a man what is the actual joy of trusting in Christ, and that is, that he himself should trust Him. We may talk till Doomsday, and then, as the Queen of Sheba said, when she came to Solomon, 'the half hath not been told.'

'He must be loved ere that today,
He will seem worthy of your love.'

It is unspeakable gladness springing from the possession of an unspeakable gift.

'Glorified.' There is nothing more ignoble than the ordinary joys of men. They are too often like the iridescent scum on a stagnant pond, fruit and proof of corruption. They are fragile and hollow, for all the play of color on them, like a soap bubble that breaks of its own tenuity, and is only a drop of dirty water. Joy is too often ignoble, and yet, although it is by no means the highest conception of what Christ's Gospel can do for us, it is blessed to think that it can take that emotion, so often shameful, so often frivolous, so often lowering rather than elevating, and

can lift it into loftiness, and transfigure it, and glorify it and make it a power, a power for good and for righteousness, and for 'whatsoever things are lovely and of good report' in our lives. And that is what trusting towards Christ will do for our gladnesses.

Lastly, in one word, let me lay upon your consciences, as Christian people—

III. The Obligation OF Gladness

Peter takes it for granted that all these brethren to whom he is writing have experience of this deep and ennobled joy. He does not say, 'You ought to rejoice,' but he says, 'You do rejoice.' And yet a verse or two before he said, 'Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.' So, then, he was not blinking the hard, painful facts of anybody's troubled life. He was not away upon the heights serenely contemptuous of the grim possibilities that lurk down in the dark valleys. He took in all the burdens and the pains and the anxieties and the harassments, and the losses, and the bleeding hearts and the cares that can burden any of us. And he said, in spite of them all, 'Ye rejoice.'

Do you? I am afraid there is no more irrefragable proof of the unreality of an enormous proportion of the Christian profession of this day than the joyless lives—in so far as their religion contributes to their joy—of hosts of us. We have religion enough to make us miserable, we have religion enough to make us uncomfortable about doing things that we would like to do. We are always haunted by the feeling that we are falling so far below our professions, and we are either miserable when we bethink ourselves, or, more frequently, indifferent, accordingly. And the whole reason of such experience lies here, we have not an adequately strong and continued trust in Jesus Christ working righteousness in our lives, nobleness in our characters, and so lifting us above the regions where mists and malaria lie. Let us get high enough up, and we shall find clear sky.

You call yourselves Christians, Does your religion bring any gladness to you? Does it burn brightest in the dark, like the pillar of cloud before the Israelites? 'Greek fire' burned below the water, and so was in high repute. Our gladness is a poor affair if it is at the mercy of temperaments or of circumstances. Jesus Christ comes to cure temperaments, and to enable us to resist circumstances. So, I venture to say that, whatever may be our condition in regard to externals, or whatever may be our tendencies of disposition, we are bound, as a piece of Christian duty, to try to cultivate this joyful spirit, and to do it in the only right way, by cultivating the increase of our faith in Jesus Christ. 'Rejoice in the Lord always'; the man who said that was a prisoner, with death looking into his eyeballs. As he said it, he felt that his friends in Philippi might think the exhortation overstrained, and so he repeated it, to show that he recognized the apparent impossibility of obeying it, and yet deliberately enjoined it; 'and again I say, rejoice.'

Christ and His Cross the Center of the Universe: 1 Peter 1:10-12

I HAVE detached these three clauses from their surroundings, not because I desire to treat them fragmentarily, but because we thereby throw into stronger relief the writer's purpose to bring out the identity of the Old and the New Revelation, the fact that Christ and His sufferings are the center of the world's history, to which all that went before points, from which all that follows after flows; and that not only thus does He stand in the midst of humanity, but that from Him there ran out influences into other orders of beings, and angels learn from Him mysteries hitherto unknown to them. The prophets prophesy of the grace which comes in the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, and the same Spirit which taught them teaches the preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They that went before had for their deepest message the proclamation, 'He will come'; they that follow after have for their deepest message, 'He has come.' And angels listen to, and echo, the chorus, from all the files that march in front, and all that bring up the rear, 'Hosanna! Blessed be Him that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

My purpose, then, is just to try to bring before you the magnificent unity into which these texts bind all ages, and all worlds, planting Jesus Christ and His Cross in the center of them all. There are four aspects here in which the writer teaches us to regard this unity: Jesus and the Cross are the substance of prophecy, the theme of Gospel preaching, the study of angels, and presented to each of us for our individual acceptance. Now, let us look briefly at these four points.

I. First, Then, Christ and His Cross Is the Substance of Prophecy

Now, of course, we have to remember that general statements have to be interpreted widely, and without punctilious adherence to the words; and we have also to remember that great mischief has been done, and great discredit cast, on the whole conception of ancient revelation by the well-meaning, but altogether mistaken, attempts of good people to read the fully developed doctrine of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice into every corner of the ancient revelation. But whilst I admit all that, and would desire to emphasize the fact, I think that in this generation, and to-day, there is a great deal more need to insist upon the truth that the inmost essence and deepest purpose of the whole Old Testament system is to create an attitude of expectance, and to point onwards, with ever-growing distinctness, to one colossal and mysterious figure in which the longings of generations shall be fulfilled, and the promises of God shall be accomplished. The prophet was more than a foreteller, as is being continually insisted upon nowadays. There were prophets who never uttered a single prediction. Their place in Israel was to be the champions of righteousness, and—I was going to say—the knights of God, as against law and ceremonial and externalism. But, beyond that, there underlie the whole system of prophecy, and there come sparkling and flashing up to the surface every now and then, bright anticipations, not only of a future kingdom, but of a personal King, and not only of a King, but a sufferer. All the sacrifices, almost all the institutions, the priesthood and the monarchy included, had this onward-looking aspect, and Israel as a whole, in the proportion in which it was true to the spirit of its calling, stood a-tiptoe, as it were, looking down the ages for the coming of the Hope of the Covenant that had been promised to the fathers. The prophets, I might say, were like an advance-guard sent before some great monarch in his progress towards his capital, who rode through the

slumbering villages and called, 'He comes! He comes! The King cometh meek and having salvation,' and then passed on.

Now, all that is to be held fast to-day. I would give all freedom to critical research, and loyally accept the results of it, so far as these are established, and are not mere hypotheses, with regard to the date and the circumstances of the construction of the various elements of that Old Testament. But what I desire especially to mark is that, with the widest freedom, there must be these two things conserved which Peter here emphasizes, the real inspiration of the prophetic order, and its function to point onwards to Jesus. And so long as you keep these truths, as long as you believe that God spoke through prophets, as long as you believe that the very heart of their message was the proclamation of Jesus Christ, and that to bear witness to Him was the function, not only of prophet, but of priest and king and nation, then you are at liberty to deal as you like with mere questions of origin and of date. But if, in the eagerness of the chase after the literary facts of the origin of the Old Testament, we forget that it is a unity, that it is a divine unity, that it is a progressive revelation, and that 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,' then I venture to say that the most uncritical, old-fashioned reader of the Old Testament that found Jesus Christ in the Song of Solomon, and in the details of the Tabernacle, and in all the minutia of worship and sacrifice, was nearer to the living heart of the thing than the most learned scholar that has been so absorbed in the inquiries as to how and when this, that, and the other bit of the Book was written, that he fails to see the one august figure that shines out, now more and now less dimly, and gives unity to the whole. 'To Him gave all the prophets witness.' And when Peter declared, as he did in my text, that ancient Israel, by its spokesmen and its organs, testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, he is but echoing what he had learned from his Master, who turns to some of us with the same rebuke with which He met His disciples after the Resurrection: 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.' The Old and the New are a unity, and Christ and His Cross are the substance and the center of both.

II. Note Here Christ and His Cross, the Theme of Gospel Preaching

If you will glance at your leisure over the whole context from which I have picked these clauses as containing its essence, you will find that the Apostle speaks of the things which the prophets foretold as being the same as 'those which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.' I must not take for granted that you are all referring to your Bibles, but I should like to point out, as the basis of one or two things that I wish to say, the remarkable variety of phrase employed in the text to describe the one thing. First, Peter speaks of it as 'salvation,' then he speaks of it in the next clause as 'the grace that should come unto you.' Then, in the next phrase, he designates it more particularly as 'the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.' Now, if we put these designations together—salvation, grace, Christ's sufferings, the subsequent glory—we come to this, that the facts of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension are the great vehicle which brings to men God's grace, that that grace has for its purpose and its effect man's salvation, and that these facts are the Gospel which Christian preachers have to proclaim.

Now notice what follows from such thoughts as these. To begin with, the Gospel is not a speculation, is not a theology, still less a morality, not a declaration of principles, but a history of

fact, things that were done on this earth of ours, and that the Apostle's Creed which is worked into the service of the Anglican Church is far nearer the primitive conception of the Gospel than are any of the more elaborate and doctrinal ones which have followed. For we have to begin with the facts that Christ lived, died, was buried, rose again from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God. Whatever else the Gospel is, that is the kernel and the basis of it all. Out of these facts will come all manner of doctrines, philosophies of religion, theologies, revelations about God and man. Out of them will come all ethics, the teaching of duty, the exhibition of a pattern of conduct, inspiration to follow the model that is set before us. Out of them will come, as I believe, guidance and light for social and economical and political questions and difficulties. But what we have to lay hold of, and what we preachers have to proclaim, is the story of the life, and eminently the story of the death.

Why does Peter put in the very center here 'the sufferings of Christ'? That suggests another thought, that amongst these facts which, taken together, make the Gospel, the vital part, the central and the indispensable part, is the story of the Cross. Now what Christ said, not what Christ did, not what Christ was, beautiful and helpful as all that is, but to begin with what Christ bore, is the fact that makes the life of the Gospel. And just as He is the center of humanity, so the Cross is the center of His work. Why is that? Because the deepest need of all of us is the need to have our sins dealt with, both as guilt and as power, and because nothing else in the whole story of Christ's manifestation deals with men's sins as the fact of His death on the Cross does, therefore the sacrifice and sufferings are the heart of the Gospel.

And so, brethren, we have to mark that the presentation of Christian truth which slurs over that fact of the Sacrifice and Atonement of Jesus Christ, has parted with the vital power which makes the story into a gospel. It is no gospel to tell a man that Jesus Christ died, unless you go on to say He 'died for our sins according to the Scriptures.' And it is no gospel to talk about the beauty of His life, and the perfectness of His example, and the sweetness of His nature, and the depth, the wisdom, and the tenderness of His words, unless you can say this is 'the Lamb of God,' 'the Word made flesh,' 'who bare our sins, and carried our sicknesses and our sorrows.' Strike out from the gospel that you preach 'the sufferings of Christ,' and you have struck out the one thing that will draw men's hearts, that will satisfy men's needs, that will bind men to Him with cords of love. 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' So, wherever you get what they call an ethical gospel which deals with moralities, and does not impart the power that will vitalize moralities, and make them into thankful service and sacrifices, in return for the great Sacrifice; wherever you get a gospel that falters in its enunciation of the sufferings of Christ, and wherever you get a gospel that secularizes the Christian service of the Sabbath, and will rather discuss the things that the newspapers discuss, and the new books that the reviewers are talking about, and odds and ends of that sort that are thought to be popular and attractive, you get a gospel minus the thing that, in the Old Testament and in the New alike, stands forth in the center of all. 'We preach Christ crucified'; it is not enough to preach Christ~ Many a man does that, and might as well hold his tongue. 'We preach Christ crucified.' And the same august Figure which loomed before the vision of prophets, and shines through many a weary age, stands before us of this generation; ay! and will stand till the end of the world, as the center, the pivot of human history, the Christ who has died for men. The Christ that will stand in the center of the

development of humanity is the Christ that died on the Cross. If your gospel is not that, you have yet to learn the deepest secret of His power.

III. Once More, Here We Have Christ and His Cross as The Study of Angels

‘Which things the angels desire to look into.’ Now, the word that Peter employs there is an unusual one in Scripture. Its force may, perhaps, be best conveyed by referring to one of the few instances in which it is employed. It is used to describe the attitude of Peter and John when they stooped down and looked into the sepulcher. Perhaps there may be a reference in Peter’s mind to that incident, when he saw the ‘two angels . . . , sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.’ Perhaps, also, there floats in his mind some kind of reference to the outspread wings and bended heads of the brooding cherubim who sat above the Mercy-seat, gazing down upon the miracle of love that was manifested beneath them there. But be that as it may, the idea conveyed is that of eager desire and fixed attention.

Now I am not going to enlarge at all upon the thought that is here conveyed, except just to make the one remark that people have often said, ‘Why should a race of insignificant creatures on this little globe of ours be so dignified in the divine procedure as that there should be the stupendous mystery of the Incarnation, and the Death for their sakes?’ Not for their sakes only, for the New Testament commits itself to the thought that whilst sinful men are the only subjects of the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ, other orders of creatures do benefit thereby, and do learn from it what else they would not have known, of the mystery and the miracle and the majesty of the Divine love. ‘To the principalities and the powers in heavenly places He hath made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.’ And we can understand how these other orders—what we call higher orders, which they may be or they may not—of being, learn to know God as we learn to know Him, by the manifestation of Himself in His acts, and how the crown of all manifestations consists in this, that He visits the sinful sons of men, and by His own dear Son brings them back again. The elder brethren in the Father’s house do not grudge the ring and the robe given to the prodigals; rather they learn therein more than they knew before of the loving-kindness of God.

Now all that is nowadays ignored; and it is not fashionable to speak about the interest of angels in the success of Redemption, and a good many ‘advanced’ Christians do not believe in angels at all, because they ‘cannot verify’ the doctrine. I, for my part, accept the teaching, which seems to me to be a great deal more reasonable than to suppose that the rest of the universe is void of creatures that can praise and love and know God. I accept the teaching, and think that Peter was, perhaps, not a dreamer when he said, ‘The angels desire to look into these things.’ They do not share in the blessings of redemption, but they can behold what they do not themselves experience. The Seer in the Revelation was not mistaken, when he believed that he heard redeemed men leading the chorus to Him that had redeemed them by His blood out of all nations, and then heard the thunderous echo from an innumerable host of angels who could not say ‘Thou hast redeemed us,’ but who could bring praise and glory to Him because He had redeemed men.

IV. And Now My Last Point Is That Christ and His Cross Is, By the Gospel, Offered to Each of Us

Notice how emphatically in this context the Apostle gathers together his wider thoughts, and focusses them into a point. 'The prophets have inquired and searched diligently of the grace that should come to you. To them it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you.' And so, he would take his wide thoughts, as it were, and gather all together, to a point, and press the point against each man's heart.

Dear brethren, these wide views are of no avail to us unless we realize the individual relation which Christ bears to each one of us. He bears a relation, as I have been saying, to all humanity. All the ages belong to Him. 'He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.' From His Cross there flash up rays of light into the heavens above, and out over the whole rolling series of the centuries, from the beginning to the end. Yes; but from His Cross there comes a beam straight to your heart, and the Christ whom angels desire to look into, of whom prophets prophesy and Apostles proclaim His advent, who is the Lord of all the ages, and the Lover of mankind, comes to thee and says 'I am thy Savior,' and to thee this wide message is brought. Every eye has the whole sunshine, and each soul may have the whole Christ. His universal relations in time and space matter little to you, unless He has a particular relation to yourself.

And He will never have that in its atoning power, unless you do for yourself and by yourself the most individual and solitary act that a human soul can do, and that is, lay your hand on the head of 'the Lamb ... that takes away the sin of the world,' and put your sins there. You must begin with 'my Christ,' which you can do only by personal faith. And then afterwards you can come to 'our Christ,' the Christ of all the worlds, the Christ of all the ages. Go to Him by yourself. You must do it as if there were not any other beings in the whole universe but you two, Jesus and you. And when you have so gone, then you will find that you have 'come to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and Church of the first born.' Christ and His Cross are the substance of prophecy, the theme of the Gospel, the study of the angels. What are they to me?

Hope Perfectly: 1 Peter 1:13

CHRISTIANITY has transformed hope, and given it a new importance, by opening to it a new world to move in, and supplying to it new guarantees to rest on. There is something very remarkable in the prominence given to hope in the New Testament, and in the power ascribed to it to order a noble life. Paul goes so far as to say that we are saved by it. To a Christian it is no longer a pleasant dream, which may be all an illusion, indulgence in which is pretty sure to sap a man's force, but it is a certain anticipation of certainties, the effect of which will be increased energy and purity. So, our Apostle, having in the preceding context in effect summed up the whole Gospel, bases upon that summary a series of exhortations, the transition to which is

marked by the ‘wherefore’ at the beginning of my text. The application of that word is to be extended, so as to include all that has preceded in the letter, and there follows a series of practical advices, the first of which, the grace or virtue which he puts in the forefront of everything, is not what you might have expected, but it is ‘hope perfectly.’

I may just remark, before going further, in reference to the language of my text, that, accurately translated, the two exhortations which precede that to hope are subsidiary to it, for we ought to read, ‘Wherefore, girding up the loins of your mind, and being sober, hope.’ That is to say, these two are preliminaries, or conditions, or means by which the desired perfecting of the Christian hope is to be sought and attained.

Another preliminary remark which I must make is that what is enjoined here has not reference to the duration but to the quality of the Christian hope. It is not ‘to the end,’ but, as the Margin of the Authorized and the Revised Version concurs in saying, it is ‘hope perfectly.’

So, then, there are three things here—the object, the duty, and the cultivation of Christian hope. Let us take these three things in order.

I. The Object of The Christian Hope

Now, that is stated, in somewhat remarkable language. as ‘the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.’ We generally use that word ‘grace’ with a restricted signification to the gifts of God to men here on earth. It is the earnest of the inheritance, rather than its fulness. But here it is quite obvious that by the expression the Apostle means the very same thing as he has previously designated in the preceding context by three different phrases—‘an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled,’ ‘praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,’ and ‘the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.’ The ‘grace’ is not contrasted with the ‘glory,’ but is another name for the glory. It is not the earnest of the inheritance, but it is the inheritance itself. It is not the means towards attaining the progressive and finally complete ‘salvation of your souls,’ but it is that complete salvation in all its fulness.

Now, that is an unusual use of the word, but that it should be employed here, as describing the future great object of the Christian hope, suggests two or three thoughts. One is that that ultimate blessedness, with all its dim, nebulous glories, which can only be resolved into their separate stars, when we are millions of leagues nearer to its luster, is like the faintest glimmer of a new and better life in a soul here on earth, purely and solely the result of the undeserved, condescending love of God that stoops to sinful men, and instead of retribution bestows upon them a heaven. The grace that saved us at first, the grace that comes to us, filtered in drops during our earthly experience, is poured upon us in a flood at last. And the brightest glory of heaven is as much a manifestation of the Divine grace as the first rudimentary germs of a better life now and here. The foundation, the courses of the building, the glittering pinnacle on the summit, with its golden spire reaching still higher into the blue, is all the work of the same unmerited, stooping, pardoning love. Glory is grace, and Heaven is the result of God’s pardoning mercy.

There is another suggestion here to be made, springing from this eloquent use of this term, and that is not merely the identity of the source of the Christian experience upon earth and in the future, but the identity of that Christian experience itself in regard of its essential character. If I may so say, it is all of a piece, homogeneous, and of one web. The robe is without seam, woven throughout of the same thread. The life of the humblest Christian, the most imperfect Christian, the most infantile Christian, the most ignorant Christian here on earth, has for its essential characteristics the very same things as the lives of the strong spirits that move in light around the Throne, and receive into their expanding nature the ever-increasing fulness of the glory of the Lord. Grace here is glory in the bud; glory yonder is grace in the fruit.

But there is still further to be noticed another great thought that comes out of this remarkable language. The words of my text, literally rendered, are ‘the grace that is being brought unto you.’ Now, there have been many explanations of that remarkable phrase, which I think is not altogether exhausted by, nor quite equivalent to, that which represents it in our version—viz. ‘to be brought unto you.’ That relegates it all into the future; but in Peter’s conception it is, in some sense, in the present. It is ‘being brought.’ What does that mean? There are far-off stars in the sky, the beams from which have set out from their home of light millenniums since, and have been rushing through the waste places of the universe since long before men were, and they have not reached our eyes yet. But they are on the road. And so, in Peter’s conception, the apocalypse of glory, which is the crowning manifestation of grace, is rushing towards us through the ages, through the spheres, and it will be here someday, and the beams will strike upon our faces, and make them glow with its light. So certain is the arrival of the grace that the Apostle deals with it as already on its way. The great thing on which the Christian hope fastens is no ‘peradventure,’ but a good which has already begun to journey towards us.

Again, there is another thought still to be suggested, and that is, the revelation of Jesus Christ is the coming to His children of this grace which is glory, of this glory which is grace. For mark how the Apostle says, ‘the grace which is being brought to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ.’ And that revelation to which he here refers is not the past one, in His incarnate life upon earth, but it is the future one, to which the hope of the faithful Church ought ever to be steadfastly turned, the correlated truth to that other one on which its faith rests. On these two great pillars, rising like columns on either side of the gulf of Time, ‘He has come,’ ‘He will come,’ the bridge is suspended by which we may safely pass over the foaming torrent that else would swallow us up. The revelation in the past cries out for the revelation in the future. The Cross demands the Throne. That He has come once, a sacrifice for sin, stands incomplete, like some building left unfinished with rugged stones protruding which prophesy an addition at a future day; unless you can add ‘unto them that look for Him will He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.’ In that revelation of Jesus Christ His children shall find the glory-grace which is the object of their hope.

So say all the New Testament writers. ‘When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory,’ says Paul. ‘The grace that is to be brought unto you in the revelation of Jesus Christ,’ chimes in Peter. And John completes the trio with his ‘We know

that when He shall appear we shall be like Him.’ These three things, brethren—with Christ, glory with Him, likeness to Him—are all that we know, and blessed be God! all that we need to know, of that dim future. And the more we confine ourselves to these triple great certainties, and sweep aside all subordinate matters, which are concealed partly because they could not be revealed, and partly because they would not help us if we knew them, the better for the simplicity and the power and the certainty of our hope. The object of Christian hope is Christ, in His revelation, in His presence, in His communication to us for glory, in His assimilating of us to Himself.

‘It is enough that Christ knows all,

And we shall be with Him.’

‘The grace that is being brought unto you in the revelation of Jesus Christ.’

II. And Now Notice the Duty of The Christian Hope. Hope A Duty?

That strikes one as somewhat strange. I very much doubt whether the ordinary run of good people do recognize it as being as imperative a duty for them to cultivate hope as to cultivate any other Christian excellence or virtue. For one man that sets himself deliberately and consciously to brighten up, and to make more operative in his daily life, the hope of future blessedness, you will find a hundred that set themselves to other kinds of perfecting of their Christian character. And yet, surely, there do not need any words to enforce the fact that this hope full of immortality is no mere luxury which a Christian man may add to the plain fare of daily duty or leave untasted according as he likes, but that it is an indispensable element in all vigorous and life-dominating Christian experience.

I do not need to dwell upon that, except just to suggest that such a vividness and continuity of calm anticipation of a certain good beyond the grave is one of the strongest of all motives to the general robustness and efficacy of a Christian life. People used to say a few years ago, a great deal more than they do now, that the Christian expectation of Heaven was apt to weaken energy upon earth, and they used to sneer at us, and talk about our ‘other worldliness’ as if it were a kind of weakness and defect attached to the Christian experience. They have pretty well given that up now. Anti-Christian sarcasm, like everything else, has its fashions, and other words of reproach and contumely have now taken the place of that. The plain fact is that no man sees the greatness of the present, unless he regards it as being the vestibule of the future, and that this present life is unintelligible and insignificant unless beyond it, and led up to by it, and shaped through it, there lies the eternal life beyond. The low fiat plain is dreary and desolate, featureless and melancholy, when the sky above it is filled with clouds. But sweep away the cloud-rack, and let the blue arch itself above the brown moorland, and all glows into luster, and every undulation is brought out, and tiny shy forms of beauty are found in every corner. And so, if you drape Heaven with the clouds and mists born of indifference and worldliness, the world becomes mean, but if you dissipate the cloud and unveil heaven, earth is greatedened. If the hope of the grave that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ shines out above all the flatness of earth, then life becomes solemn, noble, worthy of, demanding and rewarding, our

most strenuous efforts. No man can, and no man will, strike such effectual blows on things present as the man, the strength of whose arm is derived from the conviction that every stroke of the hammer on things present is shaping that which will abide with him forever.

My text not only enjoins this hope as a duty, but also enjoins the perfection of it as being a thing to be aimed at by all Christian people. What is the perfection of hope? Two qualities, certainty and continuity. Certainty; the definition of earthly hope is an anticipation of good less than certain, and so, in all the operations of this great faculty, which are limited within the range of earth, you get blended as an indistinguishable throng, 'hopes and fears that kindle hope,' and that too often kill it. But the Christian has a certain anticipation of certain good, and to him memory may be no more fixed than hope, and the past no more unalterable and uncertain than the future. The motto of our hope is not the 'perhaps,' which is the most that it can say when it speaks the tongue of earth, but the 'verily! verily!' which comes to its enfranchised lips when it speaks the tongue of Heaven. Your hope, Christian man, should not be the tremulous thing that it often is, which expresses itself in phrases like 'Well I do not know, but I tremblingly hope,' but it should say, 'I know and am sure of the rest that remaineth, not because of what I am, but because of what He is.'

Another element in the perfection of hope is its continuity. That hits home to us all, does it not? Sometimes in calm weather we catch a sight of the gleaming battlements of 'the City which hath foundations,' away across the sea, and then mists and driving storms come up and hide it. There is a great mountain in Central Africa which if a man wishes to see he must seize a fortunate hour in the early morning, and for all the rest of the day it is swathed in clouds, invisible. Is that like your hope, Christian man and woman, gleaming out now and then, and then again swallowed up in the darkness? Brethren! these two things, certainty and continuity, are possible for us. Alas! that they are so seldom enjoyed by us.

III. And Now One Last Word. My Text Speaks about the Discipline or Cultivation of This Christian Hope

It prescribes two things as auxiliary thereto. The way to cultivate the perfect hope which alone corresponds to the gift of God is 'girding up the loins of your mind, and being sober.' Of course, there is here one of the very few reminiscences that we have in the Epistles of the ipsissima verba of our Lord. Peter is evidently referring to our Lord's commandment to have 'the loins girt and the lamps burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.' I do not need to remind you of the Eastern dress that makes the metaphor remarkably significant, the loose robes that tangle a man's feet when he runs, that need to be girded up and belted tight around his waist, as preliminary to all travel or toil of any kind. The metaphor is the same as that in our colloquial speech when we talk about a man 'pulling himself together.' Just as an English workman will draw his belt a hole tighter when he has some special task to do, so Peter says to us, make a definite effort, with resolute bracing up and concentration of all your powers, or you will never see the grace that is hurrying towards you through the centuries. There is abundance of loose, slack-braced people up and down the world, in all departments, and they never come to

any good. It is a shame that any man should have his thoughts so loosely girt and vagrant as that any briar by the roadside can catch them and hinder his advance. But it is a tenfold shame for Christian people, with such an object to gaze upon, that they should let their minds be dissipated all over the trivialities of Time, and not gather them together and project them, as I may say, with all their force towards the sovereign realities of Eternity. A sixpence held close to your eye will blot out the sun, and the trifles of earth close to us will prevent us from realizing the things which neither sight, nor experience, nor testimony reveal to us, unless with clenched teeth, so to speak, we make a dogged effort to keep them in mind.

The other preliminary and condition is ‘being sober,’ which of course you have to extend to its widest possible signification, implying not merely abstinence from, or moderate use of, intoxicants, or material good for the appetites, but also the withdrawing of one’s self sometimes wholly from, and always restraining one’s self in the use of, the present and the material. A man has only a given definite quantity of emotion and interest to expend, and if he flings it all away on the world, he has none left for Heaven. He will be like the miller that spoils some fair river, by diverting its waters into his own sluice, in order that he may grind some corn. If you have the faintest film of dust on the glass of the telescope, or on its mirror, if it is a reflecting one, you will not see the constellations in the heavens; and if we have drawn over our spirits the film of earthly absorption, all these bright glories above will, so far as we are concerned, cease to be.

So, brethren, there is a solemn responsibility laid upon us by the gift of that great faculty of looking before and after. What did God make you and me capable of anticipating the future for? That we might let our hopes run along the low levels, or that we might elevate them and twine them round the very pillars of God’s Throne; which? I do not find fault with you because you hope, but because you hope so meanly, and about such trivial and transitory things. I remember I once saw a sea-bird kept in a garden, confined within high walls, and with clipped wings, set to pick up grubs and insects. It ought to have been away out, hovering over the free ocean, or soaring with sunlit wing to a height where earth became a speck, and all its noises were hushed. That is what some of you are doing with your hope, degrading it to earth instead of letting it rise to God; enter within the veil, and gaze upon the glory of the ‘inheritance incorruptible and undefiled.’

The Family Likeness: 1 Peter 1:16

THAT is the sum of religion—an all-comprehensive precept which includes a great deal more than the world’s morality, and which changes the coldness of that into something blessed, by referring all our purity to the Lord that called us. One may well wonder where a Galilean fisherman got the impulse that lifted him to such a height; one may well wonder that he ventured to address such wide, absolute commandments to the handful of people just dragged from the very slough and filth of heathenism to whom he spoke. But he had dwelt with Christ, and they had Christ in their hearts. So, for him to command and for them to obey, and to aim after even so wide and wonderful an attainment as perfecting like God’s was the most natural thing in the

world. 'Be ye holy as He that hath called you is holy, and that in all manner of conversation.' The maximum of possible attainment, the minimum of imperative duty!

So, then, there are three things here—the pattern, the field, and the inspiration or motive of holiness.

I. The Pattern of Holiness

'As He that hath called you is holy.' God's holiness is the very attribute which seems to separate Him most from the creatures; for its deepest meaning is His majestic and Divine elevation above all that is creatural. But here, of course, the idea conveyed by the word is not that, if I may so say, metaphysical one, but the purely moral one. The holiness of God which is capable of imitation by us is His separation from all impurity. There is a side of His holiness which separates Him from all the creatures, to which we can only look up, or bow with our faces in the dust; but there is a side of His holiness which, wonderful as it is, and high above all our present attainment as it is, yet is not higher than the possibilities which His indwelling Spirit puts within our reach, nor beyond the bounds of the duty that presses upon us all. 'As He which hath called you is holy.' Absolute and utter purity is His holiness, and that is the pattern for us.

Religion is imitation. The truest form of worship is to copy. All through heathenism you find that principle working. 'They that make them are like unto them.'

Why are heathen nations so besotted and sunken and obstinate in their foulnesses? Because their gods are their examples, and they, first of all, make the gods after the pattern of their own evil imaginations, and then the evil imaginations, deified, react upon the maker and make him tenfold more a child of hell than themselves. Worship is imitation, and there is no religion which does not necessarily involve the copying of the example or the pattern of that Being before whom we bow. For religion is but love and reverence in the superlative degree, and the natural operation of love is to copy, and the natural operation of reverence is the same. So that the old Mosaic law, 'Be ye holy as I am holy,' went to the very heart of religion. And the New Testament form of it, as Paul puts it in a very bold word, 'Be ye imitators of God, as beloved children,' sets its seal on the same thought that we are religious in the proportion in which we are consciously copying and aspiring after God.

But then, says somebody or other, 'it is not possible.' Well, if it were not possible, try it all the same. For in this world, it is aim and not attainment that makes the noble life; and it is better to shoot at the stars, even though your arrow never reaches them, than to fire it along the low levels of ordinary life. I do not see that however the unattainableness of the model may be demonstrated, that has anything to do with the duty of imitation. Because, though absolute conformity running throughout the whole of a life is not possible here on earth, we know that in each individual instance in which we came short of conformity the fault was ours, and it might have been otherwise. Instead of bewildering ourselves with questions about 'unattainable' or 'attainable,' suppose we asked, at each failure, 'Why did I not copy God then; was it because I could not, or because I would not?' The answer would come plain enough to knock all that

sophisticated nonsense out of our heads, and to make us feel that the law which puts an unattainable ideal before the Christian as his duty is an intensely practical one, and may be reduced to practice at each step in his career. Imitation of the Father, and to be perfect, 'as our Father in heaven is perfect,' is the elementary and the ultimate commandment of all Christian morality. 'Be ye holy as He that hath called you is holy.'

Then let me remind you that the unattainableness is by no means so demonstrable as some people seem to think. A very tiny circle may have the same center as one that reaches beyond the suburbs of the universe, and holds all stars and systems within its great round. And the tiniest circle will have the same geometrical laws applied to it as the greatest. The difference between finite and infinite has nothing to do with the possibility of our becoming like God, if we believe that 'in the image of God created He him'; and that men who have been not only made by original creation in the Divine image, but have been born again by the incorruptible seed of the Word into a kindred life with His, and derived from Him, can surely grow like what they have got, and unfold into actually possessed and achieved resemblance to their Father the kindred life that is poured into their veins.

So, every way it is better indefinitely to approximate to that great likeness, though with many flaws and failures, than to say it cannot be reached, and so I will content myself down here, in my sins and my meannesses. No! dear brethren, 'we are saved by hope,' and one prime condition of growth in nobleness is to believe it possible that, by His blessing we may be like Him here on earth in the measure of our perception of His beauty and reception of His grace.

II. Again, Notice the Field of This Godlike Holiness

'In all manner of conversation.' Of course, I do not need to remind you that the word 'conversation' does not mean talk, but conduct; that it applies to the whole of the outward life. Peter says that every part of the Christian man's activity is to be the field on which his possession of the holiness derived from and like God's is to be exhibited. It is to be seen in all common life. Here is no cloistered and ascetic holiness which taboos large provinces of every man's experience, and says 'we must not go in there, for fear of losing our purity,' but rather wherever Christ has trod before we can go. That is a safe guide, and whatever God has appointed there we can go and that we can do. 'On the bells of the homes shall be written Holiness to the Lord.' The home-bells that make merry music on their bridles are not very sacred things, but they bear the same inscription as flamed on the front of the high priest's miter; and the bowls in every house in Jerusalem, as the prophet says, shall bear the same inscription that was written on the sacrificial vessels, and all shall belong to Him.

Only, whilst thus we maintain the possibility of exhibiting Godlike holiness in all the dusty fields of common life, let us remember the other side.

In this day there is very little need to preach against an ascetic Christianity. There has been enough said of late years about a Christian man being entitled to go into all fields of occupation and interest, and there to live his Christianity. I think the time is about come for a

caution or two to be dropped on the other side. ‘Blessed is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth.’ Apply this commandment vigorously and honestly to trade, to recreation—especially to recreation—to social engagements, to the choice of companions, to the exercise of tastes. Ask yourselves ‘Can I write Holiness to the Lord on them?’ If not, do not have anything to do with them. I wonder what the managers of theatres and music-halls would say if anybody proposed that motto to be put upon the curtain for the spectators to read before it is drawn up for the play. Do you think it would fit? Don’t you, Christian men and women, don’t you go into places where it would not fit. And remember that ‘in all manner of conversation’ has two sides to it, one declaring the possibility of sanctifying every creature of God, and one declaring the impossibility of a Christian man going, without dreadful danger and certain damage, into places where he cannot carry that consecration and purity with him.

Again, the field is all trivial things. ‘In all manner of conversation.’ There is nothing that grows so low but that this scythe will travel near enough to the ground to harvest it. There is nothing so minute but it is big enough to mirror the holiness of God. The tiniest grain of mica, upon the face of the hill, is large enough to flash back a beam; and the smallest thing we can do is big enough to hold the bright light of holiness. ‘All’! Ah! If our likeness to God does not show itself in trifles, what in the name of common sense is there left for it to show itself in? For our lives are all made up of trifles. The great things come three or four of them in the seventy years; the little ones come every time the clock ticks. And as they say, ‘Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.’ If we keep the little things rigidly under the dominion of this principle, no doubt the big things will fall under it too, when they emerge. And if we do not—as the old Jewish book says:—‘He that despiseth little things shall fall by little and little.’ Whosoever has not a Christianity that sanctifies the trifles has a Christianity that will not sanctify the crises of his life. So, dear brother, this motto is to be written over every portal through which you and I go; and whatsoever we can put our hands to, in it we may magnify and manifest the holiness of God.

III. Now, Lastly, Note the Motive or Inspiration of Holiness

The language of my text might read like ‘the Holy One who hath called you.’ Peter would stir his hearers to the emulation of the Divine holiness by that thought of the bond that unites Him and them. ‘He hath called you.’ In which word, I suppose, he includes the whole sum of the Divine operations which have resulted in the placing of each of his auditors within the circle of the Christian community as the subjects of Christ’s grace, and not only the one definite act to which the theologians attach the name of ‘calling.’ In the briefest possible way, we may put the motive thus—the inspiration of imitation is to be found in the contemplation of the gifts of God. What He has said and done to me, calling me out of my darkness and alienation and lavishing the tokens of His love, the voice of His beseechings, the monitions of His Spirit, the message of His Son, the Incarnate Word, and invitation of God—all these things are included in His call. And all of them are the reasons why, bound by thankfulness, overcome by his forbearance, responding to His entreaties, and glued to Him by the strength of the hand that holds

us, and the tenacity of His love, we should strive to ‘walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.’

And not only so, but in the thought of the Divine calling there lies a fountain of inspiration when we remember the purpose of the calling. As Paul puts it in one of his letters: ‘God has not called us to uncleanness but to holiness.’ That to which He summons, or invites (for you may use either word), is holiness like His own. That is the crown of all His purposes for men, the great goal and blessed home to which He would lead us all.

And so, if in addition to the fact of His ‘gift and calling’ and all that is included within it, if in addition to the purpose of that calling, we further think of the relation between us and Him which results from it, so as that we, as the next verse says, call Him who hath called us, ‘Our Father,’ then the motive becomes deeper and more blessed still. Shall we not try to be like the Father of our spirits, and seek for His grace, to bear the likeness of sons?

My text speaks only of effort, let us not forget that the truest way to be partakers of His holiness is to open our hearts for the entrance of the Spirit of His Son, and possessing that—having these promises and that great fulfilment of them—then to perfect holiness in the fear and love of the Lord.

Father and Judge: 1 Peter 1:17

‘If ye call on Him as Father,’ when ye pray, say, ‘Our Father which art in heaven.’ One can scarcely help supposing that the Apostle is here, as in several other places in his letter, alluding to words that are stamped ineffaceably upon his memory, because they had dropped from Christ’s lips. At all events, whether there is here a distinct allusion to what we call the Lord’s Prayer or no, it is here recognized as the universal characteristic of Christian people that their prayers are addressed to God in the character of Father. So that we may say that there is no Christianity which does not recognize and rejoice in appealing to the paternal relationship.

But, then, I suppose in Peter’s days, as in our days, there were people that so fell in love with one aspect of the Divine nature that they had no eyes for any other; and who so magnified the thought of the Father that they forgot the thought of the Judge. That error has been committed over and over again in all ages, so that the Church as a whole, one may say, has gone swaying from one extreme to the other, and has rent these two conceptions widely apart, and sometimes has been foolish enough to pit them against each other instead of doing as Peter does here, braiding them together as both conspiring to one result, the production in the Christian heart of a wholesome awe. If ye call on Him as Father ‘who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear.’

So then, look at this twofold aspect of God’s character.

Both these conceptions ought to be present, flamingly and vividly, burning there before him, to every Christian man. ‘Ye call Him Father,’ but the Father is the Judge. True, the Judge is Father, but Peter reminds us that whatever blessed truths may be hived in that great Name of

Father, to be drawn thence by devout meditation and filial love, there is not included in it the thought of weak-minded indulgence to His children, in any of their sins, nor any unlikelihood of inflicting penal consequences on a rebellious child. 'Father' does not exclude 'Judge,' 'and without respect of persons He judgeth.'

'Without respect of persons'—the word is a somewhat unusual New Testament one, but it has special appropriateness and emphasis on Peter's lips. Do you remember who it was that said, and on what occasion he said it: 'Now I perceive that God is no respecter of persons'? It was Peter when he had learned the lesson on the housetop at Joppa, looking out over the Mediterranean, and had it enforced by Cornelius' message. The great thought that had blazed upon him as a new discovery on that never-be-forgotten occasion, comes before him again, and this unfamiliar word comes with it, and he says, 'without respect of persons He judges.' Mountains are elevated, valleys are depressed and sunken, but I fancy that the difference between the top of Mount Everest and the gorge through which the Jordan runs would scarcely be perceptible if you were standing on the sun. Thus, 'without respect of persons,' great men and little, rich men and poor, educated men and illiterate, people that perch themselves on their little stools and think themselves high above their fellows: they are all on one dead level in the eye of the Judge. And this question is as to the quality of the work and not as to the dignity of the doer. 'Without respect of persons' implies universality as well as impartiality. If a Christian man has been ever so near God, and then goes away from Him, he is judged notwithstanding his past nearness. And if a poor soul, all crusted over with his sins and leprous with the foulness of long-standing iniquity, comes to God and asks for pardon, he is judged according to his penitence, 'without respect of persons.' That great hand holds an even balance. And though the strictness of the judicial process may have its solemn and its awful aspect, it has also its blessed and its comforting one.

Now, do not run away with the notion that the Apostle is speaking here of that great White Throne and the future judgment that for many of us lies, inoperative on our creeds, on the other side of the great cleft of death. That is a solemn thought, but it is not Peter's thought here. If any of you can refer to the original, you will see that even more strongly than in our English version, though quite sufficiently strongly there, the conception is brought out of a continuous Divine judgment running along, all through a man's life, side by side with his work. The judgment here meant is not all clotted together, as it were, in that final act of judgment, leaving the previous life without it, but it runs all through the ages, all through each man's days. I beseech you to ponder that thought, that at each moment of each of our lives an estimate of the moral character of each of our deeds is present to the Divine mind.

'Of course, we believe that,' you say. 'That is commonplace; not worth talking about.' Ah! but because we believe it, as of course, we slip out of thinking about it and letting it affect our lives. And what I desire to do for you, dear friends, and for myself, is just to put emphasis on the one half of that little word 'judgeth,' and ask you to take its three last letters and lay them on your minds. Do we feel that, moment by moment, these little spurs of bad temper, these little gusts of worldliness, that tiny, evanescent sting of pride and devildom which has passed across or been fixed in our minds, are all present to God, and that He has judged them already, in the

double sense that He has appraised their value and estimated their bearing upon our characters, and that He has set in motion some of the consequences which we shall have to reap?

Oh! one sometimes wishes that people did not so much believe in a future judgment, in so far as it obscures to them the solemn thought of a present and a continuous one. 'Verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth,' and, of course, all these provisional decisions, which are like the documents that in Scotch law are said to 'pre-cognos the case,' are all laid away in the archives of heaven, and will be produced, docketed and in order, at the last for each of us. Christian people sometimes abuse the doctrine of justification by faith as if it meant that Christians at the last were not to be judged. But they are, and there is such a thing as 'salvation yet so as by fire,' and such a thing as salvation in fulness. Do not let filial confidence drive out legitimate fear.

He 'judges according to every man's work.' I do not think it is extravagant attention to niceties to ask you to notice that the Apostle does not say 'works,' but 'work'; as if all the separate actions were gathered into a great whole, as indeed they are, because they are all the products of one mind and character. The trend and drift, so to speak, of our life, rather than its isolated actions and the underlying motives, in their solemn totality and unity, these are the materials of this Divine judgment.

Now, let me say a word about the disposition which the Apostle enjoins upon us in the view of these facts.

The Judge is the Father, the Father is the Judge. The one statement proclaims the merciful, compassionate, paternal judgment, the other the judicial Fatherhood. And what comes from the combination of these two ideas, which thus modify and illuminate one another? 'Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.' What a descent that sounds from the earlier verses of the letter: 'In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.' Down from those heights of 'joy unspeakable,' and 'already glorified,' the apostle drops plump into this dungeon: 'Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.' Of course, I need not remind you that the 'fear' here is not the 'fear which hath torment'; in fact, I do not think that it is a fear that refers to God at all. It is not a sentiment or emotion of which God is the object. It is not the reverent awe which often appears in Scripture as 'the fear of God,' which is a kind of shorthand expression for all modes of devout sentiment and emotion; but it is a fear, knowing our own weakness and the strong temptations that are round us, of falling into sin. That is the one thing to be afraid of in this world. If a man rightly understood what he is here for, then the only thing that he would be terrified for would be that he should miss the purpose of his being here and lose his hold of God thereby. There is nothing else worth being afraid of, but that's worth being afraid of. It is not slavish dread, nor is it cowardice, but the well-grounded emotion of men that know themselves too well to be confident and know the world too well to be daring and presumptuous.

Don't you think that Peter had had a pretty rough experience in his life that had taught him the wisdom of such an exhortation? And does it not strike you as very beautiful that it should come, of all people in the world, from his lips? The man that had said, 'Though all should

forsake Thee, yet will not I.' 'Why cannot I follow Thee now?' 'Bid me come to Thee on the water.' 'This be far from Thee, Lord, it shall not be unto Thee'—the man that had whipped out his sword in the garden, in a spasm of foolish affection, now, in his quiet old age, when he has learnt the lesson of failures and follies and sins and repentance, says in effect: 'Remember me, and do not you be presumptuous.' 'Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.' 'If I had known myself a little better, and been a little more afraid of myself, I should not have made such a fool of myself or such shipwreck of my faithfulness.'

Dear friends, no mature Christian is so advanced as that he does not need this reminder, and no Christian novice is so feeble as that, keeping obedient to this precept, he will not be victorious over all his evils. The strongest needs to fear; the weakest, fearing, is safe. For such fearfulness is indispensable to safety. It is all very well to go along with sail extended and a careless lookout. But if, for instance, a captain keeps such when he is making the mouth of the Red Sea where there are a narrow channel and jagged rocks and a strong current, if he has not every man at his quarters and everything ready to let go and stop in a moment, he will be sure to be on the reefs before he has tried the experiment often. And the only safety for any of us is ever to be on the watch, and to dread our own weakness. 'Blessed is the man that feareth always.'

Such carefulness over conduct and heart is fully compatible with all the blessed emotions to which it seems at first antagonistic. There is no discord between the phrase that I have quoted about 'joy unspeakable and full of glory,' and this temper, but rather the two help one another. And such blended confidence and fear are the parents of courage. The man that is afraid that he will do wrong and so hurt himself and grieve his Savior, is the man that will never be afraid of anything else. Martyrs have gone to the stake 'fearing not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do,' because they were so afraid to sin against God that they were not afraid to die rather than to do it. And that is the temper that you and I should have. Let that one fear, like Moses' rod, swallow up all the other serpents and make our hearts impervious to any other dread.

'Pass the time of your sojourning.' You do not live in your own country; you are in an alien land. You are passing through it. Troops on the march in an enemy's country, unless they are led by an idiot, will send out clouds of scouts in front and on the wings to give timely warning of any attempted assault. If we cheerily and carelessly go through this world as if we were marching in a land where there were no foes, there is nothing before us but defeat at the last. Only let us remember that sleepless watchfulness is needed only in this time of sojourning, and that when we get to our own country there is no need for such patrols and advance guards and rear-guards and men on the flank as were essential when we were on the march. People that grow exotic plants here in England keep them in glass houses. But when they are taken to their native soil the glass would be an impertinence. As long as we are here, we have to wear our armor, but when we get yonder the armor can safely be put off and the white robes that had to be tucked up under it lest they should be soiled by the muddy ways can be let down, for they will gather no pollution from the golden streets. The gates of that city do not need to be shut, day nor night. For when sin has ceased and our liability to yield to temptation has been exchanged for

fixed adhesion to the Lord Himself, then, and not till then, is it safe to put aside the armor of godly fear and to walk, unguarded and unarmed, in the land of perpetual peace.

Purifying the Soul: 1 Peter 1:22

NOTE these three subsidiary clauses introduced respectively by 'in,' 'through,' 'unto.' They give the means, the Bestower, and the issue of the purity of soul. The Revised Version, following good authorities, omits the clause, 'through the Spirit.' It may possibly be originally a marginal gloss of some scribe who was nervous about Peter's orthodoxy, which finally found its way into the text. But I think we shall be inclined to retain it if we notice that, throughout this epistle, the writer is fond of sentences on the model of the present one, and of surrounding a principal clause with subsidiary ones introduced by a similar sequence of prepositions. For instance, in this very chapter, to pass over other examples, we read, 'Kept by' (or in) 'the power of God through faith unto salvation.' So, for my present purpose, I take the doubtful words as part of the original text. They unquestionably convey a true idea, whether they are genuine here or no.

One more introductory remark—'Ye have purified your souls'—a bold statement to make about the vast multitude of the 'dispersed' throughout all the provinces of Asia Minor whom the Apostle was addressing. The form of the words in the original shows that this purifying is a process which began at some definite point in the past and is being continued throughout all the time of Christian life. The hallmark of all Christians is a relative purity, not of actions, but of soul. They will vary, one from another; the conception of what is purity of soul will change and grow, but, if a man is a Christian, there was a moment in his past at which he potentially, and in ideal, purified his spirit, and that was the moment when he bowed down in obedience to the truth. There are suggestions for volumes about the true conception of soul-purity in these words of my text. But I deal with them in the simplest possible fashion, following the guidance of these significant little words which introduce the subordinate clauses.

First of all, then, we have here the great thought that,

I. Soul Purity Is In, Or By, Obedience

Now, of course, 'the truth'—truth with the definite article—is the sum of the contents of the Revelation of God in Jesus Christ, His life, His death, His Glory. For to Peter, as to us He should be, Jesus Christ was Truth Incarnate. 'In Him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' The first thought that is suggested to me from this expression—obedience to the truth—is that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is, as its ultimate intention, meant to be obeyed. There are plenty of truths which have no influence on life and conduct, for which all is done that they can demand when they are accepted. But the truth is no inert substance like the element which recent chemical discoveries have found, which is named 'argon,' the do-nothing; the truth is, as physiologists say, a ferment. It is intended to come into life, and into character,

and into the inmost spirit of a man, and grip them, and mold them, and transform them, and animate them, and impel them. The truth is to be 'obeyed.'

Now that altogether throws over two card-castles which imperfect Christians are very apt to build. One which haunted the thoughts of an earlier generation of Christians more than it does the present, is that we have done all that 'the truth' asks of us when we have intellectually endorsed it. And so, you get churches which build their membership upon acceptance of a creed and excommunicate heretics, whilst they keep do-nothing and unclesed Christians within their pale. But God does not tell us anything that we may know. He tells us in order that, knowing, we may be and do. And right actions, or rather a character which produces such, is the last aim of all knowledge, and especially of all moral and religious truth. So 'the truth' is not 'argon', it is a ferment. And if men, steeped to the eyebrows in orthodoxy, think that they have done enough when they have set their hands to a confession of faith, and that they are Christians because they can say, 'all this I steadfastly believe,' they need to remember that religious truth which does not mold and transform character and conduct is a king dethroned; and for dethroned kings there is a short step between the throne from which they have descended and the scaffold on which they die.

But there is another—what I venture to call a card-castle, which more of us build in these days of indifference as to creed—and that is that a great many of us are too much disposed to believe that 'the truth as it is in Jesus' has received from us all which it expects when we trust to it for what we call our 'salvation,' meaning thereby forgiveness of sins and immunity from punishment. These are elements of salvation unquestionably, but they are only part of it. And the very truths on which Christian people rest for this initial salvation, which is forgiveness and acceptance, are meant to be the guides of our lives and the patterns for our imitation. Why, in this very letter, in reference to the very parts of Christ's work, on which faith is wont to rest for salvation,—the death on the Cross to which we say that we trust, and which we are so accustomed to exalt as a unique and inimitable work that cannot be reproduced and needs no repetition, world without end—Peter has no hesitation in saying that Christ was our 'Pattern,' and that, even when He went to the Cross, He died 'leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps.' So, brethren, the truth needs to be known and believed: the truth needs not only to be believed but to be trusted in; the truth needs not only to be believed and to be trusted in, but to be obeyed.

Still further, another thought following upon and to some extent modifying the preceding one, is suggested here, and that is that the faith, which I have just been saying is sometimes mistakenly regarded as being all that truth calls for from us, is itself obedience. As I have said, the language in the original here implies that there was a given definite moment in the past when these dispersed strangers obeyed, and, by obeying the truth, purified their souls. What was that moment? Some people would say the moment when the rite of baptism was administered. I would say the moment when they bowed themselves in joyful acceptance of the great Word and put out a firm hand of faith to grasp Jesus Christ. That's obedience. For, in the very act of thus trusting, there is self-surrender, is there not? Does not a man depart from himself and bow himself humbly before his Savior when he puts his trust in Him? Is not the very essence of

obedience, not the mere external act, but the melting of the will to flow in such directions as His master-impulse may guide it? Thus, faith in its depth is obedience; and the moment when a man believes, in the deepest sense of the word, that moment, in the deepest realities of his spirit, he becomes obedient to the will and to the love of his Savior Lord, Who is the Truth as He is the Way and the Life. We find, not only in this Epistle, but throughout the Epistles, that the two words ‘disobedience’ and ‘unbelief,’ are used as equivalents. We read, for instance, of those that ‘stumble at the word, being disobedient,’ and the like. So, then, faith is obedience in its depth, and, if our faith has any vitality in it, it carries in it the essence of all submission.

But then, further, my text implies that the faith which is, in its depth, obedience, in its practical issues will produce the practical obedience which the text enjoins. It is no mere piece of theological legerdemain which counts that faith is righteousness. But, just as all sin comes from selfishness, so, and therefore, all righteousness will flow from giving up self, from decentralizing, as it were, our souls from their old center, self, and taking a new center, God in Christ. Thus, the germ of all practical obedience lies in vital faith. It is, if I might so say, the mother-tincture which, variously combined, colored, and perfumed, makes all the precious things, the virtues and graces of humanity, which the believing soul pours out as a libation before its God. It is the productive energy of all practical goodness. It is the bottom heat in the greenhouse which makes all the plants grow and flourish. Faith is obedience, and faith produces obedience. Does my faith produce obedience? If it does not, it is not faith.

Then, with regard to this first part of my subject, comes the final thought that practical obedience works inwards as well as outwards, and purifies the soul which renders it. People generally turn that round the other way, and, instead of saying that to do right helps to make a man right within, they say ‘make the tree good, and its fruit good’—first the pure soul, and then the practical obedience. Both statements are true. For every act that a man does reacts upon the doer, just as, whether the shot hits the target or not, the gun kicks back on the shoulder of the man that fired it. Conduct comes from character, but conduct works back upon character, and character is largely the deposit from the vanished seas of actions. So, then, whilst the deepest thought is, be good and you will do good, it is not to be forgotten that the other side is true—do good, and it will tend to make you good. Obedience purifies the soul, while, on the other hand, a man that lives ill, comes to think as he lives, and to become tenfold more a child of evil. ‘The dyer’s hand is subdued to what it works in.’ ‘Ye have purified your souls,’ ideally, in the act of faith, and continuously, in the measure in which you practically obey the truth.

We have here,

II. Purifying Through the Spirit

I have already said that these words are possibly no part of the original text, but that they convey a true Christian idea, whether the words are here genuine or no. I need not enlarge upon this part of my subject at any length. Let me just remind you how the other verse in this chapter, to which I have already referred as cast in the same mold as our text, covers, from a different point of view, the same ground exactly as our text. Here there is put first the human element: ‘Ye

have purified your souls in obeying the truth,' and secondly the Divine element; 'through the Spirit.' The human part is put in the foreground, and God's part comes in, I was going to say, subordinately, as a condition. The reverse is the case in the other text, which runs: 'Kept in the power of God through faith'—where the Divine element is in the foreground, as being the true cause, and the human dwindles to being merely a condition—'Kept by' (or in) 'the power of God through faith.' Both views are true; you may take the vase by either handle. When the purpose is to stimulate to action, man's part is put in the foreground and God's part secondarily. When the purpose is to stimulate to confidence, God's part is put in the foreground and the man's is secondary. The two interlock, and neither is sufficient without the other.

The true Agent of all purifying is that Divine Spirit.

I have said that the moment of true trust is the moment of initial obedience, and of the beginning of purity. And it is so because, in that moment of initial faith, there enters into the heart the communicated Divine life of the Spirit, which thenceforward is lodged there, except it be quenched by the man's negligence or sin. Thence, from that germ implanted in the moment of faith, the germ of a new life, there issue forth to ultimate dominion in the spirit, the powers of that Divine Spirit which make for righteousness and transform the character. Thus, the true cause and origin of all Christian nobility and purity of character and conduct lies in that which enters the heart at the moment that the heart is opened for the coming of the Lord. But, on the other hand, this Divine Spirit, the Source of all purity, will not purify the soul without the man's efforts. 'Ye have purified your souls.' You need the Spirit indeed. But you are not mere passive recipients. You are to be active co-operators. In this region, too, we are 'laborers together with God.' We cannot of ourselves do the work, for the very powers with which we do it, or try to do it, are themselves in need of cleansing. And for a man to try to purify the soul by his own effort alone is to play the part of the sluttish house-wife who would seek to wipe a dish clean with a dirty cloth. You need the Divine Spirit to work in you, and you need to use, by your own effort, the Divine Spirit that does work in you. He is as 'rushing, mighty wind'; but, unless the sails are set and the helm gripped, the wind will pass the boat and leave it motionless. He is Divine fire that burns up the dross and foulness; but, unless we 'guard the holy fire' and feed it, it dies down into grey cold ashes. He is the water of life; but, unless we dig and take heed to keep clear the channels, no refreshing will permeate to the roots of the wilting flowers, and there will be dryness, thirst, and barrenness, even on the river's banks.

So, brethren, neither God alone nor man alone can purify the soul. We need Him, else we shall labor in vain. He needs us, else He will bestow His gift, and we shall receive 'the grace of God in vain.'

Lastly, we have here—

III. Purifying, Unto, Love

The Apostle was speaking to men of very diverse nationalities who had been rent asunder by deep gulfs of mutual suspicion and conflicting interests and warrior creeds, and a great

mysterious, and, as it would seem to the world then, utterly inexplicable bond of unity had been evolved amongst them, and Greek and barbarian, bond and free, male and female, had come together in amity. The 'love of the brethren' was the creation of Christianity, and was the outstanding fact which, more than any other, amazed the beholders in these early days. God be thanked! there are signs in our generation of a closer drawing together of Christian people than many past ages, alas, have seen.

But my text suggests solemn and great thoughts with regard to Christian love and unity. The road to unity lies through purity, and the road to purity lies through obedience. Yes; what keeps Christian people apart is their impurities. It is not their creeds. It is not any of the differences that appear to separate them. It is because they are not better men and women. Globules of quicksilver will run together and make one mass; but not if you dust them over. And it is the impurities on the quicksilver that keep us from coalescing.

So, then we have to school ourselves into greater con-fortuity to the likeness of our Master, to conquer selfishness, and to purify our souls, or else all this talk about Christian unity is no better than sounding brass, and more discordant than tinkling cymbals. Let us learn the lesson. 'The unfeigned love of the brethren' is not such an easy thing as some people fancy, and it is not to be attained at all on the road by which some people would seek it. Cleanse yourselves, and you will flow together.

Here, then, we have Peter's conception of a pure soul and a pure life. It is a stately building, based deep on the broad foundation of the truth as it is in Jesus; its walls rising, but not without our effort, being builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit, and having as the shining apex of its heaven-pointing spire 'unfeigned love to the brethren.' The measure of our obedience is the measure of our purity. The measure of our purity is the measure of our brotherly love. But that love, though it is the very aim and natural issue of purity, still will not be realized without effort on our part. Therefore, my text, after its exhibition of the process and issues of the purifying which began with faith, glides into the exhortation: 'See that ye love one another with a pure heart'—a heart purified by obedience and that 'fervently.'

Living Stones on the Living Foundation Stone: 1 Peter 2:4-5

I WONDER whether Peter, when he wrote these words, was thinking about what Jesus Christ said to him long ago, up there at Caesarae Philippi. He had heard from Christ's lips, 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church.' He had understood very little of what it meant then. He is an old man now, years of experience and sorrow and work have taught him the meaning of the words, and he understands them a great deal better than his so-called successors have done. For we may surely take the text as the Apostle's own disclaimer of that which the Roman Catholic Church has founded on it, and has blazoned it, in gigantic letters round the dome of St. Peter's, as meaning. It is surely legitimate to hear him saying in these words: 'Make no mistake, it is Jesus Himself on whom the Church is built. The confession of Him which the Father in heaven revealed to me, not I, the poor sinner who confessed it—the Christ whom that confession set forth, He is the foundation stone, and all of you are called and honored to ring out

the same confession. Jesus is the one Foundation, and we all, apostles and humble believers, are but stones builded on Him.' Peter's relation to Jesus is fundamentally the same as that of every poor soul that 'comes to' Him.

Now, there are two or three thoughts that may very well be suggested from these words, and the first of them is this:—

I. Those That Are in Christ Have Perpetually to Make the Effort to Come Nearer Christ

Remember that the persons to whom the Apostle is speaking are no strangers to the Savior. They have been professing Christians from of old. They have made very considerable progress in the Divine life; they are near Jesus Christ; and yet Peter says to them, 'You can get nearer if you try,' and it is your one task and one hope, the condition of all blessedness, peace, and joy in your religious life that you should perpetually be making the effort to come closer, and to keep closer, to the Lord, by whom you say that you live.

What is it to come to Him? The context explains the figurative expression, in the very next verse or two, by another and simpler word, which strips away the figure and gives us the plain fact—'in Whom believing.' The act of the soul by which I, with all my weakness and sin, cast myself on Jesus Christ, and grapple Him to my heart, and bind myself with His strength and righteousness—that is what the Apostle means here. Or, to put it into other words, this 'coming,' which is here laid as the basis of everything, of all Christian prosperity and progress for the individual and for the community, is the movement towards Christ of the whole spiritual nature of a man—thoughts, loves, wishes, purposes, desires, hopes, will. And we come near to Him when day by day we realize His nearness to us, when our thoughts are often occupied with Him, bring His peace and Himself to bear as a motive upon our conduct, let our love reach out its tendrils towards, and grasp, and twine round Him, bow our wills to His commandment, and in everything obey Him. The distance between heaven and earth does part us, but the distance between a thoughtless mind, an unrenewed heart, a rebellious will, and Him, sets between Him and us a greater gulf, and we have to bridge that by continual honest efforts to keep our wayward thoughts true to Him and near Him, and to regulate our affections that they may not, like runaway stars, carry us far from the path, and to bow or stubborn and self-regulating wills beneath His supreme commandment, and so to make all things a means of coming nearer the Lord with whom is our true home.

Christian men, there are none of us so close to Him but that we may be nearer, and the secret of our daily Christian life is all wrapped up in that one word which is scarcely to be called a figure, 'coming' unto Him. That nearness is what we are to make daily efforts after, and that nearness is capable of indefinite increase. We know not how close to His heart we can lay our aching heads. We know not how near to His fulness we may bring our emptiness. We have never yet reached the point beyond which no closer union is possible. There has always been a film—and, alas! sometimes a gulf—between Him and us, His professing servants. Let us see to it that

the conscious distance diminishes every day, and that we feel ourselves more and more constantly near the Lord and intertwined with Him.

II. Those Who Come Near Christ Will Become Like Christ

‘To Whom coming, as unto a living stone, ye also as living stones.’ Note the verbal identity of the expressions with which Peter describes the Master and His servants. Christ is the Stone—that is Peter’s interpretation of ‘on this rock will I build My Church.’ There is a reference, too, no doubt, to the many Old Testament prophecies which are all gathered up in that saying of our Lord’s. Probably both Jesus and Peter had in mind Isaiah’s ‘stone of stumbling,’ which was also a ‘sure corner-stone, and a tried foundation.’ And words in the context which I have not taken for consideration, ‘disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious,’ plainly rest upon the 118th Psalm, which speaks of ‘the stone which the builders rejected’ becoming ‘the head of the corner.’

But, says Peter, He is not only the foundation Stone, the corner Stone, but a living Stone, and he does not only use that word to show us that he is indulging in a metaphor, and that we are to think of a person and not of a thing, but in the sense that Christ is eminently and emphatically the living One, the Source of life.

But, when he turns to the disciples, he speaks to them in exactly the same language. They, too, are ‘living stones,’ because they come to the ‘Stone’ that is ‘living.’ Take away the metaphor, and what does this identity of description come to? Just this, that if we draw near to Jesus Christ, life from Him will pass into our hearts and minds, which life will show itself in kindred fashion to what it wore in Jesus Christ, and will shape us into the likeness of Him from whom we draw our life, because to Him we have come. I may remind you that there is scarcely a single name by which the New Testament calls Jesus Christ which Jesus Christ does not share with us His younger brethren. By that Son we ‘receive the adoption of sons.’ Is He the Light of the world? We are lights of the world. And if you look at the words of my text, you will see that the offices which are attributed to Christ in the New Testament are gathered up in those which the Apostle here ascribes to Christ’s servants. Jesus Christ in His manhood was the Temple of God. Jesus Christ in His manhood was the Priest for humanity. Jesus Christ in His manhood was the sacrifice for the world’s sins. And what does Peter say here? ‘Ye are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.’ You draw life from Jesus Christ if you keep close to Him, and that life makes you, in derived and subordinate fashion, but in a very real and profound sense, what Jesus Christ was in the world. The whole blessedness and secret of the gifts which our Lord comes to bestow upon men may be summed up in that one thought, which is metaphorically and picturesquely set forth in the language of my text, and which I put into plainer and more prosaic English when I say—they that come near Christ become as Christ. As ‘living stones’ they, too, share in the life which flows from Him. Touch Him, and His quick Spirit passes into our hearts. Rest upon that foundation-stone and up from it, if I may so say, there is drawn, by strange capillary attraction, all the graces and powers of the Savior’s own life.

The building which is reared upon the Foundation is cemented to the Foundation by the communication of the life itself, and, coming to the living Rock, we, too, become alive.

Let us keep ourselves near to Him, for, disconnected, the wire cannot carry the current, and is only a bit of copper, with no virtue in it, no power. Attach it once more to the battery and the mysterious energy flashes through it immediately. 'To Whom coming,' because

He lives, 'ye shall live also.'

III. Lastly: They Who Become Like Christ Because They Are Near Him, Thereby Grow Together

'To whom coming, as unto a living stone, ye also, as living stones, are built up.' That building up means not only the growth of individual graces in the Christian character, the building up in each single soul of more and more perfect resemblance to the Savior, but from the context it rather refers to the welding together, into a true and blessed unity, of all those that partake of that common life. Now, it is very beautiful to remember, in this connection, to whom this letter was written. The first words of it are: 'To the strangers scattered abroad throughout,' etc. etc. All over Asia Minor, hundreds of miles apart, here one there another little group, were these isolated believers, the scattered stones of a great building. But Peter shows them the way to a true unity, notwithstanding their separation. He says to them in effect: 'You up in Bithynia, and you others away clown there on the southern coast, though you never saw one another, though you are separated by mountain ranges and weary leagues; though you, if you met one another, perhaps could not understand what you each were saying, if you "come unto the living Stone, ye as living stones are built up" into one.' There is a great unity into which all they are gathered who, separated by whatever surface distinctions, yet, deep down at the bottom of their better lives, are united to Jesus Christ.

But there may be another lesson here for us, and that is, that the true and only secret of the prosperity and blessedness and growth of a so-called Christian congregation is the individual faithfulness of its members, and their personal approximation of Jesus Christ. If we here, knit together as we are nominally for Christian worship, and by faith in that dear Lord, are true to our profession and our vocation, and keep ourselves near our Master, then we shall be built up; and if we do not, we shall not.

So, dear friends, all comes to this: There is the Stone laid; it does not matter how dose we are lying to it, it will be nothing to us unless we are on it. And I put it to each of you, Are you built on the Foundation, and from the Foundation do you derive a life which is daily bringing you nearer to Him, and making you like Him? All blessedness depends, for time and for eternity, on the answer to that question. For remember that, since that living Stone is laid, it is something to you. Either it is the Rock on which you build, or the Stone against which you stumble and are broken. No man, in a country evangelized like England—I do not say Christian, but evangelized—can say that Jesus Christ has no relation to, or effect upon, him. And certainly, no people that listen to Christian preaching, and know Christian truth as fully and as much as you

do, can say it. He is the Foundation on which we can rear a noble, stable life, if we build upon Him. If He is not the Foundation on which I build, He is the Stone on which I shall be broken.

Spiritual Sacrifices: 1 Peter 2:6

IN this verse Peter piles up his metaphors in a fine profusion, perfectly careless of oratorical elegance or propriety. He gathers together three symbols, drawn from ancient sacrificial worship, and applies them all to Christian people. In the one breath they are ‘temples,’ in the next ‘priests,’ in the third ‘sacrifices.’ All the three are needed to body out the whole truth of the relationship of the perfect universal religion—which is Christianity—to the fragmentary and symbolical religion of ancient time.

Christians individually and collectively are temples, inasmuch as they are ‘the habitation of God through the Spirit.’ They are priests by virtue of their consecration, their direct access to God, their function of representing God to men, and of bringing men to God. They are sacrifices, inasmuch as one main part of their priestly function is to offer themselves to God.

Now, it is very difficult for us to realize what an extraordinary anomaly the Christian faith presented at its origin, surrounded by religions which had nothing to do with morality, conduct, or spiritual life, but were purely ritualistic. And here, in the midst of them, started up a religion bare and bald, and with no appeal to sense, no temple, no altar, no sacrifice. But the Apostles with one accord declare that they had all these things in far higher form than those faiths possessed them, which had only the outward appearance.

Now, this conception of the sacrificial element in the Christian life runs through the whole New Testament, and is applied there in a very remarkable variety of forms. I have taken the words of my text, not so much to discourse upon them especially. My object now is rather to gather together the various references to the Christian life as essentially sacrificial, and to trace the various applications which that idea receives in the New Testament. There are four classes of these, to which I desire especially to refer.

I. There Is the Living Sacrifice of The Body

‘I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present’—which is a technical word for a priest’s action—‘your bodies a living sacrifice,’ in contrast with the slaying, which was the presentation of the animal victim. Now, that ‘body’ there is not equivalent to self is distinctly seen when we notice that Paul goes on, in the very next clause, to say, ‘and be transformed by the renewing of your mind.’ So that he is speaking, not of the self, but of the corporeal organ and instrument of the self, when he says ‘present your bodies a living sacrifice.’

Of course, the central idea of sacrifice is surrender to God; and, of course, the place where that surrender is made is the inmost self. The will is the man, and when the will bows, dethroning self and enthroning God, submitting to His appointments, and delighting to execute

His commandments, then the sacrifice is begun. But, inasmuch as the body is the organ of the man's activity, the sacrifice of the will and of self must needs come out into visibility and actuality in the aggregate of deeds, of which the body is the organ and instrument. But there must first of all be the surrender of my inmost self, and only then, and as the token and outcome of that, will any external acts, however religious they may seem to be, come into the category of sacrifice when they express a conscious surrender of myself to God. 'The flesh profiteth nothing,' and yet the flesh profiteth much. But here is the order that another of the Apostles lays down: 'Yield yourselves to God,' and then, 'your members as instruments of righteousness to Him.'

To speak of the sacrifice of the body as a living sacrifice suggests that it is not the slaying of any bodily appetite or activity that is the true sacrifice and worship, but the hallowing of these. It is a great deal easier, and it is sometimes necessary, to cut off the offending right hand, to pluck out the offending right eye, or, putting away the metaphor, to abstain rigidly from forms of activity which are perfectly legitimate in themselves, and may be innocuous to other people, if we find that they hurt us. But that is second best, and though it is better in the judgment of common sense to go into life maimed than complete to be cast into hell-fire, it is better still to go into life symmetrical and entire, with no maiming in hand or organ. So, you do not offer the living sacrifice of the body when you annihilate, but when you suppress, and direct, and hallow its needs, its appetites, and its activities.

The meaning of this sacrifice is that the whole active life should be based upon, and be the outcome of, the inward surrender of self unto God. 'On the bells of the horses shall be written, Holiness to the Lord, and every pot and vessel in Jerusalem shall be holy as the bowls upon the altar'—in such picturesque and yet profound fashion did an ancient prophet set forth the same truth that lies in this declaration of our Apostle, that the body, the instrument of our activities, should be a living sacrifice to God. Link all its actions with Him; let there be conscious reference to Him in all that I do. Let foot and hand and eye and brain work for Him, and by Him, and in constant consciousness of His presence; suppress where necessary, direct always, appetites and passions, and make the body the instrument of the surrendered spirit. And then, in the measure in which we can do so, the greatest cleft and discord in human life will be filled, and body, soul, and spirit will harmonize and make one music of praise to God.

Ah! brethren, these bad principles have teeth to bite very close into our daily lives. How many of us, young and old, have 'fleshly lusts which war against the soul'? How many of you young men have no heart for higher, purer, nobler things, because the animal in you is strong! How many of you find that the day's activities blunt you to God! How many of us are weakened still under that great antagonism of the flesh lusting against the spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would! Sensuality, indulgence in animal propensities, yielding to the clamant voices of the beast that is within us—these things wreck many a soul; and some of those that are listening to me now. Let the man govern and coerce the animal, and let God govern the man. 'I beseech you that you yield your bodies a living sacrifice.'

II. There Is the Sacrifice of Praise

Of course, logically and properly, this, and all the others that I am going to speak about, are included within that to which I have already directed attention. But still they are dealt with separately in Scripture, and I follow the guidance. We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise unto God continually—that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks unto His name.' There, then, is another of the regions into which the notion of sacrifice as the very essence of Christian life is to be carried.

There is nothing more remarkable in Scripture than the solemn importance that it attaches to what so many people think so little about, and that is words. It even sometimes seems to take them as being more truly the outcome and revelation of a man's character than his deeds are. And that is true, in some respects. But at all events there is set forth, ever running all through the Scripture, that thought, that one of the best sacrifices that men can make to God is to render up the tribute of their praise. In the great psalm which lays down with clearness never surpassed in the New Testament the principles of true Christian worship, this is declared: 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me.' The true offering is not the slaying of animals or the presentation of any material things, but the utterance of hearts welling up thankfulness. In the ancient ritual there stood within the Holy place, and after the altar of burnt-offering had been passed, three symbols of the relation of the redeemed soul to God. There was the great candlestick, which proclaimed 'Ye are the light of the world.' There was the table on which the so-called shewbread was laid, and in the midst, there was the altar of incense, on which, day by day, morning and evening, there was kindled the fragrant offering which curled up in wreaths of blue smoke aspiring towards the heavens. It lay smoldering all through the day, and was quickened into flame morning and evening. That is a symbol representing what the Christian life ought to be—a continual thank-offering of the incense of prayer and praise.

Nor that only, brethren, but also there is another shape in which our words should be sacrifices, and that is in the way of direct utterances to men, as well as of thanksgiving to God. What a shame it is, and what a confession of imperfect, partial redemption and regeneration on the part of professing Christians it is, that there are thousands of us who never, all our lives, have felt the impulse or necessity of giving utterance to our Christian convictions! You can talk about anything else; you are tongue-tied about your religion. Why is that? You can make speeches upon political platforms, or you can discourse on many subjects that interest you. You never speak a word to anybody about the Master that you say you serve. Why is that? 'What is bred in the bone comes out in the flesh.' What is deep in the heart sometimes lies there unuttered, but more often demands expression. I venture to think that if your Christianity was deeper, it would not be so dumb. You strengthen your convictions by speech. A man's belief in anything grows incalculably by the very fact of proclaiming it. And there is no surer way to lose moral and spiritual convictions than to huddle them up in the secret chambers of our hearts. It is like a man carrying a bit of ice in his palm. He locks his fingers over it, and when he opens them, it has all run out and gone. If you want to deepen your Christianity, declare it. If you would have your hearts more full of gratitude, speak your praise. There used to be in certain religious houses a

single figure kneeling on the altar-steps, by day and by night, ever uttering forth with unremitting voice, the psalm of praise. That perpetual adoration in spirit, if not in form, ought to be ours. The fruit of the lips should continually be offered. Literally, of course, there cannot be that unbroken and exclusive utterance of thanksgiving. There are many other things that men have to talk about; but through all the utterances there ought to spread the aroma—like some fragrance diffused through the else scentless air from some unseen source of sweetness—of that name to which the life is one long thanksgiving.

III. There Is the Sacrifice of Help to Men

The same passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to which I have already referred, goes on to bracket together the sacrifice of praise and of deeds. It continues thus:—‘But to do good and to communicate forget not.’ Again, I say, logically this comes under the first division.

But still it may be treated separately, and it just carries this thought—your praying and singing praises are worse than useless unless you go out into the world an embodiment and an imitation of the love which you hymn. True philanthropy has its roots in true religion. The service of man is the service of God.

That principle cuts two ways. It comes as a sharp test of their prayers and psalm-singing to emotional Christians, who are always able to gush in words of thankfulness, and it confronts them with the question, What do you do for your brother? That is a question that comes very close to us all. Do not talk about being the priests of the Most High God unless you are doing the priestly office of representing God to men, and carrying to them the blessings that they need. Your service to God is worthless unless it is followed by diligent, fraternal, wise, self-sacrificing service for men.

The same principle points in another direction. If, on the one hand, it crushes as hypocrisy a religion of talk, on the other hand it declares as baseless a philanthropy which has no reference to God. And whilst I know that there are many men who, following the dictates of their hearts, and apart altogether from any reference to higher religious sanctions, do exercise pity and compassion and help, I believe that for the basing of a lasting, wide, wise benevolence, there is nothing solid and broad except Christ and Him crucified, and the consciousness of having been—sinful and needy as we are—received and blessed by Him. Let the philanthropists learn that the surrender of self, and the fruit of the lips giving thanks to His name, must precede the highest kind of beneficence. Let the Christian learn that benevolence is the garb in which religion is dressed.

‘True worship and undefiled ... is this, to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction.’ Morality is the dress of Religion; Religion is the body of Morality.

IV. Lastly, There Is the Sacrifice of Death

‘I am ready to be offered,’ says the Apostle—to be poured out, as a libation. And again, ‘If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice with you all.’ And so, may

‘Death the endless mercies seal,
And make the sacrifice complete.’

It may become not a reluctant being dragged out of life whilst we cling to it with both our hands. It may be not a reluctant yielding to necessity, but a religious act, in which a man resignedly and trustfully and gratefully yields himself to God; and says, ‘Father! into Thy hands I commit my spirit.’

Ah! brethren, is not that a better way to die than to be like some poor wretch in a stream, that clutches at some unfixed support on the bank, and is whirled away down, fiercely resisting and helpless? We may thus make our last act an act of devotion, and go within the veil as priests bearing in our hands the last of our sacrifices. The sacrifice of death will only be offered when a life of sacrifice has preceded it. And if you and I, moved by the mercies of God, yield ourselves living sacrifices, using our lips for His praise and our possessions for man’s help, then we may die as the Apostle expected to do, and feel that by Christ Jesus even death becomes ‘an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing unto God.’

Mirrors of God: 1 Peter 2:9

THE Revised Version, instead of ‘praises,’ reads excellencies and even that is but a feeble translation of the remarkable word here employed. For it is that usually rendered ‘virtues’; and by the word, of course, when applied to God, we mean the radiant excellencies and glories of His character, of which our earthly qualities, designated by the same name, are but as shadows.

It is, indeed, true that this same expression is employed in the Greek version of the Old Testament in Isaiah 43 in a verse which evidently was floating before Peter’s mind. ‘This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.’

But even while that is admitted, it is to be observed that the expression here does not merely mean that the audible praise of God should be upon the lips of Christian people, but that their whole lives should, in a far deeper sense than that, be the manifestation of what the Apostle here calls ‘excellencies of God.’

I. Here We Get a Wonderful Glimpse into The Heart of God

Note the preceding words, in which the writer describes all God’s mercies to His people, making them ‘a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation’; a people ‘His own

possession.’ All that is done for one specific purpose—‘that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness.’ That is to say, the very aim of all God’s gracious manifestations of Himself is that the men who apprehend them should go forth into the world and show Him for what He is.

Now that aim may be, and often has been, put so as to present an utterly hard and horrible notion. That God’s glory is His only motive may be so stated as to mean nearly an Almighty Selfishness, which is far liker the devil than God. People in old days did not always recognize the danger that lay in such a representation of what we call God’s motive for action. But if you think for a moment about this statement, all that appears hard and repellent drops clean away from it, and it turns out to be another way of saying, ‘God is Love.’ Because, what is there more characteristic of love than an earnest desire to communicate itself and to be manifested and beheld? And what is it that God reveals to the world for His own glory but the loftiest and most wondrous compassion, that cannot be wearied out, that cannot be provoked, and the most forgiving Omnipotence, that, in answer to all men’s wanderings and rebellions, only seeks to draw them to itself? That is what God wants to be known for. Is that hard and repellent? Does that make Him a great tyrant, who only wants to be abjectly worshipped? No; it makes Him the very embodiment and perfection of the purest love. Why does He desire that He should be known? for any good that it does to Him? No; except the good that even His creatures can do to Him when they gladden His paternal heart by recognizing Him for what He is, the Infinite Lover of all souls.

But the reason why He desires, most of all, that the light of His character may pour into every heart is because He would have every heart gladdened and blessed forever by that received and believed light. So, the hard saying that God’s own glory is His supreme end melts into ‘God is Love.’ The Infinite desires to communicate Himself, that by the communication men may be blessed.

II. There Is Another Thing Here, And That Is, A Wonderful Glimpse of What Christian People Are in The World For.

‘This people have I formed for Myself,’ says the fundamental passage in Isaiah already referred to, ‘they shall show forth My praise.’ It was not worthwhile forming them except for that. It was still less worthwhile redeeming them except for that.

But you may say, ‘I am saved in order that I may enjoy all the blessings of salvation, immunities from fear and punishment, and the like.’ Yes! Certainly! But is that all? Or is it the main thing? I think not. There is not a creature in God’s universe so tiny, even although you cannot see it with a microscope, but that it has a claim on Him that made it for its well-being. That is very certain. And so, my salvation—with all the blessedness for me that lies wrapped up and hived in that great word—my salvation is an adequate end with God, in all His dealing, and especially in His sending of Jesus Christ.

But there is not a creature in the whole universe, though he were mightier than the archangels that stand nearest God’s throne, who is so great and independent that his happiness and well-being is the sole aim of God’s gifts to him. For every one of us the Apostle means the

word, 'No man liveth to himself'—he could not if he were to try—'and no man dieth to himself.' Every man that receives anything from God is thereby made a steward to impart it to others. So, we may say—and I speak now to you who profess to be Christians—'you were not saved for your own sakes.' One might almost say that that was a by-end. You were saved—shall I say?—for God's sake; and you were saved for man's sake? Just as when you put a bit of leaven into a lump of dough, each grain of the lump, as it is leavened and transformed, becomes the medium for passing on the mysterious transforming influence to the particle beyond, so every one of us, if we have been brought out of darkness into marvelous light, have been so brought, not only that we may recreate and bathe our own eyes in the flooding sunshine, but that we may turn to our brothers and ask them to come too out of the doleful night into the cheerful, gladsome day. Every man that Jesus Christ conquers on the field He sends behind Him, and says, 'Take rank in My army. Be My soldier.' Every yard of line in a new railway when laid down is used to carry materials to make the next yard; and so, the terminus is reached. Even so, Christian people were formed for Christ that they might show forth His praise.

Look what a notion that gives us of the dignity of the Christian life, and of the special manifestation of God which is afforded to the world in it. You, if you love as you ought to do, are a witness of something far nobler in God than all the stars in the sky. You, if you set forth as becomes you His glorious character, have crowned the whole manifestation that He makes of Himself in Nature and in Providence. What people learn about God from a true Christian is a better revelation than has ever been made or can be made elsewhere. So, the Bible talks about principalities and powers in heavenly places who have had nobody knows how many millenniums of intercourse with God, nobody knows how deep and intimate, learning from Christian people the manifold wisdom which had folds and folds in it that they had never unfolded and never could have done. 'Ye are My witnesses,' saith the Lord. Sun and stars tell of power, wisdom, and a whole host of majestic attributes. We are witnesses that 'He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.' Who was it that said

'Twas great to speak a world from naught,

'Tis greater to redeem?'

'Ye are saved that ye may show forth the praise of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.'

III. Lastly, We Have Here a Piece of Stringent Practical Direction.

All that I have been saying thus far refers to the way in which the very fact of a man's being saved from his sin is a revelation of God's mercy, love, and restoring power. But there are two sides to the thought of my text; and the one is that the very existence of Christian people in the world is a standing witness to the highest glory of God's name; and the other is that there are characteristics which, as Christian men, we are bound to put forth, and which manifest in another fashion the excellencies of our redeeming God.

The world takes its notions of God, most of all, from the people who say that they belong to God's family. They read us a great deal more than they read the Bible. They see us; they only hear about Jesus Christ. 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image' nor any likeness of the Divine, but thou shalt make thyself an image of Him, that men looking at it may learn a little more of what He is. If we have any right to say that we are a royal priesthood, a chosen nation, God's 'possession,' then there will be in us some likeness of Him to whom we belong stamped more or less perfectly upon our characters; and just as people cannot look at the sun, but may get some notion of its power when they gaze upon the rare beauty of the tinted clouds that lie round about it, if, in the poor, wet, cold mistiness of our lives there be caught, as it were, and tangled some stray beams of the sunshine, there will be color and beauty there. A bit of worthless tallow may be saturated with a perfume which will make it worth its weight in gold. So, our poor natures may be drenched with God and give Him forth fragrant and precious, and men may be drawn thereby. The witness of the life which is Godlike is the duty of Christian men and women in the world, and it is mainly what we are here for.

Nor does that exclude the other kind of showing forth the praises, by word and utterance, at fit times and to the right people. We are not all capable of that, in any public fashion; we are all capable of it in some fashion. There is no Christian that has not somebody to whom their words—they may be very simple and very feeble—will come as nobody else's words can. Let us use these talents and these opportunities for the Master.

But, above all, let us remember that none of these works—either the involuntary and unconscious exhibition of light and beauty and excellencies caught from Him; or the voluntary and vocal proclamations of the name of Hira from whom we have caught them—can be done to any good purpose if any taint of self mingles with it. 'Let your light so shine before men that they may behold your good works and glorify'—whom? you? 'Your Father which is in heaven.'

The harp-string gives out its note only on condition that, being touched, it vibrates, and ceases to be visible. Be you unseen, transparent, and the glory of the Lord shall shine through you.

Christ the Exemplar: 1 Peter 2:21

THESE words are a very striking illustration of the way in which the Gospel brings Christ's principles to bear upon morals and duty. The Apostle is doing nothing more than exhorting a handful of slaves to the full and complete and patient acceptance of their hard lot, and in order to teach a very homely and lowly lesson to the squalid minds of a few captives, he brings in the mightiest of all lessons by pointing to the most beautiful, most blessed, and most mysterious fact in the world's history—the cross of Christ. It is the very spirit of Christianity that the biggest thing is to regulate the smallest duties of life. Men's lives are made up of two or three big things and a multitude of little ones, and the greater rule the lesser; and, my friends, unless we have got a religion and a morality that can and will keep the trifles of our lives right there will be nothing right; unless we can take those deepest truths, make them the ruling principles, and lay them down side by side with the most trivial things of our lives, we are something short. Is

there nothing in your life or mine so small that we cannot bring it into captivity and lift it into beauty by bringing it into connection with saving grace? Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example. This is the first thing that strikes me, and I intend it also by way of introduction. Look how the Apostle has put the points together, as though there are two aspects which go together and cannot be rendered apart, like the underside and the upper side of a coin. 'Christ also suffered for us,' and so for us says all the orthodox. 'Leaving us an example'—there protests all the heretics. Yes, but we know that there is a power in both of them, and the last one is only true when we begin with the first. He suffered for us. There, there, my friends, is the deepest meaning of the cross, and if you want to get Christ for an example, begin with taking Him as the sacrifice, for He gave His life for you. Don't part the two things. If you believe Him to be Christ, then you take Him at the cross: if you want to see the meaning of Christ as an example, begin with Him as your Savior. 'Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps.' These are the words, and what God hath joined together let no man put asunder. With these few remarks I shall deal with the words a little more exhaustively, and I see in them three things—the sufferings of Christ our gain, the sufferings of Christ our pattern, and the suffering of Christ our power to imitate.

And first of all, that great proclamation which underlies the whole matter—Christ also suffered for us. The sufferings of Christ are thereby our gain. I shall not dwell on the larger questions which these words naturally open for us, and I shall content myself with some of the angles and side views of thought, and one to begin with is this: It is very interesting to notice how, as his life went on, and his inspiration became more full, this Apostle got to understand, as being the very living and heart center of his religion, the thing which at first was a stumbling-block and mystery to him. You remember when Christ was here on earth, and was surrounded by all His disciples, the man who actually led antagonism to the thought of a saving Messiah, was this very Apostle Peter. How he displayed his ignorance in the words, 'This shall not be unto Thee, O Lord'; and you remember also how his audacity rose to the height of saying, 'Why cannot I follow Thee now, Lord? I will lay down my life for Thy sake,' so little did he understand the purposes of Christ's suffering and Christ's death. And even after His resurrection we don't find that Peter in his early preaching had got as far as he seems to have got in this letter from which my text is taken. You will notice that in this letter he speaks a great deal about the sufferings of Christ, which he puts side by side and in contrast with God's glorifying of His Son. Christ's cross, which at first had come to him as a rejection, has now come to him in all its reality, and to him there was the one grand thing, 'He suffered for us,' as though he realizes Christ in all His beauty and purity, and not only as a beautiful teacher and dear friend. That which at first seemed to him as an astounding mystery and perfect impossibility, he now comes to understand. With those two little words, 'for us,' where there was before impossibility, disappointment, and anomaly, the anomaly vanishes, although the mystery becomes deeper. In one sense it was incomprehensible; in another sense it was the only explanation of the fact. And, my friends, I want you to build one thought on this.

Unless you and I lay hold of the grand truth that Jesus Christ died for us, it seems to me that the story of the Gospel and the story of the cross is the saddest and most depressing page of human history. That there should have been a man possessed of such a soul, such purity, such

goodness, such tenderness, such compassion, and such infinite mercy—if there were all this to do nothing but touch men’s hearts and prick and irritate them into bitter enmity—if the cross were the world’s wages to the world’s best Teacher, and nothing more could be said, then, my friends, it seems to me that the hopes of humanity have, in the providence of God, suffered great disaster, and a terrible indictment stands against both God and man. Oh, yes, the death of Jesus Christ, and the whole history of the world’s treatment of Him, is an altogether incomprehensible and miserable thing—a thing to be forgotten, and a thing to be wept over in tears of blood, and no use for us unless we do as Peter did, apply all the warmth of the heart to this one master key, ‘for us,’ and then the mystery is only an infinitude of love and mercy. What before we could not understand we now begin to see, and to understand the love of God which passeth all understanding. Oh, my friends, I beseech you never think of the cross of Christ without taking those two words. It is a necessary explanation to make the picture beautiful: ‘for us,’ ‘for us’; ‘for me, for me.’ And then notice still further that throughout the whole of this Epistle the comparative vagueness of the words ‘for me’ is interpreted definitely. So far as the language of my text is concerned there can be nothing more expressive, more outspoken, or more intelligible, ‘Christ also suffered for us,’ for our realm. But that is not all that Peter would have us learn. If you want to know the nature of the work, and what the Savior suffered on the cross for our behalf, advantage, and benefit, here is the definition in the following verse, ‘Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness.’ ‘For us,’ not merely as an example; ‘for us,’ not merely for His purity, His beautiful life and calm death; no, better than all that, though a glorious example it is. He has taken away our sins, we are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ; ‘for us’ in the sense of the words in another part of the Epistle, ‘Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,’ and if so, we are living examples of what Christ our Savior has done for the whole world.

There is another point I want to speak about in dwelling on the first part of the text. If you will read this Epistle of Peter at your leisure, you will see that while with Paul both make the cross of Christ the center of their teaching, Paul speaks more about His death, and Peter more about His sufferings. Throughout the letters of Peter, the phrase runs, and the phrase has come almost entirely into modern Christian usage from this Apostle. Paul speaks about the death; Peter speaks of the sufferings. The eye-witness of a Loving Friend, the man who had stood by His side through much of His sufferings (though he fled at last), a vivid imagination of His Master’s trials, and a warm heart, led Peter to dwell not only on the one fact of the death, but also on the accompaniments of that awful death, of the mental and physical pain, and especially the temper of the Savior. I shall not dwell on this, except to make one passing remark on it, viz., that there is a kind of preaching which prevails among the Roman Catholic Church, and is not uncommon to many of the Protestant churches, which dwells unduly on the physical fact of Christ’s death and sufferings. I think, for my part, we are going to the other extreme, and a great many of us are losing a very great source of blessing to ourselves and to those whom we influence, because we don’t realize and don’t dwell sufficiently on the physical and mental sorrows and agony He went through with the death on the cross; and one bad effect of all this is that Christ’s atonement has become to be a kind of theological juggle, and I don’t know that the popular mind can have in

the ordinary way any better means of the deliverance of Christ's cross from this theological maze than a little more frankness and honesty in dwelling on the sorrows and pain of our dear Lord.

Now a word about the second part. The sufferings of Christ as represented here in the text are not only for our gain but our pattern, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. We are not concerned here about the general principles of Christian ethics, and I don't think I need dwell on them at all as being great blessings to us; and passing from that I would rather dwell on the one specific thought before us—on the beautiful life, the gracious words, the gentle deeds, the wisdom, the rectitude, the tenderness, the submission to the Father and the oblivion to Himself, which characterizes the whole life of Jesus Christ, from the very first up to the agony on the cross. We have looked to Him as our gain, and as the head and beginning of our salvation, and now we have to turn from that mysterious and solemn thought and look to Him as an ideal pattern by which our life should be molded and shaped. 'Leaving us an example.' Just as Elijah's mantle dropped from him as he rose, so Christ in going up to the Father fluttered down on the world a pattern which He had in His sufferings. He goes away, but the pattern abides with us. 'Leaving us an example.' The word used here is translated quite correctly. The word example is a very remarkable and unusual one; it means literally a thing to be retained. You put a copy head before a child, and tell him to copy it, and trace it over till he retains it; or, to come to modern English, you put the copy head on the top of a page. What blots, pothooks, and angles you and I make as we are trying to write on the top of the page of life. See, there is the pattern. Lo, another man hath written above, and you are asked to make your life exactly the same, the same angles and the same corners—to make your life in all respects coincide with that. My friends, we shall all have to take our copybooks to the Master's desk someday. There will be a headline there which Christ hath written, and one which we have written, and how do you think we shall like to put the two side by side? My friends, we had better do it today than have to do it then. There is the pattern life; the copy is plain. I don't think I need say any more about the other metaphor contained here. The Divine Exemplar has left us the headline that we should follow His footsteps, and it is a blessed thought to know that we are to follow in His own steps. 'What, cannot I follow Thee now?' said Peter once, and you remember when the Apostle had been restored to his office, the words of the Savior were—'Feed My lambs; feed My sheep; feed My lambs, follow thou Me.' This is also our privilege. As a guide going across a wet moor with a traveler calls out, 'Step where I step, or else you will be bogged,' so we must tread in the steps of the Savior, and then we shall come safe on the other side. Tread in His steps, aye, in the steps which are marked with bleeding feet, for 'He suffered and left us an example.' I will just add one word, dear friends, to deepen the thought in its impressiveness, that the cross of Christ is to be the pattern of our lives. It stands alone, thank God, for mighty power in its relation to the salvation of the world, and it stands alone in awful terror. You and I are, at the very worst, but at the edge of the storm which broke in all its dreadful fury over His head; we love to go but a little way down the hillside, while He descended to the very bottom; we love to drink but very little of the cup which He drained the last drop of and held it up empty and reversed, showing that nothing trickled from it, and exclaimed, 'The cup which My Father hath given Me have I drunk.' But although alone in all its mighty power, and though alone in all its awful terror, it may be copied by us in two things—perfect submission to our Maker, and non-resistance and meekness" with regard to man. There is only one way of carrying the cross of Christ, which God lays on us

all, and that is bowing our back. If we resist, it will crush us, and if we yield, we have something to endure; and there is but one thing which enables a man to patiently bear the sorrows and griefs which come to us all, and that is the simple secret, 'Father, not as I will, but Thy will be done.' Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in His footsteps, and when we patiently do this the rod becomes a guiding staff, and the crown of thorns a crown of glory.

But my text reminds me that the sufferings of Christ are not only our gain and our pattern, but they are also our power to imitate—the power to fight the battle for Christ. Example is not all. The world wants more than that. The reason for men's badness is not because they have not plenty of patterns of good. If a copy head could save the world, it would have been saved long ago. Patterns of good are plenty; the mischief is we don't copy them. There are footsteps in abundance, but then our legs are lame, and we cannot tread in them, and what is the use of copies if we have a broken pen, muddy ink, and soiled paper? So, we want a great deal more than that. No, my friends, the world is not to be saved by example. You and I know that the weakness and the foolishness of men know a great deal better than the wisest of men ever did, so we want something more. Examples don't give the power nor the wish to get it. Is not that true about you? Don't you feel that if this is all which religion has given you it stops short? The gospel comes and says, 'If you love Christ Jesus because you know that He died for you,' then there will be something else than the copybook. That copy and pattern will be laid to your heart and transferred there. You will not have to go on trying to make a bungling imitation; you will get it photographed on your spirit, and on your character more distinctly and more clearly down to the very minutest shade of resemblance to the Master, and with simple loving trust you will go on from strength-to-strength glorifying God in your life. They that begin with the cross of Christ, and make the sacrifice their all in all, will advance heavenward joyously; the cross and the sacrifice will be the pattern of your pilgrimage here, and the perfectness of your characters unto the likeness of the Son. The cross is the agency of sanctification as well as the means of forgiveness—saving grace to save us from the world, saving grace to help us everywhere and in everything for our salvation, and saving grace to help us to conquer our self-will, and saving grace to bind us to Him, whose abundant goodness and gratitude no man can tell. If we love Him, we shall keep His commandments; if we love them, we shall grow in grace, and not else. None else, my brother, my sister, but the Eternal Exemplar stands there as our refuge; and if you want to be filled with this all-saving grace, deep down to the bottom of His tender heart, if you want to be good, and of pure mind, then you have to begin with that Savior who died for you, and trust to the cross for your forgiveness. Then listen to Him saying, Any man who comes after Me, let him take up My cross'—take it up, mark—'and follow Me.'

Hallowing Christ: 1 Peter 3:14-15

THESE words are a quotation from the prophet Isaiah, with some very significant variations. As originally spoken, they come from a period of the prophet's life when he was surrounded by conspirators against him, eager to destroy, and when he had been giving utterance to threatening prophecies as to the coming up of the King of Assyria, and the voice of God encouraged him and his disciples with the ringing words: 'Fear not their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread, and He

shall be for a sanctuary.’ Peter was in similar circumstances. The gathering storm of persecution of the Christians as Christians seems to have been rising on his horizon, and he turns to his brethren, and commends to them the old word which long ago had been spoken to and by the prophet. But the variations are very remarkable. The Revised Version correctly reads my text thus: ‘Fear not their fear, neither be troubled, but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord.’

I. We Have First to Note the Substitution, As A Matter Of Course, Without Any Need for Explanation or Vindication, Of Jesus Christ in Place of The Jehovah of The Old Testament.

There is no doubt that the reading adopted in the Revised Version is the true one, as attested by weighty evidence in the manuscripts, and in itself more probable by reason of its very difficulty. The other reading adopted in Authorized Versions is likely to have arisen from a marginal note which crept into the text, and was due to some copyist who was struck by Peter’s free handling of the passage, and wished to make the quotations verbally accurate.

Now, if we think for a moment of the Jew’s reverence for the letter of Scripture, and then think again of the Jew’s intense monotheism and dread of putting any creature into the place of God, we shall understand how saturated with the belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and how convinced that it was the vital center of all Christian teaching, this Apostle must have been when, without a word of explanation, he took his pen, and, as it were, drew it through ‘Lord God’ in Isaiah’s words, and wrote in capitals over it, ‘Christ as Lord.’

What does that mean? Some of us would, perhaps, hesitate to say that it means that He who was all through the growing ages of brightening revelation of old, named ‘Jehovah,’ is now named Jesus Christ. I believe that from the beginning He whom we call, according to the teaching of the great prologue of John’s Gospel, the ‘Word of God,’ was the Agent of all Divine revelation. But whether that be so or no, whether we have the right to say that the same Person who was revealed as ‘Jehovah’ is now revealed as ‘Jesus Christ,’ the ‘Word made flesh,’ or no, we distinctly fail to apprehend who and what Jesus Christ was to the writer of this epistle, and fail to sanctify Him in our hearts, unless we say” ‘To Thee belongeth all that belongs to God.’ That is the first great truth that comes out of these words, and I would commend it to any of you who may be hesitating about that Christian fact of the true divinity of Jesus Christ. You cannot strike it out of the New Testament, and if you try to do so you tear the book to pieces, and reduce it to rags and tatters.

Further, mark here what the Apostle means by the Christian sanctifying of Christ.

That is a strange expression. How am I to sanctify Jesus Christ? Well, it is the same word that is used in the Lord’s Prayer, and perhaps its use there may throw light on Peter’s meaning here. ‘Hallowed be Thy name’—explains the meaning of hallowing Christ as Lord in our hearts. We sanctify or hallow one who is holy already, when we recognize the holiness, and honor what we recognize. So that the plain meaning of the commandments here is: set Christ in your hearts on the pedestal and pinnacle that belongs to Him, and then bow down before Him with all

reverence and submission. Be sure that you give Him all that is His due, and in the love of your hearts, as well as in the thinkings of your minds, recognize Him for what He is, the Lord. Let us take care that our thoughts about Jesus Christ are full of devout awe and reverence. I venture to think that a great deal of modern and sentimental Christianity is very defective in this respect. You cannot love Jesus Christ too much, but you can love Him with too little reverence. And if you take up some of our luscious modern hymns that people are so fond of singing, I think you will find in them a twang of unwholesomeness, just because the love is not reverent enough, and the approaching confidence has not enough of devout awe in it. This generation looks at the half of Christ. When people are suffering from indigestion, they can only see half of the thing that they look at, and there are many of us that can only see a part of the whole Christ: and so, forgetting that He is judge, and forgetting that He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and forgetting that whilst He is manifested in the flesh our brother He is also God manifest in the flesh, our Creator as well as our Redeemer, and our Judge as well as our Savior, some do not enough hallow Him in their hearts as Lord.

Peter had heard Jesus say that ‘all men should honor the Son as they honored the Father.’ I beseech you, embrace the whole Christ, and see to it that you do not dethrone Him from His rightful place, or take from Him the glory that is due to His name. For your love will suffer, and become a mere sentiment, inoperative and sometimes unwholesome, unless you keep in mind Peter’s injunction.

But, further, there is included in this commandment, not only what Isaiah said, ‘Let Him be your fear and your dread,’ but also a reverent love and trust. For we do not hallow Christ as we ought, unless we absolutely confide in every word of His lips. Did you ever think that not to trust Jesus Christ is to blaspheme and profane that holy name by which we are called; and that to hallow Him means to say to Him, ‘I believe every word that Thou speakest, and I am ready to risk my life upon Thy veracity’? Distrust is dishonoring the Master, and taking from Him the glory that is due unto His name.

Then there is another point to be noted: ‘Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord.’ That is Peter’s addition to Isaiah’s words, and it is not a mere piece of tautology, but puts great emphasis into the exhortation: What is a man’s heart, in New Testament and Old Testament language? It is the very center-point of the personal self. And when Peter says, ‘Hallow Him in your hearts,’ he means that, deep down in the very midst of your personal being, as it were, there should be, fundamental to all, and interior to all, this reverential awe and absolute trust in Jesus Christ—a habitual thought, a central emotion, an all-dominant impulse. ‘Out of the heart are the issues of life.’ Put the healing agent into it, the fountain-head, and all the streams that pour out thence will be purified and sweetened. Deep in the heart put Christ, and life will be pure.

Now, in another part of this letter the Apostle says, ‘Ye are a spiritual house.’ I think some notion of the same sort is running in his mind here. He thinks of each man’s heart as being a shrine in which the god is enthroned, and in which worship is rendered. And if we have Christ in our hearts, then our hearts are temples; and if we ‘hallow’ the Christ that dwells within us, we shall take care that there are no foul things in that sanctuary. We dishonor the indwelling Deity when into that same heart we allow to come lusts, foulnesses, meannesses, worldlinesses,

passions, sins, and all the crew of reptiles and wild beasts that we sometimes admit there. If we hallow Christ in our hearts, in any true fashion, He will turn out the money-changers and overturn the tables. And if we desire to hallow Him in our hearts, we too, must by His Spirit's help, purge the temple that He may enter and abide.

And so, I come to the next point, and that is the Christian courage and calmness that ensue from hallowing Christ in the heart.

The Apostle first puts his exhortation: 'Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled,' and then he presents us an opposite injunction, obedience to which is the only means of obeying the first exhortation. If you do not sanctify Christ in your hearts, you cannot help being afraid of their terror, and troubled. If you do, then there is no fear that you will fall into that snare. That is to say, the one thing that delivers men from the fears that make cowards of us all is to have Christ lodged within our hearts. Sunshine puts out culinary fires. They who have the awe and the reverent love that knit them to Jesus Christ, and who carry Him within their hearts, have no need to be afraid of anything besides. Only he who can say, 'The Lord is the strength of my life' can go on to say, 'Of whom shall I be afraid?' There is nothing more hopeless than to address to men, ringed about with dangers, the foolish exhortations: 'Cheer up! do not be frightened,' unless you can tell them some reason for not being frightened. And the one reason that will carry weight with it, in all circumstances, is the presence of Jesus.

'With Christ in the vessel

I smile at the storm.'

The world comes to us and says: 'Do not be afraid, do not be afraid; be of good courage; pluck up your heart, man.' The Apostle comes and says: 'Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts; and then, and only then, will you be bold.' The boldness which fronts the certain dangers and calamities and the possible dangers and calamities of this life, without Christ, is not boldness, but foolhardiness. 'The simple passeth on, and is punished,' says the book of Proverbs. It is easy to whistle when going through the churchyard, and to say, 'Who's afraid?' But the ghosts rise all the same, and there is only one thing that lays them, and that is—the present Christ.

In like manner the sanctifying of Jesus Christ in the heart is the secret of calmness. 'Fear not their fear, neither be troubled.' I wonder if Peter was thinking at all of another saying: 'Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid.' Perhaps he was. At any rate, his thought is parallel with our Lord's when He said, 'Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God, and believe in Me.' The two alternatives are possible; we shall have either troubled hearts, or hearts calmed by faith in Christ. The ships behind the breakwater do not pitch and toss. The little town up amongst the hills, with the high cliffs around it, lies quiet, and 'hears not the loud winds when they call.' And the heart that has Christ for its possession has a secret peace, whatever strife may be raging round it.

‘Be not troubled; sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.’ Peter leaves out a clause of Isaiah’s, though he conveys the idea without reiterating the words. But Isaiah had added a sweet promise which means much the same thing as I have now been saying, when he went on to declare that to those who sanctify the Lord God in their hearts, He shall be for a sanctuary. ‘The sanctuary was an asylum where men were safe. And if we have made our hearts temples in which Christ is honored, worshipped, and trusted, then we shall dwell in Him as in the secret place of the Most High’; and in the inner chamber of the Temple it will be quiet, whatever noises are in the camp, and there is light coming from the Shekinah, whatever darkness may lie around. If we take Christ into our hearts, and reverence and love Him there, He will take us into His heart, and we shall dwell in peace, because we dwell in Him.

Christian Asceticism: 1 Peter 4:1-8

CHRISTIAN morality brought two new things into the world—a new type of life in sharp contrast with the sensuality rife on every side, and a new set of motives powerfully aiding in its realization. Both these novelties are presented in this passage, which insists on a life in which the spirit dominates the flesh, and is dominated by the Will of God, and which puts forward purely Christian ideas as containing the motives for such a life. The facts of Christ’s life and the prospect of Christ’s return to judge the world are here urged as the reason for living a life of austere repression of ‘the flesh’ that we may do God’s will.

I. We Have, First, 1 Peter 4:1-2, A General Precept, Based Upon the Broad View of Christ’s Earthly History

‘Christ hath suffered in the flesh.’ That is the great fact which should shape the course of all His followers. But what does suffer in the flesh mean here? It does not refer only to the death of Jesus, but to His whole life. The phrase ‘in the flesh’ is reiterated in the context, and evidently is equivalent to ‘during the earthly life.’ Our Lord’s life was, in one aspect, one continuous suffering, because He lived the higher life of the spirit. That higher life had to Him, and has to us, rich compensations; but it sets those who are true to it at necessary variance with the lower types of life common among men, and it brings many pains, all of which Jesus knew. The last draught from the cup was the bitterest, but the bitterness was diffused through all the life of the Man of Sorrows.

That life is here contemplated as the pattern for all Christ’s servants. Peter says much in this letter of our Lord’s sufferings as the atonement for sin, but here he looks at them rather as the realized ideal of all worthy life. We are to be ‘partakers of Christ’s sufferings’ (1 Peter 5:13), and we shall become so in proportion as His own Spirit becomes the spirit which lives in us. If Jesus were only our pattern, Christianity would be a poor affair, and a gospel of despair; for how should we reach to the pure heights where He stood? But, since He can breathe into us a spirit which will hallow and energize our spirits, we can rise to walk beside Him on the high places of heroic endurance and of holy living. Very beautifully does Peter hint at our sore conflict, our personal defenselessness, and our all-sufficient armor, in the picturesque metaphor ‘arm

yourselves.’ The ‘mind of Christ’ is given to us if we will. We can gird it on, and if we do, it will be as an impenetrable coat-of-mail, which will turn the sharpest arrows and resist the fiercest sword-cuts.

The last clause of 1 Peter 4:1 is a parenthesis, and, if it is for the moment omitted, the sentence runs smoothly on, especially if the Revised Version’s reading is adopted. The purpose of arming us with the same mind is that, whilst we live on earth, we should live according to the will of God, and should renounce ‘the lusts of men,’ which are in us as in all men, and which men who are not clad in the armor which Christ gives to us yield to.

But what of the parenthetical statement? Clearly, the words which follow it forbid its being taken to mean that dead men do not sin. Rather the Apostle’s thought seems to be that such suffering in daily life after Christ’s pattern, and by His help, is at once a sign that the sufferer has shaken off the dominion of sin, and is a means of further emancipating him from it.

But the two great thoughts in this paragraph are, that the Christian life is one in which God’s will, and not man’s desires, is the regulating force, and that the pattern of that life and the power to copy the pattern are found in Christ, the sufferer for righteousness’ sake.

II. More Specific Injunctions, Which Make Obedience to Them Possible to Our Weakness

More specific injunctions, entering into the details of the higher life, follow, interwoven, as in the preceding verses, with a statement of the motives which make obedience to them possible to our weakness. The sins in view are those most closely connected with ‘the flesh’ in its literal meaning, amongst which are included ‘abominable idolatries,’ because gross acts of sensual immorality were inseparably intertwined with much of heathen worship. These sins of flesh were especially rampant among the luxurious Asiatic lands, to which this letter was addressed, but they flooded the whole Roman empire, as the works of poets like Martial and of moralists like Epictetus equally show. But New York or London could match the worst scenes in Rome or Ephesus, and perhaps would not be far behind the foul animalism of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lust and drunkenness are eating out the manhood of our race on both sides of the Atlantic, and, if we have ‘the same mind’ as the suffering Christ, we shall put on the armor for war to the knife with these in society, and for the rigid self-control of our own animal nature.

Observe the strong motives which Peter just touches without expanding. A sad irony lies in his saying that the time past may suffice. The flesh had had enough of time given to it,—had not God a right to the rest? The flesh should have had none; it had had all too much. Surely the readers had had enough of the lower life, more than enough. Were they not sick of it, ‘satisfied’ even to disgust? Let us look back on our wasted years, and give no more precious moments to serve the corruptible flesh. Further, the life of submission to the animal nature is characteristic of ‘the Gentiles,’ and in sharp contrast, therefore, to that proper to Christ’s followers. That is as true to-day, in America and England, as ever it was. Indeed, as wealth has increased, and so-called ‘civilization’ has diffused material comforts, senseless luxury, gluttony, drunkenness, and still

baser fleshy sins, have become more flagrantly common in society which is not distinctively and earnestly Christian; and there was never more need than there is today for Christians to carry aloft the flag of self-control and temperance in all things belonging to 'the flesh.'

If we have the mind of Christ, we shall get the same treatment from the world which Peter says that the primitive Christians did from the idolaters round them. We shall be wondered at, just as a heathen stared with astonishment at this strange, new sect, which would have nothing to do with feasts and garlands and wine-cups and lust disguised as worship. The spectacle, when repeated to-day, of Christians steadfastly refusing to share in that lower life which is the only life of so many, is, perhaps, less wondered at now, because it is, thank God! more familiar; but it is not less disliked and 'blasphemed.' A total abstainer from intoxicants will not get the good word of the distiller or brewer or consumer of liquor. He will be called faddist, narrow, sour-visaged, and so on and so on. 'You may know a genius because all the dunces make common cause against him,' said Swift. You may know a Christian after Christ's pattern because all the children of the flesh are in league to laugh at him and pelt him with nicknames.

Further, the thought of Christ as the judge should both silence the blasphemers and strengthen the blasphemed to endure. That judgment will vindicate the wisdom of those who sowed to the spirit and the folly of those who sowed to the flesh. The one will reap corruption; the other, life everlasting.

The difficult 1 Peter 5:6 cannot be adequately dealt with here, but we may note that introductory 'for' shows that it, too, contains a motive urging to life, 'to the will of God,' and that no such motive appears in it if it is taken to mean, as by some, that the gospel is preached after death to the dead. Surely to say that 'the gospel was preached also (or, even) to them that are dead' is not to say that it was preached to them when dead.

Peter's letter is of late enough date to explain his looking back to a generation now passed away, who had heard it in their lifetime. Nor does one see how the meaning of 'in the flesh,' which belongs to the phrase in the frequent instances of its occurrence in this context, can be preserved in the clause 'that they might be judged according to men in the flesh,' unless that means a judgment which takes place during the earthly life.

We note, too, that the antithesis between being judged 'according to men in the flesh,' and living 'according to God in the spirit' recalls that in 1 Peter 5:2 between living in the flesh to the lusts of men and to the will of God. It would appear, therefore, that the Apostle's meaning is that the very aim of the preaching of the gospel to those who are gone to meet the Judge was that they might by it be judged while here in the flesh, in regard to the lower life 'according to men' (or, as 1 Peter 5:2 has it, 'to the lusts of men'), and, being so judged, and sin condemned in their flesh, might live according to God in their spirits. That is but to say in other words that the gospel is meant to search hearts, and bring to light and condemn the lusts of the flesh, and to impart the new life which is molded after the will of God.

III. The Reference to Christ as The Judge Suggests a Final Motive for A Life of Suppression of The Lower Nature, The Near Approach of The End of All Things

he distinct statement by our Lord in Acts 1:7 excludes the knowledge of the time of the end from the revelation granted to the Apostles, so that there need be no hesitation in upholding their authority, and yet admitting their liability to mistake on that point. But the force of the motive is independent of the proximity of the judgment. Its certainty and the indefiniteness of the time when we each shall have to pass into the other state of being are sufficient to preserve for each of us the whole pressure of the solemn thought that for us the end is at hand, and to enforce thereby Peter's exhortation, 'Be ye therefore of sound mind.'

The prospect of that end will sweep away many illusions as to the worth of the enjoyments of sense, and be a bridle on many vagrant desires. Self-control in all regions of our nature is implied in the word. Our various faculties are meant to be governed by a sovereign will, which is itself governed by the Divine will; and, if we see plain before us the dawning of 'the day of the Lord,' the vision will help to tame the subordinate parts of ourselves, and to establish the supremacy of the spirit over the flesh. One special form of that general self-control is that already enjoined, —the suppression of the animal appetites, especially the abstinence from intoxicants. That form of self-control is especially meant by the second of these exhortations, 'Be sober.' How could a man lift the wine cup to his lips, and drown his higher nature in a flood of drunken riot, if the end, with its solemnities of judgment, blazed before his inner eye? But this self-command is inculcated that we may be fit to pray. These lower appetites will take all desire for prayer and all earnestness in it out of us, and only when we keep the wings of appetites close clipped will the pinions grow by which we can mount up with wings as eagles. A praying drunkard is an impossible monster.

But exhortations to self-control are not all We have to think of others, as well as of our own growth in purity and spirituality. Therefore, Peter casts one swift glance to the wider circle of the brethren, which encompasses each of us, and gives the all-embracing direction, which carries in itself everything. 'Fervent love' to our fellow-Christians is the counterpoise to earnest government of ourselves. There is a selfishness possible even in cultivating our religion, as many a monk and recluse has shown. Such love as Peter here enjoins will save us from the possible evils of self-regard, and it will 'cover the multitude of sins,'—by which is not meant that, having it, we shall be excused if we in other respects sin, but that, having it, we shall be more desirous of veiling than of exposing our brother's faults, and shall be ready to forgive even when our brother offends against us often. Perhaps Peter was remembering the lesson which he had once had when he was told that 'seventy times seven' was not too great a multitude of sins against brotherly love to be forgiven by it in one day.

The Slave's Girdle: 1 Peter 5:5

THE Apostle uses here an expression of a remarkable kind, and which never occurs again in Scripture. The word rendered in the Authorized Version 'be clothed,' or better in the Revised Version, 'gird yourselves with,' really implies a little more than either of those renderings suggests. It describes a kind of garment as well as the act of putting it on, and the sort of garment which it describes was a remarkable one. It was a part of a slave's uniform. Some scholars think that it was a kind of white apron, or overall, or something of that sort; others think that it was simply a scarf or girdle; but, at all events, it was a distinguishing mark of a slave, and he put it on when he meant work. And, says Peter, 'Do you strap round you the slave's apron, and do it for the same reason that He did it, to serve.'

So, then, there are three points in my text, and the first is what we have to wear; second, what we have to wear it for; and, third, why we should wear it.

I. What We Have to Wear

'Gird yourselves with the slave's apron of humility.' Humility does not consist in being, or pretending to be, blind to one's strong points. There is no humility in a man denying that he can do certain things if he can do them, or even refusing to believe he can do them well, if God has given him special faculties in any given direction. That is not humility at all. But to know whence all my strength comes, and to know what a little thing it is, after all; not to estimate myself highly, and, still further, not to be always insisting upon other people estimating me highly, and to think a great deal more about their claims on me than fretfully to insist upon my due modicum of respect and attention from others, that is the sort of temper that Peter means here.

Now, that temper which may recognize fully any gift that God has given me, its sweep and degree, but that nevertheless takes a true, because a lowly, measure of myself, and does not always demand from other people their regard and assistance, that temper is a thing that we can cultivate. We can increase it, and we are all bound to try specifically and directly to do so. Now, I believe that a great part of the feeble and unprogressive character of so many Christian people amongst us is due to this, that they do not definitely steady their thoughts and focus them on the purpose of finding out the weak points to which special attention and discipline should be directed. It is a very easy thing to say, 'Oh, I am a poor, weak, sinful creature!' It would do you a great deal more good to say, 'I am a very passionate one, and my business is to control that quick temper of mine,' or, 'I am a great deal too much disposed to run after worldly advantage, and my business is to subdue that,' or, 'I am afraid I am rather too close-fisted, and I ought to crucify myself into liberality.' It would be a great deal better, I say, to apply the general confession to specific cases, and to set ourselves to cultivate individual types of goodness, as well as to seek to be filled with the all-comprehensive root of it all, which lies in union with Jesus Christ. We have often to preach, dear brethren, that the way of self-improvement is not by hammering at ourselves, but by letting God mold us, and to keep the balance right. We have also to insist upon the other side of the truth, and to press the complementary thought that specific efforts after the

cultivation of specific virtues—and all the more if they are virtues that are not natural to us, for the gospel is given to us to mend our natural tempers—is the duty of all Christian people that would seek to live as Christ would have them.

And how is this to be done? How am I to gird upon myself and to keep—if I may transpose the metaphor into the key of modern English—tightly buckled around me this belt which may hold in place a number of fine articles of clothing?

Well, there are three things, I think, that we may profitably do. Go down deep enough into yourself if you want to cure a lofty estimate of yourself. The top stories may be beautifully furnished, but there are some ugly things and rubbish down in the cellar. There is not one of us but, if we honestly let the dredge down into the depths, as far down as the Challenger's went, miles and miles down, will bring up a pretty collection of wriggling monstrosities that never have been in the daylight before, and are ugly enough to be always shrouded in their native darkness. Down in us all, if we will go deep enough, and take with us a light bright enough, we shall discover enough to make anything but humility ridiculous, if it were not wicked. And the only right place and attitude for a man who knows himself down to the roots of his being is the publican's when 'he stood afar off, and would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, and said, God be merciful to me a sinner.' Ah, dear friends, it will put an end to any undue exaltation of ourselves if we know ourselves as we are.

Further, let us try to cultivate this temper, by looking at God, and having communion with Him. Think of Him as the Giver of anything in us that is good, and that annihilates our pride. Think of Jesus as our pattern; how that kills our satisfaction in little excellences! If you get high enough up the mountainside, the undulating country which when you were down amongst the knolls showed all variations of level, and where he who lived on the top of one little mound thought himself in a fine, airy situation as compared with his neighbor down in the close valley, is smoothed down, and brought to one uniform level; and from the hilltop the rolling land is a plateau.

I have heard of a child who, when she was told that the sun was ninety-five millions of miles off, asked if that was from the top or the bottom story of the house! There is about as much difference between the great men and the little, between heroes and the unknown men, as measured against the distance to God, as there is difference in the distance to the sun from the slates and from the cellar. Let us live near God, and so aspiration will come in the place of satisfaction, and the unattained will gleam before us, and beckon us not in vain, and the man that sees what an infinite stretch there is before him will be delivered from the temptations of self-conceit, and will say, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfected, but I follow after.'

But there is another advice to be given—cultivate the habit of thinking about other people, their excellences, their claims on you. To be always trying to get a footing in a social grade above our own is a poor effort, but there is a sense in which it is good advice—live with your betters. We can all do that. A man writes a bit of a book, preaches a sermon, makes a speech—all the newspapers pat him on the back, and say what a clever fellow he is. But let him

steep his mind and his heart in the great works of the great men, and he finds out what a poor little dwarf he is by the side of them. And so, all round the circle. Live with bigger men, not with little ones. And learn to discount—and you may take a very liberal discount off—either the praises or the censures of the people round you. Let us rather say, ‘With me it is a very small matter to be judged of man’s judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord.’

There are plenty of hands, foremost among them a black one that is not so much a hand as a claw, ready to snatch the girdle of humility off you! Buckle it tight about you, brother; and in an immovable temper of lowly estimate of yourself live and work.

II. The Second Thought Here Is, What We Are to Wear the Apron or Girdle For?

The Revised Version makes a little alteration in the reading as well as in the translation of our text, the previous words to which, in the Authorized Version stand, ‘Yea, all of you be subject one to another.’ There is another reading which strikes out that clause, and adds a portion of it to the first part of my text, which then runs thus: ‘Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another.’ That is what Christian humility is for. The slave put on his garment, whatever it was, when he had work to do.

But perhaps there is a deeper thought here. I wonder if it is fanciful to see in the text one of the very numerous allusions in this epistle to the events in our Lord’s Passion. You remember that Jesus laid aside His garments, and took a towel, and girded Himself, and washed the disciples’ feet, and then said, ‘The servant is not above His master. I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.’ Probably, I think, there floated before the memory of the man who had said, ‘Lord, Thou shalt never wash my feet,’ and then, with the swift recoil to the opposite pole which makes us love Him so much, hurried to say, ‘Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head’—some reminiscence of that upper chamber, and of how the Master had girded Himself with the slave’s apron, or towel, in order that He might serve the disciples; and then had told them that that was the pattern for all Christian men, and for all Christian living till the very end.

Service coming from humility, and humility manifested in service, are the requirements laid down in the text. Humility is the preparation for service; and service is the test of humility. If a man does not feel himself to be needy and low, he will never be able, and he will never be willing, to help those that are. You must go down if you would lift up. Laces and velvets and the fine feathers that the peacocks of self-conceit in this world strut about in are terribly in the way of Christian work. Rough work needs rough dress; and the only garb in which we shall be able to do the deeds of self-sacrifice that are needed in order to help our brethren is humility, the preparation for all service.

But, further, service is the test of humility. Plenty of people will say, ‘I know that I have nothing to boast of,’ and so forth; but they never do any work. And there is a still more spurious kind of humility, that of a great many professing Christians (I wonder of how many of us) who,

when we ask them for any kind of Christian service, say, 'I do not feel myself at all competent. I am sure I could not take a class in the Sunday School. I do not feel sufficiently master of the subject. I cannot talk. I have no facilities for influencing other people,' and so on. Too many of us are very humble when there is anything to be done, and never at any other time as far as anybody can see; and that sort of humility the Apostle does not commend. It is unfortunately very frequent amongst professing Christians. Christian humility is not particular about the sort of work it does for Jesus. Never mind whether you are on the quarter-deck, with gold lace on your coat and epaulettes on your shoulders as an officer, or whether you are a cabin-boy doing the humblest duties, or a stoker working away down fifty feet below daylight. As long as the work is done for the great Admiral, that is enough; and whoever does any work for Him will never want for a reward. There are some of us who like to be officers, but do not like carrying a musket in the ranks. Humility is the preparation for service, and service is the test of humility.

III. Lastly, Why We Should Wear This Girdle

There is one reason given in my text, which Peter quotes from the Old Testament. 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.' That is often true even in regard to outward life. Providence and man often seem to be in league together to lift up the lowly ones and thwart the proud. If a man walks with his head very high, in this low-roofed world, he is pretty sure to get it knocked against the rafters before he has done. But it is the spiritual region that the Apostle is thinking about, in which the one condition of receiving God's grace is a lowly sense of my own character and nature, which is conscious of sin and weakness, and waits before Him. And the one condition of not receiving any of that grace is to keep a stiff upper lip and a high head. If I think that I am rich, 'and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,' that 'nothing' is exactly what I shall get from God, and if I have need of everything, and know that I have, that 'everything' is what I shall get from Him. 'He resisteth the proud, and He giveth grace to the humble.' On the high barren mountain-tops the dew and the rain slide off and find their way down to the lowly valleys, where they run as fertilizing rivers. And the man that is humble and of a contrite heart, 'with that man will I dwell, saith the Lord.' If we gird ourselves with the slave's dress of humility, then we shall one day have to say, 'My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; and He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; as a bridegroom decketh himself with his ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.'

Sylvanus: 1 Peter 5:12

I ADOPT the Revised Version because, in one or two small points, it brings out more clearly the Apostle's meaning. This Sylvanus is, beyond all reasonable doubt, the same man who is known to us in the Acts of the Apostles by the name of Silas. A double name was very common amongst Jews, whose avocations brought them into close connection with Gentiles. You will find other instances of it amongst the Apostles: in Paul himself, whose Hebrew name was Saul; Simon and Peter; and probably in Bartholomew and Nathanael. And there is no

reasonable doubt that a careful examination of the various places in which Silas and Sylvanus are mentioned shows that they were borne by one person.

Now let me put together the little that we know about this man, because it will help us to some lessons, He was one of the chief men in the church at Jerusalem when the dispute arose about the necessity for circumcision for the Gentile Christians. He was dispatched to Antioch with the message of peace and good feeling which the church at Jerusalem wisely sent forth to heal the strife. He remained in Antioch, although his co-deputy went back to Jerusalem; and the attraction of Paul—the great mass of that star—drew this lesser light into becoming a satellite, moving round the greater orb. So, when the unfortunate quarrel broke out between Paul and Barnabas, and the latter went sulkily away by himself with his dear John Mark, without his brethren's blessing, Paul chose Silas and set out upon his first missionary tour. He was Paul's companion in the prison and stripes at Philippi, and in the troubles at Thessalonica; and, though they were parted for a little while, he rejoined the Apostle in the city of Corinth. From thence Paul wrote the two letters to the Thessalonians, both of which are sent in the name of himself and Silas or Sylvanus. There is one more reference to Sylvanus in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, which mentions him as having been associated with Paul in the evangelization of the church there.

Then he drops out of the book altogether, and we never hear anything more about him, except this one passing reference, which shows us to him in an altogether new relation. He is no longer attached to Paul, but to Peter. Paul was probably either in prison, or, possibly, martyred. At all events, Sylvanus now stood to Peter in a relationship similar to that in which he formerly stood to Paul. He was evidently acquainted with and known to the churches to whom this letter was addressed, and, therefore, is chosen to carry Peter's message to them.

Now I would suggest, in passing, how Sylvanus' relations to the two Apostles throws light upon the perfectly cordial alliance between them, and how it shatters into fragments the theory which was thought to be such a wonderful discovery some years ago, as to the 'great schism' in the early church between one section, led by Peter, and the more liberal party, headed by Paul. Instead of that, we find the two men working together, and the only division between them was not as to the sort of gospel they preached, but as to the people to whom they preached. This little incident helps us to realize how natural it was for a man steeped in Paul's teaching to attach himself, if circumstances suggested it, to the person who has been said to have been antagonistic in the whole drift of his conceptions of Christianity to that Apostle.

But I do not wish to speak about that now. I take this figure of a man who so contentedly and continually took such a subordinate place—played second fiddle quite willingly all his days, and who toiled on without any notice or record, and ask whether it does not teach one or two things.

I. First, Then, I Think We May See Here a Hint as To the Worth and Importance of Subordinate Work

Not a syllable that Silas ever said is recorded in Scripture. He had been a chief man among the brethren when he was in Jerusalem, but, like some other chief men in little spheres, he came to be anything but a chief man when he got alongside of Paul, and found his proper work. He did not say: 'I have always pulled the stroke oar, and I am not going to be second. I do not intend to be absorbed in this man's brilliant luster. I would rather have a smaller sphere where my light may not suffer by comparison than be overshadowed by him.' By no means! He could not do Paul's work, but he could endure stripes along with him in the prison at Philippi, and he took them. He could not write as Peter could; it was not his work to do that. But he could carry one of Peter's letters. And so, 'by Sylvanus, a faithful brother, I have written to you.' Perhaps Sylvanus was amanuensis as well as letter-carrier, for I daresay Peter was no great hand with a pen; he was better accustomed to haul nets. At all events, subordinate work was what God had set him to do, and so he found joy in it.

Well, then, is not that a pattern for us? People in the world or in the Church who can do prominent work are counted by units; and those who can do valuable subordinate work are counted by thousands—by millions. 'Those members which seem to be more feeble are the more necessary,' says Paul. It is a great truth, which it would do us all good to lay more to heart.

It is hard to tell what is superior and what is subordinate work. I suppose that in a steam engine the smallest rivet is quite as essential as the huge piston, and that if the rivet drops out the piston-rod is very likely to stop rising and falling. So, it is a very vulgar way of talking to speak about A.'s work being large and B.'s work being small, or to assume that we have eyes to settle which work is principal and which subordinate.

The Athenians, who deemed themselves wisest in the world, thought there were few people of less importance than the fanatical Jew who was preaching a strange story about what they knew so little of that they took Jesus and Resurrection to be the names of a pair of gods, one male and one female. But in the eyes that see truly—the eyes of God—the relative importance of Apostle and Stoic was otherwise appraised.

We cannot tell, as the book of Ecclesiastes has it, 'which shall prosper—this or that.' And if we begin to settle which is important work, we shall be sure to make mistakes, both in our judgment about other people, and in our sense of the obligations laid upon ourselves. Let us remember that when a thing is to be done by the cooperation of a great many parts, each part is as important as the other, and each is indispensable. Although more glory may come to the soldiers who go to the front and do the fighting, the troops miles in the rear, that are quietly in camp looking after the stores and keeping open the lines of communication, are quite as essential to the success of the campaign. Their names will not get into the gazette; there will probably not be any honors at the conclusion of the war showered upon them; but, if they had not been doing their subordinate work, the men at the front would never have been able to do theirs. Therefore, the old wise law in Israel was: 'As his part is that goeth down into the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall part alike.'

And so, it is good for people that have only one talent, and cannot do much, and must be contented to help somebody else that can do more, to remember this pretty little picture of

Sylvanus, 'the faithful brother,' contented all his life to be a satellite of somebody; first of all, helping Paul, and then helping Paul's brother Peter. Let us not be too lazy, or too proud with the pride that apes humility, to do the little that we can do because it is little.

II. Another Lesson Which Is Own Sister to That First One

But which may be taken for a moment separately, is, the importance and obligation of persistently doing our task, though nobody notices it.

As I remarked, there is not one word of anything that Sylvanus said, or of anything that he did apart from Paul or Peter, recorded. And for all the long stretch of years—we do not know how many, but a very large number—that lie between this text of mine, where we find him in conjunction with Peter, and that day at Corinth, where we left him with Paul, the Acts of the Apostles does not think it worthwhile to mention his name. Was he sitting with his hands in his pockets all the while, do you think, doing no Christian work? Did he say, as some good people are apt to say now, 'Well, I went to teach in Sunday School for a while, and I took an interest in this, that, or the other thing for a bit, but nobody took any notice of me; and I supposed I was not wanted, and so I came away!'

Not he. That is what a great many of us do. Though we sometimes are not honest enough to say it to ourselves, yet we do let the absence of 'recognition' (save the mark) influence us in the earnestness of our Christian work to far too great an extent. And I dare say there are good friends among us who, if they would be quite honest with themselves, would take the hint, and, if I may use such a word, the rebuke, to themselves.

Dear brethren, all the work that any of us do has to become unnoticed after a little while. It will not last. Nobody will know about you or me thirty years after we are dead. What does it matter whether they know anything about us, or say anything about us, or pat us on the back for anything that we do, or recognize our service whilst we live? Surely, if we are Christian men and women, we have a better reason for working than that. 'I will never forget any of their works.' That ought to be enough for us, ought it not? Whoever forgets, He remembers; and if He remembers, He will not remain in our debt for anything that we have done.

So let us keep on, noticed or unnoticed; it matters very little which it is. There is a fillip, no doubt—and we should not be men and women if we did not feel it—in the recognition of what we have tried to do. And sometimes it comes to us; but the absence of it is no reason for slackening our work. And this man, so patiently and persistently 'pegging away' at his obscure task during all these years which have been swallowed up in oblivion, may preach a sermon to us all.

Only let us remember that he also shows us that unnoticed work is noticed, and that unrecorded services are recorded. Here are you and I, nineteen centuries after he is dead, talking about him, and his name will live and last as long as the world, because, though written in no other history, it has been recorded here. Jesus Christ's record, the Book of Life, contains the names of 'fellow-laborers' whose names have dropped out of every other record; and that should

be enough for us. Sylvanus did no work that Christ did not see, and no work that Christ did not remember, and no work of which he did not, eighteen hundred years since, enter into the enjoyment of the fruit, and which he enjoys up there, whilst we are thinking about him down here.

III. The Last Thing That I Would Suggest Is—Here Is an Example to Us of a Character Which We Can All Earn, And Which Will Be the Best That Any Man Can Get

A great genius, a wise philosopher, an eloquent preacher, a statesman, a warrior, poet, painter? No! ‘A faithful brother.’ He may have been a commonplace one. We do not know anything about his intellectual capacity. He may have had very narrow limitations and very few powers, or he may have been a man of large faculty and acquirements. But these things drop out of sight; and this remains—that he was faithful. I suppose the eulogium is meant in both senses of the word. The one of these is the root of the other; for a man that is full of faith is a man who may be trusted, is reliable, and will be sure to fulfil all the obligations of his position, and to do all the duties that are laid upon him.

You and I, whether we are wise or not, whether we are learned or not, whether we have large faculties or not, whether we have great opportunities or very small ones, can all equally earn that name if we like. If the perfect judgment, the clear eye, of Jesus Christ beholds in us qualities which will permit Him to call us by that name, what can we want better? ‘A faithful brother.’ Trust in Christ; let that be the animating principle of all that we do, the controlling power that restrains and limits and stimulates and impels. And then men will know where to have us, and will be sure, and rightly sure, that we shall not shirk our obligations, nor scamp our work, nor neglect our duties. And being thus full of faith, and counted faithful by Him, we need care little what men’s judgments of us may be, and need desire no better epitaph than this—a faithful brother.

An Apostolic Testimony and Exhortation: 1 Peter 5:12

‘I HAVE written briefly,’ says Peter. But his letter, in comparison with the other epistles of the New Testament, is not remarkably short; in fact, is longer than many of them. He regards it as short when measured by the greatness of its theme. For all words which are devoted to witnessing to the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ, must be narrow and insufficient as compared with that, and after every utterance the speaker must feel how inadequate his utterance has been. So, in that word ‘briefly’ we get a glimpse of the Apostle’s conception of the transcendent greatness of the Gospel which he had to proclaim. This verse seems to be a summary of the contents of the Epistle. And if we observe the altered translation of the latter portion of my text which is given in the Revised Version, we shall see that the verse is itself an example of both ‘testifying’ and exhorting. For the last clause is not, as our Authorized Version renders it, ‘Wherein ye stand’—a statement of a fact, however true that may be—but a commandment, ‘In which stand fast.’ And so, we have here the Apostle’s all-sufficient teaching,

and this all-comprehensive exhortation. He ‘witnesses’ that this is the true grace of God, and because it is, he exhorts, ‘stand fast therein.’ Let us look at these two points.

I. Peter’s Testimony

Now there is a very beautiful, though not, to superficial readers, obvious, significance in this testimony.

‘This is the true grace of God.’ What is meant by ‘this’? Not merely the teaching which he has been giving in the preceding part of the letter, but that which somebody else had been giving. Now these churches in Asia Minor, to whom this letter was sent, were in all probability founded by the Apostle Paul, or by men working under his direction: and the type of doctrine preached in them was what people nowadays call Pauline. And here Peter puts his seal on the teaching that had come from his brother Apostle, and says: ‘The thing that you have learned, and that I have had no part in communicating to you, this is the true grace of God.’ If such be the primary application of the words (and I think there can be little doubt that it is), then we have interesting evidence, all the stronger because unobtrusive, of the cordial understanding between the two great leaders of the Church in apostolic times; and the figments that have been set forth, with great learning and little common sense, about the differences that divided these great teachers of Christianity, melt away into thin air. Their division was only a division of the field of labor. ‘They would that I should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision.’ All the evidence confirms what Paul says, ‘Whether it were they or I, so we preach, and so’ all the converts ‘believed.’ Thus, it is not without significance and beauty that we here see dimly through the ages Peter stretching out his hands to Paul’s convert, and saying, ‘This—which my beloved brother Paul taught you—this is the true grace of God.’

But, apart altogether from that thought, note two things; the one, the substance of this witness-bearing; and the other, Peter’s right to bear it. As to the substance of the testimony; ‘grace,’ which has become a threadbare word in the minds of many people, used with very little conception of its true depth and beauty of meaning, is properly love in exercise towards inferior and sinful creatures who deserve something else. Condescending, pardoning, and active love, is its proper meaning. And, says Peter, the inmost significance of the gospel is that it is the revelation of such a love as being in God’s heart.

Another meaning springs out of this. That same message is not only a revelation of love, but it is a communication of the gifts of love. And the ‘true grace of God’ is shorthand for all the rich abundance and variety and exuberant manifoldness and all-sufficiency of the sevenfold perfect gifts for spirit and heart which come from faith in Jesus Christ. The truths that lie here in the Gospel, the truths which glow and throb in this letter of Peter’s, are the revelation and the communication to men of the rich gifts of the Divine heart, which will all flow into that soul which opens itself for the entrance of God’s word. And what are these truths? The main theme of this letter is Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, that was slain. ‘Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.’ He dwells upon Christ’s innocence, upon Christ’s meekness; but most of all upon the Christ that died, ‘whom, having not

seen, we love, and in whom, though unseen, we, believing, receive the end of our faith'—and the end of the gospel—'even the salvation of our souls.'

Thus, dear brethren, this gospel, the gospel of the Divine Christ that died for our sins, and lives to give His Spirit to all waiting hearts; this is the true grace of God. It is very needful for us to keep in view always that lofty conception of what this gospel is, that we may not bring it down to the level of a mere theory of religion; nor think of it as a mere publication of dry doctrines; that we may not lose sight of what is the heart of it all, but may recognize this fact, that a gospel out of which are struck, or in which are diminished, the truths of the sacrifice of Christ and His ever-living intercession for us, is not the true grace of God, and is neither a revelation of His love to inferior and sinful men, nor a communication of His gifts to our weakness. Let us remember Peter's witness. This—the full gospel of incarnation, sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, and reign in glory, and return as Judge—this, and nothing else, 'is the true grace of God.' And this gospel is not exalted to its highest place unless it is regarded as such by our waiting and recipient hearts.

Further, what right had this man to take this position and say, 'I testify that this is the true grace of God'? He was no great genius; he did not know anything about comparative religion, which is nowadays supposed to be absolutely essential to understanding any one religion. He was not a scholar or a philosopher. What business had he to bring in his personality thus, as if he were an authority, and say, 'I testify that this is the true grace of God'?

Well, there are two or three answers: one peculiar to him and others common to all Christian people. The one peculiar to him is, as I believe, that he was conscious, and rightly conscious, that Jesus Christ had bestowed upon him the power to witness, and the authority to impose his testimony upon men as a word from God. In the most inartificial and matter-of-course way Peter here lets us see the apostolic conception of apostolic authority. He had a right—not because of what he was himself, but because of the authority which Christ had conferred on him—to say to men, 'I do not ask you to give heed to me, Peter. I myself also am a man (as he said to Cornelius), but I call on you to accept Christ's word, spoken through me, His commissioned messenger, when I testify, and through me Christ testifies, that this is the true grace of God.'

Now no one but an apostle has the right to say that; but we Christian people have a right to say something like it, and if we have not apostolic authority, we may have what is very nearly as good, and sometimes as powerful in its effect upon other people, and that is authority based on personal experience. If we have plunged deep into the secrets of God, and lived closely and faithfully in communion with Him, and for ourselves have found the grace of God, His love and the gifts of His love, coming into our lives, and ennobling, calming, elevating each of us; then we, too, have a right to go to men and say, 'Never mind about me; never mind about whether I am wise or foolish, I do not argue, but I tell you I have tasted the manna, and it is sweet. I have drunk of the water, and it comes cool and fresh from the rock. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see. I believed, and therefore have I spoken, and on the strength of my own tasting of it, I testify that this, which has done so much for me, is the true grace of God.' If we testify thus, and back up our witness with lives corresponding, some who are wholly untouched by a preacher's eloquence and controversialists' arguments, will probably be led by our

attestation to make the experiment for themselves. 'Ye are My witnesses,' says God. He did not say, 'Ye are my advocates.' He did not bid us argue for Him, but He bid us witness for Him.

II. Further, Notice Peter's Exhortation

According to the right rendering the last clause is, as I have already said, 'in which stand fast.' The translation in the Authorized Version, 'in which ye stand,' gives a true thought, though not the Apostle's intention here. For, as a matter of fact, men cannot stand upright and firm unless their feet are planted on the rock of that true grace of God. If our heels are well fixed on it, then our goings will be established. It is no use talking to men about steadfastness of purpose, stability of life, erect independence, resistance to antagonistic forces, and all the rest, unless you give them something to stand upon. If you talk so to a man who has his foot upon shifting sands or slippery clay; the more he tries the deeper will he sink into the one, or slide the further upon the other. The best way to help men to stand fast is to give them something to stand upon. And the only standing ground that will never yield, nor collapse, nor, like the quicksand with the tide round it, melt away, we do not know how, from beneath our feet, is 'the grace of God.' Or, as Dr. Watts says, in one of his now old-fashioned hymns:—

'Lo! on the solid Rock I stand,
And all beside is shifting sand.'

However, that is not what the Apostle Peter meant. He says, 'See that you keep firmly your position in reference to this true grace of God.' Now I am not going to talk to you about intellectual difficulties in the way of hearty and whole-souled acceptance of the gospel revelation—difficulties which are very real and very widespread in these days, but which possibly very slightly affect us; at least I hope so.

But whilst these slay their thousands, the difficulties that affect us all in the way of keeping a firm hold on, or firm standing in (for the two metaphors coalesce) the gospel, which is the true grace of God, are those that arise from two causes working in combination. One is our own poor weak hearts, wavering wills, strong passions, unbridled desires, forgetful minds; and the other is all that army and babel of seductions and inducements, in occupations legitimate and necessary, in enjoyments which are in themselves pure and innocent, in family delights, in home engagements, in pursuits of commerce or of daily business—all that crowd of things that tempt us to forget the true grace and to wander away in a foolish and vain search after vain and foolish substitutes.

Dear brethren, it is not so much because there are many adversaries in the intellectual world as because we are such weak creatures ourselves, and the world around us is so strong against us, that we need to say to one another and to ourselves, over and over again, 'Stand ye fast therein.' You cannot keep hold of a rope even, without the act of grasping tending to relax,

and there must be a conscious and repeated tightening up of the muscles, or the very cord on which we hang for safety will slip through our relaxed palms. And however, we may be convinced that there are no hope and no true blessedness for us except in keeping hold of God, we need that grasp to be tightened up by daily renewed efforts, or else it will certainly become slack, and we shall lose the thing that we should hold fast. So, my text exhorts us against ourselves, and against the temptations of the world, which are always present with us, and are far more operative in bringing down the temperature of the Christian Church, and of its individual members, than any chilling that arises from intellectual doubts.

And how are we to obey the exhortation? Well, plainly, if 'this' is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, 'the true grace of God' which alone will give stability to our feet, then we 'shall not stand fast' in it unless we make conscious efforts to apprehend, and comprehend, and keep hold of it in our minds as well as in our hearts. May I say one very plain word? I am very much afraid that people do not read their Bibles very much now (or if they do read them, they do not study them), and that anything like an intelligent familiarity with the whole sweep of the great system (for it is a system) of Divine truth, evolved 'at sundry times and in divers manners' in this Word, is a very rare thing amongst even good people. They listen to sermons, with more or less attention; they read newspapers, no doubt; they read good little books, and magazines, and the like; and volumes that profess to be drawn from Scripture. These are all right and good in their place. But sure I am that a robust and firm grasp of the gospel, 'which is the grace of God,' is not possible with a starvation diet of Scripture. And so, I would say, try to get hold of the depth and width of meaning in the Word.

Again, try to keep heart and mind in contact with it amidst distractions and daily duties. Try to bring the principles of the New Testament consciously to bear on the small details of everyday life. Do you look at your day's work through these spectacles? Does it ever occur to you, as you are going about your business, or your profession, or your domestic work, to ask yourselves what bearing the gospel and its truths have upon these? If my ordinary, so-called secular, avocations are evacuated of reference to, and government by, the Word of God, I want to know what of my life is left as the sphere in which it is to work. There is no need that religion and daily life should be kept apart as they are. There is no reason why the experience of to-day, in shop, and counting-house, and kitchen, and study, should not cast light upon, and make more real to me, 'the true grace of God.' Be sure that you desire, and ask for, and put yourself in the attitude of receiving, the gifts of that love, which are the graces of the Christian life. And when you have got them, apply them, 'that you may be able to withstand in the evil day; and, having done all, to stand.'

The Church in Babylon: 1 Peter 5:13

WE have drawn lessons in previous addresses from the former parts of the closing salutations of this letter. And now I turn to this one to see what it may yield us. The Revised Version omits 'the church,' and substitutes 'she'; explaining in a marginal note that there is a difference of opinion as to whether the sender of the letter is a community or an individual. All

the old MSS., with one weighty exception, follow the reading 'she that is in Babylon.' But it seems so extremely unlikely that a single individual, with no special function, should be bracketed along with the communities to whom the letter was addressed, as 'elected together with' them, that the conclusion that the sender of the letter is a church, symbolically designated as a 'lady,' seems the natural one.

Then there is another question—where was Babylon?

An equal diversity of opinion has arisen about that. I do not venture to trouble you with the arguments pro and con, but only express my own opinion that 'Babylon' means Rome.

We have here the same symbolical name as in the Book of Revelation, where, whatever further meanings are attached to the designation, it is intended primarily as an appellation for the imperial city, which has taken the place filled in the Old Testament by Babylon, as the concentration of antagonism to the Kingdom of God.

If these views of the significance of the expression are adopted, we have here the Church in Rome, the proud stronghold of worldly power and hostility, sending its greetings to the scattered Christian communities in the provinces of what is now called Asia Minor. The fact of such cordial communications between communities separated by so many contrarities as well as by race and distance, familiar though it is, may suggest several profitable considerations, to which I ask your attention.

I. We Have Here an Object Lesson as To the Uniting Power of The Gospel

Just think of the relations which, in the civil world, subsisted between Rome and its subject provinces; the latter, with bitter hatred in their hearts to everything belonging to the oppressing city, having had their freedom crushed down and their aspirations ruthlessly trampled upon; the former, with the contempt natural to metropolitans in dealing with far-off provincials. The same kind of relationship subsisted between Rome and the outlying provinces of its unwieldy empire as between England, for instance, and its Indian possessions. And the same uniting bond came in which binds the Christian converts of these Eastern lands of ours to England by a far firmer bond than any other. There was springing up amidst all the alienation and hatred and smothered rebellion a still incipient, but increasing, and even then, strong bond that held together Roman Christians and Cappadocian believers. They were both 'one in Christ Jesus.' The separating walls were high, but, according to the old saying, you cannot build walls high enough to keep out the birds; and spirits, winged by the common faith, soared above all earthly-made distinctions and met in the higher regions of Christian communion. When the tide rises it fills and unifies the scattered pools on the beach. So, the uniting power of Christian faith was manifest in these early days, when it bound such discordant elements together, and made 'the church that was in Babylon' forget that they were to a large extent Romans by birth, and stretch out their hands, with their hearts in them, to the churches to whom this letter was sent.

Now, brethren, our temptation is not so much to let barriers of race and language and distance weaken our sense of Christian community, as it is to let even smaller things than these do the same tragical office for us. And we, as Christian people, are bound to try and look over the fences of our denominations and churches, and recognize the wider fellowship and larger company in which all these are merged. God be thanked! there are manifest tokens all round us to-day that the age of separation and division is about coming to an end. Yearnings for unity, which must not be forced into acts too soon, but which will fulfil themselves in ways not yet clear to any of us, are beginning to rise in Christian hearts. Let us see to it, dear friends, that we do our parts to cherish and to increase these, and to yield ourselves to the uniting power of the common faith.

II. We Note, Further, The Clear Recognition Here of What Is the Strong Bond Uniting All Christians

Peter would probably have been very much astonished if he had been told of the theological controversies that were to be waged round that word 'elect.' The emphasis here lies, not on 'elect,' but on 'together.' It is not the thing so much as the common possession of the thing which bulks largely before the Apostle. In effect he says, 'The reason why these Roman Christians that have never looked you Bithynians in the face do yet feel their hearts going out to you, and send you their loving messages, is because they, in common with you, have been recipients of precisely the same Divine act of grace.' We do not now need to discuss the respective parts of man and God in it, nor any of the interminable controversies that have sprung up around the word. God had, as the fact of their possession of salvation showed, chosen Romans and Asiatics together to be heirs of eternal life. By the side of these transcendent blessings which they possessed in common, how pitifully small and insignificant all the causes which kept them apart looked and were!

And so here we have a partial parallel to the present state of Christendom, in which are seen at work, on one hand, superficial separation; on the other, underlying unity. The splintered peaks may stand, or seem to stand, apart from their sister summits, or may frown at each other across impassable gorges, but they all belong to one geological formation, and in their depths their bases blend indistinguishably into a continuous whole. Their tops are miles apart, but beneath the surface they are one. And so, the things that bind Christian men together are the great things and the deepest things; and the things that part them are the small and superficial ones. Therefore, it is our wisdom—not only for the sake of the fact of our unity and for the sake of our consciousness of unity, but because the truths which unite are the most important ones—that they shall bulk largest in our hearts and minds. And if they do, we shall know our brother in every man that is like-minded with us towards them, whatever shibboleth may separate us. I spoke a moment ago about the separate pools on the beach, and the tide rising. When the tide goes down, and the spiritual life ebbs, the pools are parted again. And so, ages of feeble spiritual vitality have been ages of theological controversy about secondary matters; and ages of profound realization by the Church of the great fundamentals of gospel truth have been those when its

members were drawn together, they knew not how. Hence, they can say of and to each other, 'Elect together with you.'

Brethren, for the sake of the strength of our own religious life, do not let us fix our attention on the peculiarities of our sects, but upon the catholic truths believed everywhere, always, by all. Then we shall 'walk in a large place,' and feel how many there are that are possessors of 'like precious faith' with ourselves.

III. Then, Lastly, We May Find Here a Hint as To the Pressing Need for Such a Realization of Unity

'The church that is in Babylon' was in a very uncongenial place. Thank God, no Babylon is so Babylonish but that a Church of God may be found planted in it. No circumstances are so unfavorable to the creation and development of the religious life but that the religious life may grow there. An orchid will find footing upon a bit of stick, because it draws nourishment from the atmosphere; and they who are fed by influx of the Divine Spirit may be planted anywhere, and yet flourish in the courts of our God. So 'the church that is in Babylon' gives encouragement as to the possibility of Christian faith being triumphant over adverse conditions.

But it also gives a hint as to the obligation springing from the circumstances in which Christian people are set, to cultivate the sense of belonging to a great brotherhood. Howsoever solitary and surrounded by uncongenial associations any Christian man may be, he may feel that he is not alone, not only because his Master is with him, but because there are many others whose hearts throb with the same love, whose lives are surrounded by the same difficulties. It is by no means a mere piece of selfish consolation which this same Apostle gives in another part of his letter, when he bids the troubled so be of good cheer, as remembering that the 'same afflictions were accomplished in the brotherhood which is in the world.' He did not mean to say, 'Take comfort, for other people are as badly off as you are,' but he meant to call to the remembrance of the solitary sufferer the thousands of his brethren who were 'dreeing the same weird' in the same uncongenial world.

If thus you and I, Christian men, are pressed upon on all sides by such worldly associations, the more need that we should let our hearts go out to the innumerable multitude of our fellows, companions in the tribulation, and patience, and kingdom of Jesus Christ. Precisely because the Roman believers were in Babylon, they were glad to think of their brethren in Asia. Isolated amidst Rome's splendors and sins, it was like a breath of cool air stealing into some banqueting house heavy with the fumes of wine, or some slaughter-house reeking with the smell of blood, to remember these far-off partakers of a purer life.

But if I might for a moment diverge, I would venture to say that in the conditions of thought, and the tendencies of things in our own and other lands, it is more than ever needful that Christian people should close their ranks, and stand shoulder to shoulder. For men who believe in a supernatural revelation, in the Divine Christ, in an atoning Sacrifice, in an indwelling Spirit, are guilty of suicidal folly if they let the comparative trivialities that part them, separate God's

army into isolated groups, in the face of the ordered battalions that are assaulting these great truths.

Because persecution was beginning to threaten and rumble on the horizon, like a rising thundercloud, it was the more needful, in Peter's time, that Christians parted by seas, by race, language, and customs, should draw together. And for us, fidelity to our testimony and loyalty to our Master, to say nothing of common sense and the instinct of self-preservation, command Christian men in this day to think more, and to speak more, and to make more, of the great verities which they all possess in common.

Thus, brethren, living in Babylon, we should open our windows to Jerusalem; and though we dwell here as aliens, we may say, 'We are come unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; to an innumerable company of angels; to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to the Church of the first-born whose names are written in Heaven.'

Marcus, My Son: 1 Peter 5:13

THE outlines of Mark's life, so far as recorded in Scripture, are familiar. He was the son of Mary, a woman of some wealth and position, as is implied by the fact that her house was large enough to accommodate the 'many' who were gathered together to pray for Peter's release. He was a relative, probably a cousin (Col. 4:10, Revised Version), of Barnabas, and possibly, like him, a native of Cyprus. The designation of him by Peter as 'my son' naturally implies that the Apostle had been the instrument of his conversion. An old tradition tells us that he was the 'young man' mentioned in his Gospel who saw Christ arrested, and fled, leaving his only covering in the captor's hands. However, that may be, he and his relatives were early and prominent disciples, and closely connected with Peter, as is evident from the fact that it was to Mary's house that he went after his deliverance. Mark's relationship to Barnabas made it natural that he should be chosen to accompany him and Paul on their first missionary journey, and his connection with Cyprus helps to account for his willingness to go thither, and his unwillingness to go further into less known ground. We know how he left the Apostles, when they crossed from Cyprus to the mainland, and retreated to his mother's house at Jerusalem. We have no details of the inglorious inactivity in which he spent the time until the proposal of a second journey by Paul and Barnabas. In the preparations for it, the foolish indulgence of his cousin, far less kind than Paul's wholesome severity, led to a rupture between the Apostles, and to Barnabas setting off on an evangelistic tour on his own account, which received no sympathy from the church at Antioch, and has been deemed unworthy of record in the Acts.

Then followed some twelve years or more, during which Mark seems to have remained quiescent; or, at all events, he does not appear to have had any work in connection with the great Apostle. Then we find him reappearing amongst Paul's company when he was in prison for the first time in Rome; and in the letters to Colossae, he is mentioned as being a comfort to the Apostle then. He sends salutations to the Colossians, and is named also in the nearly contemporaneous letter to Philemon. According to the reference in Colossians, he was contemplating a journey amongst the Asiatic churches, for that in Colossae is bidden to welcome

him. Then comes this mention of him in the text. The fact that Mark was beside Peter when he wrote seems to confirm the view that Babylon here is a mystical name for Rome; and that this letter falls somewhere about the same date as the letters to Colossae and Philemon. Here again he is sending salutations to Asiatic churches. We know nothing more about him, except that some considerable time after, in Paul's last letter, he asks Timothy, who was then at Ephesus, the headquarters of the Asiatic churches, to 'take Mark,' who, therefore, was apparently also in Asia, 'and bring him' with him to Rome; 'for,' says the Apostle, beautifully referring to the man's former failure, 'he is profitable to me for'—the very office that he had formerly flung up—'the ministry.'

So, possibly, he was with Paul in his last days. And then, after that, tradition tells us that he attached himself more closely to the Apostle Peter; and, finally, at his direction and dictation, became the evangelist who wrote the 'Gospel according to Mark.'

Now that is his story; and from the figure of this 'Marcus, my son,' and from his appearance here in this letter, I wish to gather two or three very plain and familiar lessons.

I. The First of Them Is the Working of Christian Sympathy

Mark was a full-blooded Jew when he began his career. 'John, whose surname was Mark,' like a great many other Jews at that time, bore a double name—one Jewish, 'John,' and one Gentile, 'Marcus.' But as time goes on, we do not hear anything more about 'John,' nor even about 'John Mark,' which are the two forms of his name when he is first introduced to us in the Acts of the Apostles, but he finally appears to have cast aside his Hebrew and to have been only known by his Roman name. And that change of appellation coincides with the fact that so many of the allusions which we have to him represent him as sending messages of Christian greeting across the sea to his Gentile brethren. And it further coincides with the fact that his gospel is obviously intended for the use of Gentile Christians, and, according to an old and reliable tradition, was written in Rome for Roman Christians. All of which facts just indicate two things, that the more a man has real operative love to Jesus Christ in his heart, the more he will rise above all limitations of his interests, his sympathy, and his efforts, and the more surely will he let himself out, as far as he can, in affection towards and toils for all men.

This change of name, though it is a mere trifle, and may have been adopted as a matter of convenience, may also be taken as reminding us of a very important truth, and that is, that if we wish to help people, the first condition is that we go down and stand on their level, and make ourselves one with them, as far as we can. And so, Mark may have said, 'I have put away the name that parts me from these Gentiles, for whom I desire to work, and whom I love; and I take the name that binds me to them.' Why, it is the very same principle, in a small instance—just as a raindrop that hangs on the thorn of a rose-bush is molded by the same laws that shape the great sphere of the central sun—it is a small instance of the great principle which brought Jesus Christ down into the world to die for us. You must become like the people that you want to help. 'Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that He might deliver them.' And so, not only the duty of widening our sympathies,

but one of the supreme conditions of being of use to anybody, are set forth in the comparatively trifling incident, which we pass by without noticing it, that this man, a Jew to his fingertips, finally found himself—or, rather, finally was carried, for it was no case of unconscious drifting—into the position of a messenger of the Cross to the Gentiles; and for the sake of efficiency in his work, and of getting close by the side of people whom he wanted to influence, flung away deliberately that which parted him from them. It is a small matter, but a little window may show a very wide prospect.

II. The History of Mark Suggests the Possibility of Overcoming Early Faults

We do not know why he refused to bear the burden of the work that he had so cheerily begun. Probably the reason that I have suggested may have had something to do with it. When he started, he did not bargain for going into unknown lands, in which there were many toils to be encountered. He was willing to go where he knew the ground, and where there were people that would make things easy for him; but when Paul went further afield, Mark's courage ebbed out at his finger ends, and he slunk back to the comfort of his mother's house in Jerusalem. At all events, whatever his reason, his return was a fault; or Paul would not have been so hard upon him as he was. The writer of the Acts puts Paul's view of the case strongly by the arrangement of clauses in the sentence in which he tells us that the Apostle 'thought not good to take him with them who withdrew from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.' If he thus threw down his tools whenever he came to a little difficulty, and said, 'As long as it is easy work, and close to the base of operations, I am your man, but if there is any sacrifice wanted you must look out for somebody else,' he was not precisely a worker after Paul's own heart. And the best way to treat him was as the Apostle did; and to say to Barnabas' indulgent proposal, 'No! he would not do the work before, and now he shall not do it.' That is often God's way with us. It brings us to our senses, as it brought Mark to his.

We do not know how long it took to cure Mark of his early fault, but he was thoroughly cured. The man that was afraid of dangers and difficulties and hypothetical risks in Asia Minor became brave enough to stand by the Apostle when he was a prisoner, and was not ashamed of his chain. And afterwards, so much had he won his way into the Apostle's confidence, and made himself needful for him by his services and his sweetness, that the lonely prisoner, with the gibbet or headsman's sword in prospect, leers that he would like to have Mark with him once more, and bids Timothy bring him with himself, for 'he is profitable to me for the ministry.' 'He can do a thousand things that a man like me cannot do for himself, and he does them all for love and nothing for reward.' So, he wants Mark once more. And thus, not only Paul's generosity, but Mark's own patient effort had pasted a clean sheet over the one that was inscribed with the black story of his desertion, and he became 'profitable for' the task that he had once in so petulant and cowardly a way, flung up.

Well, translate that from the particular into the general and it comes to this. Let no man set limits to the possibilities of his own restoration, and of his curing faults which are most deeply rooted within himself. Hope and effort should be boundless. There is nothing that a

Christian man may not reach, in the way of victory over his worse self, and ejection of his most deeply-rooted faults, if only he will be true to Jesus, and use the gifts that are given to him. There are many of us whose daily life is pitched in a minor key; whose whole landscape is grey and monotonous and sunless; who feel as if yesterday must set the tune for to-day, and as if, because we have been beaten and baffled so often, it is useless to try again. But remember that the field on which the Stone of Help was erected, to commemorate the great and decisive victory that Israel won, was the very field on which the same foes had before contended, and then Israel had been defeated.

So, brethren, we may win victories on the very soil where formerly we were shamefully put to the rout; and our Christ with us will make anything possible for us, in the way of restoration, of cure of old faults, of ceasing to repeat former sins. I suppose that when a spar is snapped on board a vessel, and lashed together with spun yarn and lanyards, as a sailor knows how to do, it is stronger at the point of fracture than it was before. I suppose that it is possible for a man to be most impregnable at the point where he is naturally weakest, if he chooses to use the defenses that Jesus Christ has given.

III. Take Another Lesson—The Greatness of Little Service

We do not hear that this John Mark ever tried to do any work in the way of preaching the gospel. His business was a very much humbler one. He had to attend to Paul's comfort. He had to be his factotum, man of all work; looking after material things, the commissariat, the thousand and one trifles that someone had to see to if the Apostle's great work was to get done. And he did it all his life long. It was enough for him to do thoroughly the entirely 'secular' work, as some people would think it, which it was in his power to do. That needed some self-suppression. It would have been so natural for Mark to have said, 'Paul sends Timothy to be bishop in Crete; and Titus to look after other churches; Epaphroditus is an official here; and Apollos is a great preacher there. And here am I, grinding away at the secularities yet. I think I'll "strike," and try and get more conspicuous work.' Or he might perhaps deceive himself, and say, 'more directly religious work,' like a great many of us that often mask a very carnal desire for prominence under a very saintly guise of desire to do spiritual service. Let us take care of that. This 'minister,' who was not a minister at all, in our sense of the word, but only in the sense of being a servant, a private attendant and valet of the Apostle, was glad to do that work all his days.

That was self-suppression. But it was something more. It was a plain recognition of what we all ought to have very clearly before us, and that is, that all sorts of work which contribute to one end are one sort of work; and that at bottom the man who carried Paul's books and parchments, and saw that he was not left without clothes, though he was so negligent of cloaks and other necessaries, was just as much helping on the cause of Christ as the Apostle when he preached.

I wonder if any of you remember the old story about an organist and his blower. The blower was asked who it was that played that great sonata of Beethoven's, or somebody's. And he answered, 'I do not know who played, but I blew it.' There is a great truth there. If it had not

been for the unknown man at the bellows, the artist at the keys would not have done much. So, Mark helped Paul. And as Jesus Christ said, 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward.'

IV. Take as The Last Lesson the Enlarged Sphere That Follows Faithfulness in Small Matters

What a singular change! The man who began with being a servant of Paul and of Barnabas ends by being the evangelist, and it is to him, under Peter's direction, that we owe what is possibly the oldest, and, at all events, in some aspects, an entirely unique, narrative of our Lord's life. Do you think that Peter would ever have said to him: 'Mark! come here and sit down and write what I tell you,' if there had not been beforehand these long years of faithful service? So is it always, dear friends. 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.' That is not only a declaration that faithfulness is one in kind, whatever be the diameter of the circle in which it is exercised, but it may also be taken as a promise, though that was not the original intention of the saying.

For quite certainly, in God's providence, the tools do come to the hand that can wield them, and the best reward that we can get for doing well our little work is to have larger work to do. The little tapers are tempted, if I may use so incongruous a figure, to wish themselves set up on loftier stands. Shine your brightest in your corner, and you will be 'exalted' in due time. It is so, as a rule, in this world; sometimes too much so, for, as they say is the case at the English bar, so it is sometimes in God's Church, 'There is no medium between having nothing to do and being killed with work.' Still the reward for work is more work. And the law will be exemplified most blessedly when Christ shall say, 'Well done! good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.'

So this far-away figure of the minister-evangelist salutes us too, and bids us be of good cheer, notwithstanding all faults and failures, because it is possible for us, as he has proved, to recover ourselves after them all. God will not be less generous in forgiveness than Paul was; and even you and I may hear from Christ's lips, 'Thou art profitable to Me for the ministry.'

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